Determinism And Free-will Essay, Research Paper

Suppose that every event or action has a sufficient cause, which brings that event about. Today, in our scientific age, this sounds like a reasonable assumption. After all, can you imagine someone seriously claiming that when it rains, or when a plane crashes, or when a business succeeds, there might be no cause for it? Surely, human behavior is caused. It doesn’t just happen for no reason at all. The types of human behavior for which people are held morally accountable are usually said to be caused by the people who engaged in that behavior. People typically cause their own behavior by making choices; thus, this type of behavior might be thought to be caused by your own choice-makings. This freedom to make your own choices is free will.

Determinism, a philosophical doctrine against freedom, is the theory stating that all events, physical and mental (including moral choices), are completely determined by previously existing causes that preclude free will. This theory denies the element of chance or contingency, as well as the reality of human freedom, holding that the “will” is not free but is determined by biological, environmental, social, or mystical imperatives. Since every event in our lives is determined by outside causes, then we are just some sort of robots. Freedom, on the other hand, is rooted behind the idea that we do have control over the choices we make, thus having free will, a requirement for being morally accountable for an action. But if determinism is true, and we have no control over the choices we make, then we do not have free-will; and therefore, nobody can ever legitimately be held morally accountable for anything. Our common practice of thinking of others and ourselves as accountable is simply not justified!

There are those who think that our behavior is a result of free choice, but there are also others who believe we are servants of cosmic destiny, and that behavior is nothing but a reflex of heredity and environment. The position of determinism is that every event is the necessary outcome of a cause or set of causes, and everything is a consequence of external forces, and such forces produce all that happens. Therefore, according to this statement, man is not free.

If we accept the determinist argument and assume human behavior as a consequence of external factors rather than of free choice, then we must realize that our explanation of human behavior leaves no room for morality. If people do not choose their actions, then they are not really responsible for them, and there is no need for praising or blaming them. If determinism were true, then there would be no basis for human effort, for why should a person make an effort if what he or she does doesn’t make a difference? If what will be will be, then one has an excuse for doing nothing. Life would not be so meaningful for people on deterministic grounds. Human life, as we know it, would not make much sense without the concept of freedom. In our everyday lives, there are many times when we have to make decisions; what we are going to eat for breakfast, or where we are going to walk. When we talk or write, we are deciding on the arrangement of our thoughts, and we have to search for the right expressions. Our life, while we are awake and active, is a mixture of important and unimportant choices.

Having free will means that we are able to act voluntarily, that we could have decided to act differently than we did. When someone is criticized for looking sloppy, or making an offensive remark, he may try to excuse himself with a “I could not help it” remark. But if he is a normal person mentally, then he could have helped it; he could have acted differently. Many people reject determinism on the grounds that there is no free choice. Philosophers against determinism appeal to direct experience to provide evidence of the existence of free choice. Feelings which we all have, such as regret or remorse, make no sense unless there is free will. People experience regret or sorrow only because they believe they could have done otherwise. If determinism were true, then people could never have done otherwise and there should be no reason to feel any regret. A determinist may argue that human behavior is caused by environmental conditions, general trends, circumstances, and social economic forces beyond human effort and will.

Determinists state that people believe they are free only because they’re ignorant of the causes of their actions. They make that point when they say that we are deceived in thinking ourselves free, a belief that consists of the causes by which they are determined. All of this philosophy reflects the deterministic view that we are not free to change the world because we are all part of a grand causal chain, but this philosophy also claims the idea that if we accept determinism, we free ourselves from ignorance and emotional servitude. And thus, if a person has the capacity to free himself from the bondage of ignorance and emotional impulses and come to agree with determinism, then this would seem to be a very significant type of freedom.

Human experience over the course of history does rely itself on freedom. If determinism is true, why should people bother deliberating about what?s right to do or make serious decisions? Everyone’s thought and action must be inevitable; nobody really has any choice about anything because we are all helpless products of blind forces, which have made us what we are. Therefore, whatever is determined to happen by the past history of the universe is going to happen. A person’s biography was written before he or she was born, so there’s no sense in making an effort. Whatever will be will be, no matter what the person does or doesn’t do. So then why even bother getting out of bed?