THE FREEDOM OF INTENTIONAL ACTION

AND

THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBILITY

R. A. Imlay

Spring, 1966

THE FREEDOM OF INTENTIONAL ACTION

AND

THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Freedom of Intentional Action

and

The Concept of Responsibility

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at the University of Glasgow

Spring 1966

Table of Contents

Acknowledgment

I should like to thank the following people who have in various ways helped me enormously with the present work: Mr. Robin Downie, Mr. Howard Horsburgh, Mr. David Gauthier, Mr. John Woods, Mr. John Hunter and --- Camille.

PREFACE

If there are any persistent problems of philosophy and I think it would have to be agreed that there are, then, the problem of deciding whether or not man has free-will must be one of them. Indeed, in the history of philosophy so many attempts have been made to show either that he has or that he has not got a free-will that one can easily enough understand the reluctance of some philosophers to deal with the problem at all. In spite of this, however, I intend to make one more contribution towards resolving this ancient and honorable problem. More specifically, I plan to defend the position that man does have free-will; and I interpret this plan in such a way that it commits me to defending the non-causal freedom of intentions and the decisions from which they often emerge. On the other hand, I shall be willing to agree that the relationship between an intention and an action is a causal one. But since I consider the essential element in any defence of the non-causal freedom of intentional action to be demonstration of the uncaused nature of the decision and the corresponding intention that lie behind the action, my task can equally well be interpreted as that of defending the non-causal freedom of

intentional action. And that is the principal way in which I shall interpret it.

It must not be forgotten, however, that the attempt to establish man's free-will has seldom been interpreted purely as an exercise in the subtleties of philosophical dialectic. On the contrary, the practical bearing of the problem is, as far as we are concerned, only too obvious; for, we shall argue, if the agent's actions are causally determined, it becomes impossible to make sense out of his consciousness of moral obligation. But this would entail the impossibility of making sense out of the notion of the agent as a responsible person which in our view is the basic use of the notion of responsibility. We shall, therefore, with the practical bearing of our problem still in mind, begin by expatiating on the notion of responsibility with special emphasis on what we take to be the basic use of the notion. And from there we shall argue back to our interpretation of the non-causal freedom of intentional action that renders this basic use of the notion of responsibility coherent.

Incidentally, it will be noted that if we argue in this way the title of this essay will not be entirely appropriate. More specifically we should have entitled it <u>The Concept of Responsibility and the Freedom of Intentional Action</u> if the title was to reflect the order of the argument. The purely administrative problems that such a change of

title would have involved, however, were sufficient to render it practically impossible. Thus, bureaucracy triumphs once more over dialectic. Unfortunately, as a modern day St. Paul might put it, the former provides no surer guarantee of salvation than the latter.

Chapter 1

RESPONSIBILITY

A

It is no doubt familiar enough ground that there are at least three fairly distinct although interconnected strains of use of "responsible": what may be called the disposition-describing use as in "President Kennedy was a responsible person" where this rather ambiguous expression is to be contrasted both with "irresponsible person" and "non-responsible person"; in other words it is to be interpreted both as an evaluative description of the agent and as a non-evaluative description of the agent; secondly, there is the job-assigning or job-designating use, as in, "You'll be responsible for locking the door each night at 11.00 o'clock"; thirdly, there is the responsibility-attributing use as in "Smith was responsible for the death of Jones" or "Lord Reith was responsible for the growth of British broadcasting". "Responsible to" construction should perhaps also be mentioned: "You will be responsible to (ie. take orders from and report to) the Minister of Defence." They resemble the job-assigning strain since both involve the performance of tasks, but in one the task is specified while in the other it is often left to be determined.

Despite the variety of uses or strains of use of

"responsible" there does seem to be one that is basic in the sense that its applicability is a necessary condition of the applicability of the others. This one is the disposition-describing use. A world in which we never had occasion to describe anyone as a responsible person would, if we could imagine such a thing, and this is doubtful, be a world in which everyone was completely irresponsible; or more radical still but more easily imaginable and, therefore, more to the point it would be a world in which, like the Hobbesian state of nature, the inhabitants were neither responsible nor irresponsible because none of the moral categories applied. And, needless to say, moral categories have to apply if we are to make sense out of the use of "responsible" in question; for the notion of a responsible person is incomprehensible apart from the notion of obligation. Since, moreover, this latter notion, to be <u>fully</u> elucidated, would require most of the moral categories at our disposal, this amounts to saying that the disposition-describing use of "responsible" must in the same way be seen against the whole battery of moral distinctions that we habitually make.

2

In what sense is the disposition-describing use of "responsible" basic? In trying to answer this question let us take the job-assigning or job-designating use of "responsible"

first. In the kind of imaginary world we mentioned where the inhabitants were neither responsible nor irresponsible, we should not likely make an inhabitant of it responsible for carrying out any task; at best we might try to convince him that carrying it out corresponded with his own interest or could be made to correspond with it and thus provide him with an incentive. But there would be no point in appealing to him as a responsible man because ex hypothesi he would not be one; and, therefore, there would be no point in asking him to regard his task as a responsibility or an obligation. Nor is anything changed by the fact that we might still say to him, "You will be responsible for doing X --if you don't I'll punish you." For, here, his carrying out X is being made to correspond to his own interests and his being made responsible for carrying it out reduces to "Do X or else." In other words, the notion of a responsibility is really quite superfluous here and can only be regarded as a hold-over from those cases where a person is made responsible for carrying out some task because he is at least believed to be a responsible person. And, needless to say, in those cases the assignation or designation of a job can never be reduced to an imperative-cum-threat at the expense of the notion of a responsibility.

Incidentally, this latter fact should serve as a warning to anyone who would try to assimilate the job-assigning or job-designating use of "responsible" to its

responsibility-attributing use. For, if one is going to argue that the assignation or designation of responsibility means only that the agent will be held responsible for what he does or fails to do and will be punished or rewarded accordingly, then, it remains unexplained what it means to assign or designate a task as a responsibility as opposed to assigning or designating a task tout court. And this is hardly a satisfactory state of affairs.

None of this, I fully realise, adds up to a definite statement of what it is to assign or designate a task as a responsibility. I am not at all convinced, however, that it is necessary for us to provide one so long as it is recognized that there is the distinction to be drawn between assigning or designating a task as a responsibility and assigning or designating a task tout court. On the other hand, it seems undeniable that the kind of statement we have in mind would have to provide at some point for the agent's ability to sacrifice his own interests to his sense of moral obligation, as we have insisted all along.

But what if the agent had an obligation to look after his own interests? In that case it would be possible to consider the person who always had his own interests uniquely in mind to be a responsible person and to assign responsibility to him accordingly. And it would make no difference that he carried out his resulting obligations simply because

his doing so was in his own interest. I do not think, however, that the agent has any kind of obligation to look after his own interests. Or, at least, he has no such obligation where only he himself is involved; for he can, of course, have such an obligation where someone else's interests depend upon his looking after his own. Here, however, he would be a responsible person not simply because he looked after his own interests but because he looked after them as a means of looking after someone else's interests. In other words, to draw a distinction already drawn by one philosopher a person can have an obligation with respect to himself in the sense that his interests would be involved in a full description of how the particular obligation came into being but this does not constitute an obligation to himself.[1] Admittedly, we do speak of the agent's owing something to himself. For example, we say that Smith owes it to himself to take a vacation. But a moment's reflection makes it clear that we are not referring by this turn of phrase to any obligation that the agent owes to himself. On the contrary, it is just another way of saying that it is in Smith's interest to take a vacation; or, to put it in a slightly different form, it is just another way of saying that, if prudential considerations are to take priority,

---

1. Mavrodes, George I., "Duties to Oneself", Analysis, vol. 24, N.S. no. 101, 1964, pp.165-67.

then, Smith ought to take a vacation.

