**5th Theme: Free Will**

***What is free will?***

Is it compatible with determinism? If so, which type?

What are the consequences on our moral beliefs?

* Is not just being free, it is also about the fact that we are in control of what we do/ think/ choose..
* Determinism is the opposite of free will.   
  Physical determinism, Social Determinism (i.e. addiction),

**Different definitions of freedom**

1. To be able to do what we want independently from past events, natural/social/cultural conditions. It is the freedom to do otherwise (freedom of indifference)  
-We are free to choose between two opposite option.  
-According to many philosophers this is the real definition of free will. Freedom of choice, thought and action.

2. To be able to do what we do without being coerced or constrained. It is the power of self-determination. (freedom of spontaneity)  
-Capability of doing or not doing something but not indifferently (only starting from some conditions). I.e. It is me that either chooses to do or not do something

1st definition: Libertarians

They usually are incompatibilists (position in the decision of free will), they believe freedom is not compatible with determinism. They share the first definition of freedom.

* i.e. the view according to which every state of the world is the result of a previous (set of) event(s).

According to libertarian determinism is not true.

2nd definition

They are compatibilists and soft determinists.

\*\*Hard determinists think that if determinism is true and freedom does not exist\*\*

Also the supporters of determinism can admit it: human actions are part of a determinist system (the nature/ the society).

Botterill2002 (trascinato).pdfDeterminism is a kind of necessity that we think describes the world

* So when my thoughts are not clear and distinct, I can choose.

**What is determinism? – Laplace’s Demons**

\*Laplace was an important mathematician, inventor of the probability calculus and a determinist. He described determinism with the following passage:

“We may regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its past and the cause of its future. An intellect (the devil) which at a certain moment would know all forces that set nature in motion, and all positions of all items of which nature is composed, if this intellect were also vast enough to submit these data to analysis, it would embrace in a single formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the tiniest atom; for such an intellect nothing would be uncertain and the future just like the past would be present before its eyes.”

(P.S. Laplace, Introduction to *Essai philosophique sur la probabilité*, 1814)

- Every state of the universe is the consequence of a set of events in the past

- In this sense, if we know every cause that determined these states, we can also know their effects

- Everything that happens In the world is the effect of a cause and will be itself a cause of a next effect.   
C1 > E 🡪 C2 > E… and so on

Three main kinds of determinism

1. Natural determinism, the idea of which every natural event is the consequence of previous event(s)
2. Theological determinism, the idea that every human action is the consequence of the decisions of a/several god/s.
3. Anthropological determinism, the idea that every human action is the consequence of her biological nature, her social condition, her cultural background. This is very important in the 19th and 20th century, when social sciences began.

**Natural Determinism**

Democritus (460 BCE-360?BCE): everything is composed by atoms (namely, matter). The first natural determinism.

* Atoms = Alpha (not) + Temno (from Greek “to divide”). So it is an indivisible part of matter.
* World = a mechanism in which everything derives from necessity, through necessity
* The atoms give rise to every natural phenomena “by necessity”:
* “The causes of reality (…) have already in themselves, stated by necessity, everything that has been, is and will be” (Plutarch on Democritus)

Plato’s Theological Determinism

The main opponent of Democritus was Plato, who opposed him with the intelligent design theory. In fact he said that the beauty of the world could not come from necessity but from the will of God.

Compatibilism?

His atomism would be accepted from Epicurus, whose ideas were put in the “Rerum Natura” by Lucretius. In this book we can find the first questions: how to be possibly free in a determined world? If it s ruled by necessity, how can It be possibly free?

“Again if all motion is ever linked together/ and a new motion ever springs from another in a fixed order/ and first-beginnings do not by swerving make some/ commencement of motion to break through the decrees of fate,/ that cause follow not cause from everlasting,/ whence have all living creatures here on earth,/ whence, I ask, has been wrested from the fates the power/ by which we go forward whither the will leads each/, by which likewise we change the direction of our motions/ neither at a fixed time nor fixed place,/ but when and where the mind itself has prompted?”

(Lucretius, De rerum natura, bk 2, 251-260)

* Lucretius gives freedom to something that is absolutely evident. Not only human beings, but also animals are free, they are not pushed by natural causes. But how?

Lucretius = Epicurus

According to them: Freedom is not compatible with determinism.

* We have to explain freedom in a way that puts in evidence how it is possible to deviate the atoms. If it is like Democritus says, it is impossible to be free
* We must suppose a “**clinamen**” = casual swerve/ inclination of the atoms. So the atoms can change direction.   
  A1, A2, A3 is produced by A1-1,A2-1,A3-1-
* According to Epicurus, to explain the possibility of freedom, we have to say that what I do it’s because an atom has taken another place casually. What’s produced is another status in which I do another thing. Casus that can intervene on the causes and modifies them. So softer causality.

But is this a good answer?

* Important because in quantum physics we have discovered that in very little phenomena, there is casualty and not only causality. So casual deviation is possible.
* Today our description of the world is a non-deterministic description of the world.
* Until 1927, Heisenberg discovered the principle of non-determination (the particles of matter do not behave in a deterministically), all physics was determinist (17th century-1927).
* We can find this also in Descartes (one of the fathers of scientific revolution)

**Descartes’ Determinism**

(He gives the most important principle according to him)

A1. Nothing exists concerning which one can’t ask ‘Because of what cause does it exist?’ This question can even be asked about God, not because he needs any cause in order to exist, but because the immensity of his nature is the cause or reason why he *doesn’t* need any cause in order to exist.

(Second replies to the Second objections on the Meditations on first philosophy)

* Nothing exists without a cause. We can even ask with regards to God
* Descartes uses in the same sense cause and reason. Everything in the world has a causal explanation. These causes = reasons.
* Leibniz: Principle of sufficient reason. He represents the maximum point of determinism. The principle according to which, everything has a reason. Maybe a reason does not exist but that a problem of knowledge, not of the principle.

