# HUMAN FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

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CHAPTER I

# CAUSALITY

THE concept of cause has played a very important part in the story of man's evolution. If forethought, the ability to infer a set of circumstances in the future from a set of circumstances in the present, and the willingness to sacrifice a present pleasure for a future good, are characteristics which differentiate man from the lower animals, man owes them to the development of the conception of causality. Without the power to draw inferences from what has happened in the past as to what is likely to happen in the future, not only would all modern science be impossible, but primitive man would have found that even the simplest of his expectations would have been frustrated. The realisation that hunger could be appeased by eating wild berries, or that other animals could be killed for food if certain steps were taken, was at first probably nothing more than an instinctive reaction to environment.

Gradually, as man's knowledge of his environment increased, he became conscious of his own power to change it and discovered that if he did certain things, certain results would follow. His first consciousness of the relationship of cause and effect probably sprang from his feeling of control over his bodily movements. If he wished to move his hand, his hand moved; or if he willed to lie down, his body behaved in the appropriate manner. From this feeling of power over his own body, the next

step was to experience the feeling of power over other bodies or objects in the world around him. If he performed certain actions, certain results followed, but they were always associated in his mind with his own acts of willing. It was only natural that he should assume that when anything happened in the outside world, it was because someone had willed it to happen. When we see a branch of a tree swaying we consider it a sufficient explanation to say that it is because the wind is blowing, and we seek no further. For primitive man such an explanation was entirely unsatisfactory. There must be some hidden power which made the wind blow, some act of will analogous to that experienced when primitive man willed his own bodily movements.

The Greeks were the first people to abandon this animistic approach to their environment and to differentiate between events which took place as a result of natural causality and actions which were caused by volitions. Before the early Greeks all 'events' were in reality 'actions' brought about by the volition of supernatural agencies. Democritus, in fifth century Athens, endeavoured to explain phenomena in a naturalistic way, and was one of the first to formulate general scientific laws. He not only thought that nature behaves in an orderly fashion, but also that the law of cause and effect is of universal application. He wrote: "Nothing is created out of the non-existent, or is destroyed into the non-existent." If events happen without an apparent cause, or if events disprove our predictions, this is no excuse for postulating some external force which has interfered with the order of nature. It merely indicates that there is a lack of information or failure of understanding. If our predic-

tion proves false it is not as a result of the intervention of the gods or the working of blind chance; it only proves that there were causes which influenced the final result of whose existence we were unaware, or which, in our ignorance, we discounted as being irrelevant. By giving to the word 'chance' the meaning of 'unknown cause', Democritus brought about a fundamental change in man's attitude to the universe. He laid foundations which were later built upon by modern empirical philosophers, and it was to his teachings, and those of the other Atomists, that the precursors of our modern scientific age returned for inspiration. The world for Democritus was subject to laws, and he took it for granted that everything must be explicable in terms of cause and effect.

This scientific outlook on the universe, which was common to Democritus and the Greek Atomists, was submerged for about two thousand years, during which period a quite different approach to the problem of causality held the field.

The naturalistic approach of Democritus and his followers was unacceptable to Socrates and Plato, and as a result exerted very little influence during those long ages when a metaphysical view of the universe was dominant. This view is clearly set out by Plato in his 'Phaedo'. Referring to the naturalistic explanations of causality in the writings of Anaxagoras, Plato writes: "As I read on I discovered that the fellow made no use of Mind and assigned to it no causality for the order of the world, but adduced causes like air and ether and water and many other absurdities."[1] Plato refused to accept the conclusions of the Atomists which were based on observation,

[1] *Phaedo*, 98 A.

and thought it was self-evident that events in the natural world took place as they did because behind them there was a Mind with a purpose controlling events in such a way that they accomplished or fulfilled the Mind's desires. For Plato, the important question to ask about an event was not 'how' it happened, but 'why' it happened. He was not concerned to discover what preceding causes led up to the event, but rather what purpose the event served. The Atomists had been concerned with a search for preceding causes, and in so doing had taken the first steps along the road which was subsequently followed by science. Plato rejected this approach and sought the goal or aims to which the event led. It was this teleological approach which dominated the thinking of Western man until the Renaissance.

Roger Bacon, in the thirteenth century, was one of the first to voice any doubts about the medieval picture of the world, and the discoveries of the early astronomers Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo laid the basis of the modern scientific approach; but all these early scientists did little more than make tiny breaches in the theological wall which enclosed man's thinking. Copernicus, for example, was an intriguing mixture of the medieval and the modern. Although he laid the foundations of modern astronomy by his insistence on the importance of collecting facts and making careful observations, he could not rid himself completely of the teleological theory of causality. He considered it obvious that the heavenly bodies must move in a circle, for if God created the world it must be perfect and, the circle being the perfect figure, the movement of the stars and planets must be circular. He was not content to record how the heavenly bodies be-

haved, but felt compelled to consider also the purpose and motive behind their movements.

Gradually, however, the new world-picture, with its search for efficient rather than final causes, began to impose itself. Francis Bacon, in his efforts to justify the principle underlying scientific method, showed that induction and not deduction leads to knowledge about the external world. He reacted violently against the teachings of Aristotle and did much to propagate those of the Atomists which had been ignored for so long.

This search for the 'how' of events rather than the 'why' led to a remarkable growth of man's knowledge of the world and provoked philosophers to enquire into the whole basis of the concept of causality. The British empiricists Locke and Hume believed, as did Democritus, that the principle of causality was something we must assume to be true if we wish to understand how the world behaves. Unlike Democritus, however, who thought that causality was a characteristic of the events themselves, they believed that it was something which we, as human beings, bring to events. Locke, for example, when he observed changes taking place in nature, felt compelled to "collect a power somewhere" to explain how such changes could happen. This he did by taking the view that natural phenomena are analogous to the movements of our own bodies as a result of acts of will. Just as our wills appear to exert a power over our bodies, so there is a power in natural objects which can be exerted over other natural objects. Because, when we perform an action, we are aware, by introspection, of a power within ourselves which produces it, Locke deduced the existence of a similar power in the objects around us in order to

explain what happens in nature. How else, he asked, can we account for that constant change in things which we all experience? He made no attempt to explain how this power works in natural objects, and even admitted to ignorance of how it works when human beings initiate the change. He wrote: "How any thought should produce a motion in body is as remote from the nature of our ideas, as how any body should produce any thought in the mind."[1]

We feel we have the power to move our own limbs, although we cannot explain in just what way an act of will produces the effect which has been willed. The nearest that Locke could get to 'will' in inanimate objects was this 'power' which he postulated. The whole of his theory of causality was based on the *a priori* assumption that there must exist in objects some power or quality which is analogous to the will in human beings. That there is no evidence for the existence of such a power was not a sufficient reason for abandoning what was for Locke an essential ingredient in his thinking about the subject.

Through failure to make an adequate distinction between an explanation of the origin of the idea of causality and an explanation of the manner in which it functions, Locke came very close to the animistic explanation which Democritus rejected. To say that we feel compelled "to collect a power somewhere" which is analogous to the power of our wills over our bodies is one thing; to attribute such a power to inanimate objects is another. We may derive our notion of causality from the experience of our own acts of will, but this does not justify our

[1] *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, IV, 3, 28.

extending the idea of acts of will to inanimate nature in order to explain how causality functions.

Hume attempted to discover the notion of causality in the outside world, but was unable to find any particular 'quality' in all the objects which are capable of being causes or effects to which the notion could be attached. It seemed to him, however, that for a cause to bring about an effect there must always be a very close temporal and spatial connection, and that the cause always precedes the effect. But he also realised that there is more in the idea of causality than is contained in mere 'contiguity' and 'succession', for he wrote: "An object may be contiguous and prior to another, without being considered as its cause."[1] If this additional factor, which is necessary before 'contiguity' and 'succession' can be considered causal, does not reside in the objects themselves, it would seem that it must be in the mind of the observer. But Hume did not accept as self-evident the thesis that every event must have a cause. He did not consider it impossible to conceive of events happening without a cause. Since, therefore, one can imagine an object to be non-existent at one moment and existent the next "without conjoining to it the distinct idea of a cause or productive principle", there is no logical contradiction or absurdity in separating the two ideas of cause and effect. The connection between the two ideas cannot be either logically necessary or intuitively certain.

Nevertheless, Hume was ready to admit that we all feel convinced that there is a 'necessary connexion' between certain events, and he considered it important that its precise nature should be understood. Having failed to find

[1] *Inquiry into Human Understanding*, Bk. I, Pt. III, Sect. II.

this connection in the events themselves, he looked for it in our mental habits. By experiencing certain patterns which are frequently repeated in the outside world we are led to form the expectation that certain effects will follow certain causes: our mind is determined by custom or a principle of association. Hume expressed it thus: "Objects have no discoverable connexion together; nor is it by any other principle but custom operating upon the imagination that we can draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of another."[1] The necessity which we feel to exist between cause and effect is merely "that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects and from effects to causes, according to their experienced union."[2]

The empiricists in their search for efficient causes, and the metaphysicians in their search for final causes, did not envisage the possibility that there might not be any causes at all. The empiricists, unable to discover any special quality in the external world which could link cause with effect, were very concerned to explain the origin of the concept of causality. The metaphysicians, not believing in a naturalistic explanation of phenomena, did not feel called upon to account for a concept which, in any case, was mental in its functioning as well as in its origin.

Kant also believed that all our attempts to understand the universe are based upon the assumption that uncaused events do not exist. He maintained that we derive this notion from the action of our mental apparatus of perception upon our sense data. We have, on the one hand, our own way of looking at things and, on the other, the

[1] op. cit., Bk. I, Pt. III, Sect. VII. [2] op. cit., Bk. I, Pt. III, Sect. XIV.

objects in space which we look at. Both factors are necessary to arrive at the conception of causality. These two types of knowledge were, for Kant, quite distinct but mutually interdependent. Without the impressions provided by the senses there would be nothing for the mind to order and understand; without the ordering and understanding of the mind we should be unable to make anything of our impressions. Our knowledge of the external world consists not only of knowledge of particular things or facts, but of things or facts which are connected by general principles. The knowledge of these general principles cannot be derived from our sense impressions, which give us knowledge only of particulars. Kant said that this knowledge of general principles which order our sense data comes only from the mind itself.

Causality is one such principle and is embedded in the mind: it is what Kant called a 'category' or a 'notion of the understanding'. Whenever an event A is repeatedly followed by another event B, the mind intervenes and adds a third element which links the two together. This third element is the 'notion of cause'. As Kant wrote: "Our intellect does not draw its laws from nature but imposes its laws upon nature." For him the notion of cause was prior to all experience and a necessary prerequisite to all understanding of it.

In addition, he thought that we could know the truth of the statement 'Every event has a cause' with that degree of certainty which is associated with analytic or *a priori* knowledge. But the statement 'Every event has a cause' is not analytic because we cannot derive the notion of cause merely by an analysis of what we mean by the word 'event'. It is, therefore, synthetic and tells us some-

thing about the world around us. It was Kant's purpose in the 'Critique of Pure Reason' to show how such synthetic statements can be known to be certainly and universally true, that is *a priori*; he was not prepared to accept that they can have only comparative certainty and universality.

While the philosophers were exploring the grounds for our belief in the principle of causality, scientists were using the belief in order to make startling discoveries about the universe. Newton, for example, conceived the scientist's task as being concerned with "the causes of sensible effects". This was the fundamental belief of all scientists until the present century. It was sometimes found impossible to explain the movements of minute particles in causal terms for the simple reason that experimental techniques were not sufficiently refined. In such cases statistical laws, for example The Kinetic Theory of Gases, came into operation and these informed us of the behaviour of large numbers of particles taken together. Nevertheless it was always assumed that the behaviour of each individual particle obeyed the law of cause and effect.

During the present century a change has taken place in the thinking of scientists. The discoveries which have been made in atomic physics have led many scientists to adopt a completely different view of the way the world behaves. When physicists began to study the movements of the electrons within the atom, they were immediately confronted with new difficulties. They discovered that, because electrons are so very much smaller than the wavelength of light, any method employed to establish their position inevitably affected their velocity, and any method used to determine their velocity simultaneously altered

their position. This meant that it was impossible to establish conjointly both the position and the velocity of an electron. Under these circumstances it became impossible to make any prediction about its future movements. If this is the case, it would appear that no law can be formulated governing the movements of electrons because the essential primary conditions can never be ascertained. Many physicists, therefore, claim that in the microscopic world of the electron the laws of causality do not apply, and the movements of the electrons are random or uncertain.

This has led physicists to claim that chance lies at the heart of the universe and that even those laws which, in the past, we have assumed to be causal are in reality statistical. Such a view is diametrically opposed to the classical view of scientific laws. About such matters there is a wide cleavage of opinion among scientists themselves, but I do not think the problem of the fundamental orderliness of nature will in any way be affected by the eventual outcome of this disagreement. There is no doubt that in the formulation of their laws scientists are increasingly inclined to dispense with the concept of cause. They would say that it is possible to explain the phenomena of our experience without postulating any causal connection between them. If we have perceived that an event A has, in the past, been invariably followed by another event B, we are justified in inferring that, in the future, another event A will probably be followed by an event B, without making the metaphysical assumption that the event A causes the event B. But there is still one great assumption that the scientist has to make, namely that the world behaves in an orderly manner. Even if all laws are fundamentally statistical, they are still laws which explain how

the world behaves. All science is based on the assumption that things in the universe do not behave in a lawless and arbitrary manner. We discover certain patterns which are repeated, and we infer that they will continue to be repeated in the future, because without this metaphysical assumption scientific prediction would be impossible. We also realise that another characteristic of the universe is, in the words of Democritus, that "Nothing is created out of the non-existent, or is destroyed into the non-existent." It may not be logically impossible for something to come out of nothing, but no one for one moment imagines that such an occurrence ever happens in nature. In fact, all our knowledge of the way nature behaves flatly contradicts such a possibility. We cannot, of course, prove that this will never happen, but to expect the deductive certainty of proof about the world around us is to misunderstand the status of all empirical statements.

Now it is a combination of these two assumptions about the universe which is usually referred to as determinism. It might be expressed as the belief that events follow on other events in accordance with certain laws. On its truth depends the possibility of our understanding the world around us, as Bertrand Russell believed when he wrote: "Determinism whether universally true or not, is co-extensive with the sphere of possible scientific knowledge; where it fails, scientific knowledge fails."[1]

Determinism does not say anything about how these laws must function. In many highly-developed branches of modern science the concept of causality does not figure at all, but the laws which are formulated are still deterministic. Because we describe the orbits of the planets by

[1] *Determinism and Physics*, p. 18.

laws which do not contain any notion of cause, we do not thereby introduce an element of chance into the universe. Laws may be causal, statistical, mechanical or teleological, but, in so far as they are laws which explain the universe, they are deterministic. The argument as to whether all laws are fundamentally causal or statistical takes place within the context of a wider determinism.

The rejection of a rigorous causal determinism was the result of certain discoveries in the realm of sub-atomic physics. Quantum physicists are no doubt justified in maintaining that the movements of electrons cannot be explained in accordance with the classical picture of the movements of bodies, but are they justified in asserting that the whole of our material world must rest upon a basis of uncertainty? To acknowledge the limits of our present powers of observation is quite different from asserting that our powers must always be so limited. For the micro-physicist his predictions are statistical, but when we study statistical predictions in other fields, we find that they are often based on individual causally-determined events. If I toss a penny 1000 times, it will show approximately heads 500 times and tails 500 times. But on each individual occasion, whether heads or tails is uppermost is determined by certain causal factors such as the position of the coin on the thumb and the force exerted, I have no doubt that a machine could be produced which would toss a penny to fall heads every time. The law which says that if a coin is tossed on a large number of occasions heads and tails will be equal, is a statistical one; but the law which decides whether it is heads or tails on any occasion is causal. Is it unreasonable to suggest that the statistical laws which now explain the behaviour

of electrons may one day be seen to be based on a different level of causal laws?

In our study of the world we find that the laws by which we explain its behaviour form a hierarchy. Chemists study phenomena at the level of molecules, biologists at the level of living cells and psychologists at the level of consciousness. The laws which hold at any one level are always limited by considerations which may arise at a lower level. Any laws which attempt to explain human behaviour may cease to function because they have been falsified by contingencies which arise at the purely physical level. Within the context of conscious human behaviour, these physical occurrences would appear to be chance events, subject only to the laws of chance. But on the physical level they are seen to obey their own laws, and what appeared to be mere chance in one context turns out to be determined at a further level. I have, for example, a friend whom I have known for years as completely trustworthy and reliable. When he promises to drive me to the station to catch a train I can confidently predict that he will keep his promise. If, however, on his way to collect me he has a heart attack, my prediction will have been proved false. My estimate of my friend's behaviour was made within the context of psychological phenomena and could not have taken into account the heart attack which took place within a causal context of physical events. From the standpoint of my prediction the sudden indisposition has the appearance of a chance event, but there is no doubt that on the purely physical level it can be causally explained. If my friend had failed to turn up because he had decided he would rather stay in bed, then I should be forced to change my estimate of

his character and should consider it unwise to place any further trust in his promises. My prediction was falsified not on the psychological but on the physical level.

This tendency of predictions at one level to be influenced by contingencies at a lower level may surely apply to quantum physics. The movements of the electrons which appear random in the context and at the level of reality at which they are at present studied may conform to a new sort of causal law which has yet to be discovered. At any rate we must agree with Professor de Broglie when he writes that: "Quantum physics has no right to consider its present concepts definitive and cannot stop researchers imagining deeper domains of reality than those which it has already explored."[1]

Physicists differing as they do in their interpretation of sub-atomic phenomena, the layman does not feel inclined to abandon the whole concept of causality solely on the grounds that one cannot determine simultaneously the position and velocity of an electron. Two eminent physicists, Max Planck and Einstein, certainly felt no such inclination. Max Planck wrote: "I firmly believe . . . that the quantum hypothesis (principle of uncertainty) will eventually find its exact expression in certain equations which will be a more exact formulation of the law of causality."[2] Einstein expressed a similar point of view: "The indeterminism which belongs to quantum physics is a subjective indeterminism. It must be related to something, else indeterminism has no meaning, and here it is related to our own inability to follow the course of individual atoms and forecast their activities."[3] They both

[1] *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics*, D. Bohm, Foreword, p. xi.
[2] *Where is Science Going?*, p. 143. [3] op. cit., *Epilogue*, p. 202.

believed that our inability to determine both the position and the velocity of electrons, and hence our inability to forecast their future positions, does not invalidate the concept of causality, but merely indicates that we have not yet discovered how to apply the principle to the microscopic world of the atom.

In our exploration of the different levels of reality, we find that it is much more difficult to discover laws at certain levels than at others. The physicist, for example, is able to establish physical laws because he can strip phenomena of all particularity of space and time, whereas the events with which the psychologist is concerned have an endless number of qualities and relationships which make it almost impossible to formulate a general law which will have any real inferential value. He is able to understand these events in so far as he is successful in finding causal explanations of them. But the cause will always be inextricably involved in a whole nexus of attendant circumstances. The best he can do is to isolate those factors of the situation which seem most relevant, without forgetting that they always operate within a much wider context of further causal factors. He may, for example, explain a certain type of anti-social behaviour by reference to a particular event in a person's early childhood, but he will not be able always to infer the anti-social behaviour from the particular event. In certain physical and psychological circumstances the event may be causally significant, but if these circumstances are slightly changed it may not be of any importance.

Delinquency often seems to result from a broken home, but we cannot formulate a causal law to the effect that whenever a home is broken up delinquency will follow.

Although a broken home may seem to be the most significant cause in any particular case of delinquency, there are undoubtedly a large number of other factors which are operating at the same time. If any of these factors is missing or if any others are present, however insignificant they may appear in themselves, the result may be quite different. In such circumstances we can often refer to broken homes as a cause of delinquency without being able to establish a useful law-like relationship between them, since we can never isolate this causal system from so many other factors. We can think of one event as being the principal cause of another event although we cannot in practice use the connection to infer the one from the other. This means that the psychologist's task is a search for causes rather than for universal laws because the events he is called upon to explain are, unlike those of the physicist, unique. From the multitude of causes which determine every human action he must try to find those which have significance for his enquiry.

We use this same procedure when we explain the events of everyday life. If, for example, I have an accident while driving a car, skidding off the road into the hedge, I shall want to know what caused it. Whatever scientists may say about the principle of causality, there is no doubt, and no one ever does doubt, that what we call accidents occur because of certain antecedent circumstances. When we examine the circumstances which led to the skidding car, we discover that there was a whole set of causes which united to determine that I should be at the spot where the skid occurred at that particular time. In the first place, it is quite clear that if I had not purchased the car I should not have had an accident in it,

but we could hardly say that the cause of the skid was the purchase of the car. In some sense, a score of small antecedent details in my life could be looked upon as causes in that had they not been just as they were, the accident would not have happened, or would not have happened in the way it did happen. But there is a limit we must set ourselves, a temporal and spatial limit, in our search for causes. The kind of causes we should be prepared to accept for a skidding car are wet roads, worn tyres, sudden braking on a corner. The accident might have been caused by a combination of all three, but two or even one of them would usually be considered a sufficient explanation. There is a law about the coefficient of friction between tyres and a road surface, but a specific instance of this law's operation we explain in terms of cause and effect.

In the same way the historian's understanding of events is completely dependent on the axiom that everything has a cause. The study of history is, in fact, the study of causes. Very general social and historical movements may be expressed by laws, but they are, as in psychology, of very limited application because of the uniqueness of historical events—history never repeats itself. Even more than the individual in his day-to-day life, the historian must select the relevant, specific causes from a wide range of antecedent circumstances and order them to form a pattern for the purpose he has in mind. How far he must delve into the past and how widely he must spread his net are questions he must always be answering, but unless there is an order in the universe, and unless events do not spring out of nothing, that is unless determinism is true, he cannot even begin the study of history.

However successful the scientist may be in dispensing with the concept of cause in the formulation of general laws, it seems clear that it can have no impact on the causal assumptions of our ordinary thinking. When, however, we attempt to discover or explain what exactly it means to say that one event causes another, there are immediate difficulties. We may observe two events, one of which we call the cause of the other, but we cannot find a third factor to which we can give the name of causality. If I press the starter of my car, the engine springs into life; the cause was the pressing of the starter and the effect the starting of the engine. Between the starter switch and the engine there is a causal chain which is made up of further events: the pressing of the starter completes an electrical circuit, which turns an electric motor, which moves the pistons, which . . . causes the engine to start. We have broken the original causal link into other intermediary causal links, but however far we continue the process we never discover anything but further events, nothing which could answer to the name of causality.

If there is no recognisable characteristic possessed by any two events which we consider to be causally connected, how can we distinguish between those which are so connected and those which are not? For example, if over a long period of years I have arrived at the station just before my train comes in, I should never be tempted to infer that my arrival was the cause and the arrival of the train the effect.

The fact that the two events have frequently been observed to occur together, the one event following closely after the other, is not sufficient to make us suspect that there might be a causal connection. We require to

see just how this example of constant conjunction would fit in with other things we know about the world, for example what it is that makes trains go. We should try to break down the supposed connection and explore the intervening events along the causal chain. In this particular case, of course, we should find that there were none. On the other hand, we are sometimes presented with an instance of cause and effect which, far from being obvious at first glance, becomes substantiated when we examine further events which link the two together. If they are widely separated in space or time, we seek to discover the intermediate events which can successfully bridge this gap. But the bridge consists only of further events, so that when we consider that an event A causes an event B it is not because of any observable phenomenon which links them. Yet we are intuitively convinced of the reality of the relationship which exists between two events which are causally connected, but which is absent when they are not so connected. We must, however, be careful to distinguish between this conviction and the causal relationship which we actually discover in the world. The expectation that we shall find order in nature tells us nothing about what sort of order it will be.

Hume thought that our belief in a causal nexus was a kind of mental habit which is formed as the result of frequent repetition. Kant, on the other hand, thought that the idea is embedded in the mind—what he called a 'category' or 'notion of the understanding'. Hume thought that the regularities in nature lead us to expect further regularities, whereas Kant believed that the expectation of regularities is prior to the events themselves.

It seems to me that they might both be right, because they might be talking about different things. It is possible to maintain with Hume that a young child gradually realises that certain causes produce certain effects because of the constant association, without any prior expectancy. A stage is soon reached, however, when we use this expectancy of lawfulness to make further explorations of our environment: that is, we soon bring Kant's 'notion of cause' to work upon the various successions of events which are presented to the mind. If Hume was referring to the psychological origin of the individual's expectation of regularities, he could well be right; but if he was referring to the way in which grown-ups succeed in understanding events, he was almost certainly wrong. Kant had no doubt that it is we who impose a pattern upon events rather than the reverse, although he did not envisage it as a conscious and deliberate procedure. Causality, Kant thought, is built into our perceptions and it is by means of this prior notion that we interpret phenomena. We actively look for causes rather than passively observe phenomena; we interpret the phenomena by means of the prior notion of causality.

Kant was wrong, however, in maintaining that we could know *a priori* the truth of the statement 'Every event has a cause'. He committed the fallacy of not distinguishing between a psychological explanation of the way all our experience is determined byour mental make-up and the grounds on which we are justified in considering our beliefs about our experience to be true. To explain the psychological functioning of our notion of causality does not provide us with any evidence that the statement 'Every event has a cause' is *a priori* valid about the world.