This way of interpreting the turn of phrase in question is, I should have thought, the obvious one. But it is not obvious to at least one philosopher, Mr. N. Fotion. He maintains that the agent can have an obligation to take a vacation even when only his own interests are involved. And against those like Professor Kurt Baier who differ with him on the grounds that such an agent cannot complain if he does not finally take a vacation nor boast of a clear conscience if he does Fotion affirms that he can do both. Or, at least this is what Fotion seems to think that he is affirming in posing the following two rhetorical questions: "Why cannot I complain to myself and to others if I find myself too weak to carry out my resolve to take a vacation? And why cannot I boast to myself and to others of a clear conscience once I finally overcome my weakness and take my vacation?[2] But, surely, this is beside the point. No one would want to hold that the agent cannot complain and boast in the circumstances described in these questions. This is explained by the fact they introduce a new element, namely, the weakness of the agent. Now, the agent can complain when he succumbs to his weakness and boast when he overcomes it only because such a weakness ultimately poses a threat to the interests of others.

---

2. Fotion, N., "Can We Have Moral Obligations to Ourselves", Australian Journal of Philosophy, vol. 43, 1965, pp.27-27.

And as such he has an obligation to try to resist it even when in the actual circumstances no one's interests excepting his own are threatened by it. For by trying to resist it even when no other person's interests are threatened by it he puts himself in a better position to resist it when they are.

There is, however, despite all that I have said, a metaphysical model of the self in terms of which it could make good sense to say that the agent had an obligation to look after his own interests. I have in mind that model wherein the self is divided, so to speak, into a higher and a lower self. Now, in terms of such a model it could be argued that the lower self has an obligation to acceed to the moral interests of the higher self. Nor do I think that our use of the phrase "moral interests" in this context should give any cause for alarm. For on the model in question there would, as far as the higher self was concerned, be no significant distinction to be made between obligation and interest. On the contrary, the two by the very nature of the case would coincide; and it would only be with reference to the interests of the lower self that a distinction between the two could be significantly made. It is not, however, my intention to go into elaborate detail on this model of the self. Instead, I should like to make it clear to what extent the agent's obligation to look after his own interests on such a model depends upon regarding him as two persons in one.

And this betrays the extent to which the obligation to look after these interests even on this model is parasitic upon and merely an extension of the obligation we have to look after the interests of others. In other words, we cannot even entertain the possibility of having an obligation to look after our own interests unless we first assume that we have such an obligation with respect to the interests of others. And even then unless we accept a certain metaphysical model of the self the possibility seems to be a very dubious one.

If, then, it is agreed that a responsible person cannot be one who has only his own interests in mind and if it is further agreed that the latter kind of person would not be given tasks to carry out as responsibilities, we seem to have shown that the applicability of the disposition-describing use of "responsible" is a necessary condition of the applicability of the job-assigning or job-designating use of the same term. Before going on, however, I think it should be noted that to assign or designate a task as a responsibility to an agent whom one knew to have only his own interest in mind would not be a formal contradiction but what might be called a pragmatic or performative contradiction. That is to say, as an exercise it would be self-defeating and absurd in roughly the same way as my telling you that I am dead would be self-defeating and absurd; for just as in the

latter case I should nullify what I said by the mere act of saying it, so, in the former case one would deny what one knows to be true, namely, that the other person is not responsible by the mere act of assigning or designating a task as a responsibility.

3

It must not be forgotten that we wanted to show that the disposition-describing use of "responsible" is more basic than the job-assigning or job-designating use. And it might be argued that showing the applicability of the former to be a necessary condition of the applicability of the latter is not enough to show this. Or, at least, it is not enough unless the converse is not also true. And thus our task, clearly, is to show that it is not true. Now, I think this line of argument is substantially correct. But if it is correct we must ask ourselves whether we could imagine a world where no one was ever made responsible for carrying out any task and yet where it still made sense to call an agent a responsible person. The answer would seem to be, yes. A negative reply would be appropriate only if we thought of <u>all</u> our responsibilities as tasks that were assigned or designated to us; and there does not seem to be any good reason why we should think this. On the contrary, such a view would commit us to an excessively legalistic

interpretation of our responsibilities and resulting obligations. As a result, we should fail to appreciate the extent to which a truly responsible agent can, as it were, give the law unto himself. But to insist on the autonomy of the responsible agent in this way really amounts to saying that the carrying out of assigned or designated responsibilities is really only a part of what it is to be such an agent. Indeed, it is to say that we could imagine a world in which it was no part at all.

Once again on that metaphysical model of the self of which we spoke earlier it might be argued that all our responsibilities are assigned or delegated to us by our higher self. What we have already said on this subject, however, can with the obvious modifications required be seen to apply equally well here. But what of that theological interpretation of responsibilities and obligations wherein they are all made to depend upon God as their assignor or designator? It would seem to be simply from a phenomenological point of view false; and it would certainly seem to be from a logical point of view indefensible. In fact, its logical indefensibility seems to depend upon its phenomenological falsity. For, if it is true, and its truth would seem to be undeniable, that we are aware of obligations that do not have God or anyone else as their assignor or designator, then we must admit that something can be an obligation

independently of its being assigned or designated by God. But if this is the case, then we can truly regard the obligation or duty as something intrinsically binding on us. This, however, seems counter to the whole spirit of the theological view with which we are dealing; for, according to this view, our duties and obligations are such only because God assigns them or designates them to us. Thus, as one philosopher put it in a slightly different context where he talks of making instead of assigning or designating, "We find ourselves baffled by the collision between the suggestion of contingency involved in the concept of 'making' and the seemingly intrinsic authority of the specific obligation to be thus 'made'.[3] In fact, in the final analysis, a theological interpretation of obligation is really only another example of the excessive legalism of which we spoke earlier; for it matters not who is supposedly assigning or designating the responsibilities, the autonomy essential to the notion of a responsible agent is in any case compromised.

4

What of the responsibility-attributing use of "responsible"? Is it equally true here that the applicability of the disposition-describing use of "responsible" is a necessary condition of its applicability and that the converse

---

3. Maclagan, W.G., The Theological Frontier of Ethics, p.67.

does not hold? I think that we can answer in the affirmative to both of these questions or, what amounts to the same thing, to both parts of the question. To take the first part first. In a world in which the inhabitants were neither responsible nor irresponsible there would be no point in attributing responsibility to anyone for any deed. In order to defend this assertion I think it should be made clear from the beginning that there seems to be no purely causal use of "responsible"; and I take this to mean that there is no use of "responsible" in which responsibility can be attributed to the agent, all considerations of obligation aside, merely because he initiated some action. This is not to say, of course, that we do not speak of inanimate objects being responsible for having brought some state of affairs into being. But in such a case we are by extension treating the inanimate object as a kind of moral agent to whom responsibility for his deeds or misdeeds can be attributed; and that requires the notion of an obligation that he can fulfil or fail to fulfil. Now, the fact that there is no purely causal use of "responsible" is an important one; for, if there were a purely causal kind of attributive responsibility, we could, so long as they initiated actions, attribute responsibility for what they did to the totally amoral agents in our imaginary world.

