

Reading Comprehension - different text types

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Name:

Date:

Read the text and complete the tasks.

The Paradox of Free Will: A Philosophical Inquiry

In the realm of philosophical discourse, few concepts have been as persistently debated and scrutinized as the notion of free will. From the ancient musings of Aristotle to the contemporary analyses of Daniel Dennett, the question of whether humans possess the ability to make choices independent of external influences remains a cornerstone of intellectual exploration.

At its core, free will is the idea that individuals have the capacity to make decisions that are not wholly determined by prior causes or divine intervention. This concept is integral to our understanding of human agency, morality, and justice. It suggests that we are not mere automatons, but rather beings capable of shaping our destinies through conscious, deliberate action.

However, the assertion of free will is not without contention. Determinism, the belief that all events are determined by preceding causes, presents a formidable challenge to the notion of autonomous choice. If every action is the inevitable result of a prior state, the concept of free will becomes an illusion. This deterministic view is supported by scientific perspectives, particularly in the fields of neuroscience and genetics, which indicate that our decisions may be heavily influenced by biological and environmental factors.

Yet, the debate does not end here. Compatibilists argue that free will and determinism are not mutually exclusive. They propose that free will can exist within a deterministic framework, suggesting that our choices, while influenced by prior causes, still reflect our personal desires and intentions. This perspective seeks to reconcile the apparent contradiction between human agency and causal determinism, paving the way for a more nuanced understanding of free will.

Moreover, existentialist philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre emphasize the role of individual freedom in defining human existence. According to Sartre, we are "condemned to be free," burdened with the responsibility of creating meaning through our choices. This existentialist view underscores the profound implications of free will, asserting that our decisions shape our identities and moral values.

The implications of free will extend beyond philosophical speculation, influencing legal systems, ethical frameworks, and societal norms. The belief in free will underpins notions of accountability and culpability, suggesting that individuals are responsible for their actions. Conversely, if free will is an illusion, it raises critical questions about justice and punishment.

In conclusion, the paradox of free will continues to challenge our understanding of human nature and the universe. Whether we view it as an inherent aspect of our existence or an elaborate illusion, the concept of free will remains a pivotal issue in philosophical inquiry. As college students, engaging with this debate encourages critical thinking and fosters a deeper appreciation of the complexities of human agency and moral responsibility.

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Determine whether the given statements are true or false.

Free will is the idea that individuals can make decisions independent of external influences.

True False

Determinism asserts that all events are determined by preceding causes.

True False

Compatibilists believe that free will and determinism cannot coexist.

True False

Existentialist philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre emphasize the lack of individual freedom.

True False

The belief in free will supports notions of accountability and culpability.

True False

Daniel Dennett is a contemporary philosopher who has not written about free will.

True False

Neuroscience and genetics suggest that our decisions are heavily influenced by biological and environmental factors.

True False

Aristotle was an ancient philosopher who contributed to the discourse on free will.

True False

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Select the correct answer from the options provided.

Which philosopher argues that humans are 'condemned to be free' and must create meaning through their choices?

- Immanuel Kant Daniel Dennett Aristotle Jean-Paul Sartre

What is the core idea of free will as discussed in the text?

- The concept that morality is inherent and unchangeable
 The capacity to make decisions independent of prior causes
 The notion that human actions are predetermined
 The belief that divine intervention guides our choices

How does determinism challenge the concept of free will?

- By denying the existence of human agency By suggesting that all events are random
 By asserting that all events are determined by preceding causes
 By promoting the idea of divine intervention in human actions

Which scientific fields support the deterministic view by indicating that decisions may be influenced by biological and environmental factors?

- Anthropology and linguistics Physics and chemistry Psychology and sociology
 Neuroscience and genetics

What do compatibilists propose about the relationship between free will and determinism?

- That free will and determinism are mutually exclusive
 That free will can exist within a deterministic framework
 That determinism negates any form of human agency
 That free will is entirely separate from determinism

What role does free will play in legal systems according to the text?

- It supports the idea that justice is an illusion It negates the concept of accountability
 It underpins notions of accountability and culpability
 It suggests that individuals are not responsible for their actions

Which philosopher is known for contemporary analyses of free will?

- Aristotle Immanuel Kant Daniel Dennett Jean-Paul Sartre

What is the significance of engaging with the debate on free will for college students?

- It encourages critical thinking and appreciation of human agency
 It helps them memorize historical facts
 It provides straightforward answers to moral questions
 It simplifies their understanding of justice

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Match the items in one column to the corresponding items in another column.

Free will

A philosophical movement emphasizing individual freedom and responsibility.

Determinism

Existentialist philosopher who argued that we are 'condemned to be free.'

Compatibilism

The idea that individuals can make decisions not determined by prior causes or divine intervention.

Existentialism

Ancient philosopher who contributed to the discourse on free will.

Jean-Paul Sartre

The capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own free choices.

Daniel Dennett

Influences that may heavily impact our decisions according to scientific perspectives.

Neuroscience

Contemporary philosopher known for analyzing the concept of free will.

Aristotle

The belief that all events are determined by preceding causes.

Biological and environmental factors

Scientific field suggesting decisions are influenced by biological factors.

Human agency

The theory that free will and determinism are not mutually exclusive.



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What is the meaning of 'persistently debated' in the sentence 'few concepts have been as persistently debated and scrutinized as the notion of free will'?

The meaning of 'persistently debated' in the text is continuously and repeatedly argued or discussed over a long period of time.

What is the meaning of 'human agency' in the sentence 'This concept is integral to our understanding of human agency, morality, and justice'?

What is the meaning of 'formidable challenge' in the sentence 'Determinism, the belief that all events are determined by preceding causes, presents a formidable challenge to the notion of autonomous choice'?

What is the meaning of 'condemned to be free' in the sentence 'According to Sartre, we are 'condemned to be free,' burdened with the responsibility of creating meaning through our choices'?

What is the meaning of 'apparent contradiction' in the sentence 'This perspective seeks to reconcile the apparent contradiction between human agency and causal determinism'?

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Answer the following questions in complete sentences, using evidence from the text.

What is the core idea of free will?

The capacity to make decisions that are not wholly determined by prior causes or divine intervention.

What challenge does determinism present to free will?

How do compatibilists view the relationship between free will and determinism?

What is Sartre's existentialist view on free will?

Why is the belief in free will significant in legal systems?