Our minds are so constituted that we cannot help looking for causes to explain all natural phenomena, but we can never know that all phenomena must necessarily be subject to the principle of causality. There are certain truths which we can see to be necessarily true because to deny their truth would involve us in an obvious absurdity. The statement 'All brothers are male' cannot be denied without self-contradiction, because a brother is, by definition, a male offspring of the same parent. But in the statement 'Every event has a cause' we do not find any such relationship, there is no idea of 'cause' in the definition of an 'event', and we can deny this statement without contradicting ourselves.

If the statement 'Every event has a cause' is not necessarily true, it must be empirically true and based upon our experience of the world. When we study events as they take place, or devise experiments in the laboratory to see how the world behaves, we certainly discover that certain sets of circumstances are invariably followed by certain other sets of circumstances, and we become aware of an order in the world around us. When we see that certain causes produce certain effects, and as our acquaintance with our environment is gradually extended, we shall be more inclined to accept the truth of the statement 'Every event has a cause'. But the problem arises as to how many experiments we have to make, or how well acquainted we have to become with the world, before we are justified in making the jump to 'every event' from the limited number of events of which we have had experience.

It is quite clear that we can never examine every event in the universe, and if we are to establish the truth of the

causal principle, we must at some stage say that having studied a very large number of events, and not having found any which take place without a cause, we feel justified in assuming that there are no events which take place without a cause. If we had discovered that, in fact, certain events did take place uncaused, we should have been obliged to abandon the causal principle. But could we ever discover that an event occurred without a cause? We might fail to discover anything to which we could give the name of cause, but the most this could prove would be that we had not discovered a cause. By further experiments and by refinements of techniques we might subsequently discover a causal connection which had hitherto eluded us, but we could never dogmatically assert that there was no cause. Every time we succeeded in finding a causal connection we could claim that we had verified our statement, but it is of such a kind that it could never be falsified. That means that even if it were not true, we could never know it; its truth or falsehood need make no difference to the way the universe appears to us. And yet there surely would be a significant difference. On any single day of our lives we verify the causal principle hundreds of times; the occasions when we are unable to find a causal explanation are strictly limited. If events did happen without a cause, there would surely be far more of them which are inexplicable; or are we to assume that uncaused events are extremely rare? Any assumption that events whose causes are not immediately apparent are, in fact, uncaused merely invites us too easily to abandon our attempts to understand. If events did happen without being caused, does anyone think that the world would appear to us ordered and lawful as it so

obviously is? It is an assumption we make about the universe—an assumption without which all branches of knowledge about the world around us, the history of man on earth and all understanding of our fellows would be impossible. All these studies are possible only in so far as we are justified in assuming the truth of the statement 'Every event has a cause'.

From the statement that we are always justified in searching for the causes of events, we cannot deduce anything about what causes produce what effects or what the relationship between them is. We can discover what causes produce what effects only by studying the way the world behaves. The metaphysicians, with their teleological explanations of events, believed that the cause entailed the effect with the necessity which we find in deductive reasoning. This means that the relationship between cause and effect is analogous to that existing between the premiss and the conclusion of a syllogism. The deductive truths of logic are necessary and unavoidable; there is a compulsion between premiss and conclusion which cannot be circumvented. The metaphysicians wished to apply this analytic concept of causality to the external world. But statements such as 'The heat of the fire caused the snow to melt' or 'Drawing a bow across the strings of a violin produced a sound' are not necessarily true, in the way that the statement that $2+2=4$ is true: the world might have been constituted in such a way that they were not true. It is not difficult to imagine a universe in which snow did not melt as a result of heat; nor is it absolutely certain, that is not logically certain, that in our own universe heat will always melt snow. The statement that $2+2=4$ is necessarily true, whatever the

constitution of the universe. We can test the truth of causal statements only by observation and never by the analysis of the statements themselves. To imagine that the cause entails the effect is the result of the belief that all laws are in reality prescriptive laws, the expressions of the acts of will of a divine power. We no longer believe this to be true, but consider that scientific laws are purely descriptive, their truth reaching a high degree of probability but never the necessity of deductive reasoning.

We have now reached the point when we can summarise what is involved in a deterministic explanation of the universe. The scientist, qua scientist, is more concerned with the formulation of general laws than with the examination of particular instances. His laws are open hypothetical statements of the form "If any body is left unsupported, it falls", and in the formulation of such general laws he finds himself less and less called upon to include any notion of causality. His laws are, nevertheless, deterministic, involving as they do the assumption that events follow on other events in accordance with certain laws. This cannot be proved to be true, nor can it be disproved, but without it science would be impossible.

Outside the realm of theoretical science we are not concerned with general laws, but with singular categorical statements of the kind "The vase fell because it was knocked". Whenever we attempt to explain particular events, we naturally seek a causal explanation; in fact, the finding of causes, in the very widest sense, is what explaining means. This is possible only in so far as we can assume that nothing arises out of nothing and that there is an order in the universe—that is, only in so far as we are determinists.

## CHAPTER II

# DETERMINISM AND PREDICTION

IT has been suggested that to say that an event is determined is equivalent to saying that it is predictable. The theological doctrine of the omniscience of God, from which it follows that He must have foreknowledge of everything that happens, leads to a kind of theological determinism and it is sometimes thought that this must be a prototype of scientific determinism. The scientist takes the place of God but otherwise, it is claimed, the beliefs are the same. Such a claim, it seems to me, is based upon a fundamental misunderstanding. God does not make predictions of future events, He does not apply laws and arrive at conclusions, He does not derive future events from present causes. God just knows what is going to happen, He must do if He is omniscient, but He does not predict anything. The scientist, on the other hand, does predict, because he believes in the principle that like causes produce like effects. What, however, is essential to this belief is not his power to predict but the principle upon which his prediction is based.

During the seventeenth century scientists, in the first flush of success, failed to realise this essential distinction, and Laplace went so far as to assert that in principle the future state of the universe can be predicted from a complete knowledge of its present state. The discovery of new scientific laws does, of course, enlarge man's powers of prediction and it is very understandable that the great

discoveries of Laplace and his fellow-scientists should have given them the feeling of limitless power. Laplace himself made fundamental discoveries in the study of heat and it was this knowledge of how to measure and control quantities of heat and temperature which led to the invention of the steam-engine. This gave man a control over his environment which had not previously been dreamed of. Studies in the transmission of light, its reflection and refraction, led to great improvements in microscopes which in turn enabled the biologist to study the structure of the cell. It was from such studies that we derived our knowledge of the working of the human body and thus our ability to control and repair its functioning. But Laplace was wrong to assume that because all events in the universe are determined they are therefore predictable, and if we examine the basis on which scientists make their predictions it soon becomes clear that there are logical as well as practical reasons why this should be so.

In a laboratory, a scientist is able to perform experiments in such a way as to use his knowledge of what has happened in the past to predict what will happen in the future. He knows that from certain causes certain effects will follow, and this ability to pass from the one to the other is what we mean by prediction. When we leave the laboratory and attempt predictions in the outside world, we are immediately aware of fundamental differences. In the laboratory the experiment can be effectively isolated from all external factors which might falsify the result, and these artificial conditions can be repeated over and over again. In the outside world, such isolation is impossible, and the number of causal factors which might have to be taken into consideration in any one prediction

could be infinite. In fact, when a scientist formulates a law, it derives its value as a 'prediction device' from what might be called its anonymity. What is predicted is a carefully controlled, artificial state of affairs which has little resemblance to what we mean by an event in ordinary, everyday life. In scientific experiments, prediction is possible because we are able to recreate, in the present, a certain number of causal factors which we have observed to be followed by certain results in the past, and to infer that the same causes will produce the same effects in the future. It is only when such isolation of a causal system is possible that we can formulate scientific laws.

This kind of isolation is most strikingly found in the science of astronomy. The movements of the planets and stars can be ascertained, and such things as eclipses can be predicted many years ahead without any fear that something unforeseen may happen to falsify the prediction. We can accurately predict the time the sun will rise each morning because, as far as we know, there is nothing which is likely to happen to prove us wrong. Once we understand the laws which govern the heavenly bodies, we can use them to make inferences from the present about the future, and also from the present about the past. Such events cannot in any way be affected by the activities of man. A dramatic example of the way scientific predictions are verified is afforded by Einstein's theory of general relativity which appeared in 1915. As a part of this theory Einstein explained that just as material bodies exert an attraction upon one another, so light is diverted from its path by the attraction of very large bodies such as the sun. The truth of this gravitational theory was

demonstrated by Eddington during a total solar eclipse in 1919. From the observations he made Eddington was able to show that the light from stars which passed near the sun was deflected in just the way Einstein had predicted.

When we consider the course of human lives and the varied happenings with which man is intimately involved, the character of the problem of prediction changes. We can hope for success only in so far as we can reproduce a causal system isolated from outside interference and thus approximate to the conditions we can produce in the laboratory or discover in the world of astronomy. On the other hand, it is only because we can, to some extent, reproduce such conditions that human society is possible. Our daily life owes the degree of orderliness which it possesses to the fact that we can make predictions within isolated causal systems.

When I awake in the morning and press the electric light switch, the light comes on. This happens independently of my own mental or physical condition, independently also of the atmospheric conditions inside or outside the house, unless a storm has broken the power line. Because the intrusion of such an extraneous causal factor happens only occasionally, my pressing the switch is an inference from cause to effect which is usually justified. Everyday life is completely dependent upon the possibility of a large number of such inferences. Whenever our expectations are disappointed we assume that some outside causal factor has infringed the isolation of the causal system on which we relied.

Although when I press the starter of my car I am not consciously predicting what will happen, I am none the

less unconsciously expecting a certain future state of affairs to follow from something happening in the present. I might even express my expectation in the form of a prediction if I wished to impress someone who had no experience of the behaviour of motor cars. The possibility of such predictions depends upon the fact that from certain isolated causes a certain effect will follow. We rightly assume that if the effect is different it is because the causes were different.

The extent to which we can make such predictions in everyday life is, however, limited and it is not difficult to see why this should be so. The meteorologist's skill in predicting the weather improves as his knowledge of the relevant natural phenomena increases. With his increasing knowledge the number of factors to be taken into account also increases, until he reaches the stage when his power of prediction is limited, not by knowledge of scientific laws, but by the practical impossibility of accumulating all the evidence which would be necessary for an accurate prediction. This is the state of affairs we usually find when we attempt to predict events outside the laboratory.

There are, however, other factors which are more fundamentally destructive of our power to predict the future. The meteorologist, for example, bases his predictions upon the scientific laws which he has already discovered, but he can never reach the stage when he can assert that he has discovered all the scientific laws which he needs to take into account for an accurate prediction. However much he has discovered, the possibility of further discoveries can never be ruled out. This limitation of his power is not a practical but a logical one. He cannot make an accurate prediction until he knows all the relevant

laws which govern the phenomena, and he is logically debarred from making a prediction taking into account a scientific law which will not be discovered until after his prediction has been made. Someone must have been the first person to discover, for example, that hydrogen burns with a light-blue flame. Once the experiment was performed, it could be repeated with the same result, but no one could have predicted the result, even if he knew all the conditions obtaining, including all previously discovered laws, before the actual experiment was made. By making the experiment it was discovered, as a matter of fact, that this was how nature behaved under these circumstances. This is what scientific laws are, descriptions of the way nature behaves.

As long as there are events in nature which have not yet been subsumed under scientific laws, so long will it be impossible to make complete and accurate predictions. There is no reason to suppose that man can ever reach the position when nature has no more secrets to reveal.

A further obstacle to a complete and accurate prediction of the future state of the universe is the fact that every event is in some sense unique. Prediction is possible only in so far as this uniqueness lacks the causal power to falsify the result. We can recreate, in the present, situations which occurred in the past, and from our knowledge of what happened then we can forecast what will happen now, provided the temporal difference between the two situations can be ignored. In most scientific experiments this difference can be ignored, as Galileo believed when he asserted that the results would be the same whether he carried out an experiment at 10 o'clock in the morning or 6 o'clock at night, on Monday or Friday, in summer

or winter. It is impossible, however, to predict the future state of the universe from a complete knowledge of the past and present, because, in order to do this, we should have had to observe in the past what did in fact follow from such a state of affairs, and, seeing that it is logically impossible that the present state of the universe could also have been some past state, we can never know what the future state will be. Total knowledge of all the scientific laws discovered up to the present cannot enable us to predict events which have never before occurred in the history of the world.

The evidence of the atomic physicist points to this same conclusion. The Heisenberg principle of uncertainty claims that it is impossible to predict the future state of the universe from the past state because we can never determine with certainty what the past state is. If the causes cannot be fully known, not merely in practice but in principle, then the effects cannot be fully predicted. Mr F. Waismann makes this clear when he writes that the uncertainty principle "cuts the ground from beneath the Laplacian programme, removing the presupposition on which it rests, namely, that the state of the particles in the universe can, even in principle, ever be known with sufficient accuracy. Indeed, what has turned out is that the *present is unknowable* (not completely knowable) so that from data available no conclusive inference can be drawn with regard to the future."

This same difficulty is apparent if we consider the different levels or contexts within which scientific laws function. If we predict the behaviour of living organisms by means of biological laws, we shall find that we sometimes fail because these laws do not give a complete

picture of all that goes on within the organism. At a lower level there are chemical laws which may modify the behaviour and make it appear, when viewed from the level of biological laws, chance behaviour. It is, nevertheless, causally determined, but inexplicable in the biological context. There seems no reason to doubt that whatever appears to us as chance at any given level of explanation may turn out to be causally determined at another level; and also that we can never hope to exhaust these different levels or contexts within which events or behaviour can be explained.

We have already considered the impossibility of fully describing the causal factors involved in predicting an event; we encounter the same impossibility whenever we attempt to give a complete description of the effect. To test the truth of any prediction it is essential that the effect be known to be the one which was predicted. In the laboratory this presents no great difficulty because effects can usually be carefully weighed and measured, and it is this quantitative aspect which is the essence of the prediction. When, however, we consider events outside the laboratory we have no such measuring rods for testing our predictions. If we wish to predict that a certain event will follow from certain causes, we have to describe it in such a way that it will be clear that it is the event we predicted which takes place and not another which could be very similar, yet different. But how are we to make our description of an event such that all possibility of error is excluded? We can make it as comprehensive as we know how, adding detail upon detail, but we can never exhaust all the qualities which it possesses, any one of which may differentiate it from another similar event. We discover

that every event has certain spatial and temporal qualities which belong to it alone and make it unique. Because it is impossible to identify an event by multiplying descriptions of it, it can never be known for certain, even in principle, that it has been predicted. Determinism implies that, every event being causally determined, given a certain set of circumstances, only one event can follow; prediction, however, would allow of an infinite number of events to follow from any given set of circumstances, because there is an infinite number of details which may be produced to identify an event.

In the sphere of mental events and the purposive behaviour of human beings there are even greater obstacles to any attempts at prediction. Not that the determinist considers that these events are not subject to causal laws: the arbitrary and the undetermined are as unknown in the realm of human thought and action as in that of inanimate nature. No one would deny that we are often able to predict the actions of our friends, or the thoughts or emotions they will experience in certain circumstances. Having seen how they have reacted on frequent occasions in the past, we have built up an idea of their characters, and this knowledge can be used as a guide to their future behaviour. If such expectations were not usually fulfilled, all social life would become impossible. When, however, we consider the prediction of how a person will behave, we are confronted with difficulties which do not exist when we formulate laws about the behaviour of the physical world. When we make a prediction about someone's behaviour, we can do so to the person himself, to a third person, or we can make it to ourselves. If we make the prediction to the person whose action is in question,

it is possible that the very prediction itself will affect the action and so falsify our forecast. If I say to Mr Jones that all my knowledge of his character and background leads me to predict that he will vote Conservative at the next election, it is quite possible that he will react unfavourably to my presumed knowledge of how he will behave and as a result vote Liberal in order to assert his freedom and independence. On the other hand, if I had known Mr Jones a little better I might have deduced that he would react in just that way to my prediction, so that when I uttered aloud my original remarks I might have added, *sotto voce*, "But I know that these words of mine will make him vote Liberal." These last words could not be uttered aloud to Mr Jones, because the doing so might again influence his behaviour and, for example, cause him to refrain from voting altogether. Mr Jones is obviously the type of person of whom we often say that his behaviour is unpredictable. He is the kind of person it is impossible to know well, at least in the political sense, because he is lacking in political principles and is swayed by the most trifling considerations. We have been unable to discover any underlying principle by which his future behaviour can be predicted, but the fact that the act of predicting how he will behave falsifies the prediction itself does not mean that Mr Jones's behaviour is not causally determined. It does mean that, for strictly logical reasons, any such prediction is impossible.

If we make the prediction about how Mr Jones will vote to a third person, without Mr Jones's knowledge, then it is most unlikely that the prediction will be falsified simply because it was made. The same thing will apply if I make the prediction not to another person but simply

say it to myself. In theory, of course, any prediction about the future state of the universe is itself a causal factor in the bringing about of that future state, and consequently may falsify the prediction, because it could not have been taken into account in making the prediction. But all knowledge about how the world will behave is based on the principle that we are able to consider causal systems in isolation from all the other causal factors which make up the rest of the universe. We can make predictions within certain very restricted spheres, taking into account only a limited number of causal determinants. If this were not possible, all scientific experiment would itself be impossible. It is only when we can isolate the causal system about which the prediction is to be made from the prediction itself that the latter is likely to be fulfilled. Thus we can make a prediction about someone's behaviour to a third person, or to ourselves, but not to the person himself. For the same reason it is impossible for us to make predictions about our own behaviour. That our future actions cannot always be predicted to us with certainty, either by ourselves or by others, is one of the main reasons why we experience a feeling of freedom, but it affords no evidence for the claim that our actions are not causally determined.

In the case of Mr Jones we found that prediction may be impossible unless he possesses reasonably stable political opinions and principles which it is possible for us to discover and to use as a basis for our prediction of how he will act in a certain political situation. The same considerations obtain when we consider more general dispositions or traits of character. There are individuals who seem to be so deficient in those qualities which go to

make up a stable personality, whether they are beliefs, principles or ideals, that they are ever inclined to be swayed by the slightest change of circumstance. We say of such people, who so readily take on the colour of their environment and are the victims of every change of fashion in the emotional or intellectual life around them, that they are 'easily led'. Whenever they are placed in a new situation, their behaviour will be determined not by their principles or beliefs but by the influence which is brought to bear upon them from outside. In such cases prediction is almost impossible. We cannot predict their actions from their character for the simple reason that in any future situation it is not a significant causal factor.

At the other extreme we meet individuals whose beliefs and principles are held with such a degree of inflexibility that the situation in which they find themselves exerts little influence on their behaviour. Such people we call 'high-principled', maybe stubborn or fanatical if their principles are not to our liking, and their actions are so consistent that we find no difficulty in predicting them.

Between these two extremes stretches the whole range of behaviour of more normal individuals. When we have spent a considerable period of time in the company of a person, and have observed how he behaves in a variety of situations, we gradually begin to see a pattern in the things that he says and does. By witnessing the many occasions on which he has behaved with kindness to others in difficulties, we form the conviction that he is a kind person, that he has a kind disposition or character. In fact, to say of him that he is kind means no more than that he has been frequently observed to do kind deeds.

From such observations of past behaviour we infer future behaviour, and the correctness of our estimate of a person's character depends on the degree to which our inferences are justified. However extensive our knowledge of a person may be, it is none the less true that our prediction of what he will do on any particular occasion may be falsified if he is presented with a completely new set of circumstances with which he has never previously had to deal. We may not be able to estimate how he will react because we have no means of knowing the relative importance of the new factors in the situation. A person who has the reputation of being generous because he has never been known to refuse any appeal to give to charity may suddenly behave in what seems a most uncharacteristic manner by a point-blank refusal to help a certain cause. His behaviour is uncharacteristic in the sense that it is unusual and of a kind that we should not have predicted from our knowledge of his character, and we are surprised when we subsequently learn of it. But to say that his behaviour is uncharacteristic does not mean that it is inexplicable or that it does not flow from his character. It merely indicates that there was a facet of his character with which we were unacquainted; a factor which was brought out in this new situation but which had remained dormant on all the previous occasions when we had observed him behaving generously. It may be that the organisation for which the appeal was being made was one of which he most strongly disapproved, so strongly that his usual generous gesture was arrested. It is unlikely that, merely because of this single action, we should wish to revise our estimate of him as a generous man, but we may become more fully aware of the rather narrow range

of situation within which to know that a person is generous allows us to predict his future behaviour. Our awareness of the generosity of his character is built up in our minds by observing all the individual acts of generosity, but the character itself is changing with every action performed. We are inclined to assume that with every good act the character is strengthened in goodness, so that each subsequent act becomes easier, but the reverse may in fact be true.

It is not unknown for a person to become weary of doing good deeds; each one may seem to him more pointless than the last, until in the end his one desire is to do some evil deed. Such an apparently uncharacteristic action, the result of mental processes unknown to any outside observer, is none the less fully explicable and just as much the outcome of his character as all the previous good deeds. Racine's potrayal of Oreste in *Andromaque* is an example of such a man. His goodness and uprightness are known to all, but in the end he wearies of being good and vows to be evil, saying: "Mon innocence enfin commence à me peser." His subsequent actions seem uncharacteristic only because we have been unaware of the change being produced in his character by the very actions which have led us to think him a good man. We thought he was good because we observed his good deeds, but we were not aware of the effect that each good deed was having upon him. In the case of Oreste we should be inclined to say that his fundamental character had changed because all his subsequent behaviour changed as well, but the announcement of his future intentions, which was his first uncharacteristic action, was not predictable from our knowledge of his character, simply because we did not

know it very well. The explanation of his behaviour was there, but it was unknown to us.

It is quite clear that we can never know a person sufficiently well to rule out all possibility of his acting in a way which may seem to be uncharacteristic. Our predictions of human behaviour are always liable to be falsified because they are never made within an isolated causal system. Scientific predictions are reliable in so far as all those factors which we do not wish to take into account and which might falsify our predictions are rigorously excluded. Such a procedure is impossible in human affairs. Prediction in human affairs can apply only to those events about which we have been able to form expectations because we have witnessed other similar examples in the past. If I can predict that Mr Smith will get angry in certain circumstances, it is because I have seen him react in that way on previous similar occasions. It may be that the circumstances are of such a kind that I should be able to predict that Mr Jones would also get angry, even though I had never observed Mr Jones in such circumstances before. What is certain, however, is that I could not predict that either Mr Jones or Mr Smith would get angry if I had never had any experience of an angry person.

If someone attempts to predict to us our future behaviour, there are two main ways in which we may react. We may attempt to ignore the prediction completely and behave as we would have done if it had not been made; or we may do some other action than the one we had intended, for the sole purpose of asserting our independence. Although we like to think of ourselves as reliable persons, which means that our behaviour is, to a large

extent, predictable, yet we resent any attempt to forecast how we shall behave.

We are inclined to feel this resentment more strongly over the comparatively trivial choices we make every day of our lives than over more serious moral issues. If someone tells me that I shall choose a certain dish from a menu, or buy a particular article, I am more likely to feel resentment than if he says that I shall vote in a certain way at an election or take a particular side in such moral issues as capital punishment or nuclear war. It is in the minor things of life that we are most conscious of exercising our power of choosing, and it is in these that we do not like to feel that someone knows what we are going to do. It is these same acts, however, that it is most difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to predict. We do not know ourselves which way we are going to choose and the choices when finally decided upon are of a kind which bear very little relationship to our fundamental natures. If I have never in the past shown any particular preference for roast beef over roast lamb, it will be very difficult for an outsider to predict which I shall choose on any particular occasion. If I find it very difficult to make up my mind, how can an outsider know which way I shall decide? If someone were presumptuous enough to suggest that he knew what my choice would be when there existed in my mind no preference, I should be likely to react in such a way as to prove his prediction false. If, however, my desires pointed strongly in any one direction, they would be more likely to be known by an outsider and the less inclined I should be to react in such a way as to falsify any prediction he might make. In serious moral issues, when the choices we make may have important consequences

and when they are involving fully our deepest principles, then we are most unlikely to change our intended action just because it is predicted that we shall behave in a certain way. It is clear, therefore, that the more serious the choice we are called upon to make, the easier it is for an outsider to predict, and the less likely we are to resent the prediction or make any effort to invalidate it.

The character of the problem changes if we substitute an omniscient Creator for our human observer. In the first place, if the human observer claimed to know our future behaviour but never ventured to make his knowledge known to anyone, we should have no interest in the powers which he claimed for himself. But this is just the position of an omniscient Creator, who knows our actions but never tells us what they will be. In the second place, the human prediction can often be falsified but that of an omniscient Creator never can. If God knows what we are going to do, then we are logically bound to do that which God knows we shall do, even if we are told beforehand what it is. Such a state of affairs would, of course, be completely incompatible with human freedom, but if God alone knows what we are going to do our freedom is unimpaired.

The belief that God knows what our future actions will be sometimes leads to a form of theological fatalism: because we must do what God knows we shall do, there is no point in making any effort; if, when we are ill, God knows that we are going to recover, then there is nothing we need do about it, and all medical care is unnecessary; but if God knows that we shall not recover, then medical skill can be of no avail.

