

FREE WILL

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Abstract:

In this term paper I tried to address what is free will and what are the different issues in understanding the free will. I tried to address them with some example. Source of the term paper were John Searle 's book (Mind a brief introduction) and stanford encyclopedia of philosophy.

Definition:

Freewill can be defined as the power of acting without the constraint of necessity or fate; the ability to act at one's own discretion. That is free will can be defined as the defined as the ability of one to act of his or her own.

Free will is the ability of agents to make choices unconstrained by certain factors. Factors of historical concern have included metaphysical constraints, physical constraints, social constraints, and mental constraints. [Source: Wiki]

Discussion:

In order to address the free will have to address some other things so that we have some good idea about it.

PROBLEM ABOUT THE FREEDOM OF WILL?

Special problem about free will because we have two absolutely irreconcilable convictions, each of which seems to be completely correct and, indeed, inescapable.

Causality:

According to it, every event in the world occur due the antecedently sufficient causes (that have occurred in the past), which drive that the event occur given that these events occur. That is , a event is said to casually sufficient when that event has occurred then it caused another event to occur .

In these we no longer concern with the sequence within the events, we are interested only in the past events that make the event happen.

Ex:

Dropping of pen Because the world is structured such that force acts down so it falls down.

My argument:

I believe that there is a flaw in the principle of causality, it says that every event in the world occurs due to some past events which force for that event to occur. But for the “first event” to occur, there should be some event to occur before the “first event” occur which force it to happen. But this is impossible.

I think that above argument highlights the flaw in the concept of the causality.

Through experience

According to it, we do things because of our conscious experience, we experience the causes of our decisions and actions, in the form of reasons for those decisions and actions. In order to do a thing we experience the cause of our decision and actions, in the form of decisions and actions. Then we take so decision on it. After that we initiate the action to do the event.

But there was a gap between the cause of your decision and actions, and actual making of the decision, and performance of the actions.

Voluntary decision making and acting contrast with perceiving in this context. In voluntary decision making there was gap at these levels, whereas in perception there was no such gap. Author tries to explain the no gap present in the perception by giving some example of hand present just in front of our eyes, we experience the visual experience of the hand.

Example:

Gaps at various level of experience:

Reason gap:

In a case of voluntary decision making, when we are asked to choose between two things, the set of reasons that we have for selection them normally do not by themselves compel your decision.

Decision gap:

Second, there is a gap between the decision and the actual initiation of the action itself. For example, once you have made up your mind to choose one, your decision does not force the action itself.

Action gap(continuous action):

And third, for any extended series of actions, as for example if I am trying to see a movie, there is a gap between the onset of the action and its continuation to completion. One cannot say that I have initiated the action and it will be completed. But it is not sufficient, we have to make a constant effort to keep going with the action to its completion.

My argument:

I agree that we do things which are based on our experience . But I this explanation does not complete and clear as it does not tell how some such as non physical thing can make a change in the physical thing. That is how our mental actions or thought which are not physical , can cause some physical actions to occur and make a change in the physical world.

IS COMPATIBILISM A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF FREE WILL?

According to it both the determinism and free will are true. This was also known as the soft determinism. According this concept, to say that an action is free is not to say that it does not have causally sufficient antecedent conditions, but to say that it has certain sorts of causal conditions.

Example:

When I decided to take a book or pen on the table, I take that item given that condition. Note that in this case, I am acting according to the free will. Free will does not contrast with the cause but contrast with the force and compulsion.

According to it all the actions are determined , but some actions are free because they are determined by certain inner psychological process

Compatibilism does not answer following questions:

Whether all our decisions and actions preceded by causally sufficient conditions, conditions sufficient to determine that those decisions and actions will occur? Is the sequence of human and animal rational behavior determined in the way that the pen falling to the table is determined in its movement by the force of gravity and other forces acting upon it?

My argument:

As name (soft determinism) suggests , it was loose when compared with the determinism. It is better than hard determinism. Soft determinism did not address some the question mentioned above and there are some open questions which are still to be answered.

IS PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINISM TRUE ?

It deals with whether our psychological states are causally sufficient to determine all of our voluntary actions. Are our psychological states, in the forms of beliefs and desires, hopes and fears, as well as our awareness of our obligations and commitments, etc., causally sufficient to determine all of our decisions and actions?

Note that any person how donot have psychological freedom like the drug addicts , person under hypnosis ...etc.

We can see that person under the drug or alcohol control act very differently from the normal person who has the psychological freedom. This shows that our psychological levels are helpful in determining the action.

The author gave some experiment of the hypnosis, to demonstrate the influence of the psychological levels. These are the hypnosis cases. In this hypnosis experiment, the person was told that after he comes out of the hypnotic trance, when he hears the word "Germany," he will go to the window and open the window. In this experiment, as soon as the subject heard the word "Germany," he invented a perfectly rational-sounding reason for opening the window. He said something like, "It is awfully stuffy in here, we need some fresh air. Do you mind if I open the window?"

According to him, all his action was completely free. But we have good reason to think it was determined by causes of which he was unaware. So in this case, the gap has been an illusion. He had the illusion of engaging in free action, but in fact his behavior was completely determined.

Psychological causes operating on normal person are quite different from the psychological causes operating on the addict or the posthypnotic subject. The described two cases, show that man under the psychological compulsion act different from the normal person.

The man under hypnosis is operating in the gap, but he is not aware of all of his motivations. He has an overriding motivation of which he is totally unconscious. He is in fact engaging in a free action, psychologically speaking, but his overriding motivation is unconscious.

Full freedom requires an awareness of one's motivations, which in this case the agent lacks. This is unlike the addict who can be fully aware that he is in the grip of an addiction and nonetheless behave in an addictive fashion.

My argument:

I agree with the psychological determinism concept. My acceptance of the psychological determinism comes from the hypnosis experiments and other arguments about the relation between actions and psychological states. But this does not discuss how psychological things can cause the action, it just says that the psychological states affect the action. But it does not tell how it affects our actions.

IS NEUROBIOLOGICAL DETERMINISM TRUE ?

Neurological determinism is the belief that a person's character is determined by one's neurological traits. We might have free will at the psychological level in the sense that the psychology as such was not sufficient to fix our actions. But the underlying neurobiology, which also determines that psychology, might itself be causally sufficient to determine our actions. Is the neurobiology sufficient to determine the decisions and actions?

Psychological libertarianism

The thesis says that our psychological states, beliefs, desires, hopes, fears, etc., are not in every case causally sufficient to determine the subsequent action. As the psychological level is concerned, free actions do indeed exist, though of course not all actions are free at the psychological level. Sometimes, for example in the cases of compulsion, rage, overpowering desire, etc., the agent is in the grip of psychologically sufficient conditions.

Our psychological states without exception at any given instant are entirely determined by the state of the brain at that instant. Thus for example, at the present time all of my psychological states, conscious and unconscious, are determined by the activities going on in my brain. Any change in the psychological state would require a change in brain activity.

Our conscious states are higher-level or system features of the brain, and consequently there are not two separate sets of causes—the psychological and the neurobiological. The psychological is just the neurobiological described at a higher level. Neurobiology is at any instant sufficient to fix the total state of psychology at that instant, by bottom-up causation.

The absence of causally sufficient conditions at the psychological level, goes from left to right through time, will only make a real difference if this absence at the psychological level is somehow mirrored at the neurobiological level. If freedom is real, then the gap has to go all the way down to the level of the neurobiology. But how could it? There are no gaps in the brain.