The nature of the will and the two kinds of freedom (Descartes)

* We are not coerced to do this. To be free is sufficient that we go in one direction but without coercion
* In a sense, we are freer when we are more determined to do something good. I cannot say indifferently that a triangle can have either three angles or not, it is not a choice between options. It is not something I can say, I am not free in that sense because I am determined in this content (mathematical truths). This is a clear and distinct knowledge.
* I have freedom of spontaneity, without coercion, when an internal force (the light of the understanding) acts. In this force, to be free is to say there is nobody that obliges me to give this answer, it is something inside of me. I am the principle of my action, I have the power of self-determination.

How is freedom possible in a cartesian world?

Dualism: everybody is completely determined, but mind is not a body, therefore it can be free.

* Freedom is not compatible with this world, if everything is determined, we can’t be free.
* Freedom is possible because we are not only natural bodies (natural things are determined), we also have a spiritual dimension which has different freedom and belongs to a different world**. We can be free because our freedom does not pertain to this world.**
* Descartes: “the only thing we can have control on, is our thoughts. For this reason, it is better to change my thoughts rather than the course of the world.”

\*\*\* Descartes' answer is that we do not have the "freedom of indifference," that we could have acted differently. All his conception of free will requires is that we have "freedom from external constraint," that we don't feel we are being forced into behaving as we do. We behave under the idea of freedom, and that is enough to ensure that our judgments are made freely\*\*\*

Descartes’s Principles of Philosophy

* To be free is to behave morally. Only if we are free we can behave morally.
* One of the most important humanistic opinion, the idea that what defines human beings is the supreme perfection of human being, is our capacity to become what we want and to choose to behave in a way or another. This distinguish us from animals. It is important because also the meditations are an experience of freedom, Descartes underscores that finding the truth is to be free/exercise our freedom

Consequence for morality

Only if we are free, i.e. if we completely control our actions we are morally responsible for what we do = machines are not responsible (Tesla problem, Trolley Problem)

* If we denied for instance to have free will, who can we blame for our action?

How we discover freedom according to Descartes?

* There is no problem to demonstrate that we are free.
* D. is convinced that we have privileged access to ourselves and it is easy to describe our properties.

NB

According to Descartes our will is free= we can decide what we will and not only what we do.

Kant’s critique of pure reason (incompatibilist)

* In the world everything is part of a series of causes (occurrence)
* But according to Kant, we do not know the real essence of nature, we only know what the phenomena of nature appear to us. [Copernican Revolution]
* We structure nature in accordance with our mental structure. It is not our mind that mirrors nature, but it is the nature that becomes an object of our knowledge.
* The way in which human being perceive the nature: the law of cause and effect.
* Kant’s dealing with Hume’s critique on cause and effect
* Hume: we cannot find this law in nature, it is just our subjective principle of the nature. Kant agrees, but since all human beings have equal perception of the world, this principle is universal. Everything we see in our experience respect this law. The consequence is the world is marked by determinism
* But only the world has appeared to us, the phenomenal world. The one that appears to us is just a phenomenal world, we do not know if that is the essence of the world.
* The idea that the world is just the appearance that we know, means that the noumenal world is the domain of freedom.
* Dualistic view: The deterministic world of nature, and the noumenal world of freedom.
* How do we discover the latter? We discover this freedom [according to D.] by our inner feeling of freedom that is self-evident and enough to understand we are free.

The law of cause and effect is a “law of the understanding”

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The law of cause and effect is valid only in the phenomenal world

* There is another world, the noumenal world that we discover because we feel (=inner feeling) that we should behave in such and such a way.
* If we should, we can = we are free
* My feeling of duty opens to me only because I am free. It is impossible to feel duty without no choice [Kant] and natural necessity only pertains to human domain, because we are free!
* The feeling of duty is the fact of freedom, this is idea of our freedom opens to a new idea of causality. We are free, we can be the cause of our actions. They do not concern the natural world but the mental world (the world of our intentions).
* D. thinks we cannot control (deterministic world) anything but our thoughts which do not pertain naturally to the world.
* Both D. and K. are incompatibilists, if the world is determinist it cannot contain freedom. But according to them there is freedom but pertains to a different world. For D. the world is the world of Res Cogitans and for K it pertains to the Noumenal World
* D. says there are the Res Extensa World (material World) and Res Cogitans World (Spiritual World)

NB: To be free is to be a cause, a cause “through freedom”

Hume’s definition of freedom [Compatibilist]

Main Points of Hume:

* Hume was a compatibilist.
* Every human action derives from motives and character = has a cause.  
  - everyone has some features and some way of behaving which are the consequences of our education, culture and our biological disposition
* Freedom is freedom of spontaneity, not freedom of indifference.
* Rewards and punishements can become motives for acting.  
  - even if we are not completely free (freedom of indifference), rewards are important because they can become motives for acting.

Treatise on human nature, bk. 2,3, sec 1

* -Definition of the will: “by the *will*, I mean nothing but *the internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind” (p.257)*.  
  - The will is the result of our consciousness of what we are doing. It is not different from our impressions (the perceptions of the bodies and of ourselves)  
  - According to Hume there are impressions of the objects/sensation (derive from exploring the world through and of reflections. The latter are the result of reflecting on our previous ideas(?)  
  - The will is really similar to a passion, it is a nature of being human.
* The world is a determinist system: “’Tis universally acknowledg’d, that the operations of external bodies are nec- essary, and that in the communication of their motion, in their attraction, and mutual cohesion, there are not the least traces of indifference or liberty. Every object is determin’d by an absolute fate to a certain degree and direction of its motion, and can no more depart from that precise line, in which it moves, than it can convert itself into an angel, or spirit, or any superior substance” (ibid.)  
  - Liberty = freedom of indifference  
  - Every natural body is determined, there is no liberty in the world. But Remember Hume’s critique to the principle of C/E
* What we call “necessity” is only a “constant union”,”an uniform and regular conjuction” among the natural objects, which allows us to make an “inference” from A to B.  
  - It’s enough that we can find the connection between objects to speak about necessity. It is important this remark because…
* The same necessity can be found in “human affairs”: “Whether we consider mankind according to the dif- ference of sexes, ages, governments, conditions, or methods of education; the same uniformity and regular operation of natural principles are discernible. Like causes still produce like effects; in the same manner as in the mutual action of the elements and powers of nature.”(258)  
  - Since it is like this, we can say also in human affairs/actions, there is necessity.   
  - Even in the domain of human behaviour, we can find necessity and regularity.

