

So once one distinguishes those options, I think it helps a great deal to sort out some of the problems that come in this area. One does not need to say that absence of blameworthiness implies lack of freedom. Sometimes you're not blameworthy because it's not something you've done at all. Sometimes you're not blameworthy because you did the right thing. Well, Hume's most distinctive contribution to the free will debate is different from this. I mean, I've argued that this definition of Liberty is quite an important one, and I think it's a defensible one - the idea that a free action is one that you do intentionally, and that you're morally responsible or potentially morally responsible for actions that you do in those circumstances, and that if you're threatened with a gun or whatever, that doesn't change that you're acting intentionally. But Hume's most distinctive contribution to the free will debate is actually somewhat different from what he does in inquiry Section eight is to provide an argument for determinism, and he appeals here to the understanding of necessity that's in inquiry section seven, so be warned when you read inquiry section eight, as you're required to for this course, if you don't know what goes on in inquiry section seven, you might find it a little bit confusing. So here's the passage in inquiry section eight where he appeals back to what he has said in inquiry section seven: "Our idea of necessity and causation arises entirely from the uniformity observable in the operations of nature; beyond the constant conjunction of similar objects and the consequent inference from one to the other, we have no notion of any necessity or connection." So Hume's very famous contribution to the understanding of the notion of cause is this: he asks, what do we mean by one thing causing another, or one thing necessarily bringing about another? His answer is that we get the notion of causation purely by seeing constant conjunctions of things. We see motion of one billiard ball followed by motion in another ball, again and again and again. As a result, when we see the one moving, we naturally infer that the other will move. Remember what Hume says about induction: we do that just naturally, by instinct. And he thinks that that instinct is what gives us the notion of causation. We find ourselves inferring B from A, and as a result, because we find ourselves making that inference, that's why we attribute a necessity to the connection between A and B, why we say A is the cause of B. The inference comes first, we find ourselves making the inference, that's why we say there's a causal link. Okay, so what he's said now is saying is think about that notion of causation and necessity and apply it to the free will debate. What comes out of that? Well, if these circumstances, that is constant conjunction and the consequent inference of the mind, if these circumstances form in reality the whole of that necessity which we conceive in matter, and if these circumstances be also universally acknowledged to take place in the operations of the mind, the dispute is at an end. Now, that's from much later in the section. In between, Hume has given lots of arguments to say that this is the case, but if you look at human action, you find the same sort of consistency between motives and actions as you find between motion of one billiard ball and motion of another. Human behavior is predictable in the same sort of way as the behavior of the physical world. Of course, sometimes it's very complex, so is the physical world. Trying to predict the weather, for example, is extraordinarily difficult. Predicting the actions of people is often very much easier. And Hume makes the point with a lot of illustrations. He shows how everything we do in life, or almost everything we do, takes for granted a uniformity in behavior amongst other people. We do treat people as predictable. He gives one rather gruesome example of a prisoner who is in a jail awaiting capital punishment, and he points out that the prisoner may reason that the walls are too strong for him to get through, the window is too strong for him to break. He foresees his death from the axe or whatever it may be. But he also foresees it partly because he thinks that he is not going to be able to influence the guard, because he foresees that he will be taken to the scaffold, that people will act in the way that they are prescribed to act. So in working out what's going to happen to him, he is combining reasoning about physical things and reasoning about moral things, that is, people's behavior. And we do that quite naturally all the time. We combine these kinds of reasoning. Well, in that case, if the only understanding we have of necessity or causality in the physical world comes from uniform behavior and predictability, and if those apply just as much to the moral world, to the world of human action, then there's just as much reason for ascribing determinism to human action as there is to the physical world. So

most of section 8 part 1 is devoted to arguing these things, that human actions manifest uniformity, they're generally recognized as doing so, people standardly draw inferences about human behavior just in the way that they do about physical things. So he says what may seem rather paradoxical, all mankind have acknowledged the doctrine of necessity in their whole practice and reasoning, even while they profess the contrary opinion. So lots of people deny the doctrine of determinism, but actually Hume is saying in everything they do, they actually manifest a belief in it, a belief in causation governing human action. So why do they deny determinism? Why do they deny a doctrine to which their own behavior commits them? Well, Hume thinks this is because people have a strong propensity to believe that they penetrate farther into the powers of nature and perceive something like a necessary connection between the cause and the effect. So this again comes back to Hume's understanding of causation. People think when they see one billiard ball hitting another, they think they understand why it happens. Actually, Hume has said they don't. Remember about gravitation, that people thought gravitation was weird and incomprehensible. How can one thing attract another across space? They thought that was weird, whereas they thought the motion of billiard balls and collision of billiard balls was absolutely straightforward and comprehensible. And Hume's great contribution here is to say, no, it isn't, actually. If you think about it, it isn't intrinsically comprehensible why billiard balls move as they do. And I argued in the second or third lecture that this was actually anticipating modern science. Modern physicists do not expect the behavior of things, e.g., in quantum mechanics, to be intuitively comprehensible. Well, if the behavior of billiard balls isn't actually really comprehensible in the way that people thought it was, then that can cure us of the illusion that somehow there is a greater necessity in physical things than there is in human behavior. At least, that's how Hume argues. Another important argument that he makes is that morality actually requires determinism, and here we get back to the issue of morality. Incidentally, there are a few more slides than you have. I'll give you them next. So why? What is the relationship between determinism and moral responsibility? The libertarians say if we're determined, we can't be free, we can't be morally responsible. Hume actually turns that on its head and says, hang on, what is it that makes you morally responsible for what you do? Surely it is because the action arises from you. It's because you did the action, because the action was brought about by your intentions, your desires, your reasoning. That's what makes the action morally responsible. So determinism actually assists moral responsibility, it doesn't undermine it. How can an action which I do be one that I'm morally responsible for if it's actually, as it were, random that I did it? If it doesn't arise from enduring aspects of my character?