|  |
| --- |
| **LT3 - 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**  Determinism however proposes that free will has no place in explaining behaviour, though there are hard and soft versions.  Hard Determinism: AKA *fatalism,* suggest all human behaviour has a cause, and, in theory, it should be possible to identify and describe these causes. This is compatible with the aims of **science** (to uncover the causal laws that govern thought and action) and always assumes that everything we do is dictated by forces (wither internal or external) that we cannot control.  Soft Determinism: Important to the **cognitive approach,** this view acknowledges that all human action has a cause, but there is some room for manoeuvre in that people have a conscious mental control over the way they behave. William James (1890) thought that whilst it may be the job of scientists to explain the many determining forces that act upon us, this does not detract from the freedom we have to make rational conscious choices in everyday situations. |
| **Biological, Environmental and Psychic Determinism**  Biological Determinism: the **biological approach** emphasises the role of biological determinism in behaviour. Many of our physiological and neurological processes are not under our conscious control (e.g. the autonomic nervous system during stress and anxiety). Lots of behaviours and characteristics, such as mental disorders, are thought to have a genetic basis, and research has supported the role of testosterone (hormonal activity) in aggressive behaviour. Modern biopsychologists also recognise the mediating influence of environment on our biological structures but this simply means we are ‘doubly-determined’ in ways we cannot control.  Environmental Determinism: BF Skinner (Skinner’s rats) famously described free will as an ‘illusion’ and argued that all behaviour is a result of **conditioning.** Our experience of ‘choice’ is merely the sum total of reinforcement contingencies that have acted upon us throughout our lives. Although we might think we are acting independently, our behaviour has been shaped by environmental events, as well as *agents of socialisation* e.g. parents, teachers etc.  Psychic Determinism: Freud, like Skinner, agreed that free will is an ‘illusion’ but placed much more emphasis on the influence of biological drives and instincts that Behaviourists. His particular brand of determinism sees human behaviour as determined and directed by unconscious conflicts, repressed in childhood. Freud says there is no such thing as an accident. Even a ‘slip of the tongue’ can be explained by the underlying authority of the unconscious. |
| **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**  P: One strength of determinism is that it is consistent with the laws of science, and has therefore provided applicable evidence to everyday life.  E: For example, the notion that human behaviour is orderly and obeys laws means that psychology can be considered extremely scientific. Because of this, research into prediction and control of human behaviour can have beneficial implications.  E: This is strength because this research has led to the development of treatments, therapies and behavioural interventions that have benefited many, e.g. psychotherapeutic drug treatment in controlling and managing schizophrenia.  L: This is a strength because the perceived predictability of behaviour, such as mental illness for example would appear to be determined and is therefore supportive of this view. | **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**  P: One strength of free will is that it has high face validity. It makes cognitive sense.  E: Roberts et al (2000) found that adolescents with a strong belief in fatalism (that their lives’ were decided by events outside of their control) were at greater risk of developing depression.  E: This is a strength because further research suggests people with an internal locus of control who believe they have free will, tend to be more mentally healthy. Everyday experience ‘gives the impression’ that we are constantly exercising free will through the choices we make on any given day.  L: This suggests that even if we do not have free will, the fact we think we do may have a positive impact on mind and behaviour. | **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. |