“There is a general course of nature in human actions, as well as in the operations of the sun and the climate. There are also characters peculiar to different nations and particular persons, as well as common to mankind. The knowledge of these characters is founded on the observation of an uniformity in the actions, that flow from them; and this uniformity forms the very essence of necessity” (p. 259).  
- There is determinism also in human actions, in the sense that also in human actions we can find regularities, conditions, causes and conclusions.

* If freedom is the opposite of necessity, therefore freedom is equal to chance: “According to my definitions, necessity makes an essential part of causation; and consequently liberty, by removing necessity, removes also causes, and is the very same thing with chance.” (262)  
  - If we oppose necessity to freedom, then what we call freedom becomes chance.  
  - If we want to speak about freedom, we have to speak about cause of our behaviour. Since we can identify the causes of our behaviour in principle (so there is a necessity connection between my action and its cause), if I say there is no reason I am saying I drink by chance.  
  - Freedom is a form of Causality, according to H., this causality is absolutely compatible with nature, it is a part of it. In this sense we behave through causes as well as nature does. In this sense their opposition makes no sense.

Treatise on human nature, bk. 2,3, sec 2

* Necessity does not mean “violence” or “constraint”, it is synonymous with causality : “After we have perform’d any action; tho’ we confess we were influenc’d by particular views and motives; ’tis difficult for us to perswade our- selves we were govern’d by necessity, and that ’twas utterly impossible for us to have acted otherwise; the idea of necessity seeming to imply something of force, and violence, and constraint, of which we are not sensible. Few are capable of distinguishing betwixt the liberty of *spontaneity*, as it is call’d in the schools, and the liberty of *indifference*; betwixt that which is oppos’d to violence, and that which means a negation of necessity and causes.   
  - Necessity is just synonim of causality
* We think to have liberty (of indifference) because we ignore or we do not think to the motives that drive our actions “whatever capricious and irregular actions we may perform; as the desire of showing our liberty is the sole motive of our actions; we can never free ourselves from the bonds of neces- sity. We may imagine we feel a liberty within ourselves; but a spectator can com- monly infer our actions from our motives and character;” (262)  
  - We are ignorant, we freerly decide to take something without causes.
* Rewards and punishements demonstrate that our actions depend on causes “as all human laws are founded on rewards and punishments, ’tis suppos’d as a fundamental principle, that these motives have an influence on the mind, and both produce the good and prevent the evil actions.” (263)  
  - We can be subject of moral actions even if we are not free with the freedom of indifference, we are either rewarded or punished with our actions and can substitute the causes of our decisions.
* Hume’s definition of freedom [Compatibilist]

Treatise on human nature, bk. 2,3, sec 3

* The principal motives of action are the direct passions, i.e. impressions that derive from the ideas of pain and pleasure (joy and grief, hope and fear, desire and aversion).[Basic foundation for any other passion]  
  - We act driven by our passions in the search for pleasure  
  - Reason can change the actions, but not to modify my passions.
* Reason cannot be a motive of action, because it only discovers relations between ideas or causal relations of objects that are revealed in experience. Reason can provide information that modify our passions, and therefore our motives, but cannot be in itself a motive of action.

Reason cannot motivate action

“The understanding exerts itself after two different ways, as it judges from demonstration or probability; as it regards the abstract relations of our ideas, or those relations of objects, of which experience only gives us information. I believe it scarce will be asserted, that the first species of reasoning alone is ever the cause of any action. As its proper province is the world of ideas, and as the will always places us in that of realities, demonstration and volition seem, upon that account, to be totally remov’d, from each other. (….) Where the objects themselves do not affect us, their connexion can never give them any influence; and ’tis plain, that as reason is nothing but the dis- covery of this connexion, it cannot be by its means that the objects are able to affect us.” (265-266)

Conclusion: reason is the slave of passions

“Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” (266).  
- Hot topic: opposition between reason and passions. If you want to be free you should follow your reason, but Hume opposes this. Reason is not opposite to passions, they have nothing to do with actions.

Reason plays a role in action providing information especially about means to our ends, but only a passion can oppose a passion.

Malebrance

* Does not agree with the interaction between the worlds
* It is impossible that my mind can produce something that affects the material world

D: Difference with Kant

* K: freedom pertains only to intentions. Real freedom is what we MEAN to do.
* Both Incompatibilist and Libertarian (free on the spiritual/noumenal world)
* Hume is a compatibilist (we can be free in this world). But the notion of freedom is different. We do not have the freedom of indifference (do one or another thing under same circumstances), but the one of spontaneity. We are free because we are the principle of our actions.

Theological Determinism

**Homer’s heroes (Iliad and Odissey): e.g. Achilles to Priam**

“Of iron verily is thy heart. But come, sit thou upon a seat, and our sorrows will we suffer to lie quiet in our hearts, despite our pain; for no profit cometh of chill lament. For on this wise have the gods spun the thread for wretched mortals, that they should live in pain; and themselves are sorrowless. For two urns are set upon the floor of Zeus of gifts that he giveth, the one of ills, the other of blessings. To whomsoever Zeus, that hurleth the thunderbolt, giveth a mingled lot,  that man meeteth now with evil, now with good; but to whomsoever he giveth but of the baneful, him he maketh to be reviled of man, and direful madness driveth him over the face of the sacred earth, and he wandereth honoured neither of gods nor mortals. (…) Bear thou up, neither wail ever ceaselessly in thy heart; for naught wilt thou avail by grieving for thy son, neither wilt thou bring him back to life; ere that shalt thou suffer some other ill.” (xxiv, 521-533, 549-551)

* First important occurrence of this Idea in the Iliad.
* All their lives are ruled by Gods. Their lives have no power at all because they are Gods ‘puppets
* No profit = nobody listened to us
* Tragical Vision of life.
* All the evil is a *gift* from God, everything in our lives is decided by Gods. In Homer’s opinion we are not free, everything is ruled over by Gods.

