

Determinism

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An interdisciplinary look at the question, "Why do you grow a beard?"

1. Honest: I don't shave.
2. Projection: Lots of men have beards.
3. Emily Post: None of your business.
4. Democratic: Oh? Don't you like it?
5. Macho: It is manly.
6. Women Detester: It keeps women away.
7. Late Sleeper: It permits me to get up at 9:55 for a 10:00 class.
8. Religious: You will have to ask God.
9. Chicken: I hurt myself shaving every morning.
10. Conservative: It takes too much energy to shave.
11. Appreciative: It is a gift from God
12. Generous: Let me share this beard with you.
13. Concerned: It hides my weak chin.
14. Fatalist: If God had not meant me to have one He/She would not have permitted it to grow.
15. Determinist: It was a lawful relationship; when I stopped shaving, the beard grew.

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A basic assumption in all science is that natural phenomena are DETERMINED; that is, every event in the universe has a cause, and the knowledge of relationships between events and their causes enables us to control the occurrence of future events.

It should be made clear that determinism should never be identified with the pre-scientific doctrine of Calvinism, predeterminism or fatalism. By determinism we are referring solely to the notion that behavior is lawful. Determinism does not imply that we are wound up, and all we can do, as it were, is unwind. If a behavior is determined it can be changed. Finding the lawful relationship that controls the behavior is needed.

- 12-1 The term determinism, as used by behavior scientists, refers to:
- A. the idea that "we are wound up in a certain way."
 - B. the notion that behavior is lawful.
 - C. a doctrine similar to that implied in the pre-scientific doctrine of predeterminism.
 - D. fatalism. (B)

A person may not study about issues of freedom and control of behavior and still be: a productive individual, have fun, be religious, be rich or poor, be a good or bad user of behavioral principles in their personal life, and of course, many other things. The repertoires of studying about behavior and all of these other aspects of life have different learning histories. However, if there is no lawfulness in any area we are studying, who cares if we are correct. If there is not lawfulness it does not matter what we study and find as causes of behavior, because you can not change them in a meaningful way. This point is extended further in a sperate unit on freedom and control written by the author. If there is no lawfulness in Physics or Chemistry, why study which independent variables produce a sought after dependent variable. If no laws of science control behavior, move science and psychology out of the classroom into the avenue of total speculation. Proposed solutions are offered to all psychological issues every night in bars around the world. If the person had to bet money on these weird solutions in a sober state, he or she may not be willing to bet on their effectiveness or usefulness. We want the "science of psychology" to work more objectively on the issue we study. We appear at times to be getting better, but humans have not been good at using science in reference to studying their own behavior.

"How quickly can I learn French?" asked the young parents. "That depends upon you," replied the teacher, "Why are you in such a rush?" "We've just adopted a French baby only six months old," they answered, "and we want to be able to understand the child when the child starts to talk."

"Mary," said her mother reprovingly, "every time you disobey I get another gray hair." "Gee, Mom," Mary answered, "so it was you who gave grandma all her gray hair."

S.B. 12-2