Even if there is no purely causal kind of attributive

responsibility we have not, of course, simply in virtue of that fact proved the truth of the assertion that the applicability of the disposition-describing use of "responsible" is a necessary condition of the applicability of the responsibility-attributing use. I do not think, however, that in the absence of a purely causal kind of attributive responsibility independent of all considerations of obligation anyone could plausibly dispute the irrelevance of attributing responsibility in an amoral world where no one was responsible or irresponsible. This is not to say, of course, that in such a world reward and punishment would necessarily be irrelevant. But all this shows is that there is more to attributing responsibility than rewarding or punishing. Indeed, if there were not, it would be hard to see how the latter pair of activities could be morally justified; for the agent is rewarded and punished for those things for which responsibility has been previously attributed to him. And a necessary condition of, in turn, morally justifying such an attribution is that he should be able to distinguish in some way between right and wrong.

In the face of all this one might, I suppose, suggest that we ignore the question of moral justification and go on to attribute responsibility and reward and punish people accordingly in our amoral world. But this, it seems to me, is a desperate expedient that could be rendered plausible

only if we did not have the concept of responsibility that we actually do have. It is, however, with the concept of responsibility that we actually do have that I am principally concerned.

Once again this is not to say that a formal contradiction can be got out of saying, "Smith is neither a responsible nor an irresponsible agent and he is responsible for the death of Jones". It would, however, be a pragmatic or performative contradiction; and anyone who was sincerely trying to convince us that Smith should be held responsible for the death of Jones would defeat his own ends by saying such a thing. Incidentally, that a formal contradiction cannot be got out of uttering the sentence in question brings us back to our original contention that, although the various strains of use of "responsible" are interconnected they are in a significant sense distinct.

5

Once again we must show that if the applicability of the disposition-describing use of "responsible" is a necessary condition of the applicability of the responsibility-attributing use the converse is not true. Otherwise, we shall not have shown that the former is any more basic than the latter. How is this to be shown? First of all, let us imagine a world the inhabitants of which were responsible in

the disposition-describing sense and yet were never responsible in the responsibility-attributing sense. An example of such a world would be one where everyone tried to act in accordance with his obligations but where, because of empirical obstacles in his way, he did not succeed in doing what he tried to do. And this does not come about because the agent cannot be considered responsible for what he tried to do; for obviously he can and one has only to think of the number of people thought to be responsible in a praiseworthy sense for trying to save the lives of their friends or the number of people held responsible for attempted murder to be convinced of this fact. It remains true, however, that in a world where everyone systematically tried and failed to act in accordance with his obligations the motivation for trying would be transformed into something different eventually, namely, a disposition to be so motivated if things were relevantly different; and yet even here we could speak of a responsible agent as one who would, if the empirical circumstances were significantly altered, be motivated to try to f fulfil his obligations or simply go ahead and fulfil them. Thus, to take one of our examples, Lord Reith, even if he could not succeed in being responsible for anything in our imaginary world, let alone anything so laudable as the growth of the B.B.C., could still be considered a responsible person.

It might be argued against this that Lord Reith in

the circumstances described could at best be considered a potentially responsible person and not a responsible person tout court. But the trouble with this is that everyone can in a trivial sense be considered a potentially responsible person: there is always some possible world in which even the person in our imaginary world who lacks the disposition to be motivated to try to fulfil his obligations or simply to go ahead and fulfil them would be so disposed. As a result, if we were to call Lord Reith in the circumstances described a potentially responsible person we should have to distinguish this sense "potentially responsible person" from that in which everyone is a potentially responsible person. In view of this it would seem much less likely to mislead and, therefore, more appropriate if we called Lord Reith a responsible person tout court in the circumstances described.

Another argument that has to be considered is to the effect that in our imaginary world the inhabitants would not know what the phrase "responsible person" meant. For in order to know this, they would have to know what "action" meant since the notion of a responsible person is tied to the notion of an obligation to do certain things, but they cannot know what "action" means because they do not perform actions. Now, it should be noted right from the start that the most this argument could prove is that the inhabitants of our imaginary world did not describe one another as respon-

sible persons. It could not prove that we, as outsiders, are prohibited from describing them as responsible persons. In order to do this one would have to go on to argue that we do not know what the phrase "responsible person" means. But the plain fact is that we do. Moreover, I am not at all sure that even the inhabitants of our imaginary world could not know what the word "action" and hence "responsible person" meant. In any case, if they could not know what "action" meant, it would be hard to understand how, if the empirical obstacles in the way of their doing anything were suddenly to disappear, they would recognize that for the first time they were performing actions. And for the same reason it would be hard to understand how the first man who ever performed an action in the real world recognized that that was what he was doing. Nor would it do any good to say that he discovered that he was performing an action; for the very notion of discovery in this context seems to require that he be able to recognize what an action is.

What we have said of the disposition-describing use of "responsible" applies equally well to its opposite "irresponsible". Here, too, we can imagine a world in which all the inhabitants tried and systematically failed to act in contradiction with their obligations. Eventually, they would cease even trying; and yet even here we could speak of an irresponsible agent as one who would, if the empirical

obstacles were significantly altered, be motivated to go on trying to flout his obligations or simply go on flouting them. Thus, to revert to one of our examples, Smith, even if he, like Lord Reith, could not succeed in being responsible for anything, let alone anything so unpleasant as the death of Jones, could still be considered as an irresponsible person. And the same reason we gave for not calling Lord Reith a merely potentially responsible person can with slight and obvious modifications be advanced for not calling Smith a merely potentially irresponsible person.

6

Thus far we have argued that the disposition-describing use of "responsible" is the basic one because its applicability is a necessary condition of the applicability of the others while the converse is not true. But, it may be argued in reply, whether or not the disposition-describing use of "responsible" is basic in this sense or not, this is not the sense of "basic" that philosophers have had in mind when they have emphasized, as they often have, the responsibility-attributing use of "responsible" at the expense of the disposition-describing use. And this is probably true. One has only to think of two philosophers as utterly opposed to one another as F.H. Bradley and John

Stuart Mill both of whom concentrate on the responsibility-attributing use of "responsible" in order to appreciate the general agreement among philosophers that this use of "responsible" is the most basic one.[4] On the other hand, however, when we ask what actually is the criterion or what actually are the criteria that such philosophers employ in terms of which they agree that the responsibility-attributing use of "responsible" is the most basic one we seem to be left completely in the dark. In the case of Bradley and Mill, for example, their agreement seems to be based on nothing more than the unproven assumption that responsibility is equivalent to accountability to someone or something for something. But this is simply to identify, and in a quite arbitrary manner, the notion of responsibility with its responsibility-attributing use; and it does not help us to understand the other two uses of this notion.