The Tragedy: Oedipus Rex (Sophocles)

King Oedipus of Thebes sends his brother-in-law Creon to identify the cause of the mysterious plague that has struck the city. Creon reports that the plague will be lifted if the man who killed the former king, Laius, is brought to justice.

Queen Jocasta doesn't believe Tiresias when he says Oedipus is the murderer. Once, an oracle told her that her husband would be killed by their child, and because (she thinks) that hasn't come true, she doesn't believe Tiresias.

Years ago, to prevent her child from killing her husband, Jocasta left her infant child to die on the side of the road. Oedipus suspects that he was that abandoned baby. When he first came to Thebes, he met and killed a man on the road who turned out to be Laius, his father. He then met and married the widowed Jocasta, his own mother.

A messenger and a servant confirm the tale. Jocasta hangs herself out of shame. Oedipus discovers her body and uses the pins of her brooches to stab out his own eyes.

* Conflict between the Theological Determinism and the idea of Guilt.
* The protagonist cannot avoid to do something bad
* Fate = Fatus (from “Fas-Fari”v. = “what has been said”) it is like this because this is what Gods’ will

If everything is established why Oedipus is guilty? = He is the principle of his actions

“CHORUS LEADER:

I do not believe

what you did to yourself is for the best.

Better to be dead than alive and blind.

OEDIPUS: Don’t tell me what I’ve done is not the best.

And from now on spare me your advice.

If I could see, I don’t know how my eyes

could look at my own father when I come

to Hades or could see my wretched mother.

Against those two **I have committed acts**

so vile that even if I hanged myself

that would not be sufficient punishment”

* He blinded himself = Smart? –> to see is to know (“eidon” has the same root of the word vision “video”). To see and to understand belong to the same domain
* But he is not so smart lol
* Even if he did anything he could not to do bad things, the oracle prophesize, he is convinced HE is guilty since he cannot blame the Gods. He is the one who is responsible.
* Even if everything is already determined it is my fault, this is an idea of Greek Culture
* To be happy = To understand and accept your destiny.
* Idea of the soul that decided the its destiny (in the world of ideas) and after that it receives a demon (which observes your life and tries to understand if you follow your destiny or change direction). If you are good with your demon, you are in the condition “eudaimonia” (good wealth) = happiness. Happiness in this sense, is to follow our destiny.

Augustin of Hippo (354CE, 430CE) - Father of Christian Doctrine

God is omnipotent, morally perfect and omniscient.

Why evil exists? = human freedom

Problem: if God knows everything before it happens, are my actions free?

* Augustine is a philosopher who transformed the Christian doctrine in Theology (ordered set of thesis, dogmas, convictions…). He set up the attributes of God.

Prescience and Freedom (Augustine On the free choice of the will)

“surely what perplexes and upsets you is how these two claims are not opposed and inconsistent:[1] god foreknows everything that will be [2] We sin not by necessity but by the will. For if god foreknows that someone is going to sin, you say, it is necessary that he sin; but if it is necessary, then there is no choice of the will in his sinning, but an unavoidable and fixed necessity instead. you fear that by this train of reasoning we infer either the negation of [1], which is irreli-gious, or, if we cannot deny [1], we infer instead the negation of [2].” (Augustine is speaking to Evodius)

An Example

If God knows that tomorrow I will go to the cinema, necessarily I will go to the cinema, because if I won’t go it would mean that “something can turn out otherwise than God previously foreknew” (4, 15)

* Problem that Aristotle already posed, the problem of Future Contingents.

Problem of future contingents

Sentences like “A sea battle will take place tomorrow”

According to Aristotle (*On interpretation*, chap. 9) they do not have truth value, because if they have, they cannot be contingent = they will be logical necessary.

* To avoid this conclusion, Aristotle states that these kind of sentences have no truth value. They are not either true or False

In Christian theology the problem is even harder than in Aristotle, because if I will necessarily behave so and so, how can I be blamed for my actions?

* God’s foreknows evertything, how is it possible to state that the future has no truth value and will happen anyhow.

Augustine’s solution

Distinction between God’s knowledge of the event X and the modal status of the event X.

If the event X is a voluntary event, God’s knowledge cannot change this status:

* The event in itself is logically contingent, even if God’s knowledge of it is necessary.

“our will would not be a will if it were not in our power. Quite the contrary: since it *is* in our power, it is free in us. What we do not have in our power, or what can not be what we have, is not free in us. Thus it turns out both that we do not deny that god has foreknowl- edge of everything that will be, and nevertheless that we do will what we will.72 for although he has foreknowledge of our will, it is the will of which he has foreknowlege. Therefore, it is going to be our will, since he has foreknowledge of our will. nor could it be our will if it were not in our power. Therefore, he has foreknowledge of our power. hence power is not taken away from me due to his foreknowledge” (ibid. 8, 33-34)

* Freedom means that what pertains a certain act is in our power.
* Even if god knows a certain event will take place i.e. tomorrow, this event will continue to be contingent and not necessary because it involves my will. So, for Augustine, freedom is compatible with theological determinism, our will is a cause that God has built when creating the world. God cannot change this free causality.
* But God…Not only sees what we do but decides also what we do, so…

Why God provided us with freedom if we can sin because of it?

