



## Is Fatalism a Pessimistic and Harmful Way of Living?

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*Received 08 Sep, 2023; Revised 19 Sep., 2023; Accepted 21 Sep., 2023 © The author(s) 2023.  
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Fatalism is a philosophical doctrine that asserts that all events in one's life are predetermined and inevitable, leading to the belief that human beings have no control over their destinies. Fatalism claims that even if it is debatable whether we are determined beings or not, death is certain, hence any and every action in our lives is pointless. This notion raises the question of whether fatalism is a pessimistic and ultimately harmful way of living. To explore this question more comprehensively, we will delve into the perspectives of various philosophers, including Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Arthur Schopenhauer, Thomas Aquinas, and Laozi. These philosophers have provided diverse insights into the concept of fatalism in their works, allowing us to gain a more profound understanding of the implications and consequences of adopting a fatalistic outlook on life.

Friedrich Nietzsche, a prominent German philosopher, had a complex relationship with the concept of fatalism. He argued that embracing fatalism could lead to nihilism, a belief in the meaninglessness of life, and the rejection of moral values. Nietzsche famously stated, "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how." This quote emphasizes the importance of finding purpose and meaning in life, even in the face of adversity. Nietzsche believed that individuals should strive to assert their "will to power", a concept denoting their ability to shape their destinies.

Fatalism, in his view, could be destructive, as it might discourage individuals from taking responsibility for their actions and seeking self-improvement. Therefore, Nietzsche would likely argue that fatalism is a pessimistic way of living because it negates human agency and the potential for personal growth.

Another view is of existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre who had a contrasting perspective on fatalism. He argued that life is inherently absurd and devoid of any predetermined purpose or meaning. According to Sartre, individuals are condemned to be free, which means that they must create their own values and define their existence through their choices. Sartre's famous quote, "Existence precedes essence," reflects his belief that individuals exist first and then define their essence through their actions.

From his existentialist standpoint, fatalism could be seen as liberating, as it relieves individuals of the burden of having to find an external purpose or meaning in life.

However, Sartre also emphasized the anxiety and responsibility that come with this freedom. In his view, embracing fatalism could lead to an avoidance of this existential anxiety and a sense of comfort in accepting life's uncertainties.

Similar to Sartre, Albert Camus, was another existentialist philosopher who introduced the concept of the absurd. He argued that life's fundamental absurdity arises from the human desire for meaning in an indifferent universe. Camus famously stated, "The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

Camus believed that individuals should confront the absurdity of life and find purpose in the act of living itself, even in the absence of inherent meaning. From his perspective, fatalism could be seen as both pessimistic and liberating. It could be pessimistic if it leads to resignation and passive acceptance of one's fate, but it could also be liberating if it allows individuals to focus on the journey and find meaning in the struggle against the absurd.

On the other hand, Arthur Schopenhauer, a 19th-century German philosopher, had a rather pessimistic view of human existence. He believed that life is filled with suffering and that our desires and ambitions often

lead to dissatisfaction. Schopenhauer's philosophy revolved around the idea that the will is a blind and irrational force that drives human actions.

Schopenhauer would likely argue that fatalism aligns with his worldview, as it emphasizes the idea that human beings are subject to an uncontrollable and indifferent force—the will. However, Schopenhauer's pessimistic perspective would also acknowledge that fatalism, by accepting the inherent suffering of life, may offer a certain degree of resignation and relief from the constant striving and desiring that characterizes human existence.

Thomas Aquinas, a medieval philosopher and theologian, approached the question of fatalism from a theological perspective. He argued that God's divine providence encompasses all events in the universe, including human actions. Aquinas believed in a predetermined divine plan and emphasized the importance of human free will in carrying out God's intentions.

From Aquinas's viewpoint, fatalism may be seen as a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of divine determinism. He would likely argue that recognizing God's plan and aligning one's choices with it can provide a sense of purpose and meaning in life. While acknowledging the predetermined nature of certain events, Aquinas believed that individuals retain moral responsibility for their choices, which can lead to virtuous living and spiritual growth.

Laozi, the ancient Chinese philosopher and founder of Taoism, offered a different perspective on fatalism. Taoism emphasizes living in harmony with the Tao, an underlying natural order or way of the universe. Laozi's teachings promote simplicity, non-interference, and acceptance of the natural course of events.

From a Taoist perspective, fatalism could be seen as an alignment with the flow of the universe. It involves relinquishing the illusion of control and accepting events as they unfold. Laozi's philosophy suggests that living in accordance with the Tao, which may include fatalistic elements, can lead to inner peace and a sense of interconnectedness with the world.

In conclusion, the question of whether fatalism is a pessimistic and bad way of living is multifaceted and has elicited diverse perspectives from various philosophers. Nietzsche's emphasis on the will to power and personal responsibility contrasts with Sartre's existential freedom and Camus's confrontation of the absurd. Schopenhauer's pessimistic outlook finds some alignment with fatalism, while Aquinas emphasizes divine determinism with moral responsibility. Laozi's Taoism offers a perspective that emphasizes natural harmony and acceptance of the universe's flow.

Ultimately, the answer to whether fatalism is pessimistic or liberating may vary depending on individual values and beliefs. Fatalism can provide relief from the burdens of seeking external meaning and control, but it may also lead to passivity and resignation. As individuals navigate their philosophical beliefs, they must carefully consider these perspectives and determine whether fatalism serves as a source of existential freedom, inner peace, or a potentially detrimental way of living in an indifferent world.

- Jyot Singh Narang