But why, then, do they make this assumption? I suspect the answer to this question is intimately connected with the practical concern we naturally have with the possibility of our being punished. For the notion of punishment goes hand in hand with the notion of accountability; we

---

4. Bradley, F.H., "The Vulgar Notion of Responsibility in Connexion with the Theories of Free Will and Necessity", Ethical Studies, 2nd edition, pp.1-41. Mill, J.S., A Critical Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, 4th edition, pp.586-606.

are accountable among other things for failing to carry out the responsibilities that have been assigned or delegated to us; and we are liable to punishment for our failure. Thus, there is something to be said, as there is by definition for all half-truths, for the one contained in Mill's contention that responsibility just is punishment; and even here it would have been more correct for him to have said that responsibility is the grounds for punishment.[5] Worse, still, the undue emphasis on the purely accountable aspects of responsibility that it encourages tends to hide from us the role of imagination and reflection in the moral life. For it is the disposition-describing use of "responsible" that makes clear the need for them. And by thus requiring us to stress the role of the intellectual virtues it at the same time helps us to appreciate that we are not simply creatures with responsibilities and obligations for which we are accountable to someone or something. On the contrary, we are also autonomous agents with reason and imagination which allow us to reflect on the questions of how best to fulfil our obligations and what exactly our obligations are. And it is the person who thus reflects who is said to be a responsible person.

---

5. Mill, J.S., p.586.

B

I

If it is true that the basic use of "responsible" is the disposition-describing one, then this fact must be expected to have a profound influence on our view of human consciousness. More specifically, it must lead us to think of our consciousness of obligation as a continuum as opposed to something that is by its very nature discontinuous and episodic. Why, it will be asked, is this the case? I think the answer is clear once we remind ourselves that a responsible person is not only one who fulfils his obligations with reason and imagination but also one who has in his waking hours a permanent sense of obligation as opposed to one that comes and goes. Nor am I embarrassed by the fact that this commits us to the view that he has this sense of obligation even in moments of anger. For anger is surely to be distinguished from a fit of rage. The former by no means excludes the presence of a sense of obligation if only in the background whereas the latter does seem to exclude it. It is undoubtedly for this reason that susceptibility to such fits is so hard to reconcile with the judgment that so and so is a responsible person. But this is surely just another way of emphasizing the fact that a responsible person is one who is in his

waking hours permanently aware of his obligations.

There is one obvious objection to be made to this conclusion. Why, it might be asked, did we speak of a disposition-describing use of "responsible" in the first place if we meant that it describes the permanent awareness the agent has of his obligations? For, surely, it will be urged, a disposition is not something of which we are permanently aware; on the contrary, to call something a disposition is not only to deny that it is something that exists in some categorical sense but also to deny that it is something of which we are or need be permanently aware. In fact, the whole point of a dispositional analysis, it could be plausibly argued, is to permit us to analyze certain properties alleged to be mental in terms of certain patterns of behaviour and thus permit us to short-circuit consciousness; and this interpretation would have the advantage of being consistent with the behaviouristic tendencies of recent contributions to the philosophy of mind. On such an interpretation of a dispositional analysis, to say of someone that he is a responsible person is tantamount to saying that in certain circumstances he will behave in certain ways. Thus, it is only to be expected that saying someone is responsible has been compared to saying that glass is brittle, sugar is soluble and the like.

---

5. Mill, J.S., p.586.

There are, however, serious difficulties involved in this interpretation of such an analysis. Or, at least, there are serious difficulties when it is applied to a notion like that of responsibility; for, if we wished to unpack all that is implied in calling anyone a responsible person, we should have an infinite series of different hypothetical propositions on our hands. Indeed, Professor Gilbert Ryle, one of the most ardent proponents of the interpretation of the dispositional analysis in question, uses almost those very words in relation to the notion of a gregarious animal.[6] But they apply equally well to the notion of a responsible person. What is interesting, however, is that Ryle does not interpret this infinity of different hypothetical propositions as the reductio ad absurdum of his position that it seems to be.

Nor, it hardly needs saying, does it do any good to describe a few ways in which a responsible person acts and then to end it with "and so on". For this suggests that your reader or listener could extend the list of hypothetical propositions indefinitely and it invites him to do so. But this invitation could be accepted with reasonable hope of success only by someone who knew the rule according to which the series is constructed; or, to put it another way, he must know what the hypothetical propo-

---

6. Ryle, Gilbert, The Concept of Mind, p.44.

sitions already expressed by his predecessor have in common before he can continue the series. Otherwise, he would not know which propositions not yet expressed to include or exclude. Unfortunately, however, this requirement can be satisfied in the case of a notion like that of a responsible person only by introducing the notion itself into the analysis; and this would allow him to say that if a person is responsible he will do so and so and such and such and all the other things a responsible person does. But this is hardly an acceptable procedure just because it does require that what is being analysed should be part of the analysis. Moreover, it would seem to indicate that, if to be a responsible person is to be disposed to behave in certain ways, it is also something more than that.

In all fairness to Ryle, however, we must take into account the distinction he makes between simple, single-track dispositions, the actualisations of which are nearly uniform, and dispositions the exercises of which are indefinitely hetrogeneous.[7] This distinction seems to parallel the one he makes later on between specific tendencies described by specific or determinate words and generic tendencies described by generic or determinable words.[8] According to Ryle, most "higher-grade" dispositions fall

---

7. Ryle, Gilbert, p.43-44.

8. Ryle, Gilbert, pp.117-18.

within the latter group.[9] Now, where simple, single-track dispositions described by specific or determinate words are involved the kind of dispositional analysis he advocates is shown to its best advantage; for here it seems entirely possible to regard the dispositional term as a short-hand device for referring to a number of things the person would do or does do in certain circumstances. Thus, to use one of Ryle's own examples, to say of someone that he is a cigarette-smoker is to say that he does and would smoke cigarettes on such and such occasions.[10] At the same time the uniformity implied in the manifestations of such a disposition would in turn imply a significant resemblance among the propositions describing them. As a result, we should be equipped with a rule in terms of which we could continue such a series of propositions.

It is, unfortunately, for the proponents of the kind of dispositional analysis in question, an entirely different matter when it comes to the other kind of disposition that Ryle mentions. Here it is, to say the least, difficult to discover any significant resemblance among the propositions describing their manifestations that would justify their being grouped together. Indeed, Ryle's use of the word "heterogeneous" to describe such manifestations

---

9. Ryle, Gilbert, p.44.

10. Ryle. Gilbert, p.43.

and "generic" to describe the disposition itself can only leave one confused. For, to take his use of "generic" first, it would be absurd to say that the word "responsible" in the notion of a responsible person describes a genus of which the various things that responsible people do are species. Worse still, it would beg the question at issue by assuming from the outset that the various things a responsible person does have something significant in common, namely, their all being species of the same genus, whatever that genus might be. Moreover, Ryle seems to contradict himself on this score by emphasizing the heterogeneous character of manifestations of dispositions similar to the one in question; for, if they really are heterogeneous, then it is not surprising that we cannot find a rule in terms of which we could continue with the series of propositions describing such manifestations. In fact, at least part of what we mean by calling a collection of anything heterogeneous is that its members have nothing significant in common and have been collected at random. Thus, we seem to be faced once more with the fact that our difficulties can be solved only by including the dispositional notion to be analysed in the analysis itself.

One way of avoiding this unpalatable alternative, it might be thought, is to have recourse to the distinction between class-membership and the relationship between

determinates of common determinables. According to W.E. Johnson we subsume the determinate or specific colours of red, green and yellow under the common determinable, colour, because of a relation of difference among them qua colours and not because of anything they have in common with each other, again, qua colours, and this is for the very good reason that they have nothing in common qua colours.[11] Now, whether or not we agree entirely with Johnson on this issue, it is, I think, undeniable that he had an important insight: it is not enough to say that red, green and yellow are merely different because, then, there would be no reason to group them together. As a result, it is easy to understand why Johnson is led to say that they are not only different from each other but also opposed to each other.