“next, the creature who sins also has his own place. he has lost happiness through his sins, but he has not squandered his ability to regain happiness. furthermore, the [sinner] surely comes before the creature who is possessed by the perpetual will to sin (…). For just as even a wandering horse is better than a stone that does not wander off because it has no perception or movement of its own, so too a creature that sins through free will is more excellent than one that does not sin because it does not have free will. (likewise) i might praise wine as good of its kind while faulting some- one who got drunk on it, and yet put the same person whom I faulted and who is still drunk ahead of the wine i praised on which he got drunk” (v, 15, 55-56)

* It is better for the beauty of the universe to have creatures of different kinds. It is a perfection to have free will (greater than the lack of free will).
* The drunk man (free will) > The wine (no free will)

**Spinoza**

* God is an infinite substance.
* Everything necessarily derives from (the essence of) God) as the properties of a triangle derive from its essence. “from God’s supreme power or infinite nature infinitely many things in infinitely many ways—that is, all possible things – have necessarily flowed or do always follow, with the same necessity and in the same way as from the nature of a triangle it follows from eternity that its three angles equal two right angles” (Ethics, I, scolium to prop. 17  
  - You cannot derive nothing from God without contradiction with regard to the essence of God
* So, everything is necessary (like the necessity that connects the properties of the triangle and the infinite things that can derive from God)  
  -Spinoza 🡪 Hard determinist

**To be free means to exist and to act “by the necessity of its own nature”=only God is free, everything else acts by external causes.”**

“I say that a thing is free, which exists and acts solely by the necessity of its own nature. Thus also God understands Himself and all things freely, because it follows solely from the necessity of His nature, that He should understand all things. You see I do not place freedom in free decision, but in free necessity. However, let us descend to created things, which are all determined by external causes to exist and operate in a given determinate manner. In order that this may be clearly understood, let us conceive a very simple thing. For instance, a stone receives from the impulsion of an external cause, a certain quantity of motion, by virtue of which it continues to move after the impulsion given by the external cause has ceased. The permanence of the stone's motion is constrained, not necessary, because it must be defined by the impulsion of an external cause. What is true of the stone is true of any individual, however complicated its nature, or varied its functions, inasmuch as every individual thing is necessarily determined by some external cause to exist and operate in a fixed and determinate manner” Spinoza to Schuller, October 1674

* We can speak about freedom, but it means something can be free
* There is only one being that is free (acts by the necessity of its own nature) that is God. Also because God is CAUSA SUI

Free will is an illusion

“Further conceive, I beg, that a stone, while continuing in motion, should be capable of thinking and knowing, that it is endeavouring, as far as it can, to continue to move. Such a stone, being conscious merely of its own endeavour and not at all indifferent, would believe itself to be completely free, and would think that it continued in motion solely because of its own wish. This is that human freedom, which all boast that they possess, and which consists solely in the fact, that men are conscious of their own desire, but are ignorant of the causes whereby that desire has been determined.” (ibidem)

* Since any individual is not CAUSA SUI, but are the effects of some other cause. In this sense free will is just an illusion
* Spinoza thinks that we think to be free, only because we are conscious of the last part of our decisional process. The desire of doing something is only the ultimate moment of a long series of processes.

Spinoza’s notion of freedom

* In order to be free we have to know the real causes of the things. So it is possible to be free
* This knowledge give rise to a particular affect (=the love of God (amor Dei intellectualis)), which oppose the other affects that make us slave.
* We are still necessitate, but we understand our being part of the whole and we see the world as God sees it (*sub specie aeternitatis*).
* We become free because we understand that everything is necessary.

- We can be free, when we know all the chain of causes of the things and their essence, and understand that everything is necessary and a manifestation of God’s essence. In this moment we feel a certain sensation which opposes the other effects that makes us slave (our passions move us in way or in another). So we are free of our passions, understand the causes and become conscious of ourselves. We are master of ourselves, we accept actively what happens to us. We can arrive to Beatitude.

**Anthropological Determinism**

Human beings are the results of internal causes (biological or psychological) or external causes (natural or cultural environment). It is a form of determinism that can be applied to human beings.

We can identify three domains that discussed these forms of determinism.

* Sociology
* Psychology
* Biology

**Sociology**: Emile Durkheim

* Sociologist, he was one of the founders of sociology (in some respects *the* founder).
* Main thesis: social facts can be explained through general laws (as well as natural facts by, for instance, physics).
* Definition: “We represent them as consisting of manners of acting or thinking, distinguishable through their special characteristic of being capable of exercising a coercive influence on the consciousness of individuals.”, *The Rules of Sociological method*, preface to the 2nd edition, p. 43)
* Social facts determine human behavior, it only is a social fact if it has a coercive power.

“When I perform my duties as a brother. a husband or a citizen and carry out the commitments I have entered into, I fulfil obligations which are defined in law and custom and which are external to myself and my actions. Even when they conform to my own sentiments and when I feel their reality within me, that reality does not cease to be objective, for it is not I who have prescribed these duties; I have received them through education.(…) Not only are these types of behaviour and thinking external to the individual, but they are endued with a compelling and coercive power by virtue of which, whether he wishes it or not, they impose themselves upon him”, ibid. p. 51.

* I do not behave because I answer, in some way, to the social duty that this role wants by me. E.g. the role of big brother has put in me some obligations and duties to do. E.g. Custom puts in me certain duties that I have to accomplish
* It is not the individual that decides upon these facts, it is my education that created them (external element)
* All the social facts have this kind of power on ourselves, they oblige us to behave in a certain way
* It is not only laws that teach us to behave, but also education bend us to the will of society

“it is indisputable today that most of our ideas and tendencies are not developed by ourselves, but come to us from outside” (ibid. 52).