This dilemma is sometimes thought to remain even if

we divest it of its theological trappings. Although we may not believe in a God who knows what the future will be, it still remains true that the future must be what it is going to be, irrespective of whether it is or can be known. For example, there either will or will not be, in the future, an atomic war between America and Russia; the proposition "There will be a war between America and Russia" must be either true or false. If it is true that there will be a war, so the argument runs, there is nothing we can do about it; but if it is false then there is no need for us to bother. It would appear that an event in the future is compelled to take place or not take place according to the truth or falsehood of a prediction about it. But how can an event be causally produced by a proposition about it, whether true or false? There are many causal factors which may lead to war, but the truth or falsehood of propositions about any future war is not included among them. It is a tautology to say that the future will be what it will be, and it is logically necessary that any statement about the future must be either true or false. But the causes which determine what the future state of the world will be are not logical truths about propositions. Logical truths about propositions can never be causes of events. The future state of the world is causally determined by the present state but is in no way influenced by certain necessary truths about propositions. The fatalist who argues that because what is going to be must be, therefore there is nothing that can be done about it is in fact saying that our own actions never produce any changes in the world. From a harmless tautology which tells us nothing whatever about the world we live in he derives a conclusion about how the future

state is determined. He says that whatever it is that causes the future to be what it will be, our own actions can never have any part in it.

But even the fatalist cannot but admit that we spend our lives in all kinds of activities which quite obviously do influence subsequent events. Although our plans may not always be crowned with success, there are at least some occasions when we can feel sure that the shape of things to come has been moulded by our efforts. Our efforts are not always doomed to frustration as the fatalist would have us believe. Because the future will be what it will be, we are not justified in saying that it will be so in spite of anything we may do about it. Our thoughts, desires and actions are all causal factors, along with very many others, which determine what the future will be. If these causes are changed the effects will be different, but it is only events which are active in the world we know which can have any effect upon the future state of the world, and tautologies are not events.

The fatalist, unlike the determinist, believes that man's actions are not to be numbered among the factors which determine the changing nature of the world, but it is not clear whether he allows of any other causal agencies outside the sphere of human action. Having accepted the logical necessity that the future will be what it will be, he may deduce that the relationship between events is similar to that found between the premisses and conclusion in logic: that is that the world is a vast deductive system which can be understood by a process of arguing from first principles. Such an inference, however, does not seem inevitable from the fatalist's first assumption about the truth of propositions. It would be possible to deduce that

man's actions have no effect upon events in the world and at the same time believe that his environment is to be explained by a process of induction rather than deduction.

In any case, the essential ingredient of the fatalist's argument is not his explanation of how the world behaves, but the assertion that we can have no part in the shaping of its future. The determinist believes that events are determined by other events and not by a logical relationship between propositions. He must assent to the tautology that what will be will be, but derives from it nothing of relevance to the world as we know it. If, however, we look at the present state of the universe and say about it "What is was to be", we are saying something which is not tautological, but something which expresses the essence of the determinist's position and indicates in what way it differs from that of the fatalist. For the determinist the present state of the world, or 'what is', has been determined by previous states of the world, or 'what was'. The relationship between the past and the present is not a logical one as the fatalist might have us believe, but a contingent one as revealed by observation or embodied in scientific laws; and among the causes which operate are included the desires and actions of human beings—something which the fatalist denies. If there were a Book of Destiny written at the beginning of time, its latest pages, for the determinist but not for the fatalist, would give pride of place to the thoughts and deeds of men.

Such a conclusion, however, rests on certain assumptions about the status of the thoughts and deeds of men, and these assumptions have recently been challenged by research into the connection between the physical states of the human organism and its psychological manifesta-

tions. If we cannot always predict human behaviour by the use of psychological laws, may it not some day be possible to predict it by using physical and chemical laws? That there is a very close causal connection between the physical and psychological has been demonstrated by the success which has attended the efforts of mental specialists who have treated a sick mind as though it were a sick body. For example, the operation of prefrontal leucotomy often achieves striking results in relieving great emotional tension, and drugs are widely used in the treatment of depressive states.

But this causal process does not work in one direction only. Freud and his followers have shown that physical disorders may often be psychological in origin. Stomach ulcers may be caused by prolonged stress or anxiety, and other serious illnesses often have their origin in the patient's unconscious, being nothing but a means of escape from an unbearable psychological situation.

The individual is, in fact, a 'body-mind', and the acceptance of this truth has led to the recent rapid growth of psychosomatic medicine. The same illness may be described in physical or mental terms and treated accordingly. On the one hand we may talk of the biochemical changes which take place in the organism, and on the other of mental stresses which occur when the individual has to cope with his environment. The physician will treat the illness by administering medicines to deal with the physical symptoms, the psychologist will endeavour to modify the patient's attitude to his environment and thus remove the mental stress. The patient is ill on two causal levels, and the changes which take place on one level produce corresponding changes on the other. Now

this interdependence of the physical and mental which appears in a dramatic form when the 'body-mind' is diseased is an essential characteristic also of the healthy person. All our thoughts are mirrored by a corresponding arrangement of the cells of the brain, and our emotions cannot be separated from certain organic processes in the body.

With increasing knowledge we may be able to associate certain brain patterns with their mental counterparts, and thus, in theory at least, be able to explain the changing physical patterns of the brain by means of physical laws. If we can also ascertain the mental counterparts of these physical patterns, we shall be able to use physical laws to predict mental occurrences. This is not to say that statements about mental events are deducible from statements about physical events in the brain, but that for every mental event there is a corresponding physical event in the brain, and that we cannot have the one without the other. We cannot deduce the colour of a rose from a knowledge of the wavelength of light which it reflects, but we can discover by experiment that whenever we have light of a certain wavelength we inevitably have a certain colour. Although a colour cannot be logically deduced from a wavelength, we can learn which colours correspond to the different wavelengths of light. In the same way, although we cannot logically deduce statements about behaviour from statements about the physical state of an organism, we can nevertheless learn which behaviour statements correspond to which physical statements. If a particular state of the brain is always accompanied by a particular mental experience, and if this physical state is always followed by another physical

state which is accompanied by another mental experience, does it not follow that we can predict the occurrence of a mental experience from our knowledge of a physical state? For example, if I catch sight of a fierce-looking bull while crossing a field, I am probably terrified, and run. On receiving a particular visual stimulus the body responds with certain chemical and physical changes. My seeing the bull, feeling afraid and running away all have counterparts on the physical level of nerve impulses, glandular secretions and muscular contractions. But the description of the situation in physical terms bears no resemblance to the situation as I experience it. It is not that it is very different in the sense that descriptions may be very different because they describe totally different situations, but in the much more fundamental sense in which a wavelength of light differs from a colour. Any description of nerve impulses or chemical changes is quite unlike any description of what it is like to be afraid, and still more unlike the experienced sensation of being afraid. Even if the physiologist could discover the physical basis of all our mental processes, he would not be saying anything about what it feels like to have an experience of fear. The discourse of the physiologist and that of the psychologist take place on quite different conceptual and causal levels. They are talking about the same thing but from widely different standpoints. However detailed and comprehensive the physiologist's knowledge of the working of the brain may eventually become, he can never, for logical reasons, describe the phenomena with which the psychologist deals. He may one day be able to say that, whenever a certain pattern is found in the brain cells, it is always accompanied by a certain emotion, and that

this emotion is never found without the accompanying pattern in the brain. But a description of the physical pattern is not a description of the emotion we experience.

The physiologist may one day be able to predict our emotions from a knowledge of the present physical state of our brain. The extent of this prediction will be limited by the factors we have already considered which limit prediction in other spheres. Because all individuals are in many respects unique both by virtue of their inherited characteristics and their experience, the area of human conduct which could be predicted would be small. Nevertheless, that some degree of prediction will be possible there can be no doubt. It may some day be possible to say that given certain physical and chemical information about an organism, certain psychological events can be inferred; that I become angry, for instance, because of an antecedent physical condition of my body. But the kind of explanation we normally expect of an outburst of anger is one which specifies some other mental occurrence. I was very angry yesterday because I saw a person driving a car dangerously fast in a built-up area. Such an explanation makes sense, the kind of sense which would be missing if I were to say that I was angry because of certain physical and chemical changes in my body. No doubt the physical and chemical changes did take place; no doubt they causally determined my feeling of anger; but what they cannot do is *explain* it.

The way physical events causally determine mental ones without ever being able to describe or explain them can be seen to be of great importance in the question of human choice. Whether or not we accept the hypothesis that our choices are fully determined by physical causes,

choices are in fact quite different phenomena from physical or chemical processes. We know what it feels like to make a choice and are quite sure that it can never be reduced to a scientific formula. Whenever we experience a feeling of making a choice, this feeling cannot be turned into an illusion by explaining that it is determined by processes in the brain. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it is so determined, but this in no way impairs the reality of our subjective experience of choosing. It is, indeed, this subjective experience we are talking about when we use the word 'choice'. Failure to realise this leads many people to imagine that if it can be shown that an act of choice is determined by physical causes in the brain, then it follows that we can never really choose. Such a conclusion fails to take into account that the reality of mental experiences and psychological laws cannot be destroyed by any discoveries made at a lower causal level, just as chemical laws would not lose their usefulness if they could be interpreted in physical terms. Physical and chemical facts about the brain are in a completely different category from thoughts and feelings as experienced by a conscious person.

Any discovery about the relationship between bodily and mental processes does not require us to change the conceptual framework we already use to explain human behaviour. We must not imagine that the physiologist or psychologist will one day discover some theory of neural impulses or psychological drives which will explain all human actions. The questions which we ask about the different kinds of human actions require answers on different conceptual levels. Human beings sometimes act in ways which are intelligent and purposive, while at other

times they respond to their environment by actions which are automatic and purposeless.

If I say to someone, "Why did you do that?" I may get several different kinds of answer. One answer might be, "Because I was pushed". The speaker would in fact be disowning what he did as his own action; he had no intention of doing it and acted solely under compulsion. The action would be sufficiently explained by knowledge of the antecedent cause. Such events which happen to people or which they suffer cannot really be included in the category of actions. We do well to restrict the term 'action' to those events which the person feels he in some way initiates. To the question "Why did you do that?" we usually expect the answer in terms of reasons or motives. It is quite clearly with such actions that we must be concerned in our discussion of human freedom.

If I ask someone who has just resigned from a committee, "Why did you resign?" I do not expect a causal answer but an explanation giving his reasons. These reasons can be of two kinds. He might reply, "Because I disagreed with the policy they were following" or "Because I hoped my action would convince them that they were following the wrong policy." In both cases he would be giving the reason for his resignation but in the second case he would also be giving the motive for his action. Motives are a special class of reasons which apply to actions which are performed with a particular end in view. To give the motive for an action is to give the reason for that action, but to give the reason is not necessarily to give the motive.

The reason for an action may be circumstances which are external to an agent. "Why did you turn left there?"

might get the reply, "Because there was a No Entry sign straight ahead." On the other hand, the reason may lie in the character of the actor. Ambition, vanity, patriotism can all be reasons for an action but, unlike the No Entry sign, they can also in certain circumstances be motives. Nevertheless, when we find the reasons for actions among such character traits, it seems to me that it is only occasionally that they can also be looked upon as motives. When an ambitious person does ambitious things he is acting in character in an almost automatic way. His ambition manifests itself in different ways, but it can only be rarely that ambition itself is the goal of his action.

Actions can therefore be explained on logically different levels. Compulsive behaviour can be explained in physical, causal terms; but to explain intelligent, purposive behaviour we have to use the concepts of reason and motive. This does not mean that there does not exist a causal basis of all our actions, but that to give such a causal answer would be irrelevant to the questions we usually ask about human behaviour. To the question "Why did you go into that shop?" the answer "In order to buy some matches" is significant and satisfying. But to talk about the neural impulses and psychological drives which underlie the action is no kind of answer to my question. Nevertheless there are neural impulses and psychological drives which do underlie our actions and it is the duty of the physiologist and psychologist to seek to understand them. It is their job not to try to explain motivated actions by using purely causal concepts, but to discover the causal basis of our motives. Human behaviour cannot be explained by, or reduced to, neural processes; we need to talk of motives. But why we have

motives and why we have the motives that we have are things on which the physiologist and psychologist may one day have something significant to say—and in purely causal terms.

What is the significance of all this to the discussion of human freedom? We have seen that it is useful and significant to explain some actions causally, others in terms of reasons or motives. But causes, reasons and motives all originate from the interaction of character and environment. Motives do not exist in some mysterious region outside the person, but within the person himself. Motive language is not causal language, but a motive is some thing which a person has. If I go into a shop to buy matches, I am acting from a motive, but it is I who have the motive. We cannot explain this action by talking of causes, but if we ask what a motive is, or whence it came, then we must return to a different conceptual level and talk of causes. Motives look towards ends to be achieved, but they must exist in someone's mind as 'a desire to . . .' or 'a liking for . . .'. These desires and likings, just like all other mental phenomena, are part of the formed character of the agent. To express it another way, if a person with a certain character in certain circumstances does an action for a particular motive, then if he could return to the same circumstances with the same character, he must perform the same action for the same motive. A motive can be no different from any other character trait as far as the determining of action is concerned.

Because motives, choices and intentions cannot be explained in physical terms, it does not mean that they do not possess a physical basis. In the same way the substratum of physical laws underlying all actions does not,

indeed cannot, change the essential nature of what it is to experience a motive, make a choice or carry out an intention. Making a choice is essentially the conscious feeling that we experience whenever we choose: this is what we mean when we say we make a choice. Any subsequent discovery of causal determinants cannot remove this feeling or give any grounds for the assertion that we thought we were choosing, whereas in reality we were causally determined. Choosing cannot be anything more than what we feel it to be when we choose.

When we consider the context in which human choices are made, we realise to what extent they are determined by external forces. They are inevitably greatly influenced by the pressures, sometimes direct, sometimes subtle and indirect, of the society within which they are made. When we take a broader historical view of world events, the actions of even outstanding individuals often seem of little importance in the context of general economic and social trends. James Watt and George Stephenson were prominent figures at the start of the Industrial Revolution and did much to change the face of Britain during the nineteenth century, but as we look back from the twentieth century we realise that if Watt and Stephenson had never been born, someone else would have made their discoveries. Things would not have been exactly the same, but taking the long-term view the difference would not have been great. We can now see that such a change was 'in the air', and that individuals could only partly modify the manner of its coming.

Our thinking on this subject has been fundamentally influenced by the writings of Marx. He showed the extent to which our institutions, laws, social customs and even

ideas are conditioned by economic factors. In every age even the most original and imaginative work, whether in the arts or in science, can be original and imaginative only within limits which are set by the economic framework of society. But, having accepted that such limits exist, we must not fall into the error of supposing that economic causes are the only ones. Societies are made by man, and economic laws cannot function except through the activities of man. Marxists would sometimes seem to wish to have us believe that we are puppets within a system which has its own inexorable laws. But what are economic laws if not generalisations about the things that men desire and do in society? Because we can discover a pattern in the way societies have functioned and evolved in the past, we must not assume that societies in the future cannot avoid following the same pattern. Because scientific laws are devices to enable us to predict the future, we must not imagine that economic laws enable us to do the same. It does not follow that because there are scientific laws which enable us to predict the result of an experiment in the laboratory, there are also economic laws by which we can predict the future relations of America and Russia.

There are two principal reasons why this is so. The first is the purely logical one that although all historical processes are causally determined, we cannot predict what course they will take because the mere act of prediction is an additional causal factor which could not have been taken into account when the prediction was made. Marx believed that because all events are causally determined they are therefore unavoidable; that because economic causes are often decisive, human effort can never be a cause in its own right. He believed that by a study of economic

causes alone he could predict the collapse of capitalism, without realising that his own prediction could be one of the causal factors responsible for its falsification.

The second reason for the impossibility of predicting an historical event derives from its uniqueness. Although, when it has taken place, it can be explained by the laws of physics, chemistry, biology, etc., yet it could not have been predicted because, before it occurred, no such event had ever been observed. No general law can be discovered to cover the occurrence of an event which is unique. But although unique, it is none the less fully determined by previous events. If we fail to distinguish between a belief that all events are causally determined and a belief in 'historical necessity' as expounded by Hegel, Marx and Spengler, there is the danger that we may accept as inevitable a state of affairs which could have been avoided if we had not ceased to believe that human choices and decisions can themselves be causal factors. The great figures of the past were themselves active causes moulding events just as much as they were the effects of all the factors of heredity and environment which contributed to make them what they were.

Although all our thoughts and ideals, choices and decisions are to a considerable extent determined by the society and age in which we live, it is only occasionally that such causal factors are felt to be destructive of our power to choose. Most people in Britain who are Christians do not feel that they have been compelled to accept their faith, and yet their religion has been conditioned by the society into which they were born, and if they had been born in Burma it is more than likely that they would be Buddhists. In spite of such conditioning they probably

do not feel that their power of choice has been limited in any way. The large majority of our beliefs and choices are subtly conditioned, but only occasionally do we object to the process. The important thing to remember is that, to whatever extent we are conditioned by our environment, we do not lose the feeling that we ourselves are able to make choices and decisions. Such a feeling is not impaired by the fact that our choices and decisions are causally determined; indeed, the feeling of freely choosing is likely to be the stronger, the stronger the determining factors.

It is a characteristic of our attitude to any event that the further removed we are from it in time, the more ready we are to view it as one of a causally determined series of events. This is true even of the birth of new ideas or the creation of works of art, and illustrates the fallacy of the claim that determinism entails predictability. Beethoven's 'Eroica' symphony could not have been predicted from a total knowledge of the state of the universe previous to its composition. Nothing like it had ever been written before, and even Beethoven himself could not have told us what it would be before it was created. It is difficult to see what meaning could be attached to the prediction of the 'Eroica' which would not entail its creation. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the composing of this symphony was spontaneous and arbitrary; it was the only possible result of certain causal factors in the composer and his environment. The total state of the universe prior to the composition of the symphony being what it was, no other work could have been written. When we view it historically, we see it as a development of the symphonies of Haydn and Mozart, and explain the changes as stemming from the revolutionary situation in

Europe and the massive independence of Beethoven's character. We do not any of us believe that such things are purely fortuitous, as the rejection of determinism requires.

In our own lives we think and act, make choices and decisions, without being conscious of the underlying causes which determine what we do. It is only when we look back that the true causal pattern of our lives becomes apparent to us. Sir Winston Churchill was conscious of this when he wrote: "If I had to live my life over again in the same surroundings, no doubt I should have the same perplexities and hesitations; no doubt I should have my same sense of proportion, my same guiding lights, my same outward thrust, my same limitations. And if these came in contact with the same external facts, why should I not run as the result along exactly the same grooves? Of course if the externals are varied, if accident and chance flow out through new uncharted channels, I shall vary accordingly. But then I should not be living my life over again, I should be living another life in a world whose structure and history would to a large extent diverge from this one."[1]

[1] *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 11.

CHAPTER III

# FREE WILL AND THEOLOGY

IN everyday life we all assume that events take place in accordance with an ordered system of laws; like causes, we believe, produce like effects. No theories of sub-atomic physics can in any degree lessen the conviction with which we hold this belief. At the same time we believe that we have a certain freedom of choice in the actions we do and that because of this freedom we can be held accountable for these actions. Now it is frequently claimed that these two beliefs are incompatible: that the universal application of the law of causality must conflict with the freedom of human actions.

When we examine this apparent clash more carefully we find that it arises only if we try to hold certain other beliefs at the same time. The belief in an ordered universe is not incompatible with the conviction that we can choose between alternative courses of action: it is only if these are placed within a context of other beliefs that they conflict.

What this context is can best be seen if we look at the origin of what is usually referred to as the problem of free will. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in their wide-ranging studies of human thought and conduct made only passing reference to this problem. The Stoics and Epicureans were more concerned with it because they thought it fundamental to any discussion of ethics and of how men could best achieve the Good Life. But it is not until we reach the

early Christian thinkers that we find it occupying a central position, and stated in such a form as urgently to call for a solution. A question which had received only scant attention from the Greeks appeared to be of supreme importance to St Augustine. This change of attitude, which constituted the most striking difference between the writings of the Greeks and those of St Augustine, was brought about by the discovery of 'Sin'. A consciousness of sin and a preoccupation with the life to come were never far from the mind of St Augustine, nor from the minds of the majority of Christians; whereas they are completely absent from the writings of the Greeks. Sin and Grace, Heaven and Hell were not realities for them, nor were they much concerned with rewards and punishments in a future life.

It is against this theological background that the 'free will problem' appears to require us to believe in contradictory propositions. Just what these propositions are can best be studied in the writings of St Augustine, for he was fully aware of the dilemma. It presented itself to him in the following form: If God is the omnipotent and all-good creator of the universe, is it just that man should be punished in an after-life for actions which must ultimately stem from God who is the 'author of all things'? St Augustine in his *Confessions* shows us to what extent he was haunted by this question, and how desperately important it was to absolve God from ultimate responsibility for the actions of man. Unless it could be shown that man's actions are free, eternal damnation would be an unbearable affront to our sense of justice.

As we read in the *Confessions* about St Augustine's wild and dissolute youth and his spiritual conflicts, we realise

how intense and passionate was his nature. If speculation about human freedom is born of a consciousness of sin, it is not surprising that it occupied such a dominating position in St Augustine's life and work. Until his conversion at the age of 32, he wavered constantly between a state of subservience to all his bodily lusts and passions and an overpowering sense of remorse at his own weakness. Sin and God were the twin poles of his existence. Even as an infant in the cradle he was not free from sin, and he wrote: "Arrived now at adolescence I burned for all the satisfactions of hell, and I sank to the animal in a succession of dark lusts: my beauty consumed away, and I stank in Thine eyes."[1]

This highly-developed, even pathological, sense of sin coupled with the belief in a God of creation who is wholly good, to whom we are responsible for our sins, presents us for the first time with the theological problem of freedom. St Augustine himself expressed it as follows: "But though I said and firmly held that the Lord God was incorruptible and unalterable and in no way changeable, the true God who made not only our souls and bodies but all things whatsoever, as yet I did not see, clear and unravelled, what was the cause of Evil . . . so I set myself to examine an idea I had heard—namely that our free-will is the cause of our doing evil, and Your just judgment the cause of our suffering evil. I could not clearly discern this. I endeavoured to draw the eye of my mind from the pit, but I was again plunged into it; and as often I tried, so often was I plunged back. But it raised me a little towards Your light that I now was as much aware that I had a will as that I had a life. And when I willed to do or not to do

[1] *Confessions*, Bk. II, i.

anything, I was quite certain that it was myself and no other who willed, and I came to see that the cause of my sin lay there.

"But what I did unwillingly, it still seemed to me that I rather suffered than did, and I judged it to be not my fault but my punishment though as I held You most just, I was quite ready to admit that I was being justly punished.

"But I asked further: 'Who made me? Was it not my God, who is not only Good but Goodness itself? What root reason is there for my willing evil and failing to will good, which would make it just for me not to be punished? Who was it that set and ingrafted in me this root of bitterness, since I was wholly made by my most loving God? If the devil is the author, where does the devil come from? And if by his own perverse will he was turned from a good angel into a devil, what was the origin in him of the perverse will by which he became a devil, since by the all-good Creator he was made wholly angel?' "[1]

St Augustine returned to this same problem again and again in the *Confessions* and in *The City of God*, and as we read his passionate utterances we cannot help feeling the anguish of soul which he endured. We cannot help contrasting his despair with the serenity of Marcus Aurelius, who also believed in the omnipotence of God but not in heaven and hell. The utter helplessness which St Augustine felt before the problem presented above is the result of an attempt to hold at one and the same time certain beliefs which are incompatible. He perceived that there is evil in the world which, he believed, was created by God. But he also believed that God is wholly good, and if this is so,

[1] *Confessions*, Bk. VII, iii.

where does the evil come from? When to these incompatible beliefs we add the belief that man is ultimately responsible for doing evil, the problem becomes even more intractable.

St Augustine was not prepared to sacrifice either of the two incompatibles, and attempted to resolve the difficulty in the following manner. He considered that there are three statements which we all know to be true:

(1) Nothing comes to pass without an efficient cause.
(2) Human wills are the cause of human actions.
(3) God knows human wills to be the cause of human actions.

He further considered that actions may be analysed into two parts: (*a*) the act of will which initiates bodily movement; (*b*) the purely bodily action which effects some change in the environment. For example, when I place my pen on the table it is possible to distinguish the act of will which gives rise to the movement of my arm, and the act itself of placing the pen on the table. St Augustine considered all acts of will to be subject to the will of God "because they have no power but what he gives them".[1] On the other hand, what he called 'corporal causes', that is the physical impact of one object upon another, for example the action of my hand moving the pen, are not to be considered as efficient causes, but rather as effects. For St Augustine the word 'cause' is improperly used unless it contains an element of purposiveness, and the only real causes in the universe are our own wills. It is the consciousness of their power over the external world which constitutes the freedom for which he was seeking.

[1] op. cit., Bk. V, ix.

The fact that our wills are determined by God does not deprive us of this feeling of freedom. He summed up his conclusion thus: "How then can that set order of causes in God's foreknowledge deprive our wills of power, seeing our wills bear such a sway amongst the very causes themselves?"[1]

Such a conclusion is equivalent to saying that we are free to do as we will, but that our wills are not free. It is obvious, he says, that we are not subject to that form of necessity where all things are bound to happen in a certain fixed way, in spite of all that we may try to do against them. On the other hand, says St Augustine, "If necessity be defined to be 'that whereby such a thing must needs fall out thus, or thus', I see no reason we should fear that it could hinder the freedom of our wills in anything."[2] Freedom consists in being able to say "our wills are ours, willing what we will"; freedom is the feeling that we have the power to carry out those actions which our wills have decided upon.

