Free Will Essay, Research Paper

Do I have Free Will?

After considering the evidence for the three views I have concluded that soft determinism is best supported. I will be arguing for soft determinism with evidence presented in the class readings.

I will start out with the evidence of unconscious motivation. It is the unconscious that forces us to act out things we think are justifiable but can actually be hurtful. With the three factors of our unconscious state, the ID, super-ego and the unconscious ego, we tend to be in a tug-of-war with our mind over who has control. With the mind being in the unconscious state we tend to make compromises in our actions. With the unconscious working, we have the freedom of free will. Once the ID is in action it puts its demands in the table and wants satisfaction while the super-ego denies the wish. We need our unconscious to mediate between the two forces otherwise our mind would be in a constant battle.

Another argument for the point would be of moral responsibility. According to Hospers we have none. We are conditioned from birth with qualities of our personality, social standing and attitudes. Most people are so set on their ways that unconsciously they block out rational thought and act on what they have been programmed to do. In the unconscious state we are just bystanders to our neurosis which is always in control and has already been unconsciously determined. If most of our acts are compelled then we have no means of true freedom.

Now let us look at free acts versus unfree acts. First, we should have a definition of both: free acts are caused at that moment by internal states whereas unfree acts occur due to outside forces. A true Libertarian believes that there is no cause for anything, that everything happens as the self decides while a Determinist believes everything happens due to some outside force. The soft determinist has the right idea, that all acts are necessitated by previous causes. There are some free acts and there are some unfree acts. We need both of these forces to guide us through life. If we go through life without worrying about a single thing then I believe that this life has been wasted, that we have just been going through some routine only to get by and then move on to something better which has been determined for us somehow. We need free acts thrown into the mix so we have some reason for living. Right now I am acting out of free will in a way, I am writing this paper. You might say it is an unfree act because it is an assignment but I can choose not to do it. My free act is that I want to learn more by exploring this subject so I can apply myself to better things. In soft determinism we also need some unfree acts. Just this past weekend after the snow storm I was pulling into the parking lot and pulled into the space, knowing very well that I buried my car in 8 inches of fresh snow. This event was caused by the huge amount of snow we got and that the lot wasn’t plowed. Since it was not my choice to get my car stuck in the snow, this is an example of an unfee act. While most things are determined for us it is that little free agent that keeps us going.

The evidence for Libertarianism is less persuasive than Determinism and Soft Determinism. First of all the argument for the inner standpoint is very unpersuasive. This is trying to show that determinism is false, which is entirely impossible. The argument is that you cannot look at things from an outer standpoint, that a determinist tries looking at it as through a different, or wrong, point of view and when they discover that it is not there then they their beliefs don’t exist anymore. Also, that moral freedom is an inner act is hard to comprehend. It is said that the act must be one of which the person judged can be regarded as the sole author. He can be held morally responsible for these acts because they have occurred from external to the self. If the self is a separate enema from the mind then all the other little pieces floating around it cannot influence it.

While there has to be determined acts out there, there still needs to be some immediate cause on the psychological state of the agent. With the external compulsions acting on the agent there seems to be some interaction with the self which shapes the way we think. If we have the thought of free acts then there is something left to be compelled to work for.

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