Even the suicide, an act that we usually see as really personal, is a social fact and as a social fact shall be explained

* Most of the opinions we have about certain topics, are the result of society, education, peers etc...
* Even the suicide is an act that we use to think as personal. Why do they do it? Why do somebody kill themselves?   
  Suicide must be explained through determinism/ quantitative analysis/ social laws

**Here is explanation:**

“Since suicide is an individual action affecting the individual only, it must seemingly depend exclusively on individual factors (…). Is not the suicide’s resolve usually explained by his temperament, character, antecedents and private history? The degree and conditions under which suicides may be legitim- ately studied in this way need not now be considered, but that they may be viewed in an entirely different light is certain. If, instead of seeing in them only separate occurrences, unrelated and to be separately studied, the suicides committed in a given society during a given period of time are taken as a whole, it appears that this total is not simply a sum of independent units, a collective total, but is itself a new fact *sui generis*, with its own unity, individuality and consequently its own nature—a nature, furthermore, dominantly social. Indeed, provided too long a period is not considered, the statistics for one and the same society are almost invariable”(Durkheim, *Suicide*, 1897, p. xliv)

* Suicide in society must be considered as a unique fact

**The Suicide Law**

We can identify a suicide law that can rule all the suicides of the society.

“suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual forms a part. “ibidem. 167.

* A person that decides to commit suicide is someone that in a society wants to be an individual; the desire to maintain or of being an individual pushes these people to kill themselves

**Three Kinds of Suicide**

Durkheim analyzes three types of suicides:

* **Egoistic suicide**. Cause: the individual feels or becomes socially isolated.  
  I feel/ become someone that does not belong in the community in which I live.   
  Egoistic because the individual does not think about the society, rather about themselves.
* **Altruistic suicide**. Cause: the individual feels him/herself like a burden for his/her society; suicide is perceived as a duty.
* **Anomic suicide**. Cause: the individual suffers the breakdown of social equilibrium. Anomic means “without laws”

All of them lie on the same cause:

**The social cause of suicide lies on the feeling of being extraneous to the society.** They feel like an individual

All the human studies were born in the 19th century. This is not casual, the 19th century is the century that has killed the individual (after a period of enlightment where the rights of the individual were seen as sacred). It deleted all the defense of the individual’s rights. Here we see how strong this idea is, the individuals are completely determined by society and those who refuse it they have this destiny (suicide) or are what today we call “looser”/mad/ emarginated. To be out of society is considered a fault.

**Psychology: Cesare Lombroso**

Premise: since the end of the eighteenth century some physicians claimed that the body manifests the personality.

For instance Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), who (re)invented the physiognomy, and Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828), who invented the phrenology (the skull mirrors the brain, whose different areas have different functions).

He called it “organology”. “Phrenology” was used for the first time by his pupil Johann Gaspar Spurzheim)

* Very important thinkers because they thought that the body, in particular the head, manifested personality. It is characterized by inner qualities/ characteristics.
* H. Gardner, “Multiple Intelligences Theory”: he claimed we can have a lot of different intelligences (emotional intelligence, visual intelligence). Here is questioned all the IQ test and the analysis of human intelligence’s description. In the preface he states that Gall with his theory was not so far from the truth.

**J.K. Lavater**

A passage where he states this human determinism:

“Shall nature discover wisdom and order in all things; shall corresponding causes and effects be every where united; shall this be the most clear the nost indubitable truths; and in the first the mpost noble of the world of nature shall she act arbitrarily, withoout design, without law? The human countenance, that mirror of the Divinity, that noblest of the works of the Creatore – shall not motive and action, shall note the correspondence between the interior and the exterior, the visible and the invisible, the cause and the effect, be there apparent!”

(Essays on Physiognomy, 1775, engl. ed 1878, p. 14)

* Nature is ruled by laws, how is it possible that human beings have not some rule that govern their nature?
* How is it possible that human beings cannot manifest the correspondence between the cause and the effect/ mind and body/ external and internal causes?
* Since everything is determined and our physiognomy manifest our inner morality and emotions, it is impossible that we can change something in ourselves because everything is completely determined.

“My opinion (…) is that man is as free as the bird in the cage; he has a determinate space for action and sensation, beyond which he cannot passa. As each man has a particular circumpherence of body, so has he likewise a certain sphere of action (Can it be denied that certain minds, certain frames, are by nature capable, or incapable, of certain sensations, talents, and actions? To force a man to think and feel like me, is equal to forcing him to have my exact forehead and nose; or to impart unto the eagle the slowness of the snail, and to the snal the swiftnees of the eagle (…) Each individual can but what he can, is but what he is” (ibid., pp. 90-91)

* Lavater was a man of 18th century (new tech today)

Some Examples… of the necessary relations between the inner and the external

* Curve of the head/ eyebrows: people who have this kind of head/ eyebrows show a certain set of characteristics. Some external characteristics are correlated to certain inner aspects.
* Appearances show real essences of people.   
  E.g. Today’s studies it is shown that people dressing or looking in a certain way, have more possibility of success in getting a job.

Main Points of Gall’s Theory

1. Each area of the brain corresponds to a specific faculty or inclination (Gall identified 27 “primitive forces”). Nowadays neuroscience accept this kind of idea, different areas of our brain have different functions.  
     
   Damasio, important neuroscience, “Descartes’ error” in this book he tried to explain that Descartes’ idea (our mind is a thinking thing, conscious and that thinks rationally, emotions are connected with the body…) is wrong. Why? Because the capacity to take rational decisions, also depend on emotions. “Phineas Cage’s case” demonstrate this. His attitude/ personality changed completely after an accident in which a tube trespassed his brain from one half to the other and survived. This change in his personality must be because his emotional part of the brain was damaged, since it actually damaged that part. In this sense emotions and decisions are not to be separated.
2. The more the faculty is developed, the bigger is the corresponding area of the brain. E.g. if you prefer science, that area of the brain is bigger than the average areas of the brain’s parts
3. The external dimension of the skull is determined by the corresponding area of the brain (ex. in Italian: to have the “bump” for mathematics)

**Cesare Lombroso**

Derived his theory from this intellectual context, even if he really criticized phrenology (it has no sense in science). Anyhow he also stated that:

* The physical appearance manifests the intellectual and moral properties.
* We can detect these properties through a scientific analysis of the skull (note that he criticized phrenology…)
* There are natural born criminals