Now this would be quite acceptable, it is in fact the point of view which the present book tries to set out, were it not for certain theological assumptions which St Augustine has for the moment forgotten about. Is this limited degree of freedom sufficient to justify God's holding man ultimately responsible for his actions? Has St Augustine succeeded in answering his own question: "Who was it that set and ingrafted in me this root of bitterness, since I was wholly made by my most loving God?" If our actions are sinful, and if our wills are determined by the will of God, it is not possible to avoid the conclusion that God is responsible for our actions. Our

[1] op. cit., Bk. V, ix. [2] op. cit., Bk. V, x.

will is the cause of our actions, God is the cause of our will, God is therefore the cause of our actions, and we cannot be held accountable for our actions before God. That God should know what our future actions will be cannot diminish our freedom unless we presume to have access to this knowledge. That all our actions ultimately derive from God as the first cause presents no problem unless we attempt, at the same time, to believe that God holds all men to be ultimately responsible for their actions and rewards or punishes them accordingly.

St Augustine cannot have been wholly convinced by his own attempt to reconcile these incompatible beliefs, for he also maintained that, as a result of the first sin committed by Adam and Eve, the whole human race is condemned to everlasting punishment, "had not the undue grace of God acquitted some from it".[1] Mankind is divided into two classes, the elect and the damned. "But therefore does man imagine that this infliction of eternal torment is injustice?"[2] he asked. Not at all. This separation of mankind "by the free and gracious mercy of God" is "to show in some the power of grace, and in others the revenge of justice". If this be true and we can be saved only by the unmerited bestowal of God's grace, then it cannot be of any concern whether our actions are or are not free. The separation of human actions from divine causality was thought essential in order to justify the ways of God to man, but if we are saved or damned irrespective of what we do, then our sense of justice cannot be preserved whatever degree of freedom human actions may possess.

This doctrine of predestination remained an important

[1] *City of God*, XIV, ii. [2] op. cit., XXI, xii.

part of the teaching of the Christian Church for about a thousand years. It is, therefore, rather surprising to find that it was also accepted by the Reformed Church. To refer to the attitude of Calvin and his followers to this doctrine as one of acceptance is to fail to do justice to the eagerness with which it was received and to the zeal and vigour with which it was propagated.

The problem of predestination and free will presented itself to the leaders of the Reformation in the following form. God is omnipotent and omniscient and all things spring from His will. But if man's will were free, then everything that happens would not be subject to the will of God. The reconciling of the omnipotence and omniscience of God with the free will of man was a task which Calvin found it impossible to perform. Finding it logically impossible to accept both, he felt compelled to discard a belief in free will. Calvin maintained that unless some are chosen to salvation and others destined to destruction, the eternal decree of God is subjected to the will of man. He wrote: "If the fruit of election be a good and proper will in man, it follows that the reprobate are inclined to evil by all the affections of their hearts. Nor does Paul when he denies that it is of him that willeth, attribute a vain and imperfect will to the reprobate, but rather teaches that when they who were previously averse from all rectitude, begin to have a good will, and to walk in the right path, it is owing to the mercy of God. Let people therefore cease to place the source and first cause of the separation between the elect and the reprobate in the human will, if they would leave any room for the election of God."[1]

[1] Ep. 135 (Quoted by Thomas H. Dyer in *Life of Calvin*, p. 268).

Though most of the Reformers adopted Calvin's solution, there were some within the Church who found it unbearably repugnant. They could not believe that a just and merciful God could consign many of his creatures to eternal damnation merely on the grounds that they were not chosen for salvation.

The Catholic Church had always accepted the teaching of St Augustine on predestination, so long as its implications were not too rigorously insisted upon. It became difficult for the Church to maintain silence on the question when its opponents, with Calvin at their head, propounded their own doctrines and claimed that they sprang from the teachings of St Augustine. The Catholic Church was compelled to make its position clear when, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Cornelius Jansen, a Flemish bishop, published a long commentary on the theology of St Augustine in a book entitled *Augustinus*. The book itself might have been ignored were it not that its teachings were propounded at Port Royal, an abbey near Paris. The Jesuits, who rejected the teaching of St Augustine on predestination, made strenuous efforts to suppress the Jansenist teaching which they considered heretical. In spite of support from Pope Innocent X, they were not wholly successful, and the Jansenists with their strict moral teachings made converts among those who were repelled by the lax principles advocated by some of the Jesuits. In addition, their movement achieved added fame and lustre by its association with the name of Pascal whose *Lettres Provinciales* attacked many of the abuses which were condoned by the Jesuits, and with that of Racine who was educated at Port Royal and whose plays reflect so much of the Jansenist teaching.

From the time of St Augustine to the present day, the Church has never quite made up its mind whether to sacrifice the omniscience of God and the doctrine of predestination, or the principle of free will and ultimate responsibility. The Calvinists and the Jansenists fully realised the contradiction and were prepared to sacrifice free will, undismayed by the absurdity of making God both Creator and Judge. Others, who have been repelled by the conception of a God who punishes us for sins which are preordained, have usually endeavoured to hold the two contradictory beliefs simultaneously: a feat which the human mind seems to find no difficulty in performing.

If mankind is divided into the elect and the damned, and eternal salvation or damnation follows irrespective of anything we ourselves may do, then there is no need to pretend that the fate which befalls us in an after-life is either a reward or a punishment, since there exists nothing which could be either rewarded or punished. According to such a belief our actions count for nothing; it cannot therefore matter whether they are free or determined; and the freedom of the will, from a theological point of view, ceases to be a problem. If, on the other hand, it is maintained that in spite of God's foreknowledge we are rewarded or punished in an after-life for our actions, we have to believe also that we are compelled by God to perform certain actions and then subsequently rewarded or punished by God for performing them. Such a belief, in flagrant violation of our deepest sense of justice, is too repugnant to be believed by most people. But what is it that makes this belief so objectionable? It is not the belief in the omniscience of God and predestination, but in the

simultaneously held belief in hell. This latter belief the Church is not prepared to abandon, and yet refuses to accept the conclusions of Calvin: an attitude which does more honour to its sense of justice than to its intellectual integrity. The Church has not abandoned a belief in the omniscience of God, but this belief is conveniently ignored when the question of human freedom is discussed. It is possible to consider this question without any theological assumptions; it is also apparently possible to make such assumptions, at the same time ensuring that they shall be forgotten when they present difficulties.

If a belief in hell is to be retained, it is essential that those people who are sent there as a punishment for the sins they have committed in this life shall be shown to have been ultimately responsible for those sins and thus to be rightly and justly punished. Unless it can be shown that a person is responsible for his actions, we are repelled by the suggestion that he should be punished for them. It is this belief, that God justly punishes us for our sins, that makes it imperative to establish our responsibility for them. But it is not sufficient to establish our responsibility FOR our actions; we must also show that we are responsible TO someone, in this case God. We shall examine later the extent to which it is possible to say that a man is responsible FOR his actions, both to himself and to his fellow-men. But we are faced with quite a different problem when we try to show how a person can be held to be ultimately responsible, or responsible to God, for his actions.

A man can be free to act as he chooses, but the choice itself must be either determined or not determined by previous causes. If the choice is determined by previous

causes, either in the person who chooses or in the environment, then it is pertinent to ask what further causes determined these causes. At what stage in this series of causes is it possible to say that a person can be held responsible for any particular causal factor? Whatever event we choose in the causal chain, it is always possible to ask what caused it.

Professor John Wisdom makes an interesting attempt to discover in what sense it is possible to ascribe ultimate responsibility for an action. He writes: "Suppose that your acts are determined by your decisions, and your decisions by your wishes, and your wishes by the possibilities which your environment presents to you, together with your disposition on which that environment acts. Suppose that your disposition is determined by the nature of your parents, and their nature by the natures of Adam and Eve. Suppose that the natures of Adam and Eve were determined by God. In such a case are you rightly blamed for your acts? You are responsible for them but is it not God who is 'ultimately' responsible for them?"[1] Later in the same work he writes: "The Law of Causation can be reconciled with ultimate responsibility only by supposing that the series of determinations of the will by the will is endless. Pre-existence follows from our considerations. This pre-existence must have been world-long."[2] But what Professor Wisdom has, in fact, proved is that, in a causally-determined universe, no individual can be ultimately responsible for his actions. In the infinite series of the causal chain, ultimate responsibility can rest only with the First Cause and not with any of the subsequent causes.

[1] *Problems of Mind and Matter*, p. 117. [2] op. cit., p. 130.

An attempt is sometimes made to avoid this conclusion by denying the principle of causality, and by saying that it is possible for events to happen without a cause. Although, as we have already seen, uncaused events are not logically impossible, such an assumption would not in any way enable us to establish ultimate responsibility; it would, in fact, destroy even the limited amount of responsibility allowed by determinism. If I can perform actions which are in no sense determined by factors in my own character, it is impossible to see how I can be held responsible for them. Events which are not causally determined are chance events, and even if we grant that such events can happen, they are not such as to warrant the ascription of responsibility. We are thus bound to conclude that there is no rational foundation for a belief in ultimate responsibility, whether we adopt the hypothesis of determinism or indeterminism.

It is often said that if we destroy the belief in ultimate responsibility, and therefore all justification for rewards and punishments in an after-life, we at the same time remove a very powerful moral incentive. If there is no reward or punishment in another world, why, it is asked, should we be good? Did not Voltaire say in this connection that "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him"? The only comment which needs to be made is that any action which is performed from hope of reward or fear of punishment can hardly be called moral.

There are two principal reasons why the question of free will has always occupied a central position in religious thought: the first is the problem of evil, and the second the belief in heaven and hell. We are all conscious

of the presence of evil in the world which, unless we can avoid the hypothesis of determinism, must be attributed to the First Cause, or God. But how can a God who is all-good have created a world in which there is so much evil? The only explanation, it is suggested, is that the evil in the world is the result of the free will of man. Man has been given the power of acting freely, and evil has been the result. I shall attempt to show later in this book that there is no intelligible analysis of the words 'free will' which will enable man to be held responsible in the ultimate sense for his own actions, much less the evil in the world. God cannot shed his responsibility so easily, for if God is omnipotent but allows evil to exist in the world He cannot at the same time be good. Even if evil were the result of man's free will, for God not to put an end to it, although he possessed the power to do so, would be just as destructive of divine goodness as the gratuitous creation of evil.

Closely linked with the problem of reconciling the presence of evil in the world with its creation by a God who is wholly good is the belief in an after-life, with its rewards and punishments. If it can be shown that man is the cause of evil in the world, then our sense of justice is not offended by the belief that he is punished for it in the world to come. It is this theological need to "justify the ways of God to man" that makes it extremely difficult for some people to think dispassionately about the problem of free will. The problem, however, cannot be solved merely by rejecting determinism: there is no method by which man can be made ultimately responsible. If a belief in heaven and hell could be justified on the basis of some other explanation of human conduct,

then we could understand its being accepted in order to preserve the theological dogma. What is more difficult to understand is the widespread failure to see that, although determinism is fatal to the idea of man's responsibility to the Creator of the universe, it is no more so than indeterminism or any other possible explanation of human actions. Without the hypothesis of determinism there cannot be even a limited degree of responsibility; the doctrine of eternal reward or punishment cannot be made to rest on any basis of justice, however we choose to explain human conduct. If this were more widely realised, it would swell the ever-increasing number of people who find the doctrine of hell-fire impossible to hold on emotional rather than intellectual grounds. These people are not prepared to believe in a God who treats His children in a way in which they themselves would not be prepared to treat their fellow-men. In an age when increasing numbers accept the evil of punishment only in so far as good may come of it, there is a growing reluctance to believe that any good can come from a punishment which never ends.

There is also no doubt that only through the abandonment of this belief can one fully accept a belief in the omnipotence of God. The great incompatibility of which St Augustine and Calvin were so deeply conscious can be resolved, and its resolution can be instrumental in releasing a deeply religious attitude to the universe. Professor MacMurray expressed this very clearly when he wrote: "If we believe in God, we live as if the fortunes of the world did not depend on us; we live as if the world could be trusted to work out its own destiny and to use us, even through our mistakes and our failures, for its own good pur-

poses."[1] Only by ceasing to think of man's ultimate responsibility can we truly believe that we are the instruments of God's purpose. Professor Einstein, starting from a belief not in God but in determinism, stated a very similar attitude to the world, a fundamentally religious one: "In human freedom in the philosophical sense I am definitely a disbeliever . . . Schopenhauer's saying that 'a man can do as he will, but not will as he will', has been an inspiration to me since my youth up, and a continual consolation and unfailing wellspring of patience in the face of the hardships of life, my own and others. This feeling mercifully mitigates the sense of responsibility which so easily becomes paralysing, and it prevents us from taking ourselves and other people too seriously."[2] The resemblance between the two passages is remarkable, all the more so since their authors reached their conclusions from different premisses.

A belief in determinism is quite clearly not incompatible with a religious outlook on the universe. If to be religious is to be conscious of the presence of God, there can have been few people more religious than Spinoza, for whom the whole universe was permeated with the divine presence. And yet his explanation of the universe was rigidly determinist. Indeed, any other explanation would have been unthinkable for Spinoza, who found determinism emotionally satisfying as well as intellectually irrefutable.

He considered that our actions are partly determined by our own natures, and partly by external factors; but that only those actions which are purely autonomous can ever be free. When Spinoza called an action 'free', he did

[1] *Creative Society*, p. 23. [2] *The World as I see it*, p. 2.

not mean that it was spontaneous and undetermined, but that it was not determined by circumstances external to the agent. In so far as "our mind acts certain things", we have 'adequate' ideas, and in so far as it is influenced by things external to our mind, we have 'inadequate' ideas. These 'adequate' ideas of the world around us give us true knowledge, or reason, and it is this true knowledge, or reason, which makes us free. Spinoza wrote: "A free man is one who lives according to the dictates of reason alone."[1] Although we cease to be free in as much as we are subject to external causes or 'inadequate' ideas, yet we can, by attaining a greater consciousness of these ideas, cease to be slaves to them, and achieve a greater degree of freedom.

For Spinoza, freedom was a kind of self-knowledge: the greater our understanding of the underlying causes of our own conduct, the greater the degree of freedom which we achieve. That all events must have causes Spinoza never once doubted, and the application of this principle to the human will he expressed in the form of a Proposition: "there is in no mind absolute or free will, but the mind is determined for willing this or that by a cause which is determined in its turn by another cause and this one again by another, and so on to infinity".[2] Because man can never cease to be influenced to some extent by external causes, he cannot be completely free. Only God or Nature, beyond which, by definition, nothing else can exist, can be free; because only God or Nature "is determined in its actions by itself alone".[3] When Spinoza said that only God or Nature is free, he meant nothing more

[1] *Ethics*, Pt. IV, Prop. LXVII Proof. [2] op. cit., Pt. II, Prop. XLVIII.
[3] op. cit., Pt. I, Def. VII.

than that He is wholly self-creating; he did not mean that God's actions are not causally determined. He wrote: "Things could not have been produced by God in any other manner or order than that in which they were produced."[1] There is nothing arbitrary or undetermined about God's actions: God can bring about only those things which follow from His nature. For those who think that the freedom of God can have any other meaning, Spinoza wrote: "Others think that God is a free cause because they think he can bring it to pass that those things which we say follow from his nature, that is, which are in his power, should not be made or that they should not be produced by him. But this is the same as if they said that God can bring it to pass that it should not follow from the nature of a triangle that its three angles are equal to two right angles, or that from a given cause no effect should follow, which is absurd."[2]

All the actions of God follow from one another with a strict logical necessity, and it is this very determinism which, paradoxically, constitutes God's freedom. Man can never be completely free, because he is never completely self-determining, but his freedom increases as his knowledge of God increases. He must always strive "to understand God and his attributes and actions which follow from the necessity of his nature", because the happiness or blessedness of man is "nothing else than satisfaction of mind which arises from the intuitive knowledge of God".[3]

This willing submission to the Order of Nature, or the Will of God, the conviction that, whatever befalls, God's

[1] op. cit., Pt. I, Prop. xxxi.
[2] op. cit., Prop. xvii, note.
[3] op. cit., Pt. IV, Append. iv.

will is being done, is a most powerful antidote to any feeling of despair. Freed from the hopelessness of remorse, which finds no place within his system, Spinoza tells us that "We shall bear with equanimity those things which happen to us . . . if we are conscious that we are a part of nature as a whole, whose order we follow. For in so far as we understand, we can desire nothing save that which is necessary, nor can we absolutely acquiesce in anything save what is true: and therefore in so far as we understand this rightly, the endeavour of the best part of us agrees with the order of the whole of nature."[1]

Such a belief can have no meaning if we would attribute ultimate responsibility to man. But there is no way of transferring power and responsibility from God to man.

[1] op. cit., Pt. IV, Append. xxxii.

## CHAPTER IV

# THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

I suggested in the previous chapter that the problem of free will assumes an urgency only within the context of certain theological assumptions. It is, nevertheless, true to say that even without these assumptions there is often considerable confusion as to the exact status of human actions, and the degree of freedom which they can possess. Dr Johnson's irritated reply: "Sir, I know the will is free, and there's an end on't" is often quoted with approval as indicative of the common-sense approach to the problem. It is the kind of assertion which is intended to make any further discussion unnecessary, if not slightly ridiculous. When Dr Johnson claims that he knows that the will is free, he must be intending to refer to the immediate knowledge of what happens in his mind when he makes a choice. He feels quite free, and knows intuitively that he has the power of choice. To appeal to our own powers of direct intuition and produce evidence of such an immediate and primary nature is thought to render evidence from any further source completely invalid. How can there possibly be an argument more telling or evidence more convincing than that provided by our own immediate experience? If, when I perform an action, I experience a feeling of freedom, what right has anyone to say that I am mistaken? Am I not the best judge of my own feelings? The quotation from Dr Johnson, however, asserts not that we often experience a

feeling of freedom in choosing, but that we know that the will is free. Indeed, this has been the traditional formulation of the problem of human freedom: not that human beings have freedom of choice, but that the will is free.

Before we consider what meaning could be attached to such a claim, let us look more closely at the intuitive evidence for a feeling of freedom when we make choices. It is well to remember that this intuitive approach to the problem is open to the objection which confronts the intuitive approach to all problems in ethics, namely the difficulty of reconciling conflicting opinions. If the only evidence to be examined is our own immediate experience as afforded by introspection, how then do we deal with those who declare that they are not aware, by introspection, of any such feeling of freedom? Unless we are prepared to examine further what exactly this freedom consists of, which some assert and others deny, the whole problem must remain beyond the reach of intelligent discussion, and consist solely of assertion and counter-assertion. Most people agree, however, that we frequently do have a feeling of freedom when we perform certain actions, and this feeling is a reality which must be taken into consideration whenever the question of human freedom is discussed. The freedom may be illusory, but the feeling of freedom is a datum of experience which cannot be ignored.

When we look about us with horror at the increasing power and influence of totalitarian governments, we are thankful for the degree of freedom which we enjoy in these islands. This political freedom is beyond the scope of the subject we are discussing, but we are not unaware

that, because of its supreme importance, anything which would seem to diminish man's freedom in any way is likely to meet with resistance. It is for this reason essential to obtain a clear idea of what we mean by human freedom, and to realise that an understanding of the springs of human conduct can serve only to make us better aware of the forces in the world around us which would enslave the mind of man. To appreciate the limitations on our freedom does not cause us to value any less highly the freedom we do possess.

The late President Roosevelt stated that one of our aims in resisting the Nazi tyranny was to preserve the Four Freedoms: Freedom from fear, Freedom from want, Freedom of speech and Freedom of worship. It is because these freedoms are so fundamental to our conception of what makes the Good Life that anyone who would seem to be questioning any kind of freedom is immediately suspect. 'Freedom of the will', it is assumed, is like the 'Four Freedoms' of President Roosevelt and, like them, must be defended at all costs. There is, however, a fundamental difference. We are agreed that President Roosevelt's 'Four Freedoms' are attainable and desirable, but when we come to consider the 'Freedom of the will', it will be seen that, not only is it unattainable, but it is also undesirable.

That this is indeed the case will become apparent if we consider how we use the words 'free' and 'freedom'. If we examine President Roosevelt's 'Four Freedoms', we notice that two of them are expressed as freedoms 'FROM': freedom FROM fear, and freedom FROM want; whereas the other two are expressed as freedoms 'OF': freedom OF speech, and freedom OF worship. When we

say that freedom from fear is a desirable ingredient of human life, or that it is desirable that human beings should be free from fear, we surely mean that, in so far as it is possible in a modern society, human actions should not be completely dictated or compelled in a certain direction by fear of what might happen if some other action were performed. We think it very undesirable that fear should be one of the chief factors determining our actions, and we value freedom from fear as an essential of the Good Life. There are still parts of England where, whether justifiable or not, the fear persists that an avowal of political sympathies may endanger one's livelihood. A man is so much less a man if such fears inhibit the open expression of opinion. The extent to which freedom from want is a necessary ingredient of a full and happy life needs no illustration.

When we turn to the other two freedoms, we notice that there is an important difference between them and the two we have just examined. In the first two cases we were discussing fear and want as determining factors in a very large number of possible human actions; almost all our actions could be affected in some way if the fear and the want were sufficiently acute. Fear and want are the specific causal factors from which we wish the greatest possible number of human actions to be free. In the second two cases, we are discussing the specific actions: freedom of speech, or freedom to speak; and freedom of worship, or freedom to worship; and we maintain that these two specific actions should be as free as possible from all kinds of external determining factors. In the case of fear and want the causes are specific and the actions general; in the case of speech and worship the actions

are specific but the causes general. In our own day, freedom of speech is most seriously endangered by the actions of governments, but it may also be whittled away by Churches, trades unions, employers and others who have the power to apply sanctions against us. We could not specify all the causal factors which might interfere with our freedom of speech and worship, but when we talk of freedom OF speech and freedom OF worship, what we do, in fact, mean is that they shall be free FROM as many external determining factors as possible.

If we consider further examples of our use of the words 'free to', we shall find that in all cases the underlying meaning of what we are saying is 'free FROM', and that we choose to refer to the specific action which we are free to perform, rather than attempt the impossible task of enumerating all the causal or determining factors that we are free FROM. If, for example, I say that I am free TO attend a concert this evening, what I mean is that I know of no obstacles, and they might be many and various, which will prevent my attending the concert. The same analysis holds good when I am faced with a choice between two alternatives. If in certain circumstances I say that I am free TO choose between two courses of action, what I mean is that I know of nothing which would make either action impossible: I am free FROM, as far as I am aware, any determining factor or factors which would render one action possible but not the other. Therefore, although we often refer to ourselves as being free TO, in all cases there is the underlying and fundamental meaning that we are free FROM. In all discussions of freedom it is well to keep this distinction carefully in mind.

When, therefore, we say that we are conscious of a

feeling of freedom, we mean that we are conscious of being free FROM something or other. It may help to make this clearer if we consider an example of an action which is not accompanied by a feeling of freedom, and see what factor deprives us of this feeling, or what it is we are not free FROM on this occasion. By doing so we shall be better able to understand those actions in the performance of which we do feel free. To take an extreme example, if a robber uses the threat of a pistol to demand my wallet, the action of handing over the article in question cannot, in any sense, be called free and would certainly not be accompanied by any feeling of freedom. We are not considering the question whether or not I am free to perform an alternative action, but we are trying to establish under what circumstances we are introspectively conscious of a feeling of freedom. The threat of the pistol has such persuasive force that I am likely to accede to the robber's request, but I have no feeling of freedom and am very well aware that what I am not free from is the threat of the pistol.

When we consider actions which are not performed at the dictate of forces outside ourselves, we are aware that some of them are accompanied by a much stronger feeling of freedom than others. In order to make a true and unbiased assessment of the evidence afforded by intuition, we must not fall into the error of confusing the feeling of freedom which we experience when performing an action with any supposed knowledge of freedom which we use to interpret the actions we perform. We must not allow any preconceived ideas about the type of action which we most want to consider free to influence our assessment of those which, in fact, give us the greatest feeling of

freedom. We are attempting to decide which actions 'feel' free, and not which ones we 'know' to be free.

One of the first things we discover is that we can have a feeling of freely performing an action even when no act of deliberation or choice is involved. In many of our almost instinctive reactions to environment, when we behave in an uninhibited and unpremeditated manner, this feeling is often very strong. If we go for a long walk across the moors we may wander up hill and down dale, drawn this way or that by idle curiosity without ever making any deliberate choices. We may make no intellectual appraisals of the situations as they arise, we may exert no 'will power', but the gratification of our impulses gives rise to a feeling of acting freely. When we act in anger, although it is usual, and no doubt true, to say that we are in a sense the victims of our passions, yet our attention is so undivided, we act so wholeheartedly and decisively in one direction, that what we do feels freely done.

When we consciously perform an action as the result of rational deliberation, we can also be conscious of a feeling of freedom. If, for example, I am conscious of a draught from an open window, I may decide to get up and close it in order to put an end to the discomfort. If I analyse my feelings I can say that, having decided not to put up with the draught any longer, my action is performed without any external compulsion and is accompanied by a feeling of freedom between my being conscious of the desire to suppress the draught and the act of shutting the window. The translation of my desire for the absence of draught into the action of closing the window gives rise to a feeling of satisfaction which we call a 'feeling of freedom':

the feeling that my body is responding to my desire and my choice.

That this feeling, which we all experience, does derive from the 'enjoyment' of an impulse or an act of choosing as it issues into action can be seen if we consider what happens when it is impeded in any way. When moral principles or social conventions prevent us from giving vent to strong emotions in word or deed, we often feel frustrated and unfree. If I am invited out to a meal and my host expresses outrageous opinions, my natural reaction to make an indignant reply will be moderated by my realisation of the duties of a guest. The result will be a painful feeling of tension and unease. In the same way, if we desire and decide to perform an action but are prevented from carrying it out either through some personal deficiency or through some external impediment, then we are conscious, not of a feeling of freedom, but of one of frustration. It is when we are performing actions which we most desire to do, or which come most naturally to us, that the feeling of freedom is greatest. When our actions are the expression of our fundamental disposition, when a kind man is doing kind things, or a domineering man is ordering others about, it is then we feel most free. There is a complete absence of doubt or indecision about what is to be done; there is no mental questioning about the desirable course to follow.