None of this, however, is relevant to Ryle's analysis of so-called generic dispositions or the heterogeneous manifestations they seem to involve; for, although it is true that something cannot be red and at the same time green, it is not true that a responsible person cannot do various things that such a person does and do them at the same time. In other words, there need be no incompatibility among the actions that manifest the disposition in question.

---

11. Johnson, W.E., Logic, vol. 1, p.174.

8

What has gone wrong with the kind of dispositional analysis we have been examining? I think the fundamental error consists in a failure to distinguish between the meaning of a statement and the ways in which it is verified; for the fact that a statement can be verified in a great variety of ways does not entail that it means a great variety of things. If it did entail this it would not even make sense to ask whether a conjunction of propositions used to describe the way a person behaves or would behave allows us to conclude that he is, say, responsible. And this permits us to understand why Ryle's analysis of so-called generic dispositions necessarily involves a reference to the disposition being analysed. More specifically, if the series of hypothetical propositions that such an analysis involves describes the various ways of finding out whether a certain dispositional property is present, then it is not surprising that they have nothing more in common than that for the presence of which they provide evidence. As a result, that which unifies such a series must not be sought in the series itself but outside of it. Or, more precisely, it must not be sought in such a series when we have Ryle's so-called generic dispositions in mind.

9

The distinction between the meaning of a statement and the various ways in which it is verified is most important for our purposes. It permits us to define a responsible person as one who in his waking hours is permanently conscious of his obligations and at the same time to regard this characteristic as something predisposing him to behave in certain ways in certain circumstances. Indeed, it is just because it does predispose him to act in certain ways in certain circumstances that we regard it as a disposition in the first place. What is important to realise, however, is that as a disposition it is something over and above the ways in which it predisposes the agent to act. In other words, it is a property of the person in a categorical sense, a part of his "nature".

This view will be criticized on the grounds that it commits us to speaking of states of consciousness that are in principle unobservable. I do not, however, find this criticism particularly damaging. It would be damaging if it entailed that the agent was absolutely the final arbiter as to whether or not he was a responsible person. But it need not entail this at all. On the contrary, our insistence on the various ways in which the presence of a dispositional property can be verified militates against such an interpretation. And it goes without saying that

very often an observer will be in a position to tell the agent, despite his protestations to the contrary, that he is not a responsible person. Consequently, it would not be acceptable to define the notion of a responsible person in the way we have if it meant that such a person could act in any way he liked. But, then, it is hard to understand why anyone would want it to mean that unless he also wanted to draw a radical distinction between thought and action; and I can see very little reason for doing that.

10

There is, however, another criticism that may be directed against our view of a responsible person as being one who is permanently aware of his obligations. It is that on such a view the moral agent becomes a duty-obsessed wretch lacking all spontaneity, the victim of a morally exacerbated conscience. Nor can there be any doubt that it is our emphasis on the permanent nature of such consciousness that inspires such a criticism. But it is based on a failure to distinguish between what Maclagan has called "articulate foreground awareness" on the one hand and what we might call inarticulate background awareness on the other.[12] It would seem that there are a great many things of which we are aware at any given moment in our waking

---

12. Maclagan, W.G., pp.99-100.

life even though they do not at every given moment occupy the centre of our attention. Thus, although I am now concentrating on what I am writing, I am aware of my intention to meet some friends this evening. And the proof is that if someone asked me what I planned to do this evening I should tell him straight off that I planned to meet some friends. Of course, I am not aware of this particular intention in the same way that I am aware of what I am doing at the moment or, at least, I was not aware in this way until what I was writing brought the particular intention in question by some process of association into the foreground of my consciousness. This, however, only serves to justify our distinction between foreground and background awareness. For one thing is certain: I was in some sense aware of my intention to meet my friends. If I had not been how could I have told somebody straight off what I planned to do tonight?

This distinction between background and foreground awareness applies to awareness of obligation as well as to awareness in general. Thus, the fact that a responsible person is permanently aware of his obligations does not mean that he must sacrifice all joy in living to the dictates of an overbearing conscience. It simply means that any time in his waking life his sense of obligation will at least present a background against which his thoughts and actions are put in relief.

At the same time, however, we must distinguish between background and foreground awareness on the one hand and the quite familiar notion of degrees of awareness on the other. Otherwise, we run the risk of confusing one's background awareness of one's obligations with a minimal degree of awareness of those same obligations. This could lead us seriously astray since it would encourage us to believe that the former implied a failure to appreciate fully what one's obligations are. For, it is clear, to say that someone has a minimal degree of awareness of his obligations is not just to say, if it is at all to say, that he has a background awareness of them. It is also to pass an unfavourable judgment on his moral character. As a result, it becomes clear that the background awareness of his obligations that a responsible person possesses must at the same time allow for a full awareness on his part of what his obligations are. In other words, the nature of the awareness in question must in no way detract from its object and must not depend for what it is, namely, a specifically background variety of awareness, upon a merely partial view of its object.

II

I think it is also worth pointing out that a responsible person is not only permanently aware of his obli-

gations but he is aware that he is aware of them. And the same argument can be used to show that the person has an awareness of his own awareness as the one that might be used to show that the person knows what he knows. Or, more precisely, this is true if we have the strong sense of "knowing" in mind; for in that sense, "I am not in a position to say "I know" unless my grounds for saying so are such that they give me the right to disregard any further evidence or information."[13] But anyone who knows in this sense ipso facto knows that he knows since the evidence that permits him to establish the one also permits him to establish the other. And I advise anyone who remains unconvinced to accept Schopenhauer's invitation to try to imagine a state of affairs where he knows without knowing that he knows or where he knows that he knows without possessing the first-level knowledge.[14] It cannot be done. Nor can it be done for the notion of awareness.

This is not to say that the awareness a responsible person has of his obligations must occupy the centre of his attention. On the contrary, he usually has a background and not a foreground awareness of his own awareness.

---

13. Hintikka, Jaakko, Knowledge and Belief, p.20.

14. Schopenhauer, Arthur, Two Essays, translated by Mme. Karl Hellebrand, p.166.

That is why Hintikka is right when he points out that "I am paying attention to the fact" cannot be made to entail "I am paying attention to the fact that I am paying attention to the fact."[15] He is, however, wrong in my view when he goes on to contend that a person need not be aware of his own awareness tout court.[16]

But why is it so important to establish that a responsible person is aware of his own awareness of his obligation? I think the answer to this question is to be found in Schopenhauer's previously mentioned remarks on knowing. When they are adapted, as we said they should be, to awareness, it becomes clear that awareness of awareness is a necessary condition of being aware of anything. Consequently, it is a necessary condition of one's being aware of one's obligations. In other words, it is not to be thought that in insisting on the person's awareness of his own awareness we are insisting on something of only minor importance. It is, on the contrary, in virtue of what its denial would imply, of the first importance.

---

15. Hintikka, Jaakko, p.28.

16. Hintikka, Jaakko, p.28. It would be more accurate to say that Hintikka denies the virtual implication from "I am aware that p" to "I am aware that I am aware that p" but he does not deny the epistemic implication. For an elucidation of this distinction see p.82 of Knowledge and Belief.

12

Thus far we have argued that the concept of a responsible person requires us to think of our awareness of our obligation as something continuous. But surely this is not the whole of the matter. A responsible person is not only one who is permanently aware of his obligations but also one who responds to this awareness. In fact, it is not too much to say that awareness of obligation is already in some form or another a negative or positive response to it. Conversely, a response is, as Maclagan puts it, "distinctively a moment in personal living, something other than sub-personal reaction, only as it encloses an awareness of the demand that it either meets or evades."[17] Nor can there be any doubt that the response of responsible persons to their awareness of obligation must in general be a positive one.