**Criminals, Savages, Colored Races…**

“Those who have read this far should now be persuaded that criminals resemble savages and the colored races. These three groups have many characteristics in common, including thinness of body hair, low degrees of strength and below-average weight, small cranial capacities, sloping foreheads, and swollen sinuses. Members of both groups frequently have sutures of the central brow ridge, precocious synostes or disarticulation of the frontal bones, upwardly arching temporal bones, sutural simplicity, thick skulls, overdeveloped jaws and cheekbones, oblique eyes, dark skin, thick and curly hair, and jug ears. Among habitual criminals as among savages, we find less sexual differentiation than between normal men and women. In addition, in both we find insensitivity to pain, lack of moral sense, revulsion for work, absence of remorse, lack of foresight (although this can at times appear to be courage), vanity, superstitiousness, self-importance, and, finally, an underdeveloped concept of divinity and morality” (*Criminal man* (1876), p. 91)

* Appearances = Mental Inclination for criminality

**Lombroso’s theory of crime**

* Crimes depend on “atavism” (the reappearance of an ancestral trait that have been lost through evolution). Criminals are very near to the first state of nature, in this sense they are individuals that are not evolved.
* Crime is a “natural phenomenon”. So it must be studied like we study physics; any natural phenomenon must be described through laws
* Even though criminals are not free (because they are determined by their nature), crime must be punished:   
  “I do not agree with those famous jurists who argue that all offenders should go to prison because they freely chose to break the law. However, if anyone argues that offenders should be incarcerated to protect society, then I agree. That is the theory of social defense” (ibid. p. 93)  
  - We have to punish criminals, not because they are responsible for they are actions (and they are not because they are not free at all), but they must be punish to protect the others because people might be affected by criminals’actions. This idea is very important for Italian legal history. It is found in the Theory of Cesare Beccaria.

**Some Descriptions of criminals**

“thieves are notable for their expressive faces and manual dexterity, small wandering eyes that are often oblique in form, thick and close eyebrows, distorted or squashed noses, thin beards and hair, and sloping foreheads. Like rapists, they often have jug ears. Rapists, however, nearly always have sparkling eyes, delicate features, and swollen lips and eyelids. (…) Habitual murderers have a cold, glassy stare and eyes that are some- times bloodshot and filmy; the nose is often hawklike and always large; the jaw is strong, the cheekbones broad; and their hair is dark, abun- dant, and crisply textured. Their beards are scanty, their canine teeth very developed, and their lips thin. Often their faces contract, exposing the teeth. Among nearly all arsonists, I have observed a softness of skin, an almost childlike appearance, and an abundance of thick straight hair that is almost feminine.” (ibid. p. 51)

* Lombroso was waiting for some pictures of criminals and instead he received people’s pictures for their passports. It seems that he wrote these pages on common people, thinking they were criminals.

Biology: from Colton to Pinker

Some historical hints. (Premise)

Since Darwin’s Origin of Species (1859) many scholars started to ask how inheritance works. In the same period Georg Mendel (1822-1884) was making a lot of researches on inheritance and between 1856 and 1863 he identified three important laws. Mendel’s work become widespread only after 1900. in 1906 William Bateson understood that Mendel’s characters depend on genes: the genetics was born.

* Mendel identified 3 laws of inheritance

**Francis Galton**

Darwin’s cousin… Founder of the **Eugenics** “the science which deals all influences that improves the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage” (in Essays on Eugenics, 1901, p. 35). “The aim of Eugenics is to represent each class or sect by its best specimens” (p. 36)

* Galton was the first to imagine a world in which the fittest (in Darwin’s words) was the best people. He passes from the idea of fittest to the one of “the best”

**Galton’s project**

Eugenics must identify the best individuals in each group, understand and classify their qualities, study the social groups, suggest marriage laws to the governments and become a “new religion”, “for Eugenics co-operates with the workings of Nature by securing that humanity shall be represented by the fittest races. What Nature does blindly, slowly and ruthlessly, man may do providently, quickly, and kindly.” (p. 42)

* The first one to state the biological determinism
* Eugenics was included in Nazi’s party program
* He was convinced (like Lombroso) his program a contribution to science in its path towards progress.
* He wanted to modify society through laws in order to help humanity to improve

**This is idea is Biological determinism:**Personal destiny (psychology, moral attitude, behaviour) is determined by biological characters.

* In particular by our genes, DNA.

**Bio-Determinism**

Recent supporters of bio-determinism (for instance and unbelievably, James Watson, who discovered with Francis Crick the structure of DNA in 1953 and won the Nobel prize in Medicine in 1962) ground their conviction on the so-called “central dogma” of molecular biology (Francis CRICK, 1958) , which states that an information can flow from the nucleic acids (DNA and RNA) to a protein, but not vice versa.

* Protein > Functions of our body
* We can derive from this dogma, that the environment cannot really affect the structure of what we are. This idea is already present with Darwin, environment has no real role in our lives; we are what we are, the only role of the environment is deciding who’s the fittest to survive.
* Watson interpreted as that the same idea: our nature is immutable in our life.   
  It is a Paradox, because it is the opposite opinion of Darwin’s theory.  
  Some scientist started to think that environment had no role in our changes and it is only thanks to our genes if we change.