When we are presented with a choice between two alternative courses of action, neither of which evokes a clear-cut and certain response, we begin to feel less sure of ourselves. There is a conflict which can be resolved only as a result of deliberation, and this conflict greatly

reduces our feeling of freedom. The competing claims of the two possible actions seem to pull us now in one way, now in another, but the conflict cannot be resolved by a compromise or by a synthesis; one course has to be chosen and the other rejected. After we have chosen a certain course it seems as if the whole personality is not behind it; some part of us would go another way. In circumstances in which the choice has been particularly difficult, we often feel the pull of the rejected alternative long after the decision has been made, and we wonder whether we have chosen wisely. Such choices may vary from the comparatively trivial one of whether to go to Scotland or Brittany for a holiday to the very important choice of a career. In either case we may find that we cannot altogether put out of our mind the attractions of the course we have rejected. Difficult moral decisions often place us in this kind of situation, and it is in respect of moral decisions that it is usually desired to establish the reality of the freedom of the will. If we are to rely on our own consciousness of a feeling of freedom, we must conclude that we are most free when our actions flow most naturally from, and are motivated by, our dispositions, and that we are least free when our characters and dispositions do not provide us with these signposts to action.

We have so far been considering the intuitive basis for our feeling of freedom and trying to determine when we do feel free in our choices and actions. But, as we have seen, this is a feeling which we have as individuals, as personalities reacting to our environment; it is not a belief we have about whether, or in what way, our choices and actions are causally determined. Those who adhere to the doctrine of free will are not saying that we often

have the feeling that we can do as we will, but that the will is free. We are aware, they say, by a process of introspection, that when we perform certain actions our wills are completely free from any determining factors. This is not the same as saying that when we make certain decisions or perform certain actions we have, as agents, a feeling of freedom; what they claim is that we have a feeling that the will is free. Assuming the reality of acts of volition (an assumption we will consider later), this would mean that when our volitions are determined by our desires they are not free volitions and, presumably, are unaccompanied by any feeling of freedom. It would also mean that there are certain volitions which are not causally determined by anything in our characters or dispositions, and that these alone are free and are, presumably, accompanied by a feeling of freedom.

It is important to realise that the indeterminist is now saying far more than can possibly be justified by an act of introspection. He is not merely reporting an experience, a feeling of freedom, which either exists or does not exist, but he is stating a proposition about that experience, namely that the will is not causally determined, which can be true or false. He is not saying that he does not experience causality in performing certain actions, but that he experiences an absence of causality. To say that a certain act of will is not causally determined is not to state a datum of experience, but to reflect on experience and put forward a proposition about it. The truth of such a proposition cannot be verified by introspection.

The indeterminist, if he wishes to support his case by the evidence of our feeling of freedom, is committed to the proposition that we have a feeling of free volitions,

and that this is quite distinct from the feeling of freedom which accompanies the causal sequence of desire—volition —action. If this is indeed true, it means that, when we perform actions because we wish to do them, we are not free and do not experience a true feeling of freedom, because in such cases our volitions are caused by our desires, and only uncaused volitions are really free; when a kind man does a kind action, he is not acting freely, since his action is determined by his character and any feeling of freedom he may have is illusory, because he is not really free. Yet our feeling of freedom is greatest when we act most completely in harmony with our own character and disposition, when the action is most truly our own, causally determined by the kind of person we are; our feeling of freedom is least when we are not more strongly impelled in one direction than in another. If, therefore, we appeal to the evidence provided by introspection, we discover that it all points the other way. We can obtain no support for the belief that some things are done as the result of a free act of the will from any subjective feeling of freedom, for the simple reason that this feeling is strongest in the performance of those acts which are most in keeping with our known character, and such character-determined actions cannot be those which are performed as the result of an undetermined volition. Introspection can tell us which actions give rise to the greatest feeling of freedom but can tell us nothing about the possibility of undetermined volitions. It does not provide us with any clear evidence even for the existence of the will itself, whether free or determined.

The exact status or function of the will in human actions is not at all clear. We know what it means to say

of someone that he is strong-willed or of another that he has no will-power. The first person will pursue his ends with great determination and refuse to deviate from his chosen course of action. Once he has made up his mind to do something he refuses to be discouraged by difficulties or seduced by counter-attractions. Absence of perseverance and determination denotes, we say, a lack of will-power. Are such expressions merely figurative, to indicate a certain type of character, or do we imply by them that there is such a thing as the will? It does not follow, because we know what it means to say that a person has a strong will, that there must be a mental faculty called the 'will'.

There have been psychologists and philosophers who have believed that such a faculty does exist, among them John Locke, who wrote: "This power which the mind has thus to order the consideration of any idea, or the forbearing to consider it; or to prefer the motion of any part of the body to its rest, and vice versa, in any particular instance, is that which we call the will."[1] For Locke, the exercise of the power of the will was the distinguishing characteristic of voluntary actions. That means that when I perform a voluntary action, there are, in reality, two separate actions—the act of willing to perform the action and the action itself. If this is a true account of what happens, we might analyse a simple action such as placing my pen on the table as follows: I have the idea of putting down the pen—I will to put it down—I put it down. But thinking back over the action, do I recognise this as a true account of what took place? Such an apparently empirical statement of fact can only

[1] *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. II, Ch. XXI, p. 112.

be checked by a process of introspection. I can remember thinking about putting down the pen and also performing the action, but they seemed to follow one upon the other; there was no awareness of an intermediate act which might be called an act of the will. There are surely many simple, voluntary actions in which we are not aware of any mental act between the thinking about an action and its performance. We have a single idea present in the mind, and this seems to produce the appropriate action. When we are faced with a choice betweem two alternatives, the mind appears to flit from one idea to the other as a preliminary to action. We seem to go through a mental process which might be likened to trying on hats. We put on one, look at it in the mirror, repeat the process with the second hat and then go back and try the first on again. Eventually a preference is established and we buy one of the hats. If, in a restaurant, I am asked to choose between boiled beef and roast lamb, I probably go through a short process of what is called deliberation, and then make my choice. But what is this deliberation but a holding in the mind first of the idea of eating beef and then of lamb? My mind contemplates first the one idea, and then the next, until a preference is established. The choice may have been comparatively easy because one idea was so much more attractive than the other, but, to explain why, we have to examine the history of our past encounters with beef and lamb. I might have had no hesitation in choosing the lamb because I knew, from previous painful experience, that the beef was generally badly cooked, and because I had no reason to suppose that the lamb would be equally unpalatable. In such a case, the period of deliberation would be short and the

choice easy. It might be that I had had beef for dinner on the previous day, and chose lamb because I had been advised by a friend that it was particularly good, or there might have been one or more of a dozen reasons which influenced my choice. Whatever the reasons were, the ease with which the choice was made would depend upon the preponderance of the 'pro-lamb' over the 'pro-beef' motives. The occasion sometimes arises when we find in ourselves no decided preference for the one rather than the other. In such cases we may ask someone else to make the choice, or resort to the spin of a coin. In extreme cases we may resemble Buridan's ass.

In the choice between the beef and the lamb, and in other less frivolous choices between competing pleasures, the process is the same. The individual certainly has the feeling that he is making a choice with complete freedom. The varied and conflicting desires which he experiences are set against one another and against the general background of his interests, and one of the possible courses of action is followed.

Such a choice, though freely made, does not contain any element which might be called an exercise of the will. Once the preference is established, the action, in this case saying "I will have the beef" or "I will have the lamb", follows automatically. On the other hand, we all know that there are some actions which do not seem to follow spontaneously upon our entertaining an idea of them. On a cold morning a warm bed has such power of attraction that the thought of getting up does not always produce immediate action. In fact, the thought of getting up inhibits action, and there follows a mental conflict between the desire to remain in a warm bed and the knowledge

that there is a job of work to be done. If we do eventually get up, such an action is explained by saying that it is a result of an effort of will. That we all do experience such feelings of effort when we are called upon to make difficult decisions or perform unpleasant actions cannot be denied. When we study the conditions under which these feelings are present, we notice that they often accompany a conflict between our pleasures and our duty. It often appears to us that the forces urging us to follow the path of pleasure are very strong, whereas those impelling us towards doing our duty are lamentably weak. That this is true is only further corroborated by those occasions on which we do not follow the path of duty. When this is the outcome there appears to be no problem, but when we do our duty it looks as if there might be one. It might be expressed thus: "If the force of the motives driving us to seek pleasure is greater than that driving us to do our duty, can we ever, in these circumstances, do our duty?"

In those cases where there is a fierce conflict between pleasure and duty, what does, in fact, seem to be happening? One explanation which is frequently advanced is that, although our motive for doing our duty may be the weaker, it can be reinforced by drawing upon the will; and it is this process of reinforcement which is what we refer to when we talk about an 'effort of will'.

It is not quite clear when this supposed process takes place, but it is most commonly situated between the deliberation and the action itself. That is, once we have chosen to do our duty, we acquire an increase of power to enable us to translate our choice into action. But if we can discover anything from introspection, it would appear

that the feeling of effort of which we are conscious is more closely involved with our deliberation than with our action. Once we have really made the choice, the action follows naturally. The evidence of introspection would seem to suggest that the sequence of events is not deliberation—act of will—overt action, but rather that anything which we can call an act of will is an element of our deliberation.

The only evidence, therefore, for the existence of an act of will is that when we make certain difficult choices, often moral ones, these choices are frequently accompanied by a feeling of effort. This introspective evidence does not appear to apply to any particular type of choice: there is no method of classification which will enable us to say that when we make such and such a choice there will be a feeling of effort. It follows, therefore, that if this feeling is a result of an effort made by the will, we have no means of telling whether the will is involved except by noting the presence of a feeling of effort. We cannot say that the will is involved whenever an action is what we call voluntary, because there are many obviously voluntary actions which are not accompanied by any feeling of effort. We cannot even say that all moral choices involve the will, because these too are often made without any accompanying feeling of effort. If, indeed, we use the method of introspection in our attempt to prove the existence of the will, we are denied its application to a whole range of moral situations to which, if we need the concept of the will at all, its fiat should obviously apply. If this concept is essential in order to establish human freedom, freedom would seem to be possible in only a very limited number of actions: those in the performance

of which we are conscious of a feeling of effort. A concept which is derived from such unsatisfactory empirical evidence, and at the same time fails to correspond to any particular category of human actions, can do nothing but confuse the problem of human freedom. Indeed the traditional formulation of the problem as one of the freedom of the will is the chief obstacle to its understanding.

The feeling of effort we experience is the result of a deliberate attempt to establish an order of preference between competing desires, opinions or ideals. A struggle is an inevitable result of claims closely competing for our attention. If we attempt to explain this struggle by postulating some further power such as the will, it becomes pertinent to ask where it comes from. Is it implanted in us at birth? The fact that, as individuals, we vary considerably in our power to make moral decisions would suggest that we are endowed with wills of varying power. If this source of power, or will, is not something we are born with, it must be something we have acquired since birth. If so, whence did we get the power to acquire it? This power to acquire the will must itself have been given at birth or acquired since birth—and so we could go on. We are entitled to use such expressions as 'strong-willed' or an 'effort of will' if by so doing we are referring in the one case to a particular aspect of a person's character and in the other to a choice or decision which is accompanied by a feeling of effort. But we are not entitled to deduce from such expressions that there exists a faculty or power called the "will" which enables us to break free from the determination of our actions by our character. The existence or otherwise of such a faculty can have no bearing on the philosophical problem of human freedom, in spite

of the fact that it is usually referred to as the problem of the freedom of the will.

In the struggle between the competing claims for our attention to which I have referred above, the various mental ideas present in the mind are never purely intellectual phenomena, but are endowed with a definite emotional element. The mind never accepts ideas without establishing first of all an emotional attitude to them, and it is between these 'idea-emotion' complexes that the struggle for survival is waged.

In this struggle why is it that we make one choice rather than another? Is the outcome always decided by the relative strengths of the competing motives, and what do we mean when we say that one motive is stronger than another? We may make the *a priori* assumption that it is always the stronger motive which determines the action, and that we derive our knowledge of whether one motive is stronger than another by seeing which action we perform. This is equivalent to saying that when we refer to one impulse as being stronger than another, all we mean is that it is the impulse which produces the action. Unsatisfactory as this may seem at first sight, it is not at all clear what better explanation there could be. There is no way known to psychologists of measuring the strength of our impulses and comparing the results with our actions. Lacking such a scientific technique, it is difficult to see how we can arrive at any precise knowledge about the relationship between the strength of our impulses and our subsequent actions, other than by an intuitive assessment of which motives are stronger and which weaker.

There seems to be no reason to doubt that when we choose between two pleasures our choice falls upon the

one which, we think, will provide the maximum pleasure. It seems probable that in such a case the motives for the course of action we propose to follow will seem stronger than those for the rejected alternative: we choose to do that which we most desire to do. It would be paradoxical indeed to claim that although I chose A, I am introspectively convinced that my desire to do B was the stronger. I do not think we should ever be prepared to accept such an assessment of the motives for an action. We should be more inclined to suspect a failure of introspection than that, in such a choice, we ever act against our strongest desire.

It is often maintained, however, that when our choice lies between two conflicting desires, we are dealing with mental events which are closely akin to purely instinctive behaviour, but that when we are faced with a choice between our desires and our duty, the character of the problem changes. When, it is claimed, our choice lies between two competing desires, it is always the stronger which issues in action, but when the choice is between our duty and a desire, we are faced with a completely different situation. Our sense of duty is a motive, but a motive of a very special kind, in which there is no element of desire.

This assumes that there is a natural conflict between our desires and our duty. The typical moral situation is thought to be one in which we have to choose between one course of action which is prompted by our desires and another which duty calls upon us to perform. We may have a slight inclination to do one thing and a very strong inclination to do another, but, it is said, if the voice of duty tells us to do that which we feel less inclined to do,

it can summon the power from the will to overcome the stronger desire. There is, I think, in such a claim an implication that there is something slightly unworthy in being motivated by a desire. Duty is "the stern daughter of the voice of God" and bids us always do things which are difficult and unpleasant, whereas desire is akin to lust and passion and is always urging us to desert the path of duty. As I have already said, it is not always easy to be sure of the strength of our own motives, and introspection, our only guide in this matter, does not always give a clear answer.

If we define 'desire' in such a way as to cover only the expression of our immediate physical reaction to our environment, we can feel certain that we often do curb such 'desires' in the interest of other things. For example, my promise to attend a certain uninteresting function may successfully overcome a desire to indulge in some other more obviously pleasant activity. But can we restrict the meaning of 'desire' in such a way? If I attend the function, it is because I do not wish to break my promise or disappoint those to whom the promise was made. In the weighing of alternatives I have probably advanced beyond the stage of instinctively choosing the action which will provide the greatest immediate pleasure, but my choice will be the one which will most fully satisfy my desires as a responsible moral agent. I shall have performed my duty because my desire to do so was greater than any other. My choice was a function of my whole character in a given situation, and not merely of superficial desires and inclinations. It is only by trivialising the meaning of 'desire' that we can believe that we often do our duty against our strongest desire.

The isolation of those actions which come within the category of 'doing one's duty' from those which do not requires that the former should have an existence of their own which is not affected in any way by the character of the agent. They must be completely autonomous, shielded from all thoughts and desires, hopes and fears. Not only does this doctrine require that the performance of our duty should be uninfluenced by our desires, but also that our very conception of what our duty is should be arrived at in a region of decision cut off from our everyday lives. But, as we have already seen, before the mind is able to accept an idea, including ideas about our duty, it must first of all establish an emotional relationship with it. An idea cannot exist in isolation, but must come to terms with the character and temperament of the person who is to accept it. Pure ideas are myths, and it is the emotional element which becomes attached to them which largely determines their power to control our actions.

When we reflect on our moral deliberations and decisions, we see at once that they are inevitably made within the context of the society in which we live, and are influenced by the climate of opinion which has moulded our interests, hopes and ideals. We are, to a large extent, prisoners of our environment. It is not our desires alone which are conditioned in this way, but our conception of what our duty is. The changing pattern of social morality through the ages should convince us of the truth of this and of the falsehood of the doctrine which would have us believe that we possess some inner and infallible knowledge of our duty, and that all we need to do in order to follow it is to call upon that treasure-house of power called the will. When we consider that it is our duty to do

a certain action, we do not reach this conclusion because the action possesses a special quality or characteristic, a sort of moral label, by which we recognise it. There is nothing to which we can point as being the factor which is always present in an action which it is our duty to perform. Nor is our sense of duty an inner searchlight which is always at hand, if we would only use it, to reveal the one path, among many, which we must follow.

Many people succeed in living a virtuous life without ever being conscious on any particular occasion that they are doing their duty. There are no actions which, for them, can be singled out as possessing any special moral value or which have been preceded by a moral struggle. Sometimes this absence of moral questioning is indicative of an unawareness of possibilities of action which are apparent to others, resulting from a limited power of imagination or from a restricted field of interest.

There are other people who are painfully conscious of the reality of moral struggle, not because they are more deficient in will power than others, but because they are over-endowed with sympathetic imagination. Through education they are aware of a wider field for human sympathy, and through temperament they are more strongly urged to feel and express that sympathy. A course of action which they may consider to be man's highest duty will be beyond the imaginative grasp of others.

Nevertheless, to portray our lives as a constant struggle between our desires which would lead us to do evil and an 'inner voice' which calls upon us to do our duty is to give a completely false picture of most people's moral experience. It is untrue to suggest that moral acts

are always, or even usually, preceded by a struggle between duty and desire. Most people succeed in doing their duty to society without any such struggle between what they consider their duty and what desire prompts them to do; duty and inclination do not necessarily conflict. This is not to say that such moral dilemmas never do arise, but they form a very small part of all the moral decisions we make. The majority of the virtuous actions of a person who has attained any degree of virtuous conduct are motivated by his acquired disposition or character. The acquisition of a virtuous character does, of course, imply a background of previous moral deliberation, or even of moral struggle, but the element of deliberation and struggle diminishes to the extent to which virtuous dispositions are acquired. As Aristotle wrote: "By doing just actions we come to be just; by doing the actions of self-mastery we come to be perfected in self-mastery; and by doing brave actions brave."[1]

For most of us the great moral problems are not so much a question of finding some inner source of power which will enable us to do our duty against opposing desires as of discovering what that duty is. When we are faced with two possible courses of action and are perplexed as to which we should choose, our problem is one of the intellect rather than of the will. We try to estimate the likely consequences of each course of action, or we search for some general moral principle which points to the one rather than the other. Having decided which course seems to us the right one, we have to translate our decision into action. If we successfully perform this action, we do so because we think it the right action in the circumstances.

[1] *Ethics*, Bk. II, p. 27.

We may decide to do A rather than B because it seems to us that the greater happiness will result from so doing, and we consider happiness a very desirable end-product. Or we may be influenced in our decision by what we consider the intrinsic 'rightness' of an action, believing that the consequences are irrelevant to its moral worth. In the one case we desire to bring about certain good consequences, and in the other to conform to an abstract principle or rule of conduct. Whatever our motives may be, it is impossible to dispense with the idea of desire. We may succeed in doing our duty because we wish to increase the amount of good in the world or because of the emotion aroused in us by the recognition of the intrinsic 'rightness' of a line of conduct, but in neither case do we do our duty simply because it is our duty. Even if the rather arid moral principle of 'doing one's duty' is ever a motive of conduct, one must still first desire to follow this principle. The idea that this need not be so probably arises from the traditional theological view that obedience to moral law consists of obedience to the commands of a supreme being without any reference to our wishes or desires. But this very obedience presupposes a desire to obey the divine commands in general, although this desire may be absent on any particular occasion.

It is within the context of a moral struggle that the indeterminist tries to establish the freedom of the will and by doing so is forced to accept the paradoxical conclusion that a truly virtuous person, whose actions flow spontaneously from his character, is the least free of men. It would seem that the more successful we are in acquiring a virtuous character, and thus reducing the area of moral struggle, the less free we become. We can become virtuous

only by sacrificing our freedom, and can remain free only in so far as we fail to acquire a virtuous character. The whole of our educational system and moral teaching is based on the theory that by training the character we can incline the person to virtuous conduct, but now we discover that we can do this only at the cost of the individual's freedom. The completely virtuous person would be the least free of all; he would in fact be a slave to virtue.

We are led to this paradoxical conclusion by the attempt to establish a category of action which is independent of our formed character. Quite clearly, those actions which are the result of our being the kind of persons we are cannot qualify as free, in the sense required by the indeterminist, and it was to differentiate between such character-determined actions and 'free' actions that the concept of the will was introduced. Some writers, realising that such a concept does not serve any useful purpose, have introduced another concept which they call the 'self'. For them the only free actions are those which are 'self-determined'. The evidence for the existence of this 'self' is said to be introspective: it is claimed that, if we consider what takes place when we make a moral choice, we are conscious of a 'self' as something distinct from, and beyond, our desires, sentiments and ideals, that is, beyond our character.

To those people who are not conscious of such a 'self' the argument obviously carries little weight. If, however, we grant the existence of this 'self', we experience the same difficulty in explaining its origin as we have already experienced in our attempt to explain the origin of the 'will'. Freedom from determination cannot be obtained by postulating such concepts as the 'self' or the 'will', for

the obvious reason that these faculties or powers cannot arise out of nothing but must themselves be causally explicable. In addition it seems unhelpful, in order to explain our moral decisions, to postulate a power which is not susceptible of being influenced in any way by all those factors which are usually considered of such importance in moral education. In fact, whatever efforts are made to train a person's character, they are all futile because of the arbitrary actions of this mysterious entity called 'self'.

What can it mean to say that at some point during the period of reflection some power, independent of a person's character and interests, makes the choice? Does it mean that after we have considered which action is the more likely to give us the maximum amount of pleasure, and have reached the state when one desire has considerably more compelling force than another, we are still able, with no consideration for character, interests or desires, to choose? It is no solution to suggest that our desires do exert a certain influence, but that they are not decisive and do not determine, and that we often act against our strongest desires. This is equivalent to saying that we sometimes do not do what we most wish to do, but choose to do something which we wish to do less, although no reason or motive can be adduced for our so acting. If this were true, there would be little use in our attempting to examine our desires and to match them against the whole corpus of likes and aversions which we have built up through the years, and which make up a part of our essential selves. What a travesty of freedom it is which compels us to act in this capricious and unreasonable manner! Surely this is not what is meant when we say that we are conscious of a feeling of freedom when we

choose; it is rather a choice which is exercised without any previous feeling of any kind of which we are conscious. We are conscious of the two competing desires; how can we expect to feel free if our choice is determined by something else of which we are not conscious?

When we are engaged in a struggle between competing desires, the desire which is ultimately victorious is no more and no less a part of our 'self' than is the desire which is overcome. They are both our desires and, although by choosing a certain line of action we are ensuring that that type of behaviour will become more firmly established as a part of our character and consequently will occupy a surer place in our future self than the rejected alternative, yet they are both parts of the self at the time of the action. The tendency to equate the self with those choices which are triumphant must not lead us to imagine that it is a special power standing apart from the rest of the individual.

Professor Stuart Hampshire uses the word in this partial sense when he writes: "An irrational man does not pause to establish self-consciously in his own mind the exact order of dependence of his own opinions and intentions. He is not active in reviewing the whole range of his opinions and intentions, but rather passively finds them forming and changing without the deliberate imposition of an order on them. He is so much less free and less self-determining."[1] The degree of freedom, Professor Hampshire suggests, depends on the amount of self-conscious weighing of alternatives which precedes the action. It is true that actions which are the result of a rational deliberation may be of greater moral worth than many

[1] *Thought and Action* p. 268.

purely instinctive actions, but it does not therefore follow that they must also be more free, or, more precisely, that the agent is more free when his actions are so determined. To say that an action is free is to say that it is uncaused, that it cannot be explained with reference to any preceding state of affairs: to say that an individual is free is to say that his actions are not subject to determination of a certain kind, not that his actions are uncaused or fortuitous. There are no such things as free actions, but we can talk meaningfully of an individual being free. For Professor Hampshire this freedom is equivalent to self-determination, where by 'self' he means that part of an individual which is capable of rational deliberation.

Leibniz and Kant both reached a not dissimilar conclusion. Leibniz believed that in our actions we may be determined by our own understanding or reason, or follow blindly the dictates of our passions. The more we act according to our reason, the more we are free: we are less free in so far as we are ruled by our passions. Having rejected the liberty of indifference, Leibniz had to be content with the freedom which consisted of being "determined by the perfection of our own nature". For Kant freedom was a characteristic of those actions which are caused by the 'faculty of reason' ,which is itself subject to the moral law alone. All other actions are subject to ordinary physical laws and are therefore not free.

Such a conclusion is at variance with what is generally thought to follow from a belief in free will. It is in order to establish the freedom of wrong actions, not right ones, that the conclusions of determinism are rejected. Nevertheless, I think it is possible to explain why so many philosophers have been of the opinion that the essential

character, or 'self', of an individual is rational, and thus to infer that only self-determined, or rational behaviour can be free.