Incidentally, this juxtaposition of the words "response" and "responsible" in the phrase "responsible person" should not lead us, as it might have led others, to jump to the conclusion that <u>etymologically</u>, at least, a responsible person is just one who is held answerable or accountable for his actions. On the contrary, even on the purely etymological level there is no reason to believe that in emphasizing the fact that he is one who

---

17. Maclagan, W.G., p.51.

is held answerable or accountable for his actions we are not at the same time emphasizing the fact that he can be held answerable or accountable. In other words, there is no reason to believe that we are not emphasizing the fact that he is one who is permanently aware of his obligations. For, as we have maintained all along, it is only such a one who can rightly be held answerable or accountable for his actions.

It is, moreover, easily enough gathered from what we have said that on our view the moral consciousness of such a person is essentially of a dialectical nature. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the truly responsible person is engaged in a continuing dialogue with himself. Thus, when we speak of the moral demand and our response to it, our language is more than merely metaphorical. It is, on the contrary, a quite legitimate analogical extension of notions more commonly associated with interpersonal relations.

13

We must say more of the responsible person's positive response to his awareness of his obligations. Such a response will often consist in something less than the actual fulfillment of the obligation. There are, for example, in many cases serious empirical obstacles in the

way of the person's doing what he thinks he ought to do. Thus, he might have made a promise to a friend to help him out of financial difficulty and then finds out that he no longer has the money and does not know anyone from whom he could borrow it. Nor are there only empirical obstacles that should concern us here: very often the person will think that such and such an action constitutes an appropriate response to a moral demand, when, in fact, it is quite inappropriate and possibly immoral. This, then, is where our earlier insistence on the reasonableness and the imaginativeness of the responsible person becomes important. Indeed, without these two qualities the logical contrast we can always make in a purely theoretical way between the awareness of obligation and obligation itself becomes an actual contradiction. Unfortunately, moreover, even with these two qualities and the best will in the world the contradiction often remains.

Before elucidating the familiar phrase "with the best will in the world" I think it worth pointing out that the moral agent is aware of an obligation to be imaginative and reasonable. This will, I suspect, strike some as peculiar; for it is tempting to say that these two qualities are in some sense gifts that some are fortunate enough to possess and others not. On such a view it would be as pointless to insist that members of the latter category

have an obligation to be reasonable and imaginative as it would be to insist that someone with no musical skill has an obligation to be a great violinist. This, however, is to overlook the fact that if reasonableness and imaginativeness are gifts they are gifts that every man capable of being a moral agent possesses. This does not mean, of course, that every man fitting this description possesses them to the same extent. It does mean, on the other hand, that he does have an obligation, and one of which he is aware, to be as imaginative and reasonable as it is in his power to be in fulfilling his obligations.

But this brings us back to the phrase "with the best will in the world". For, on reflection, it might seem that a willingness to do what he takes to be the right thing and the sincere endeavour to do it that that involves are the most that can be asked of the moral agent. The notion of a sincere endeavour, however, raises the question of whether the responsible person is aware of anything more than an obligation to try to do what he takes to be the right thing. I think we can give an affirmative answer to this question. To think otherwise would be to make the error of assuming that, because we can sometimes usefully distinguish between trying to do something and actually doing it, we can always usefully distinguish between the two. Such an assumption is, however, a gratuitous one:

very often where there are no really serious empirical obstacles the person is obliged to do what he takes to be the right thing as opposed to merely trying to do it. Indeed, on any other interpretation the very notion of trying loses all significance since it makes sense to try to do something only if the possibility exists that you can do something. And there is no reason to think that among the things you can do there might not be included some of the things you ought to do.

Incidentally, this logical dependence of the notion of trying upon the notion of doing gives us an insight into the former that complements what we shall have to say later on the same subject. The insight, to be more explicit, is that the notion of trying is most typically employed as a means of expressing hesitation as to the outcome of the action. That is, whenever the agent suspects there will be a disparity in the descriptions of what is being done <u>at the time</u> on the one hand and the state of affairs the doing will bring into existence on the other hand he is quite likely to employ the notion of trying to qualify what is being done. And the same holds true when an observer entertains the same suspicion. As Professor Eric D'Arcy puts it:

> We stress the <u>trying</u> when we anticipate that non-success is very, or quite,likely; the task is delicate, or intricate, or laborious, and people who do X in the hope of effecting Y frequently fail to do so.

> A man whose car is giving trouble, and who has to ask some friends to push it in an attempt to start it 'on the run', will be described as 'trying to start his car'; whereas the act of pressing the starter-button in normal circumstances is called simply 'starting the car'.[18]

And further evidence for this interpretation is to be found in the fact that if there turns out to be no disparity the agent and the observer can drop the notion of trying altogether. Thus, if the agent succeeds in breaking down the door as a result of having tried to do so, he can describe what he has done and the observer can describe what he has done as having broken down the door tout court instead of having tried and succeeded in breaking it down.

But what if he does not succeed? The agent might be convinced that the door's being broken down will result from what he is doing now only to find that there are four very strong men holding it up and thus frustrating all his efforts; and let us assume for simplicity's sake that he stops whatever he is doing as soon as he finds this out. Now,in such a case as this the agent could afterwards quite appropriately say that he had been trying to break down the door even though at the time he would have said that he was breaking it down tout court.[19] In other words, here, it would seem that the notion of trying is being

---

18. D'Arcy, Eric, Human Acts, p.51.

19. D'Arcy, Eric, p.34.

used to emphasize what he failed to do. This is not to say, of course, that the agent's trying and failing to break down the door is not compatible with his doing other things that he takes to be involved in the success of such an undertaking. But it is to say that insofar as doing anything in this case is to be identified with breaking down the door the agent did nothing.

If what we have said is true, then to say that the agent is obliged to try to do something is to say that he is obliged to do it and to express hesitation about the result; and most typically this hesitation stems from the possibility of causal circumstances preventing him from carrying out his obligations. It is, however, essential to distinguish between allowing for this possibility and a flat refusal to believe that the agent can in the existing causal circumstances do what he is supposedly obliged to do. In the latter case there would be no point in insisting upon his obligations and to do so would engender the kind of performatory or pragmatic contradiction of which we spoke earlier. For, just as "ought implies can", so, to <u>say</u> that the agent ought to do something implies on the part of the sayer, if he is honest and knows what he is saying, the belief that he can do it in the existing causal circumstances. And since to refrain from acting can in a fundamental sense constitute a kind of action, it also implies the belief that

he can refrain from doing things in the existing causal circumstances when this is interpreted as an obligation.

14

We must say something about the maxim already mentioned, namely, "ought implies can" if we are fully to grasp the significance of what we said about believing. First of all, and this is a subsidiary point, it should be clear that anyone who assents to this maxim and has the logical sense of implication in mind is committed to holding that "ought" has a descriptive content. Otherwise, it is hard to see how telling someone that he ought to do something can imply anything. For only propositions imply things and I take it that those who want to empty "ought" of its descriptive content want to say that telling someone that he ought to do something does not amount to asserting a proposition. Nor does it help here to have recourse to a logic of imperatives as opposed to a logic of propositions. And the reason is not hard to find: there is absolutely no temptation as there might be with telling someone that he ought to do something to construe telling him that he can do it as an imperative. On the contrary, to tell him that he can do it is plainly to assert a proposition.

