Author’s Name

Instructor Name

Art 101

19 November 2018

Research Essay: Determinism vs. Compatibilism

The debate between determinists and compatibilists has continued for decades. In this research paper, we will discuss and examine the major claims made by both sides and give a balanced understanding of the issue.

The hard deterministic explanation of free will, according to Holbach, can be explained by stating that since human beings are purely material , and all material changes are governed by laws of science, therefore, all decisions by human beings are governed by scientific laws (Hoefer). Furthermore, to be free, an action must be independent of physical causes, and since no human action is independent, therefore no action is free.

According to hard determinists, the illusion of free will is caused by the inability of human beings to identify the causes of our actions. Walter Terrence Stace was a British civil servant and philosopher who argued that the philosophers who follow the hard-deterministic approach to explain free will, make the semantic mistake of redefining the term “free will”. He postulates that we can reach absurd conclusions by misunderstanding the meaning of a certain word (McKenna and Coates). According to Stace, the definition of free will should be determined by the daily use of the word. Free will is thus defined as,

“Freely done acts are the ones that are caused by the psychological conditions of the actor. Acts that are not free are the ones which are caused by the external states of affairs to the actor.”

Using this definition, W.T. Stace made the case for soft determinism that there are scenarios where a human being can, despite having a causal chain, choose to do a different thing. His explanation accounts for moral responsibility to be given to humans.

I agree with Stace’s explanation as it is more practical and factually correct. Hard determinism creates a lot of moral problems for us to solve and has semantic issues as well.

**Works Cited:**

Hoefer, Carl. “Causal Determinism.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2016, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/determinism-causal/.

McKenna, Michael, and D. Justin Coates. “Compatibilism.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2018, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2018. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/compatibilism/.