Even before the discoveries of modern psychology, it seemed natural to consider the passions as in some sense existing outside and apart from the individual. To be motivated by Locke's 'boisterous passion' was, it seemed, very much like being compelled to action by an outside force. If I am compelled to act by the superior power of another person, I am not free. Is this not similar to the power exerted by a great passion, with the consequent denial of freedom? In some sense it would seem that the passion is not really a part of myself, that 'I' can look upon it as something outside. There must, therefore, exist in each of us an 'inner core' or 'self' which is distinct from our passions, and only in so far as we possess such a self can we be free. The more we discover about the motives, conscious and unconscious, of our actions, the smaller does the sphere of influence of the self become. In our studies of human behaviour we are usually more concerned to explain why someone commits a crime than why he does a good action. If a person commits a murder, we seek to unearth the causes in the heredity or environment of the murderer in order to use our knowledge to prevent future murders. On the other hand, if someone does a noble deed, we do not consider it necessary to explore his early life to discover the determining factors. To explore the motivation of wrong actions has always been considered more interesting and more socially useful than that of right actions; that is why wrong actions, just because they can be causally explained, are thought to fall outside the province of the self. In this way the self

becomes restricted to those aspects of behaviour which we cannot causally explain or for which we do not usually seek a causal explanation. Because such actions are usually right actions, the self acquires a certain moral tone which we also find associated with the 'understanding' of Leibniz and the 'faculty of reason' of Kant. But the assumption of the existence of such a self can never be more than a temporary explanation of human conduct. There is no basis for the belief that right actions are immune to the prying eye of the psychologist or that human freedom can be saved only if there are actions which cannot be explained.

According to this doctrine, if I do kind actions because I am innately kind, then this kindness is not a part of my 'self'. If I am naturally impulsive, then this aspect of my character is not really me, but is something outside my real 'self' compelling me to behave in this way. But such an explanation of what it means to be compelled bears no resemblance to what we usually assume the phrase to mean. I know what it means to say that I am compelled to act in a certain way by a force outside myself, but what can it mean to say that I am compelled to act in such a way by my own character? If I go to Italy for a holiday because I very much want to do so, it seems strange, to say the least, to describe my action as being compelled by my desires. And yet that is what we must do if the self is separate from my desires and if only self-determined actions are free, or, more precisely, if the agent is more free when his actions are self-determined.

Now it is clearly of some importance that we should distinguish between those actions which are capable of being influenced by rational deliberation and those which

are not; but it is not necessary that all actions which are capable of being so influenced should be so on any particular occasion. It is the fact that an action could have been, and not that it has been, influenced by deliberation and choice that is essential before the agent can be called free. If we are compelled to act by an outside power or by an inner 'boisterous passion', as Locke calls it, then we are not free, but we can be free without having to impose an order on our opinions and intentions before we act. The extent to which our actions are causally determined by our conscious selves may be a measure of our individual responsibility for those actions—we become less innocent as we become more self-conscious—but not of our freedom. Because instinctive, unreflecting action is often unwise, we are inclined to assume that the moral worth of an action depends on the amount of self-consciousness which precedes it. This may often be the case, but such an assumption ignores those highly moral actions which flow unselfconsciously from a highly integrated and moral character, and contradicts the evidence supplied by introspection.

There can be no doubt that the majority of our everyday choices are determined by our desires, which are a function of our character. If we are free only when we are making moral choices, choosing between duty and desire, then we cannot find any introspective basis for such a freedom. For the average person the central fact of the whole free will controversy is the internal feeling of freedom, of which he is conscious by introspection, when he is faced with a choice between two alternatives. It is in the ordinary choices of everyday life, whether to have tea or coffee for breakfast, where to go for our holidays, and

in hundreds of similar choices each day, that we feel and believe that we are free. This is the freedom that Dr Johnson demanded and that the man in the street believes himself to possess.

When we consider the many and varied types of human action, we discover that they all have one quality in common: they are all grounded in the reaction of a character to its environment. They vary from an instinctive or purely habitual reaction, to those which are the result of long and conscious deliberation; but in all cases they are capable, at least in theory, of being explained; behind them all there is a reason or motive, even if unconscious. The only alternative to the acceptance of this explanation is to assert that there are certain actions which are uncaused. The indeterminist would choose as the model for human freedom that act which is unmotivated, which does not have its origin either in the character of the person, or in the attendant circumstances. He would argue that, if our actions are the result of causes or motives, then they are not free; only actions which are somehow uncaused and spontaneous are truly free, and therefore, if we act in accordance with what we consider the highest principles of human action, then we are slaves; freedom is to be achieved only by a surrender to chance, and *l'acte gratuit* becomes the noblest act of all. As Professor A. J. Ayer writes: "One becomes like a roulette ball. One is the person to whom things happen, the plaything of the fates, surely the antithesis of what is ordinarily meant by being free."[1]

As soon as we attempt to discover in the notion of human freedom anything more than the power to do as we choose, we are going beyond all evidence afforded by

[1] *Encounter* (1955, Oct.).

introspection, and are so divorcing our actions from our characters as to make freedom synonymous with pure chance. We are free in so far as we have the power to weigh the alternatives, make decisions, and act according to the inclination of our own acts of deliberation. In so acting, we have a feeling of freedom; but such a feeling would be impossible unless our actions followed from our motives and desires. Uncaused or unmotivated actions not deriving from our characters or dispositions would be without any such feeling; in fact, such spontaneous actions could not, in any real sense, be called *our* actions at all.

## CHAPTER V

# FREEDOM AND MORALITY

ONE of the reasons most often advanced against the determinist hypothesis is that a belief in free will is essential for morality. It is maintained that, unless in a given situation a person could have acted differently from the way he did in fact act, it would be unjust to praise or blame him for the action in question, and, as a result, if we can never rightly praise or blame there is an end of morality. The problem with which we are confronted is whether we are ever justified in praising or blaming an action if it is one of a strictly determined series of events. If we can give a causal explanation of an action, are we debarred from referring to it as either moral or immoral?

We all agree that there are certain things we do to which we should consider it most improper to apply any moral judgment. If a person waves something in front of my eyes, I can hardly be blamed (or praised) for blinking. It is true that the movement of my lids can be causally explained by reference to light waves and nerve cells, but this is not the reason why we consider that the words 'moral' and 'immoral' do not apply. If we said to someone, "You should not have blinked when I waved that paper before your eyes", we should get the reply, "But I couldn't help it. I did not choose to blink, and even if I had chosen not to blink I should have done so just the same." In such a case we should accept the explanation and consider that our moral judgment was completely

out of place. We should reach this conclusion not because we discovered a causal explanation of what happened between the waving of the paper and the blinking, but because we recognised that if an action cannot be influenced by the agent's choice it is irrelevant to talk of praise or blame. Before we can rightly say that a person ought to have performed an action, it is necessary that he could have refrained from doing so. In the case of reflex actions, which are completely beyond our power to inhibit, no such choice is open to us. It is for this reason, and not because they are causally determined, that we do not consider them suitable for praise or blame.

Because reflexes cannot be influenced by our conscious choice we may consider that they are not, strictly speaking, actions. It is indeed more true to say that we suffer them than that we perform them. We may place in the same category a whole range of neurotic behaviour. Modern medical research has revealed to us causal factors, both physical and mental, at a level of which the agent is unaware, which enable us to explain certain types of behaviour. The actions may be of such a kind as to appear perfectly rational; it is only when we look at them more closely that we realise the extent to which they deviate from the behaviour of a normal person.

John Hospers gives an example of such behaviour: "A man has wash-compulsion. He must be constantly washing his hands—he uses up perhaps 400 towels a day. Asked why he does this, he says 'I need to, my hands are dirty;' and if it is pointed out to him that they are not really dirty, he says 'They feel dirty, anyway I feel better when I wash them.' So once again he washes them. He 'freely decides' every time; he feels he must wash them, he

deliberates for a moment, perhaps, but always ends by washing them. What he does not see, of course, are the invisible wires inside him pulling him inevitably to do the thing he does."[1] The man is fully conscious of the fact that he is washing his hands, but is quite ignorant of why he is doing so. His action is causally determined at a level which is inaccessible to his conscious desires and choices. As in the case of reflexes, we should hesitate to blame or punish him, not because his action can be causally explained, but because it cannot be affected by his decision. Whatever he had decided to do would not have affected the action he did in fact perform, and we all agree that unless a person could have acted differently in a certain situation, in some sense of the words 'could have', then we are not entitled to praise or blame, reward or punish him.

It is, however, very far from clear what precise meaning can be attached to the words "I could have done . . .". If a pupil at school says, "I could have answered that question this morning", the only thing we can be certain of is that he did not answer the question. If, from past experience, we feel we can trust both the pupil's power to assess his own knowledge and his truthfulness in reporting what he knows, then we are entitled to infer that he was making a true statement. But what is the pupil saying? Some part at least of what he is saying is "I knew the answer to that question this morning." He is certainly laying claim to the knowledge required for a correct answer to the question, but it is far from certain what more he is saying, if indeed he is saying anything more. Were the pupil to add the words "if I had wanted to", he would not add anything to what he has already said in the way of explanation. The person to whom he was speaking would

[1] *Free Will and Psychoanalysis* p. 566.

certainly have assumed as much without its being explicitly stated and would still expect some further explanation of why he did not answer the question. This would apply also if the pupil had added the words "if I had chosen to". Neither additional clause would have told his hearer anything he did not already take for granted.

And yet the original statement might require some explanation and would probably elicit the response "Why didn't you?" If the pupil replied, "Because I didn't want to" or "Because I didn't choose to", he would be held guilty of evasion. His hearer would probably reply, "Of course you didn't want (or choose) to, but why didn't you want (or choose) to?" The pupil would then be expected to give a reason for not wanting or not choosing. He might have already given the correct answers to other questions which his classmates did not know and have been afraid of becoming unpopular by a further display of knowledge. This would be the reason why he did not want or choose to answer the question, the causal factor which determined his action. If he had wished to indicate why he did not answer the question he would have said, "I would have answered that question this morning if I hadn't feared the reaction of the rest of the class". Such a translation from "I could have . . ." to "I would have . . . if . . ." is not possible with the verbs 'to want to' and 'to choose to' in the protasis, because they do not give an acceptable explanation. We do not say "I would have answered that question if I had wanted (or chosen) to" because such a statement merely refers to the causal links between 'wanting to' or 'choosing to' answer a question and the answering, and this is assumed by the hearer. The real cause lies further back and it alone is significant.

The statement we have been considering is capable of two interpretations. In the first place, the pupil may have been referring only to the state of his knowledge: that he possessed sufficient information at that time to answer the question correctly. If the words have this meaning, they are, as it were, completely divorced from other causal influences which were operating at the time they were uttered. Their truth cannot be affected by any choices or wishes, but this very inviolability is purchased at the price of the absence of any reference to whether the question could have or could not have been answered on this particular occasion.

In the second place, the pupil may have wished to convey the idea that, in addition to possessing the necessary knowledge, he would have answered the question if the conditions had been in some respect, or respects, different. It does not follow from what he says that, if the situation were repeated, alike in every respect to the original situation, his action would have been different from what it was. If his statement possesses a specific reference to the possibility or otherwise of his having answered the question at a particular time, then "I could have . . ." is equivalent to "I would have if . . ." where the if-clause contains the causal factor which determined his action. The determining factor in this sense is never the agent's wishes or choices.

If a person says, "I could have gone to the cinema last night", it is not to tell his listener that he possesses, as in the previous case, any particular knowledge or ability. Going to the cinema is an activity which is assumed to be within the capacity of most people. What he is saying is that the opportunity to go was available to him. We shall

see that this is so if we consider some of the possible contexts in which this statement might be uttered. If, for example, a friend had asked, "Will you come to the cinema with me this evening?" and he had replied, "I am sorry, but I have another appointment this evening. I could have gone last night", he is implying that if he had been asked on the previous evening, there would not have been any engagement to prevent his accepting the invitation. That is not to say that "I could have gone to the cinema last night" is equivalent to "I would have gone . . . if I had been asked". We still do not know whether he would in fact have gone if he had been asked, but merely that he could have gone if he had been asked. But the sentence "I could have gone if I had been asked" is rather strange in that whether he could or could not have gone to the cinema is in no way dependent upon his being asked. "I could have gone to the cinema last night" was intended to convey the information that he would not have been prevented from going by another engagement, but not that there was a causal connection between being asked and going to the cinema. It is quite possible that he would have gone to the cinema, but this would have depended upon other factors such as the excellence of the film and the attractiveness of alternative ways of spending the evening. We might express what he had in mind by saying "I had no previous engagement last night to prevent my going to the cinema, and if I had been asked I might have gone".

The difference between "I could have gone to the cinema if I had been asked" and "I could have gone to the cinema" *tout court* is that in the latter he is saying that the opportunity existed but nothing about any other factors,

such as his general attitude to the cinema, knowledge of films, mood at the time, all of which would have influenced his choice; whereas in the former he is suggesting one factor—being asked—which would have inclined him towards going. It does not follow from the fact that he was not asked that he could not have gone. He was not asked and he did not go, but he could have gone even though he was not asked, and maybe, if some other circumstance had been different from what it was, he would have gone. Nevertheless, when he said "I could have gone to the cinema last night", with or without an if-clause, he was not implying that if all the circumstances had been the same it was still possible for him to have gone to the cinema.

Mr J. L. Austin discusses the case of the golfer: "Consider the case where I miss a very short putt and kick myself because I could have holed it. It is not that I should have holed it if I had tried: I did try, and missed. It is not that I should have holed it if conditions had been different: that might of course be so, but I am talking about conditions as they precisely were, and asserting that I could have holed it."[1] If a golfer gets no further than this in self-analysis, he is not likely to reduce his handicap. To say "I could have holed it" means no more than to say that on frequent occasions in the past I have in fact, in similar circumstances, holed it. The conditions for a putt at golf can never be exactly repeated and therefore no exact estimate can ever be made of the future success or failure of any particular putt. I feel certain that any golfer who misses a putt which he usually holes does not merely kick himself but seeks some explanation of his failure. I do not think that any golfer would agree with Mr Austin

[1] *Ifs and Cans*, p. 119 note.

when he writes: "A human ability or power or capacity is inherently liable not to produce success, on occasion, and that for no reason."[1] Nor do I think that a golfer who misses a putt ever says "I could have holed it" unless he has in mind some conditional clause such as "if I had taken more care" or "if I hadn't been overcome by the occasion". What he does say is "I ought to have holed it" or "I would have holed it yesterday".

Whenever I make a statement such as "Yesterday I could have done A but I did B", I am not saying that if I could return to the time just before I did B, with every circumstance exactly as it was at the time, the action A might have been done instead of B. If I did perform B it was presumably because I desired and chose to do so. How then would it be possible for me to do A without a change in my desires and choice? But if these were different we should not be recreating the moment of time as it existed immediately before I did B. If they remain the same my action must remain the same.

The indeterminist wishes to maintain that I could have acted differently in a categorical sense, that is, given the whole set of circumstances obtaining when the action was performed, including my character, a different action might still have followed without any change in the factors which causally determined my choice. For this to be true it is obvious that the action must in some way be independent of the character and disposition of the agent. If the independence is complete, then the action must be spontaneous and uncaused. Those who say that this is a true picture of what happens not only deny the principle that everything has a cause, but also in the process

[1] op. cit., p. 120 note.

destroy all basis for rewards and punishments. For what is it that we are rewarding or punishing? Once we break the causal sequence between a person's character and his actions, once we say that someone with a certain character in a certain set of circumstances could have performed either of two different actions, then we deny that a person's actions are determined by his character. There cannot be any causal connection between his actions and the total state of the universe, including the agent's mental and physical make-up, preceding the actions: they must be completely fortuitous. But unless an action has its origin in the character of the agent, it is neither to his shame nor to his credit that it is performed, and all punishment or reward would be meaningless. If his actions are not determined by his ideals, hopes, sentiments and beliefs, if they are what they are not because he is a certain kind of person but because they just happen that way, on what grounds can he be punished or rewarded?

It would seem, therefore, that moral language is fitting only if an action is one of a strictly determined series of events. But since we believe that all events are causally determined and that some actions can merit praise or blame, we have to discover what it is that makes it possible to apply these terms at all. Can we discover any criteria which will serve to distinguish actions which can rightly be praised or blamed from those which cannot?

We consider that moral language can be used only of those actions which, in the words of G. E. Moore, "are under the control of our wills, in the sense that if, just before we began to do them, we had chosen not to do them, we should not have done them".[1] Such actions he

[1] *Ethics*, p. 13.

calls voluntary. Whenever we say that a person ought to act or ought to have acted in a certain way, we assume that he could act or could have acted so. Similarly, if a person could not have willed not to perform an action, we have no right to say that he ought not to have done it. If we accept Moore's definition of a voluntary action as one which would not have occurred if, just beforehand, the agent had chosen not to perform it, we have, I think, the criterion we are seeking. A person threatened with a revolver and told to hand over a sum of money or be shot is certainly presented with a choice between two alternative lines of action, but we should hesitate to call voluntary whichever is chosen. We can be sure that he desires neither to be shot nor to hand over the money; he is compelled to act against his desires, and his will is under constraint. The mere fact that he has a choice does not mean that he *chooses* to perform either of them. The choice exists between two actions either of which is performed under compulsion and cannot therefore in any sense be called voluntary. Any action performed under such circumstances does not come within the scope of moral judgments. We do not blame a person for doing something which he is forced to do and therefore cannot avoid doing.

We do blame a person for doing something if the action is deliberately chosen or intended, and it is this kind of action we have in mind when we say that it could have been avoided. But all that we can possibly mean by saying this is that a different choice or intention would have produced a different result.

It is for such voluntary actions that we say that a person is responsible. When, however, we notice how the words

'responsible' and 'responsibility' are used in everyday speech, we are immediately aware of the failure to attach any precise meaning to them. The sentence "Smith shot his wife" could be interpreted as being the equivalent of "Smith is responsible for the death of his wife by shooting". As soon, however, as we say this, we are faced with the problem of what exactly we mean by saying that Smith is 'responsible for' his wife's death. Professor Hart contends that whenever we make statements such as 'I did it', 'You did it', 'He did it' or 'Smith shot his wife', we are not describing different physical actions preceded or accompanied by corresponding mental occurrences, but are ascribing responsibility for the action in question. When we say 'Smith shot his wife' we are ascribing responsibility to Smith for his wife's death, and this is a judgment which will remain valid unless we later discover other factors or circumstances which may lead us to modify it. For example, the degree of responsibility may be reduced or even completely removed if we discover that the action was not intended, or performed in self-defence, or was determined by various other extenuating factors. Professor Hart maintains that we cannot lay down beforehand any physical or psychological conditions of such a kind as to enable us to determine by reference to them whether a person is or is not to be held responsible for an action. By saying 'Smith shot his wife' we are automatically ascribing responsibility, but the degree of responsibility is subsequently determined when further facts come to light, in the same way as a defence counsel might plead extenuating circumstances in a court of law.

But what precisely do we mean when we interpret

'Smith shot his wife' as ascribing responsibility? Do we mean anything more than that the action of firing the revolver was Smith's action and not the action of some other person? When I say 'Smith shot his wife' I am ascribing responsibility to Smith for his action only if responsibility means that the action was Smith's, and not that of Jones or Brown. It is important to realise that I am not saying any more than this. If it is later discovered that the shooting was an accident, because Smith's wife rushed round the corner of the house and into the line of fire just as Smith was aiming at a rabbit, then Smith is still just as responsible for the action as he was before the accidental nature of the shooting was known. In the sense in which 'Smith shot his wife' automatically ascribes responsibility, a person can be held responsible for an accident. In this sense 'responsible for' is used to mean 'causally determining'. We make frequent use of this meaning, as when we say, 'A burst tyre was responsible for the accident', or 'The introduction of a speed limit was responsible for a reduction in the number of accidents'. In such cases we mean that the burst tyre or the speed limit was the main causal factor in the production of a certain subsequent state of affairs, in the same way as Smith's pressing the trigger of his revolver was the main causal factor in the death of his wife.

It is fatally easy to slip from this meaning of 'responsible' to another and less easily defined meaning. If we use 'responsible for' merely to mean 'the cause of', how can we account for the distinction, which we most certainly make, between 'Smith shot his wife with intent to kill' and 'Smith shot his wife by accident'? We should certainly be inclined to say that Smith was responsible for

his wife's death if he intended to shoot her, in a way in which he could not be held responsible if it was an accident. In both cases he would have performed the action, and to an outside observer the actions might appear identical. What difference can there be unless we make some reference to Smith's mental state at the time of firing the revolver? In the one case we say that he intended to shoot his wife, and in the other that he did not. This distinction enables us to say that Smith was 'responsible for' his wife's death in the one case in a sense which would be quite out of place in the other. But this use of 'responsible for' is quite different from the use which means merely 'causally determining'.

It is quite clear that we use the phrase 'responsible for' in two distinct ways, and that much confusion arises through our failure to distinguish between them. When we decide that someone is 'responsible for', in the sense that he intended and desired an action of which we disapprove, we are inclined to condemn him to an extent which we would not do if the action were not intended or desired. To what extent and for what reasons are we justified in doing so? If we return to the example of Smith shooting his wife, we are not inclined to blame him if we are convinced that he did not intend the result of his action, that is if the killing was what we call an accident; but we most certainly do blame him if we believe that he intended and desired his wife's death. Both actions, we assume, had certain causal antecedents residing in Smith's character and environment. The main difference between them lies in the difference of mental attitude. In the one case he intended and desired to kill his wife; in the other case he did not.

Quite clearly many crimes are committed in which it is very difficult, if not impossible, to be sure that a person intended the result of his action. This is so not only when he is considered incapable of forming an intent because of insanity, or when his responsibility is diminished for some similar reason, but in cases when such a defence would be quite out of place. In such cases the Law introduces the conception of the 'reasonable man', and it is claimed that whenever a person understands the action he is doing then he must be held responsible for the consequences, if they are of such a kind as would have been anticipated by a 'reasonable man'. Against such an ascription of responsibility no evidence as to the actual intention of the person concerned is admitted. In criminal cases it can hardly be expected that the word of the person charged with the offence should be accepted as trustworthy evidence of his real intent, although in the last resort he may be the only person who knows whether he intended the consequences of his action. Nevertheless, cases do arise when there is evidence, other than the wrongdoer's own testimony, which clearly indicates that the consequences of an action were not intended, even though any reasonable person might have been expected to anticipate them. The difficulty of arriving at a clear picture of a person's mind prior to his committing an offence does not seem to justify such an automatic presumption of intent.

If Smith, in the case we have considered above, says that he intended to shoot a rabbit and not his wife, and if we know, and know that Smith knows, that all rabbits in the district have been killed off by myxamatosis, then we have good reason to doubt his avowal of intention and should consequently reconsider whether or not he was

responsible. We may also consider that he deserved some blame, whatever his intentions, for not anticipating the possible dangerous consequences of shooting at rabbits so near a house. It is not necessary that he should have intended to shoot his wife to be held to some extent responsible for the result of an action which it would not have been unreasonable to expect him to foresee.

The degree of responsibility for the result of an action which was not intended, but which might have been foreseen, is much less than that for the intended result of an action. In the first case we should consider a man stupid, thoughtless and even criminally negligent, but his offence would be less heinous than if he had fully intended the result.

In the assessment of responsibility we must take into consideration the discoveries of Freud and the psychoanalysts. They tell us that a person may genuinely believe his intention is of a certain kind whereas it is in fact something quite different and completely inaccessible to his conscious mind. He may announce that he intends to achieve one result while all the time he is trying to achieve another without being aware of it. This kind of neurotic behaviour, which is in no way affected by conscious intentions, is usually considered to be a mitigating factor in the assessment of responsibility.

The degree to which we consider a person responsible for his actions, and consequently the degree to which he is to be praised or blamed, cannot be divorced from his mental attitude immediately before the action was performed. But we must not forget that his mental attitude is itself the product of previous mental attitudes, which were themselves determined by still earlier mental atti-

tudes. As we have seen already, there can be no end to our search for preceding mental causes; so that, if a person's action is strictly determined by previous causes, he cannot be ultimately responsible for what he does. Is it not true that all the events in his life have been determined by previous events, and even determined by previous events in the lives of his parents, and so on to the beginning of time? There are some who deny this, believing they can thus preserve the concept of ultimate responsibility. But the only alternative to causally determined actions is random, uncaused actions. Can one be held responsible for these? Surely the dilemma is of our own making. We are seeking a kind of responsibility which does not make sense.

Once we realise that we cannot, logically cannot, be held 'ultimately' responsible for our actions, whether we think they are causally determined or random, we are free to pursue the much more profitable task of determining the varying degrees of the responsibility we do possess. It is essential to distinguish between the ordinary shoplifter and the kleptomaniac, the thug and the psychopath, and to do so we say that the thug is responsible for his actions to a degree which would not apply to the psychopath. The notion of diminished responsibility is one which is of extreme importance in our legal system. The famous McNaghten rules, which apply to cases of murder, attempt to define the conditions which make a person not responsible for his actions. These rules state that a man was not responsible if he was "labouring under such a defect of reason, from disease of the mind, as not to know the nature and quality of the act he was doing, or, if he did know it, that he did not know he was doing

what was wrong". This means that a man who commits murder and does not know what he is doing cannot be held responsible in the same way as someone who is in full possession of his faculties and knows what he is doing. Knowledge of what one is doing would seem to be a prerequisite of responsibility. But this is not the only distinction which can be drawn. Murder may be committed as a result of a deficiency of will as well as of a deficiency of intellect. The murderer may very well have known that the act was wrong and yet have been unable to resist whatever impulses drove him on. There is no doubt that any attempt to determine degrees of responsibility in accordance with the varying degree of compulsiveness of impulses is much more difficult to carry out than the corresponding differentiation between degrees of sanity. There is also a much greater danger of circularity in the argument. We must be careful that we do not assume that the impulse was irresistible merely because it was not resisted. For insanity there are generally-accepted criteria: we may say that a person must have been mad to do a certain thing, but we also have methods of establishing madness other than the doing of the thing in question. For emotional disorders or deficiencies of the will there is frequently no such method. Are we justified in saying that responsibility is diminished in those cases where the only evidence of emotional disorder or deficiency of will is provided by the cases which we are called upon to judge? It might appear that we have been guilty of circularity, but I do not think that this is so. Psychologists have shown quite conclusively that although we may be intellectually aware of the action we are performing, we may be quite unaware of the unconscious motives

which effectively determine our conduct. We may profess certain conscious motives whereas, in fact, we are completely unaware of why we really behave in the way we do.