The second and for our purposes more important point to be made about the maxim in question is that no sense can

be made of the responsible person's awareness of the moral demand unless it is also true to say, as Professor C.D. Broad put it, "of an action, which was done, that it could have been avoided in some sense of "could" which is not definable in terms of "would have if".[20] In the same way, "We must be able to say of a conceivable action, which was not done, that it could have been done in some sense of "could" which is not definable in terms of "would have if".[21] Or, to put things in the present tense, if the agent cannot, in the absence of a different set of causal circumstances, do other than what he does or what he refrains from doing, then the moral demand is rendered either superfluous or futile; and, as a result, his awareness of it as a genuine moral demand becomes at best problematic and at worst unanalyzable. It is rendered superfluous in those cases where its content coincides with what the causal circumstances will bring about and it is rendered futile when its content does not so coincide with what these circumstances will bring about.

But what if awareness of the moral demand is itself part of the set of causal circumstances? Surely, in that

---

20. Broad, C.D., "Determinism, Indeterminism and Libertarianism", Ethics and the History of Philosophy, reprinted in Free Will, edited by Sidney Morgenbesser and James Walsh, pp.115-132. See p.122.

21. Broad, C.D., p.122.

case it would be neither superfluous nor futile. It would not be superfluous because in its absence the agent might not do what he otherwise would do and it would not be futile because it would contribute to bringing about the action. Everything, of course, turns on whether awareness of the moral demand can be considered itself part of the set of causal circumstances. Now, it seems to me that it cannot. In order to show this, however, we should have to say what is more appropriately said in a later chapter. More specifically, we should have to show that motives are not causes; and since awareness of the moral demand constitutes a motive, it cannot be a cause. But since the contention that motives are not causes will be ventilated later, we can only ask the reader to bear with us.

At the same time, however, it is worth remarking upon the oddity of the suggestion that awareness of the moral demand exercises a causal influence upon the agent. For, if this were true, it would be hard to make sense out of the distinction between a genuine sense of obligation and what we described earlier as the dictates of an overbearing conscience. After all, it is the latter that presents itself in the guise of a cause. That is to say, it is something of which the agent is a victim in the same way that a person in the grips of an obsession or a person acting under some internal compulsion -- we shall have

occasion to deal with these two cases later, in another connexion -- is a victim. On the other hand, a genuine sense of obligation does not seem to be assimilable to something of which the agent is a victim. Indeed, one of its distinguishing features is that it is something of which the agent is not a victim; and once this is forgotten we find that we are no longer talking of a genuine sense of obligation at all but of a state of mind that borders on the pathological. It is interesting in this regard to note that a genuine sense of obligation differs significantly from other motives, whether we have character traits of which it is an example or desires in mind. More specifically, we do not have the same difficulty with the notion of someone who is the victim of his own ambition or of someone who is the victim of his desires. This is not to say that such a person would be any healthier in spirit than the person suffering from the dictates of an over-bearing conscience. But what is important from our point of view is that the notion of sanity or control is, as it were, "built in" to the notion of the person who has a genuine sense of obligation, whereas the same cannot be said always of the ambitious or the desiring person.

A word of caution is in order. Nothing that we have said thus far commits us to the view that ambition or a particular desire constitutes a kind of cause. On the contrary,

as we shall argue later, neither character traits nor desires are in the ordinary run of things correctly considered as causes. But the phrase "in the ordinary run of things" is to be emphasized since both can by degree become causes as in the case of the person whom they render a victim. On the other hand, the difference between a genuine sense of obligation and an over-bearing conscience is not one of degree but one of kind. And it might very well be considerations of this nature that those philosophers have in mind who emphasize the eternal conflict between duty and desire and treat the latter invariably and the former never as a cause. They are, however, in my view, illegitimately assuming that a difference of degree can be safely ignored. In any case, it is only on such an assumption that a desire can be treated invariably as a cause.

But before doing anything else, we must say something more about an assumption that we ourselves have made. More specifically, I am thinking of the assumption that a cause is something in the face of which the agent is not really an agent at all but a patient. For it might be argued that this is not at all an essential characteristic of a cause and, as a result, both a genuine sense of obligation and motives to which the agent is in no sense a slave can be treated as causes along with the rest. Now, it is undoubtedly true that in a broad sense of the term even the

ordinary distinction between a cause and a reason is not drawn. But, as it will become evident in due course, it is not with the broad sense of the term that we are concerned. And in this we are following the example of the vast majority of philosophers who have sought to defend freedom of the will and who have at the same time resisted the temptation to obscure their fundamental disagreement with the determinist by accepting a broader definition of one of the key terms in the debate.

C

15

It is, I think, clear from the above that we are committed to defending a non-causal kind of freedom of action; and by this we mean to refer more specifically to the non-causal freedom of intentional action that opposes the philosophical libertarian to the philosophical determinist. But why, it might be asked, apart from all considerations of whether there is such a non-causal freedom or not, should it have to be the non-causal freedom of intentional action? After all, intentional actions, even if the most common, are not the only kind of actions there is. On the contrary, actions can be classed as deliberate, voluntary, accidental, unintentional and so on. And, the

objection continues, it might very well be the case that the non-causal freedom of one or more of these classes of actions is necessary as well if we are to make sense of the moral demand. Now, all this is true and no one who wants to argue for the non-causal freedom of specifically intentional actions should feel the slightest temptation to deny its truth; for, as we shall try to show, to argue for the non-causal freedom of intentional actions is ipso facto to argue for the same kind of freedom for deliberate actions and voluntary actions.

Let us compare first deliberate and intentional actions. What is the difference between the following two statements: "X's hitting Y over the head was an action that he performed intentionally (that he had intended to perform)" and "X hit Y over the head deliberately (after deliberation)"? When we way the former we seem to stress more the overt action that X performed. In fact, this notion is present in the very etymology of the word "intend" with its emphasis on the actual effort to achieve some goal, literally, to stretch out towards something (tendere, to stretch out). It is this stretching-out-towards-something characteristic of intending that renders it impossible to make a clear-cut distinction between the intention and the intentional or intended action. In more general terms, one could say that the very notion of conative

activity is present in the notion of intending itself; and it is no doubt this that has led certain philosophers like Hampshire and Hart, wrongly, I think, to identify intending with a kind of trying.[22]

Before continuing with our comparison of intentional and deliberate actions we should say something about our lumping together intentional and intended actions. For it may seem that what we have said applies more to the latter than to the former. After all, despite our insistence on the difficulty in drawing a clear-cut distinction between an intention and an action we never meant to deny that there was such a distinction. With many intentional actions, however, this would have to be denied since many of them are not intended. In these cases the criteria for the application of the corresponding description seem to be of an exclusively behavioral nature. As a result, we must stipulate that when we speak of intentional actions we shall speak only of those that are intended. We shall, moreover, follow the same procedure with deliberate actions and actions performed after deliberation. What we said of intentional actions applies equally well to deliberate ones. And for much the same reason that we decided to treat only those intentional actions that were intended we shall treat

---

22. Hampshire, L. and Hart, H.L.A., "Decision, Intention and Certainty", Mind, LXVII, 1958, p.11.

only those deliberate actions that were performed after deliberation.

