

In his seminal paper “Skepticism about Weakness of Will”, Gary Watson has raised doubts about the widespread assumption that weak-willed action is free action. Watson’s skeptical challenge has proved highly influential and provoked several replies. Still, as I will argue in my talk, a closer inspection reveals that, up to this point, no convincing reply has been given. I will provide a diagnosis for why this is so: so far, too little attention has been paid to the fact that Watson’s skeptical challenge is, at the core, an explanatory challenge to which the concept of self-control is pivotal. I will then offer a new suggestion for how to meet this challenge. Specifically, I will argue that successfully addressing Watson’s skeptical challenge requires us (i) to distinguish between two forms of self-control, volitional and deliberative, and (ii) to defend the claim that weakness of will involves a failure of deliberative self-control.