



ESSAY TITLE:

Examine different theories that human beings have free will.

Bulleted summary

Beliefs

- Philosophical theory - French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) - ‘there is no determinism—man is free, man is freedom’
- Sartre argues that human beings must rely upon their own imperfect will
- Sartre saw humankind condemned to freedom
- Irony - ‘man is not free not to be free’
- Sartre believed moral agents are *pour-soi* (‘being for itself’) because they have consciousness whereas animals are *en-soi* (‘being in itself’) and do not have the same self-conscious nature to step back and assess.
- Sartre sees a significant distance between the physical world and that of human consciousness (a ‘gap’), enabling control
- The fact of being able to deny freedom supports freedom
- People try to deny free will to avoid pain and anguish that this responsibility brings – he calls this ‘bad faith’
- To defer to an ethical theory with a set framework is an example e.g. the waiter illustration. Not true or free to be themselves
- Bad faith is still an exercise of free will, just not the best form
- Another theory – scientific evidence: Angela Sirigu
- Sirigu argues against biological determinism through cognitive neuroscience
- Free will can be found in the parietal cortex area of the brain
- Evidence: electrical jolts stimulated desires to move parts of their body. However, even when a body was motionless, the brain had convinced the patient that they



had indeed moved. Therefore, the parietal cortex must send messages to the premotor cortex which then predicts potential movements and selects or 'wills' one of them

- Randy Jirtle and Robert Waterland discovered that slight changes to the diet of a mother could dramatically change the gene expression of their baby. Genes can change through epigenetic switches that (a) control the appropriate codes for the gene (b) can sense the environment around the organism. This affects the future life of the organism and is why so much is made of diet in pregnancy.

Quotations

'There is no God, so man must rely upon his own fallible will and moral insight. He cannot escape choosing.' (Jean-Paul Sartre)

'We must believe in free will, we have no choice.' (Isaac B. Singer)

'Before, genes predetermined outcomes. Now everything we do, everything we eat or smoke can affect our gene expression and that of future generations. Epigenetic introduces the concept of free will into our idea of genetics.' (Randy Jirtle)

'You need both systems, the parietal and premotor cortex, to generate intention and check whether this is followed through.' (Angela Sirigu)

Sirigu's experiment is 'extremely interesting, because up to now it has been very difficult for neuroscientists to deal with the idea of intentions or wishes or will.' (Patrick Haggard)

'What it tells us is there are specific brain regions that are involved in the consciousness of your movement.' (Angela Sirigu)