

Free will vs Determinism

Free Will vs Determinism AO1

Free Will

The notion of free will suggests that we as human beings are essentially self-determining and free to choose our own thoughts and actions. A belief in free will does not deny that there may be biological and environmental factors that exert some influence on our behaviour, but nevertheless implies that we are able to reject these forces as the masters (or mistresses) of our own destiny. This is a view of human behaviour that is advocated by the **humanistic approach**.

Determinism

Biological, Environmental and Psychic Determinism

The Scientific Emphasis on Causal Explanations

One of the basic principles of science is that every event in the universe has a cause and that causes can be explained using general laws. Knowledge of causes and formulation of laws are important as they allow scientists to predict and control events in the future. For instance, in chemistry, it can be demonstrated how adding *X chemical* to *Y chemical* will result in *Z reaction* within the controlled environment of a test tube.

Hence, in psychology, the **lab experiment** enables researchers to simulate the conditions of the test tube and remove all other extraneous variables in an attempt to precisely control and predict human behaviour.

Free Will vs Determinism AO3

Determinism – FOR

Determinism – AGAINST

P: One weakness of determinism is that there are some inconsistencies with the view, and everyday life.

E: For example, the hard determinism stance is not consistent with the way in which our legal system operates. In a court of law offenders are held morally accountable for their actions. Also, despite its scientific credentials, determinism is an approach that is unfalsifiable.

E: This is a weakness because it is based on the idea that causes of behaviour will always exist, even though they may not yet have been found. As a basic principle, this is impossible to prove wrong.

L: As a result, it suggests that the determinist approach to human behaviour may not be as scientific as it first appears.

Free Will – FOR

Free Will – AGAINST

P: One weakness of free will is that there is contradictory against the theory of free will.

E: Libet (1985) and Chun Siong Soon et al (2008) have demonstrated that brain activity determines the outcome of simple choices. And researchers found that the activity related to pressing a button with the left or right hand occurs in the brain up to ten seconds before PPs report being consciously aware of making such a decision.

E: This is a weakness because this shows that even our most basic experiences of free will are decided and determined by our brain before we become aware of them.

L: As a consequences, the concept of free will can be questioned.