The difficulty is not whether responsibility can ever be diminished because of these unconscious motives, but to what extent. Are we ever fully conscious of our motives? Do we ever achieve that degree of self-consciousness which is alone compatible with full responsibility? On the intellectual level it is comparatively easy to apply the McNaghten rules and say that where there is no knowledge there is no responsibility, but on the level of emotion and will no such simple decision can be made. It is much easier to pick out the mental defective than the moral defective, but both conditions imply a diminished responsibility. If we also consider the extent to which our actions are determined by our habits of thought and emotional responses, both of which are largely the product of our education and social environment, we shall realise the narrow limits within which our conscious decisions can operate. In our efforts to apportion responsibility, and decide the extent to which blame is justified and punishment effective, we shall understand that there is no clear distinction between the mentally or morally healthy on the one hand and the sick on the other, but rather that all offenders are more or less sick.

We cannot be aware of the extent to which mental sickness is a causal factor in conduct without asking ourselves what effect this must have upon our moral judgments. When people are physically sick our only concern is to help them recover their health, and in recent years there has been a very great advance towards a similar attitude to mental illness. But this improved attitude has

on the whole been reserved for those whose mental derangement has been almost complete, and we are less understanding of those whose mental health has been only partially impaired.

That this is so is largely due to the fact that there are two opposing viewpoints as to why we are justified in making moral judgments in general and in inflicting punishment in particular. On the one hand there are those who look upon all punishment as in itself evil, but necessary as a means to achieve some greater good. On the other hand there are those who think that certain actions require to be atoned for by punishment, irrespective of any further effect it may have. The latter attitude has a long history and is, on the whole, the one still held by the majority of people. It is with this attitude that every penal reformer has to contend. Those who defend this retributive attitude to punishment say that our sense of right and wrong is offended unless a wrong-doing is atoned for by a punishment which is, in some way, commensurate with the offence. Punishment, they claim, has nothing whatever to do with reform or deterrence but is inflicted upon the offender for the sole purpose of annulling the evil which has been committed. The fact that a person has done wrong, whatever the circumstances, is a sufficient reason for his being made to suffer, and the degree of suffering must be sufficient to negative the original wrong, but not excessive, or a further injustice will be done. The impossibility of drawing up any table of equivalents between crime and punishment was pointed out by Hegel: "Reason," he wrote, "cannot determine . . . any principle whose application could decide whether justice requires for an offence (i) a corporal punishment

of forty lashes or thirty-nine, or (ii) a fine of five dollars or four dollars ninety-three, four, etc. cents . . . and yet injustice is done at once if there is one lash too many, or one dollar or one cent too many or too few."

What punishment is required to annul the stealing of a sheep? Our ancestors thought that justice would not be done without the sacrifice of a human life; today the offender would probably get off with a fine. In both cases justice would be done, but what different conceptions of justice! There is no fixed, immutable equivalence between the evil of the offence and the evil of the punishment, and the metaphysical conception of a balance in nature which has to be maintained is nothing more or less than the relationship between the offence and the moral indignation felt by society. The history of penal reform shows quite clearly the remarkable extent to which moral indignation varies from person to person and from age to age. Since the Middle Ages there has been a considerable growth of humanitarian impulses and an increasing revulsion against brutal punishment.

The supporters of the retributive theory of punishment are not inclined to attach any importance to the causal factors which have produced the offence or to varying degrees of responsibility. The theory derives from the theological doctrine that man can be ultimately responsible for his actions and is punished for his misdeeds by a divine creator. No attempt is made to explain in what way a man can be ultimately responsible for his actions and so merit divine wrath; and this same unawareness of what is involved in the concept of responsibility bedevils the retributivist's attitude to the function of punishment in society. It is not unlike that of certain primitive

societies in which punishment was inflicted in order to placate some deity who had been offended. The question of moral responsibility as we understand it today was never considered. An offence against the deity would call down his wrath upon society, and this could be averted only by punishing the offender. That the wrong was intended or not, voluntary or involuntary, would have no bearing on the punishment inflicted. The purpose of it was not to punish a voluntary action but to placate an enraged deity. The doctrine that sin is punished by eternal damnation would seem to demand and justify a similar retributive attitude to punishment in human affairs, but there are encouraging signs that the gradual rejection of these theological beliefs has been accompanied by a change in the attitude to punishment.

There are some, however, who reject the theological basis of retribution and still maintain that punishment stands in no need of justification beyond the fact that an offence has been committed. It is said that we are intuitively persuaded of the necessity of punishment irrespective of any results it may have. Mr E. F. Carritt defending this point of view writes: "For remorse is the penalty that fits the crime, that which all punishment seeks to simulate and to stimulate."[1] But if we attempt to base the theory on intuition we find at once that not everyone intuits the same thing. For example, Dr A. C. Ewing writes: "Now it seems to me that, instead of it being intuitively certain that punishment should be inflicted as an end-in-itself without any consideration of consequences, the intuitive evidence is all the other way."[2]

[1] *The Theory of Morals*, p. 110.
[2] *The Morality of Punishment*, p. 18.

There is no doubt that the moral indignation which is commonly felt at certain crimes is most easily assuaged by the punishment of the criminal. This is, I believe, quite different from saying that we intuitively feel that retribution is the main justification for punishment. To say that we often feel a deep-seated urge to punish people for wrongdoing is not to say that we are intuitively certain that the punishment is justified. Psychologists tell us that this urge to punish others derives from our own sense of guilt at our failure to live up to our moral ideals. This feeling of guilt can often be dispelled by the convenient device of inflicting punishment on someone else: to obtain relief it is not essential that we should undergo the punishment ourselves. But whatever the origin of this desire to receive and inflict punishment, we cannot deduce from it any truths about the grounds on which punishment may be justified.

The determinist rejects the theory that punishment is a good in itself and would wish to retain it only in so far as it is a means to some other good. He does not believe that there is some metaphysical balance between guilt and punishment which must be maintained whatever the consequences. It is his conviction that, in general, it is more likely that the sum of good in society will be increased and the sum of evil decreased if wrongdoings are sometimes punished than if they are not. This result is achieved because punishment does possess a very strong inhibiting effect upon conduct; and just as punishment inhibits action, so reward encourages it. It could hardly be denied that people are encouraged to behave better through rewards and are deterred from behaving badly through punishments. It is this fact about human nature

which makes it possible to use a system of rewards and punishments to maintain and increase the harmony and general good of society. This result is achieved partly by the effect produced upon the future conduct of the person who is rewarded or punished, and partly by the effect upon the conduct of those other people who learn that certain actions are rewarded and others punished.

For the determinist all punishment is essentially forward-looking and only justified if it is likely to induce right conduct, either in the person punished or in others. It follows that only actions which are voluntarily chosen can really merit punishment or reward. We may punish a person for not doing a certain thing if, from our knowledge of that person, we have good reason to believe that he failed to do it not through any fundamental lack of ability, but just because he chose not to; and we consider the punishment justified because we believe it will influence his desires in such a way that he will be more likely to do it in the future. If, however, he could not have done the action even if he had chosen to, then we consider that punishment would not achieve anything and would be out of place.

The whole functioning in society of rewards and punishments depends on the assumption that they do, in the main, exert a directing influence upon human behaviour. It is because of this that we are justified in rewarding and punishing. If we consider any particular offender we may find that the punishment does not have its desired effect. This may be because it is not well chosen, either from the point of view of kind, or of severity, or because the offender is the type of person whose behaviour cannot be influenced in this way.

We all know of cases where punishment seems to produce behaviour which is the reverse of that intended. The boy at school who is caned for a misdemeanour often seems to develop a curious compulsion to do those things which will bring this form of punishment. Far from being persuaded to mend his ways, he may become more anti-social than he was before he was caned. This does not necessarily mean that he should not have been punished at all: it may be that the wrong type of punishment was chosen. But how long do we have to experiment with the infliction of various types of punishment before we come to the conclusion that punishment can never be effective? Can we ever know that in any particular case it can never be effective, or is it merely that we have grown tired of punishing before we have succeeded in finding the right kind?

We assume that punishment can be effective whenever the action punished is under the control of the conscious desires and will of the agent. But do we have any criteria for deciding whether the action is desired and willed other than the fact that the punishment is effective?

It must be admitted that our knowledge of human desires and motives is not yet sufficient to enable us always to tell beforehand whether punishment will be effective. This does not mean that we are never able to do so. Psychoanalysts have succeeded in explaining certain types of abnormal behaviour as the result of events in a person's early life which determine his actions but of whose existence he is completely unaware. In one sense, of course, any one offence can be considered to be abnormal behaviour, but abnormality, as understood by the psychoanalyst, requires a whole pattern of conduct and not one isolated instance. That is to say that we do

have certain criteria of abnormality other than the fact that punishment proves to be ineffective.

This is not the case, however, with all types of mental abnormality. Medical science gives the name of 'psychopath' to a person who persistently offends against social morality but who yet shows no other symptoms by which his emotional disorders can be checked. In such cases punishment merely serves to reinforce the anti-social tendencies and to destroy whatever moral feelings already exist. When we discover that punishment does not produce the desired effect but only serves to increase the offender's hostility, we are compelled to seek some other solution. Just as, in general, our system of rewards and punishments is based upon our experience of how they will influence the conduct of the normal person, so, when we discover a whole category of abnormal persons, we must seek a new system which will produce the desired result upon them as a whole.

When we study any particular case which does not, with certainty, fall within some abnormal category, it is frequently very difficult to decide whether punishment is appropriate or not. If we consider the different stages in the history of a person who becomes a drug-addict, we shall discover that somewhere along the process of addiction the point is reached where the will no longer exists as a causal factor. The person is a complete slave and has abandoned all deliberate control of his actions. In the early stages of the addiction the agent's will could still be influenced by praise or blame, reward or punishment, and it is possible to say that he could avoid taking the drug. In the last stages of addiction we are forced to admit that the will is beyond the influence of reward or punishment

and that it is no longer possible to say that the addict could have avoided taking the drug. If we believe that the behaviour of people in a certain state of mind cannot in any way be influenced by the threat of punishment, we cannot avoid the conclusion that in such cases punishment would be unjustified.

In society punishment is usually administered through some legally constituted body according to a well-established set of rules or laws. To decide whether to punish or not in any particular case it is usually sufficient to ensure that the offence is of a kind for which punishment is required. But as soon as an offence has been committed, the deterrent value of the threat of punishment has ceased to exist in the case of the offender. He will now be punished and the act of punishment in itself, if it is widely known in society, will be likely to increase the power of the deterrent for other people. By the same token, if the offence goes unpunished, for whatever reason, the deterrent power of that punishment is likely to be diminished. It is for this reason that the effect which will be produced upon the individual offender is frequently of less importance than the wider consideration of dissuading others from offending in like manner. Because the effectiveness of the penal code depends upon the regularity and inevitability of its application, there is a presumption that the offender must be punished. The deterrent effect of such penal laws is judged by their success in influencing conduct in society at large and not in any particular case. Whenever an offence has been committed, we are concerned not only with the individual offender but also with all those who may be deterred by the manner in which the offender is treated. This means that we can never merely

ask ourselves how we can best prevent the offender repeating his offence, but we have also to look beyond and consider what treatment is most likely to deter others from committing the same offence. And there can be no doubt that these two considerations are often in conflict. This conflict can never be satisfactorily resolved, and punishments are often less severe when the offence is considered in isolation and much more severe when it is thought necessary to use the offence as a warning to other potential offenders.

This may sometimes lead to a state of affairs in which, in order to deter others, we are inclined to inflict a punishment which bears no relation to the degree of responsibility of the offender. Yet, whenever we feel sure that no real measure of responsibility exists, whenever knowledge is lacking or will seriously impaired, we are inclined to refrain from punishing, regardless of the effect that this may have on others. But it cannot be too strongly emphasised that because of the dual nature of punishment, looking inwards to the individual offender and outwards to potential offenders, the relationship between responsibility and punishment is often a very tenuous one.

The essential difference, therefore, between the retributivist and the determinist is that the former looks backwards whereas the latter looks forward to the future state of the offender and of society. For the one, punishment is necessary for no other reason than that a law has been broken; for the other, punishment must follow the breaking of a law because in this way we can increase the total amount of good in the world.

The position of the retributivist has been rather weakened of recent years by discoveries in the fields of psy-

chology and sociology. The further we penetrate into the causes of crime, whether in the character or environment of the criminal, the less justification there seems to be for the retributive view of punishment. The more we discover of the mental and moral deficiencies which underlie and causally determine many crimes, the less we are ready to think that punishment must be inflicted just because there has been a crime. Every causal factor uncovered in the history of a criminal which can be considered to mitigate the gravity of his crime weakens the metaphysical link which the retributivist intuits between crime and punishment.

In the weighing of such factors it is very difficult to discover any grounds on which one causal factor should be considered more destructive of guilt than another. For example, when we learn that a young delinquent was brought up in a home without any moral standards, we are inclined to feel that, because we understand the causal factors which have made him what he is, his responsibility for his wrongdoing is to some extent diminished and that his punishment must be less severe. Yet another delinquent, coming from what we should consider a good home, may have been conditioned to do wrong by his home background just as surely as the other. In any case the latter's delinquency was just as much the product of his heredity and environment as was the former's and it is impossible to differentiate between them on grounds of guilt: any difference in the punishment they receive must be based solely on the effect it is likely to have.

The fundamental retributivist claim that there is a deep-seated human feeling that wrong must always be nullified by punishment does not correspond with what

we find when we look at the institution of punishment in our present-day society. It is certainly true that we often experience a feeling of outrage when we notice how the wicked seem to prosper in the world. There seems to be no justice when virtue is thwarted and vice reaps all the rewards. But however much we may disapprove of this state of affairs, we do not draw up laws to redress the balance. We may wish that we could prevent the wicked from profiting from their wickedness and that we could always ensure that the moral code is not broken with impunity, but in society punishment exists for social crimes and not for private sins. Adultery may be considered wicked but it is not punished; parking offences are often punished but would hardly be considered wicked. Should we not punish envy, jealousy and all uncharitableness rather than a score of offences which bear hardly any taint of wickedness but have nevertheless found their way on to the statute book? The truth of the matter is that legalised systems of punishment do not seem to show any of the characteristics which the retributivist would require of them.

Yet the generally accepted view is that people who break the law should be punished no matter what the effect of such punishment may be. If this were not so, what would it mean to say of someone that he deserves to be punished, or that his punishment is just? To say of a punishment that it is deserved or just is to imply that it is justified as an end in itself or, in other words, that it is retributive. But we have already seen that retribution postulates ultimate responsibility and also that the concept of ultimate responsibility cannot be made conceptually intelligible. It is, therefore, necessary for us to take a

look at the concepts of 'justice' and 'desert' in order to see what meanings these words can have.

When we talk of a law being just, we have in mind the idea that the punishment which the law stipulates for the offence corresponds with our own moral feelings about the wrongness of the offence. Such feelings vary from individual to individual, and from age to age, and can to some extent be modified by the laws themselves. Laws which may be considered just in a capitalist society may very well be thought unjust in a socialist one. It is not unreasonable to suggest that some of the laws of Britain, by attaching more importance to the rights of property than to those of individuals, fail to correspond to what many people today consider just, however satisfactory they may have seemed in the past. Hobbes, however, maintained that the words 'just' and 'unjust' were wrongly used when applied in this purely evaluative way to the laws themselves and should be retained only for the manner in which the laws were enforced. When a law was in accord with the moral law, then, Hobbes thought, it was 'right' rather than 'just': when a verdict was in accord with the law, then the verdict was 'just'. Although we continue to talk of both laws and verdicts being just, it is important that we keep in mind the two different meanings of the word.

For a verdict to be just it is necessary that the person sentenced should have committed an offence and that the verdict itself should be in accordance with a law. In addition, circumstances such as wealth and status which are irrelevant to the offence should not be taken into account. Used in this way it has descriptive rather than evaluative force. When a person commits an offence and is punished,

we say that the punishment is just and deserved if it is the one prescribed by law. We may also think that the law itself is just, but this is not necessarily so: a punishment may be just even though the law is unjust. These descriptive and evaluative meanings of the word 'just' are perfectly intelligible, and it is not until we attempt to add to them some notion of responsibility that we become puzzled.

In practice laws are not administered in a mechanical, automatic way; the judge is entitled and expected to take into consideration various relevant factors which will to some extent determine his verdict. If, for example, a motorist knocks down a pedestrian, it is necessary, before a just verdict can be pronounced, that their relative responsibility should be assessed. The accident represents the crossing of two causal chains as represented by the life histories of the motorist and the pedestrian. It is the duty of the judge to select out of the different causes those which he considers the most significant for his purpose and in this way to apportion responsibility. If the pedestrian suddenly stepped into the path of the car which was being driven with due care and attention, then this action would be selected as the one which caused the accident, and the pedestrian would be held responsible for it. To punish the motorist in these circumstances would be considered unjust, because he was not responsible for the accident. When 'responsible for' means 'causally determining', as in the above example, there is no difficulty in seeing how this concept can be used to ensure that a punishment is just. I do not mean that it is always easy to assess the degree of responsibility of this kind for an action, but that we do know what we are looking for and

can understand its relevance to the action in question. The trouble arises when we try to conceptualise any additional meaning which the principle of retribution would seem to require. Such a meaning would enable us to say of a criminal that he is justly punished, or deserves to be punished, just because he is a wicked man. There is no doubt that the generally accepted meaning of a 'just punishment' contains this element of requital or desert. Thus we have on the one hand our ordinary moral language which appears to require a meaning of 'justice' and 'desert' based upon ultimate responsibility, and on the other the fact that these ideas contradict the only conceptually intelligible explanation of human conduct.

The feeling that a punishment is just in this retributive sense is quite independent of any knowledge about the history or circumstances of the offender; it is in fact an emotional reaction to an offence and requires a psychological explanation. When we read of an appalling crime, we may wish to subject the criminal to the same kind of experience as he has inflicted on his victim, but we are prepared to admit that this would not be just if the criminal were insane. We may find this adjustment difficult to make, and there are still some people who do not succeed in making it; nevertheless, it is possible to make it, and as the causes of crimes are uncovered by research into the heredity and environment of criminals, so the need for it becomes greater. The discoveries of modern psychology have not made any difference to the fundamental conceptual problem of how to explain human actions; even before we knew very much about the unconscious factors which determine behaviour, it still remained true that they must have been caused or un-

caused, with all the implications that this involves. Nevertheless, the uncovering of unconscious motives has led to a greater awareness of the essential confusion which lies behind much of our thinking about rewards and punishments, justice and desert. It has not led to any new philosophical concepts but has begun to change our psychological attitude and to make us wonder what it is we do think. There was a time when it was possible to think of criminals as just wicked, with the added feeling of self-congratulation, and to consider any punishment they received as deserved, or retributively just. They were bad and that was all there was to it. Now, however, that the psychologist has appeared on the scene and pointed out that the crime was the direct result of certain experiences in the criminal's youth, and that if we had been subjected to the same experience, we should probably have committed the same crime, we lose some of our self-assurance and begin to have doubts about retribution.

That some people should be more reluctant than others to make the necessary emotional adjustments is inevitable, but the history of penal reform is the history of these adjustments. Once we have fully accepted the implications of the truth that ultimate responsibility is logically incompatible with either a causal or non-causal explanation of phenomena, then we shall also be prepared to admit that the concept of justice, in the sense of requital, is untenable.

There is often a demand that there should be a correlation between the punishment for an offence and the indignation which is felt by society. But such a procedure would ignore completely the degree of responsibility of the offender and would turn punishment into revenge.

Brutal attacks on children provoke general disgust and anger, and yet the offender may be insane and therefore unfit for punishment. On the other hand, a husband who is sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for the manslaughter of his wife's lover may have been subjected to such a degree of provocation that his offence elicits the sympathy rather than the indignation of society as a whole.

Nevertheless, the fact that an action is thought to require punishment is likely to modify our moral attitude to that action. Motoring offences have been very slow to arouse a feeling of moral disapproval in the public at large, but there is evidence that exceeding the speed limit in built-up areas and driving while under the influence of drink are more and more being felt to be morally wrong, a change which is partly the result of the punishments which are inflicted for them. That the process can also work in reverse is illustrated by the objection of the Church to the removal of punishment for certain homosexual offences. Some prominent churchmen, wishing to preserve society's moral disapproval of homosexuality, believe that this can be done only if it remains punishable by law. It is quite clear, therefore, that the institution of punishment both influences and is influenced by the moral standards of society. But I wish to suggest that the punishment for an offence and the moral disapproval of that offence are essentially separate processes, each having its part to play in the moulding of society. I would also suggest that punishment cannot adequately fulfil its function until its divorce from morality is fully realised and accepted.

The recognition of such a divorce is nothing more than the recognition that we should distinguish between the

criminal and the crime. The degree of moral disapproval which society feels for a crime must not be the chief factor determining the quality and amount of punishment inflicted on the criminal. I am not suggesting that there should be no relationship between them. Indeed there are two reasons why this cannot be so. In the first place, the criminal is more likely to realise the seriousness of his offence if his punishment bears some relationship to the degree of disapproval felt by society. In so far as the punishment is able to bring about such a realisation and thus change the criminal's moral attitude, it can be said to exercise a reforming influence. Not that such reform is often the result of punishment, but it seems reasonable to assume that it sometimes is. In the second place, the criminal must always be considered in the wider context of society. It is never possible to decide on the punishment best suited to an individual and ignore the effect this will have on other potential offenders. In both cases, however, we are accepting the relationship between punishment and moral indignation on purely utilitarian grounds, and not as the expression of a retributive link between crime and punishment. That is to say we decide the punishment according to the effect we think it will have on the future conduct of the offender and others, and not according to the degree of moral disapproval felt by society of the crime itself. Sociologists and penologists must study the origin of crime and the treatment and punishment most likely to reduce its incidence in society without being hampered in their work by a supposed intuitive knowledge of the relationship between them.

We must be prepared to approach the problems involved as psychologists and sociologists, hoping to cure

the ills of society, rather than as judges concerned only with passing sentence. Once we realise that there is no philosophical basis for any other approach, our penal system can be modified to take account only of future good and abandon the present Janus-like attitude of trying to reform and at the same time pass judgment of ultimate responsibility. Such a change of attitude will result in methods of treatment and punishment which will be much more likely to reduce the amount of crime, for the simple reason that they will be directed solely to that end.

It is not possible to predict just what results such an approach will have, but there can be little doubt that it will entail some fundamental changes in our present moral attitude. The kind of changes we may expect can be illustrated from the present controversy over capital punishment. On the one hand there is the retributivist who believes that the taking of one life must be annulled by the taking of another. He does not have to produce any evidence about the effect of capital punishment on society; such evidence would be quite irrelevant. If it could be shown that hanging people was inclined to increase the number of murders, he would not be any the less convinced of its necessity, and if it appeared to reduce the number, he would not need to use this to support his case. But such a belief is based on the concept of ultimate responsibility and, as we have already seen, this concept cannot be defended, because it is incompatible with any conceivable explanation of human actions. There can be no justification for hanging a murderer without looking beyond the murder itself. To justify the hanging we have to think of its likely effect upon society, that is its force

as a deterrent. On the other hand, once we abandon the retributivist position, we are compelled to base our argument on the evidence which is available. But we must be prepared to view the evidence objectively and not be influenced by the doctrine of retribution which we have intellectually abandoned but may still cling to emotionally. If we are really convinced, when dealing with a murderer, that the only thing that matters is the future good of the murderer himself and of society, we must choose the punishment which is most likely to achieve this good, without reference to our own feelings about the murderer.

If there is evidence that capital punishment is a unique deterrent, that is if murders can be prevented by the hanging of a particular murderer, then such capital punishment could be justified. The evidence we do possess, however, does not seem to support this claim: hanging the murderer does not appear to influence the number of murders committed. Murders are not usually done by ordinary criminals, but are the result of moral and emotional tensions built up in such a way that murderers are unlikely to be inhibited by any threat of unpleasant consequences. But if hanging is not found to be a deterrent, what about imprisonment? If we base our penal system on a scientific study of the evidence, is it not possible that we may one day discover that not only is hanging not a deterrent, but imprisonment is not either? Given the certainty that the number of murders would not in any way be affected by releasing all murderers immediately after conviction, on what grounds could we justify their imprisonment? It would be wrong to imprison them just because they committed a murder, because there was no

other action which, in a categorical sense, they could have done. All their past lives led inexorably towards this action for which their responsibility could not be ultimate. To deprive them of liberty would be to reduce the total amount of good in the world, and this cannot be justified unless there is some compensating good elsewhere, which we have assumed not to be the case. On the basis of this premiss the murderer's immediate release is the right action. The difficulty, of course, is to measure all the effects of the actions which we take, and we can never be sure how delayed these effects may be. It is therefore important in all such forms of social engineering to move slowly, both to ensure that the direction in which we are moving is the correct one and to enable the public to adapt its moral attitude to the new measures. If it should turn out that murderers are the kind of people for whom punishment is out of place, it does not follow that our moral attitude need change towards murder itself. To abhor the crime but not the criminal is the most important moral lesson that our society must learn.

