

So we've looked quickly at some of Hume's contributions here at the end of this, and in the light of that argument that I've just described, you might well wonder whether free will is a coherent notion at all. Because despite all the arguments of the compatibilist, you might well think there is something odd about ascribing morally responsible to us if everything that we do was inevitably determined a thousand years before we were born. Doesn't that really make free will a dubious notion, despite all of the points that have been made?

But now we see that there's a problem if you deny determinism. Suppose you deny determinism, suppose you think that a lot of what happens in the world is random. A lot of human actions are determined by, sorry, brought about by factors that are not causally determined, in which there's a, there are dice being thrown in my head when I do whatever I do. How does that make me morally responsible? It's hard to see that randomness helps at all. So the libertarian has quite a difficult challenge here as well. The libertarian has to explain how something can be meaningfully free in a morally important way and yet not determined.

Well, one way around all this sort of thing is taken by Hume in his "Enquiry" which you'll be reading. But it's important to be aware of it. Hume is what's called a sentimentalist in morality, a very important trend both in his day and in ours. The idea basically is this: morality is founded on our feelings, on our sentiments, on sympathy or what Hume calls sympathy, what we might call empathy and fellow feeling towards other people. So the claim is that morality is not some sort of metaphysical speculation. When I judge something right or wrong, I'm not doing that on the basis of philosophical argument, or very rarely so. I'm doing it on the basis of my feelings. I see somebody robbing an old lady, I feel resentment for the robber, I feel great sympathy for the person who's robbed, and it's that natural fellow feeling which gives rise to moral sentiments. At least that's the claim.

Now, notice that if you are a sentimentalist, if you take this kind of view, if you think of morality as something like a projection of human attitudes, then there's no reason at all why determinism should undermine it. So Hume gives this example: a man who is robbed of a considerable sum, does he find his vexation for the loss any wise diminished by these sublime reflections, thinking about determinism and so forth? Of course not. If I'm robbed of a considerable sum, the fact that the villain was causally determined to do it makes no difference to my resentment. I feel extremely angry. Why then should his moral resentment against the crime be supposed incompatible with him?

So notice that there are different ways out of this. We don't need to be trapped by the metaphysical debate. We might be able to stand back and change our account of morality or develop a proper account of morality that allows determinism and maybe allows randomness within it.

So don't forget, when you're thinking about free will and moral responsibility and determinism, don't forget that questions can be asked about the nature of morality and it's entirely possible that your answer to those questions will influence your view on free will and determinism. Well, um, you'll have gathered I'm quite sympathetic to Hume's approach on this, as on many other things. But there is a sense in which you might well think that it's rather too crude. Hume wants to say that we're free if we act in accordance with our will. Freedom is simply power to act or not act according to the determinations of the will. But surely we want to say there is a significant

difference between different actions. Those that are in accordance with one's will, take a drug addict or an obsessive kleptomaniac. They seem to be slaves to their will in a sense that the rest of us aren't. Don't we want to say that they lack freedom in a particular way? And it looks like Hume and many other compatibilists are not going to be able to have a satisfactory answer to this if you make the conditions for freedom so easy to meet that all that's required for a free action is that you do what you want to do. How can you distinguish between the drug addict and the normal autonomous person?

Well, here we get back to Harry Frankfurt and his second very important contribution to the debate. He suggests a distinction between first-order desires, for example, maybe the desire to smoke a cigarette, and second-order desires, for example, the desire to quit smoking. So the addicted smoker who realizes that he's addicted and wishes he could give it up, that can't, has a conflict in his desires. He's got a second-order desire to give it up, he's got a second-order desire not to desire cigarettes, and he has the first-order desire for the cigarette. He's not in control of himself at the higher level, and that gives us a way of saying that he is less free. So bringing this sort of consideration into a determinist compatibilist account, I think, helps a great deal. It enables one to distinguish between different degrees of freedom within a compatibilist framework.

I'm just going to end very quickly by drawing your attention to what I think is a particularly interesting contribution on the indeterminacy side. Most of the big philosophers who discussed free will over the centuries have actually tended to be compatibilists. Compatibilism is by far the dominant trend. But Robert Kane has written a lot of stuff from the other side. Recently, he's written a number of books about free will, and when he describes the debate, he normally does so in a very even-handed and perceptive way. So I do recommend what he writes, and there's an article on the web here which gives an indeterminate picture, which tries to get around the standard problems within determinism. So he gives the following example: suppose I try to shoot somebody, but my aim is very unsteady, it's a chancy matter whether I actually hit them. But if I do hit them, I'm responsible. The randomness in no way undermines my responsibility.

Well now suppose that there are conflicting desires in my mind and I want to do A and I want to do B, but they're incompatible. But whichever one actually wins out, even if even if a random process in my mind that brings it about that one wins rather than the other, that doesn't prevent my being responsible. So he's saying randomness is compatible with responsibility, and he uses this to attack the argument against indeterminism, which claims that randomness undermines responsibility. And then he wants to go on to say that things like this, random episodes, random things in our mind that brings about that one thing dominates rather than another, can over our lives end up building our character in such a way that later things that we do are determined by that character. But we are still responsible for them because they came about in this indeterminist way. And I think that's an interesting and imaginative contribution. The difficulty for him, I think, is explaining why even that element of randomness is valuable. One might agree with him, but in those circumstances, randomness is compatible with responsibility. It's very hard to see how randomness makes you more responsible than something that's straightforwardly caused. And at that point, I shall have to leave you to ponder the debate by yourselves. You can see it is a very complex issue with a lot of strands weaving together. I hope you enjoy reading more about it. Thank you.