**Jacques Monod (“Chance and necessity”) The importance of this dogma is explained here:**

“the translation mechanism is strictly irreversible. Information is never seen being conveyed in the opposite direction-i.e., from protein to DNA-nor is there any conceiv- able way in which it could be. This certitude rests upon an accumulation of observations by now so complete and so well verified and its consequences, especially for evolutionary theory, are so important-that it may be considered one of the fundamental tenets of modern biology. Of this the upshot is that there is no possible mechanism whereby the structure and performance of a protein could be modified, and these modifications transmitted even partially to posterity, except by an alteration of the instructions represented by a segment of DNA sequence. Conversely, there exists no conceivable mechanism whereby any instruction or piece of information could be transferred to DNA” (Jacques Monod, Chance and necessity, 1970, pp. 109-110)

* We are born from error (mutation) and we evolve from errors too
* In order to change/evolve, what needs to take place is the mutation between one being to its posterity (only way a being can change), environment does not influence anything.
* Anyway he did not take position

**Monod is this debate**

According to Jacques Monod (who did NOT express bio-determinist positions) this does mean that the environment cannot really influence the individuals. Environment can only select the fittest. Individuals are like islands. They can change only if their instructions (=DNA) were modified. Dna can be modified only by chance, by causal mutations

**Watson’s foolish statement**

In an interview to The Sunday Times (October, 2007) James Watson declared that he was “inherently gloomy about the prospect of Africa” because “all our social policies are based on the fact that their intelligence is the same as ours – whereas all the testings says not really”. He said there was a natural desidere that all human beings should be equal but “people who have the deal with black employees find this not true”.

* Idea that came from BioDeterminism (our genes determine what we are)

**Gould and Lewontin**

Since the seventies, bio-determinism has been discussed for instance by Stephen J. Gould and Richard Lewontin

* Gould and Lewontin tried to fight determinism
* Environment is very important, if we do not have a good environment our genes cannot express themselves.

**And today? Steven Pinker**

“The refusal to acknowledge human nature is like the Victorians’ embarrassment about sex, only worse: it distorts our science and scholarship, our public discourse, and our day-to- day lives. Logicians tell us that a single contradiction can corrupt a set of statements and allow falsehoods to proliferate through it. The dogma that human nature does not exist, in the face of evidence from science and common sense that it does, is just such a corrupting influence.” (p. IX)

* The idea that when we are born, we start our life from TABULA RASA, is absolutely wrong because we are already determined by our genes.
* The aim of the book is to demonstrate that we are not a blank slate

**Main Points of Pinker’s book**

* Human beings are the result of their biology. Therefore, human beings are not equal, because their genetic patrimony is different (except for identical twins).  
  - We are not equal because all of us are different, even if there are exception we share features with other human being.
* Even if genes determine what we are, the genetic patrimony does not determine the individual personality in every detail for two reasons:

1. “The **first** is that most effects of genes are probabilistic. If one identical twin has a trait, there is usually no more than an even chance that the other will have it, despite their having a complete genome in common. Behavioral geneticists estimate that only about half of the variation in most psychological traits within a given environment correlates with the genes. In the chapter on children, we will explore what this means and where the other half of the variation comes from.  
   - In this sense, even if Pinker thinks that our genetic patrimony determine what we are, he thinks that this determination does not give rise to our personality because of a probabilistic way of how our genes show themselves  
   - In this sense he gave less weight to our genetical disposal.
2. The **second** reason that genes aren't everything is that their effects can vary depending on the environment. A simple example may be found in any genetic textbook. While different strains of corn grown in a single field will vary in height because of their genes, a single strain of corn grown in different fields — one arid, the other irrigated — will vary in height because of the environment. A human example comes from Woody Allen. Though his fame, fortune, and ability to attract beautiful women may depend on having genes that a sense of humor, in *Stardust Memories* he explains to an envious childhood friend that there is a crucial environmental factor as well: “We live la society that puts a big value on jokes.... If I had been an Apache Indian, those guys didn't need comedians, so I'd be out of work.”” (pp. 49-49)  
   - Although our genes determine what we are, they cannot express themselves in every environment and the presence of probabilistic factors makes it impossible to say they are those who determine our personality.

According to Pinker what we are depends on a “complex interaction between Heredity and environment”(viii) but an important role is played by “Lady Luck” (p. 396)

* Chance has a very important role even in the optic of his probabilistic view.

“When reminiscing on how we got to where we are, we all can think of forks in the road where we could have gone on very different life paths. If I hadn't gone to that party, I wouldn't have met my spouse. If I hadn't picked up that brochure, I wouldn't have known about the field that would become my life's calling. If I hadn't answered the phone, if I hadn't missed that flight, if only I had caught that ball. Life is a pinball game in which we bounce and graze through a gantlet of chutes and bumpers. Perhaps our history of collisions and near misses explains what made us what we are. (…) We still don't know whether these unique experiences leave their fingerprints on our intellects and personalities. But an even earlier pinball game certainly could do so, the one that wires up our brain in the womb and early childhood. (…) One twin lies one way in the womb and stakes out her share of the placenta, the other has to squeeze around her. A cosmic ray mutates a stretch of DNA, a neurotransmitter zigs instead of zags, the growth cone of an axon goes left instead of right, and one identical twin's brain might gel into a slightly different configuration from the other's.” (p. 396)

**Are we free?**

According to Pinker, if to be free means that there is no reasons that explain our behaviour, then we are not free. The point is that we do not need to solve the free will problem in order to preserve personal responsibility. We are responsible because the fear of punishment is a reason that can affect our behaviour (for this reason if we cannot understand the notion of crime or error, as the people that are insane or the children, we cannot be considered responsible)

(see S. Pinker, *The fear of determinism*, in *Are we free? Psychology and free will*, ed. by J. Baer etc., pp. 310-324)

* We cannot give answer in Pinker’s opinion
* Personal responsibility is something that can depend on our consciousness of our actions.
* We are responsible, we can be considered responsible…We are moral beings even if we are not free because we can insert in our reason to behave in a certain way, the fear of punishment. And since morality is matter of punishments and rewards, we can be considered responsible for our acts (they are reasons to act)
* What is important is to give a solution to the problem of moral error (it is possible). It is impossible to solve the problem of free will.
* It is not because we are free that we act morally, acknowledging the punishments and the rewards is the central matter to talk about this. He excludes morality completely.

Free Will = Labyrinth of Reason (Leibniz)

Her opinion

* Philosophy teaches to pose questions, teaches to leave aside our prejudices, and changes our opinion and to try to understand positions that we do not like at all.