

Does Free Will Exist?

A Variety of Responses to the
Determinism of Empiricists and
Idealists

Learning Targets

- Explain the two types of determinism, where that idea came from, and why others freaked out about that.
- Explain the concept of free will, and the ethical implications of free will.
- Explain and compare the contributions of Mill and Bentham, Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche to the field of philosophy.

Determinism

- Mechanical Determinism
 - Everything has a cause.
 - Divine will, human nature, etc.
- Historical Determinism
 - Social or intellectual forces.

Utilitarianism

- John Stuart Mill (and Jeremy Bentham)
- Human actions are not inevitable.
- An action is good if it leads to happiness, and bad if it stands in the way of happiness.
- Freedom = happiness.

Objections to Utilitarianism

- Justice?
- How do we weigh happiness?
 - Higher pleasures vs. lower pleasures.
 - People will inevitably learn to appreciate higher pleasures.
 - Bias?

Freedom for Women

- Argued for the rights of women.
 - Denying equality is morally wrong.
 - Bad for men and women.
 - Equality promotes the greatest happiness for both partners.

Karl Marx

- Big Hegel fan. Where Hegel was about intellectual freedom, Marx was about political and economic freedom.
- A determinist, of sorts.
 - Believed lives were determined by the way they make, distribute, and use material goods.

Marx, in Practice

- Believed capitalism would burn itself out and lead to a revolution by workers, ensuring freedom for everybody.
- Freedom meant taking pride in your work, not in amount or worth of possessions.
- “alienated” labor.

Marx, in theory

- People's beliefs (and behavior) are determined by the relations of production.
 - Religion
 - Philosophy
 - Popular belief all reflect power structure, and people are compelled to fit into that structure.
 - Example? Money today vs. Feudal Europe.

Soren Kierkegaard

- Thought Hegel was too impersonal.
- Important for people to have a meaningful existence.
- To be meaningful, life has to have permanent significance

Kierkegaard and Time

- Life exists in aesthetic, ethical, and religious stages.
 - Aesthetic (pleasure) stage is temporary
 - Once you're sick of that, you try to become more moral and responsible.
 - When that still leaves you in despair, you get religious.
 - (all of this is like Hegel's dialectic, but personal and spiritual.)

The Leap of Faith

- You have to become religious by a leap of faith, not because of philosophical or conventional religious excuses.
- You have to live with the consequences, but the choice is yours.
- Welcome to *existentialism*.

Friedrich Nietzsche

- Waiting for superman (Übermensch)
- Thought mistakes were ok, and that nothing was really objective, anyway.
 - We need to think things that aren't true in order to make sense of a chaotic reality.

Nietzschian Morality

- Rules are fine, but only since most people are sheep. (hated the herd mentality)
- Individuals are capable of much more than we currently think, but social constraints hold the best of us back.
- Objectively, there is no such thing as good or evil. There is only will.

Nietzsche's Will

- Schopenhauer thought it was bad, and needed to be overcome.
- Nietzsche thought that the key to a satisfied life was to let your will lead the way. Listen to your inner drive (and nothing else) and you will be all you can be.

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