Another aspect of the same problem of responsibility is the relationship of blame to punishment. Although misunderstanding about the concept of blame carries no particularly serious consequences for society, it is often destructive of tolerance and understanding between individuals.

The first thing we notice about our use of the word is that we do not restrict its application to human beings. We can blame the weather for the low attendance at a cricket match, or a bad workman can blame his tools. In such cases all we mean is that the weather and the tools

are the principal factors determining in the one case the low attendance, and in the other bad workmanship.

When we blame human beings for doing or failing to do something, such causal determination is only part of what we mean. If I blame Johnny for producing unsatisfactory homework through laziness, in addition to the purely causal aspect I am saying that this kind of behaviour is undesirable. I am making a value judgment about the action. Thus our blame contains two elements, the ascription of responsibility and a moral evaluation of the action. What it should not contain, although this is seldom realised, is any suggestion that Johnny is ultimately responsible. With the conditions, both hereditary and environmental, obtaining when Johnny did his homework, there was only one possible outcome—the one which did in fact take place. And yet our attitude towards him differs from the one we take towards his neighbour who also produced unsatisfactory homework, but through lack of ability. The reason for this difference is that we know that Johnny could do much better if he made a greater effort, whereas as far as his neighbour is concerned greater effort will not achieve any results. When we blame Johnny we are telling him that we do not like a certain kind of homework and that he can do something about it in the future; we are not saying that he could have done anything different in the past. If we wish to be rational when we blame, we would do well to restrict our censures to those occasions when they are likely to produce results.

There is no doubt that such advice conflicts with the way blame is commonly allotted. If a person murders someone and then commits suicide before he can be

brought to justice, should we do right to blame him? If our analysis is correct, our blame would be justified only in so far as we wish to state the fact that it was this person who committed the murder and to suggest that such acts are morally to be condemned. Such condemnation would be justified because it reinforces an important moral principle, but not if it is thought to pass a moral judgment on the murderer. It is this sort of absolute moral judgment which, in some muddle-headed way, is thought to be implicit in our blame. But the concept of responsibility which is required by such a belief cannot be rendered any more intelligible with regard to blame than it can to punishment.

Although blame and punishment are alike in being based on the same interpretation of the concept of responsibility, they are not applicable to an identical range of actions. We blame a person for telling lies, but only in special circumstances, such as in a court of law, do we punish him. This is so because punishment usually forms part of a codified system of laws which must of necessity be of limited application. Blame knows no such predetermined limits. Any human act may be blamed, but before society feels inclined to punish it likes to feel sure that the offence falls within a certain category and that the offender knows that it carries a punishment.

On the other hand, we sometimes punish a person without blaming him. Such situations seem to arise with increasing frequency as the state plays a greater part in the ordering of our lives. It is possible to maintain that the government does right to punish nuclear disarmers who endanger the security of military establishments, and yet possible for us not to blame the offenders. It is

not illogical to claim that the government does right to imprison journalists who refuse to divulge their sources of information, and yet we need not blame such journalists for refusing to do so.

That this should be so derives from the fact that we are inclined to attach much greater importance to motives when we blame than when we punish; in punishing we are primarily concerned with the consequences of an action, although sometimes motives have their part to play in the mitigation of the offence. When there are fundamental differences of moral principle, or when there is no agreement about which consequences are desirable, we may do what we can to bring the other person's moral outlook into line with our own, but we should hardly blame him for an action which, according to his own moral principles, was the best in the circumstances. It would be absurd to blame primitive tribes for some of their practices which seem wrong to us but not to them. We can attempt to change their moral attitude, but as long as their actions are in accord with their moral beliefs, blame would be out of place.

An interesting point also arises as to whether we are ever justified in blaming historical figures of the past. We can blame a Hitler or a Mussolini if all we mean is that they were evil men who were instrumental in causing much suffering. If, however, we attempt to go beyond this and to assign to them some ultimate responsibility for their actions, it becomes a pointless and absurd activity. There is no absolute sense in which they could have acted differently, but we can still point to their actions as immoral. To praise or blame Hitler for what happened, except to show that we approve or disapprove of certain

types of action and to use them as guides for future conduct for ourselves and others, would serve no useful purpose and could not be justified. In practice, we frequently fail to distinguish between the action we abhor and the person who did the action, and we vent on Hitler all our disgust for the things which were done by him and in his name. But it is also true that the less we become emotionally involved in an historical situation the more clearly we see, and the more readily we are prepared to admit, that events could not have happened differently.

If, in our approach to historical figures of the past, we reject the hypothesis of determinism, what is the alternative? Even the libertarians are prepared to admit that a considerable proportion of our actions are strictly determined by character and circumstances. According to Professor C. A. Campbell, himself an indeterminist, "they comprise perhaps 99 per cent of the choices in most men's lives",[1] and only very few of our actions are really free or spontaneous, and not dependent upon character and circumstances. If this is indeed true, what should we expect to find on studying the life-history of a Napoleon or a Hitler? Surely the 'free' actions, which are required by the indeterminist, would stand out in splendid isolation from all the other actions which are merely determined by character and circumstance. Should we not be able to point, for example, to certain actions of Hitler and say of them: "These actions, of course, are not the kind of thing you would have expected Hitler to do in these circumstances, but then these were free actions?" We do not speak in this way, but do in fact assume that Hitler's actions were a result of his character placed in a certain

[1] *Contemporary British Philosophy*, p. 108.

historical situation, and we largely derive our knowledge of his character from the actions he performed, because we assume a causal connection between them.

If there were two classes of actions, determined and spontaneous, is it not strange that this is not reflected in our ordinary moral discourse and in our penal system? We do make a distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions, but not between determined and undetermined. A person who is considered not to have known what he was doing is held to be less responsible than one who did, but what would this other distinction be like? Would the man whose action was determined by his character be more, or less, responsible than one whose action was not 'in character'? Should we punish a person, who does evil deeds because he is bad, more, or less, than a person who is good but who, on one occasion, behaves in a capricious and wicked manner? If for the indeterminist strict causality is destructive of responsibility, then it must be the spontaneous action alone which should be punished. The man who is bad, and consistently bad, can be excused, but not the man who is usually good and once fails. It is difficult to believe that anyone would wish to build a system of morality on such a foundation.

It will not be out of place at this stage to consider some of the objections which are often advanced against the determinist's justification of punishment. The first and most general of these is to the effect that, if we are concerned solely with the utilitarian aspect of punishment, there is no reason why we should not use it in order to influence conduct, even if no offence has been committed. But this is to misunderstand the determinist's case. To say that punishment is justified only by the good it does

does not commit him to saying that it may be administered without any reference to some act in the past. The good which the determinist thinks important can only be achieved by making the offender and society in general look upon certain acts as bad, and this cannot be done unless the cause and effect relationship between act and punishment is there to be seen. It is only if there is a past act of which the punishment can be regarded as the consequence that the good will be achieved.

Having said this, I can see no reason why, in certain circumstances, society would not be justified in subjecting individuals to loss of liberty or the experience of pain, even though they had not committed an offence. I do not think we can correctly call such measures punishment, because punishment must possess some reference to a past act, but society is sometimes justified in taking them. When, during the war, enemy aliens were interned, they had not committed any offence; it was, however, considered that, because there was a possibility that they might do so, the safety of the state required that they should be deprived of their liberty. If the treatment they received had occurred as a result of an offence, we should have called it punishment, but without the offence it could hardly merit that name. It might be said that they were punished for being Germans, but being German is surely not an offence. Yet it was considered that being a German would render a person liable to commit an offence and that society was justified in taking action.

In the same way we do not imprison people for being wicked, but for doing criminal acts. Yet if society could predict with certainty a criminal act from knowledge of a wicked character, would it never be justified in taking

action? If it were possible to predict from our knowledge of his heredity and environment that a person would commit a murder before he reached the age of twenty, it would seem quite wrong for society to do nothing about it until after the murder. When a prisoner is sentenced to three years' imprisonment for theft and is given an extra three years as preventive detention, the second sentence cannot be regarded as a punishment for an offence. It is a measure of social hygiene, to obtain the maximum of good for society as a whole. So it does not seem that we need automatically be outraged at the possibility of inflicting 'punishment' even if no offence has been committed. It is another example of the eternal dilemma of ends and means and is not susceptible of a simple, straightforward solution. However often we piously assert that the end never justifies the means, there are frequent occasions when we act as if the reverse were true. If our aim is to increase the amount of good in the world, we must sometimes be prepared to inflict an injustice on an individual for the sake of some greater good.

Because the determinist believes that the chief purpose of punishment is to deter, it does not follow that he is not interested in the existence of an offence as such, or in its nature. That this is often misunderstood is illustrated by the assertion that the determinist is committed to believing that we should be justified in introducing capital punishment for parking offences on the ground that it would be very effective as a deterrent. It does indeed seem probable that the number of parking offences would show a spectacular decline if such a measure were introduced, but it is equally probable that there would be the occasional thoughtless person who would forget about

the severity of the penalty and would be called upon to pay the price. Such a solution of the parking problem would be intolerable to the determinist because his main concern is not that any particular offence should be prevented, whatever the cost, but that the final result of any system of punishment should be a balance of good over evil. It seems quite clear that the evil of taking a life far outweighs the inconvenience caused by parking offences. Although the determinist does not believe in any metaphysical balance between crime and punishment, he must, when deciding on what punishment is suitable for what crime, take into account not only the probable deterrent effect of the punishment but also the relative evils of the crime and the punishment. To inflict a very severe penalty for a very minor offence would diminish, not increase, the amount of good in the world. This is equivalent to saying that society is bound to possess a scale of values in which there must be some correlation between the seriousness of the offence and the severity of the punishment. But it does not mean that society must hold that certain offences demand, as of right, certain penalties. The relationship between them must be kept in mind in order that the total evil produced by the occasions on which the punishment has to be inflicted does not outweigh the total evil which would have resulted from the offences for which the punishment was instituted. If we could be certain that the fixing of a very severe penalty for an offence would be a hundred per cent effective as a deterrent, then such a penalty would obviously be justified. The history of our penal system, however, should be convincing proof, if proof is needed, that such a result would not follow.

It is sometimes said that even if the determinist can give a reasonable explanation of why we punish, there are certain occasions when we reward which would be inexplicable on his hypothesis. Mr E. F. Carritt puts the point thus: "Surely we must consider the nature of punishment and that of reward together; only the fact that rewards are not so highly organised by the state has obscured this propriety. A man who felt it incumbent on him to reward faithful service with a pension would be offended at the suggestion that this was no proper reward unless he published it in the newspapers so as to encourage others, or that the recipient himself was too old for encouragement."[1] Mr Carritt's contention is that if the determinist maintains that punishment is justified only if it is likely to influence future actions for the good, then the same criterion must apply to the giving of rewards. If, therefore, it can be shown that the reward cannot influence future actions, then the reward is not justified.

But there is surely a distinction to be drawn between punishment and reward which Mr Carritt fails to take into consideration. Whenever the determinist, or indeterminist, becomes aware of an action which arouses in him a feeling of disgust and loathing, he responds in the perfectly natural way, which is to give some form of expression to his emotional reaction. Whether he is a determinist or an indeterminist, he is responding emotionally to a situation and expressing his repugnance at the action. If, subsequently, it can be shown that the action was not voluntary, then he must admit that any punishment would add to the pain in the world without producing any compensating good, and would therefore be

[1] *The Theory of Morals*, pp. 109-110.

unjustified. There is an important difference between such a case and that of the faithful servant mentioned by Mr Carritt. The employer, when he considers the servant's long and faithful service, experiences a feeling of gratitude for the service performed and affection for the servant. Although his reward may not have any effect on others or on the future behaviour of the person rewarded, it most certainly expresses the giver's approval of this kind of action and also increases the happiness of the two people concerned. We show, and it is right that we should, our disapproval of certain actions and our approval of others, irrespective of whether they will influence future conduct. But to add to our disapproval a punishment which does not reform or deter is merely to increase the misery and pain in the world, and is therefore morally indefensible, whereas in similar circumstances a reward adds immeasurably to the happiness of those concerned. That the responsibility of both the person to be punished and of the person to be rewarded is not ultimate is no reason why the determinist should cease to show in the one case his moral disapproval or in the other his moral approval of the action.

It has been said that if the determinist's explanation of punishment as deterrent but never retributive is the true one, then it seriously conflicts with the language we habitually use when we pass moral judgments. Before we consider the truth of this claim it must be said that, in spite of the doctrine that the language of everyday is sufficient for the purposes of philosophy, it would seem absurd to abandon a philosophical explanation solely on the grounds that it conflicts with common usage. If there is one aspect of the free will controversy which is more

remarkable than any other, it is the complete failure in everyday speech to attach any precise meaning to such words as 'free' and 'responsible', and from this very imprecision arises the whole problem we are discussing. Even if our everyday language does not conform with determinism, there is no reason why it should not change, just as the whole attitude to punishment has changed during this century.

Sir Isaiah Berlin believes that if we are determinists many moral statements cease to have any meaning for us. He writes: "But whether such determinism is a valid theory or not, it seems clear that acceptance of it does not in fact colour the ordinary thoughts of the majority of human beings, nor those of historians, nor even those of natural scientists outside the laboratory. For if it did, the language of the believers would reflect this fact, and be very different from that of the rest of us."[1] He then goes on to mention expressions which we constantly use but which, he suggests, we should have to give up if determinism were true. Let us consider some of these, for it is my contention that they are all meaningful for the determinist and do not entail any change in common speech. The first example is: "You should not have done this". According to the determinist, such a remark is made to acquaint the person addressed with the fact that his behaviour has fallen short of a certain moral standard, and to encourage him to avoid such behaviour in the future. What the determinist is in fact saying is: "What you did was wrong: do not do it again" or "It would have been better if you had not done this: do not do it again". Only on the assumption that the remark can have some

[1] *Historical Inevitability*, p. 31.

effect upon the person's character does the remark have any sense at all. As we have already seen, this connection between character and moral action is the very thing the indeterminist denies.

Another remark which Sir Isaiah Berlin considers we should have to sacrifice if we accept determinism is: "I could do it, but I would rather not". What the speaker apparently means is that the action is within his physical and mental capacity, but that the performance of it conflicts with his desires. If reasons could be adduced to change the balance of the person's desires, if, for example, the result of the performance of the act could be shown to be more desirable than the non-performance, then he has it within him to do it. The statement does not lose its meaning, nor does it conflict with determinism.

There is, then, no need for the determinist to change his language; he can and will continue to make such moral utterances as—"You should not have done this" or "I could do it, but I would rather not" or "He lacked the strength of will to resist" which, Sir Isaiah Berlin maintains, he cannot use without intellectual confusion. In fact, by showing exactly what such moral utterances can mean, the determinist can be instrumental in removing the mental confusion which now surrounds them.

The untenable positions which the unreflecting use of moral discourse can lead one to take may be illustrated by considering the difference between the ordinary thief and the kleptomaniac. A poor person who steals food is called a thief, whereas a wealthy person who does the same thing is called a kleptomaniac. This does not mean that there is a bias in our legal system. Anyone who steals food because he is hungry and cannot afford to pay for it is

behaving in a perfectly rational manner, however undesirable it may be: to steal articles which one does not need or which one could easily pay for constitutes completely irrational behaviour. There is an immediate presumption of mental instability when behaviour deviates so radically from what is considered normal. How do we view these two cases when they appear in a court of law? The behaviour of the poor thief can undoubtedly be explained by factors in himself and his environment which were of such a nature that they overcame any will to resist the temptation to steal. In such cases as these the fear of punishment often reinforces the will and enables the temptation to be resisted. It is chiefly on these grounds that punishment would be justified.

In the case of the kleptomaniac we also find compelling motives, though different ones, which the person has not succeeded in resisting. On what grounds do we decide whether or not to punish? Mr Mabbott writes: "Kleptomaniacs do not steal when they see a policeman or shop assistant watching them and do take ingenious steps to avoid detection. There behaviour therefore is affected by fear of punishment."[1] If it is true that a kleptomaniac does behave in this way, does it necessarily follow that he does so through fear of punishment? May it not be that the whole complicated operation of secreting the articles and removing them without being seen is performed without any realisation of what may follow in the way of punishment, if detected? The presence of a policeman or shop assistant is merely an obstacle to be avoided if the task is to be accomplished successfully; but there need be no awareness in the kleptomaniac's mind that the policeman

[1] *Contemporary British Philosophy*, p. 296.

means punishment. It may not be fear of punishment which causes the person to resort to devious subterfuges, but the desire to bring the undertaking to a successful conclusion.

If it is true that the kleptomaniac is deterred by fear of punishment, then it is difficult to see why he should be treated differently from the 'poor thief'. Only to those actions which are not deliberately chosen can it be said that punishment is inapplicable, and then because it will be without effect upon subsequent actions. If the kleptomaniac's actions are influenced by fear of punishment, then they must be under his conscious control and are suitable for punishment.

The attempt to determine the degree of punishment according to an assessment of responsibility, without any reference to the effect it may have, is the result of the confused belief that ultimate responsibility is an intelligible concept. The ordinary thief has been determined in his actions by heredity and environment just as surely as the kelptomaniac. Our moral disapproval of theft is just as great in the one case as in the other: stealing is wicked, however caused. If we punish the thief but not the kleptomaniac, it is not because we consider the one more guilty than the other, but because a theft which is causally determined by hunger can be inhibited by punishment, whereas when it is the result of a certain mental state it cannot. To attempt any absolute assessment of responsibility is not just a difficult task but a meaningless one.

If moral sanctions can be justified only on the hypothesis of strict causality in the sphere of human conduct, and only in so far as they are thought likely to increase the amount of good in the world, many people fear that

the general acceptance of such a belief would influence conduct in such a way as, paradoxically, to diminish the amount of good. They fear that there will be a lowering of moral standards because we shall always be able to claim that whatever we do, whether fair deed or foul, is the inevitable result of an irresistible impulse. But to accept a causal explanation of human conduct does not destroy the reality of human choices and decisions, and it is to those that moral sanctions apply. My relationship to my own behaviour is not that of an outside observer. When I make a choice or do an action, I do not view the causal factors involved and then predict what I shall do. I may make such a prediction with regard to the behaviour of someone else, but in my own case I do not predict, but choose and act. That our choices and actions are causally determined should encourage us to try to understand our own fundamental natures and to take steps to remedy our failings rather than submit to every passing impulse and then attempt a retrospective justification of our actions. We cannot excuse our voluntary actions on the grounds that when they are viewed retrospectively they are seen to have been causally determined. If it were true that whenever our actions are caused we are not responsible for them, then there would be no responsible actions, for no actions are uncaused. But we already make a distinction between those actions which merit punishment and those which do not, and it would be difficult to see what this distinction could be if the mere fact of an action's being caused automatically made the performer not responsible for it.

Although determinism relieves us of the onus of ultimate responsibility, we still remain responsible to our

fellow-citizens and to ourselves. If we commit a crime, we must pay the penalty which society demands, because no appeal to 'ultimates' can relieve us of our immediate responsibility. The wrongdoer cannot claim exemption from punishment; but the punishment which society inflicts is its own method of self-preservation and not a judgment passed upon the offender. We are responsible to ourselves in so far as we frequently measure our achievements against our aspirations, our actions against our principles. When we realise how far we fall short of our highest hopes, this can be a powerful incentive to right action in the future. The fact that we are not ultimately responsible for our physical and mental endowments does not remove the incentive to do what we can to improve them; why should we have any other attitude to the moral side of our nature?

From our study of the relationship between causality and free will we have seen that the belief that every event has a cause does not conflict with the belief that we can often do as we will. If we deny the principle of causality and accept the indeterminacy principle of modern physics, it seems at first that we have achieved an extra allowance of freedom. Because the electron appears to be completely free, and because the universe is built up of electrons, it might seem to follow that our wills must also be free. We soon realise, however, that if the will behaves in the purely chance manner of electrons, human responsibility will vary inversely with the degree of freedom of the will. This conclusion is inescapable in view of the fact that a person cannot be held responsible for chance events.

Although no one today seriously attempts to base

human freedom and responsibility upon the apparently random behaviour of electrons, one frequently hears the assertion that modern physical theory justifies a belief in free will. It is by the constant repetition of such unfounded statements that the 'free-will—determinism' controversy is kept alive, in spite of the fact that freedom and responsibility are not increased, but diminished, by a refusal to accept the doctrine that every event has a cause.

This being the case, why does there exist a strong body of opinion which considers that determinism is a pessimistic doctrine, incompatible with the dignity of man, and that personal free will is an alternative which alone takes into account man's highest ideals and aspirations? How is it that, although almost all philosophical thinking is determinist, it has made so little impact on general, educated opinion? There can be no doubt that much of the opposition to the doctrine derives from a profound and understandable dislike of certain implications which are thought to follow from it. One of these is that determinism implies that human beings are subject to the same physical laws as those which govern machines, and that human thoughts and emotions are, in reality, nothing more than the movements of particles of matter. Determinism says nothing so foolish. It does say that causality applies to mental events as well as to those in the physical world, but not that the former can be described or explained in terms of the latter. There may be some people who believe that chemical, biological and psychological laws can all be reduced to, and are nothing more than, laws of physics, but such a belief is not entailed by a belief in determinism.

Another cause of misunderstanding is the belief that

determinism denies the reality of human choice. That I can lift my arm whenever I please is a certainty I feel which cannot be taken from me by any theory. That I can perform any action which is within my mental and physical ability if I choose to do so is an essential belief if life is to have any purpose; that I can refrain from an action if I choose to do so is a necessary foundation for any system of morality. But none of these beliefs is incompatible with determinism, and no one has yet succeeded in making clear what precisely it could mean to say that we have free will in any additional sense.

It is sometimes claimed that if all events are causally determined they must, as a consequence, be predictable, at least in principle, and that such a possibility threatens to reduce man to the status of a robot. But even if it were true that determinism means prediction, such terrifying consequences do not in fact follow. A prediction about my future of which I could not, logically could not, ever be aware could do nothing to impair the feeling of freedom which I possess. We have, however, already seen that the principle that like causes produce like effects does not entail prediction; this supposed consequence cannot, therefore, be used to frighten us, nor can the fact that prediction is impossible serve to invalidate the principle itself. For this reason, when modern atomic physicists refer to the unpredictability of the atom, they are not denying determinism but saying, in the words of Mr F. Waismann: "Determinism is an *idealisation* rather than a statement of fact, valid only under the assumption that unlimited accuracy is within our reach." Such accuracy may never be possible, but the fact that it is unattainable does nothing to destroy the underlying principle.

The most fundamental misunderstanding concerns moral responsibility and the justification of punishment. The general assumption is that responsibility is possible only if our wills are free, whereas the reverse is the case. The responsibility which is compatible with determinism is never ultimate; but this is no bad thing, because it both encourages an attitude of understanding and tolerance towards our fellows and relieves us of the hopeless feeling of remorse. Punishment is justified if it deters or reforms, but never if it is retributive. Such a belief may not lead to any significant change in our judicial practice, but it will make us realise that it is the crime we must condemn and not the criminal. For those who reject determinism with its limited responsibility there remains the task, one which no philosopher has yet accomplished, of showing how morality and responsibility can be reconciled with free (i.e. spontaneous and uncaused) acts.

Although determinism can, and indeterminism cannot, give an explanation of the status of human choice and responsibility, yet we cannot hope for its general acceptance until people rid themselves of certain emotional attitudes which cloud the issue. When a person says he believes in free will he often seems to be implying that there is something slightly shameful in being a determinist. A belief in free will is considered analogous to a belief in a moral principle: it is thought that to believe that the will is free is rather like believing that cruelty is wrong. If I say that I believe in free love, I am expressing a moral judgment which may or may not be approved by society at large; if, however, I say I believe in free will, I am not making a moral judgment but am saying

something about a matter of fact, namely that the will is not causally determined. It is this assimilation to a moral judgment of what is really a question of fact which prevents the problem being considered without prejudice.

This prejudice which is, I believe, theological in origin will not be easy to overcome. From St Augustine onward theologians have had to face the problem of the incompatibility of the omniscience and omnipotence of a loving God with the doctrine of heaven and hell. In recent times more and more people have become emotionally prepared to accept the only way out of this impasse, which is to abandon the belief in eternal reward and punishment. Once there ceases to be a need to justify rewards and punishments in an after-life, there is no longer any reason to seek for a way in which man can be held ultimately responsible for his actions. In this way the theological problem of free will ceases to be a problem.

Against this background of theological change must be placed the discoveries of modern psychology about the causes of human actions. The traditional formulation of the problem of free will is seen to be an attempt to build a wall around an area of human conduct and to write upon it "Nothing within this wall can be explained." But the explaining of human conduct is precisely what the psychologist is more and more successful in doing, and the area which is believed to be proof against explanation becomes smaller and smaller. Freedom appears to be an ever-diminishing asset which will disappear altogether when human behaviour becomes fully explicable. Such a conclusion is, however, based on the belief that freedom is to be found in the realm of the random and the fortuitous; whereas, in reality, we are free when our

actions are determined by our choices, and when our choices are the expression of our own fundamental natures. Our feeling of freely choosing cannot be whittled away by the psychologist and has nothing to do with whether our actions are explicable or not. We are as free as we feel ourselves to be: no more and no less. This is the essence of our freedom, and no discoveries about the causes which have made us what we are can invalidate it.

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