But in what way does a deliberate action differ from an intentional one? I think that in the former case the emphasis is more upon the thinking, the weighing of alternative courses of action preceding the overt physical act. Here the deliberation can be more easily distinguished as an intellectual activity distinct from the overt, physical action that results from it than can the intending. Another way of putting it would be to say that both are rehearsals for action but that the latter resembles more the dress rehearsal the night before opening the play while the former resembles more the fundamental planning that goes into the staging and structuring of the play.

This, however, should not lead us to forget that the difference between the two is more a difference of emphasis than anything else. There is no sharp boundary-line between the two classes of action for the simple reason that when the deliberation leads to a decision to perform an action the decision logically implies an intention to perform it. As a result, it can be said that an action performed deliberately is also performed intentionally. It is not, on the other hand, true to say that every intentional action is also a deliberate one; for we can think of examples where we have intended to do something, have

done it and where we should not be said to have done it deliberately. Thus, we might on the spur of the moment decide to pull the lever that sets off the fire alarm, intend to pull it and actually pull it. And here the force of the phrase "on the spur of the moment" is to rule out the weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of pulling the lever that would make us want to say that we had acted deliberately. This example shows, moreover,,how in some cases an intentional action can come very close to being an impulsive one.

16

What of voluntary actions? Surely, it might be argued, the non-causal freedom of voluntary actions is necessary if we are to make sense of the responsible person's awareness of the moral demand. Or, at least, this seems to have been the opinion of a great many philosophers who have made the free-will determinist controversy turn on the question of whether or not voluntary actions were non-causally free. It seems to me, however, that such an approach is likely to be misleading; for it must not be forgotten that an action is commonly described as voluntary in a context where there might be reason to think that the agent was in some way compelled to do what he did. In other words, the notion of voluntary action and the notion

of an action performed under compulsion offset one another. The one is employed in circumstances where it would not seem peculiar to employ the other. In view of this, it is not surprising that many determinists, the most notable among them being Hume, have been only too happy to defend a determinism of voluntary actions: they thought this allowed them to hold that, so long as they were not compelled, it made very little difference whether or not voluntary actions were caused. And once they had convinced their readers of this, they could, without unduly shocking their religious and moral sensibilities, go on to say that they in fact were caused. This logical maneouvring, however, is plausible only if we agree that an action's not being compelled of itself permits us to say that it is voluntary. Otherwise, the determinist has not made his point that the opposite of a voluntary action is not a causally determined one but one that the agent has been compelled to perform. Now, I see no reason to agree to this, but I do think that because the notion of a voluntary action is commonly employed in the way described it is easy to be led mistakenly into agreement.

It might be thought that the best way of resisting this process is to remind ourselves that an action is voluntary only if it is preceded or accompanied by an act of will. Consequently, it will not be enough that the

action in question was not compelled; if we want to be assured that it is voluntary we shall have, first of all, to assure ourselves that it was willed in the literal sense in which it involves an act of will. The difficulty, however, is that it is hard to know what this act of will is supposed to be. Admittedly, it might be possible to know what it was supposed to be if the expression referred to the ability certain privileged human beings are alleged to possess whereby they can will others to do things. Those versed in the art of spiritualism, for example, are alleged to possess this ability. But whatever one might think of spiritualism, it is not presumably the kind of willing associated with it that philosophers who have spoken of acts of will have had in mind; for they have not been interested in what a person can make others do by willing but in the events he causes in his own body in this way. And it is not at all clear what this could mean.

What, then, of an act of will's close relation, namely, an effort of will? Here, at least, it is easy enough to know what is meant by the phrase. Making an effort of will is a relatively common form of activity in which we all at some time or another engage. On the other hand, however, it can hardly be regarded as something we do every time we perform a voluntary action. And thus it can hardly be regarded as a necessary condition of our per-

forming a voluntary action. Admittedly, we could extend the notion of an effort of will so that it was co-extensive with the notion of a voluntary action; but I do not see how we could do this without being prepared to sacrifice certain of the specific characteristics of the former. And such a procedure would seem to be self-defeating.

The best way of resisting the temptation to say that an action's not being compelled of itself permits us to say that it is voluntary is to remind ourselves that voluntary actions are a sub-class of intentional ones. Nor is anything changed, as Miss G.E.M. Anscombe seems to think, by the fact that some voluntary actions come about as a result of the agent's permitting them to happen because they please him but where he does not initiate them.[23] For it is equally clear that some intentional actions come about in the same way. Thus, a person might permit himself to be caressed and have intended all along to permit himself to be caressed. Here, presumably, the person derives a certain pleasure from being treated in this way and he initiates no action. Yet simply by virtue of the fact that he intended it all along his permitting himself to be caressed is intentional. It would, moreover, remain intentional even if he had not intended it. And the fact that the agent does not initiate any action is strictly irrelevant.

---

23. Anscombe, G.E.M., Intention, pp.89-90.

But if a voluntary action is an intentional one the converse does not hold; for we can easily imagine a case where the agent does something under compulsion and yet does it intentionally. Thus, a bank clerk may open his till at gun-point and this would be done intentionally although not voluntarily. Now there is very little temptation to say that an action's not being compelled of itself permits us to say that it is intentional. But since voluntary actions are intentional the same will apply to them. Or, more precisely, since we have in mind those intentional actions that are actually intended, the same will apply to those voluntary actions that are both intentional and intended. This, however, amounts to saying that it would be less misleading to concentrate on intentional actions and not voluntary ones in trying to evaluate the pros and cons of the free-will determinist controversy.

17

This conclusion, it must be added, holds only if the notion of an intentional action is itself not usually employed in such a way as to mislead. And there are some who would maintain that it is employed in such a way. It is, admittedly, true that we usually specify that an action is intentional in circumstances where there might be some reason to think that it was performed unintentionally, accidentally, by mistake and so on. As a result, it might

be thought to be tempting to regard an intentional action merely as an action that is not performed in any of these ways. And this would be comparable to regarding a voluntary action as one that the agent is not compelled to perform and where its being caused or not has very little to do with the matter. In fact, however, the notion of an intentional action, instead of being parasitic in this negative way on these other actions, provides, to continue with the metaphor, the necessary nourishment with which they can sustain themselves. Or, to put it in more literal terms, an intentional action is the paradigm case of an action and the others are only more or less degenerate instances thereof. As a result, when we speak of an action we usually have in mind an intentional one; and we are little moved by the fact that an action's being intentional excludes it from being several other things.

It is true, on the other hand, that when we specify that an action is intentional instead of leaving it to be understood by the context we do usually want to make it clear that it excludes its being some other kind of action. That is why such a procedure is associated with the attribution of responsibility where it is very important to establish how the action in question was performed. We are not, however, primarily interested in limiting the notion of an intentional action in this way. If we were, we

should have concentrated on the responsibility-attributing use of "responsible" and not the disposition-describing use.

18

As for those other kinds of action that we mentioned but did not elaborate upon, namely, actions performed unintentionally, accidentally, and by mistake, I do not think that anyone would seriously consider them as bearers of non-causal freedom; and it would, as a result, be a self-defeating enterprise from the start to make the responsible person's awareness of the moral demand depend on them.

We should, however, say something about involuntary and unintentional actions. In the case of involuntary actions it should be pointed out that they do not offset voluntary ones. On the contrary, despite the terms employed to describe them the notion of a voluntary action and the notion of an involuntary one function more independently the one from the other than one might have originally suspected. Thus, as we have already seen, we normally emphasize the voluntary nature of an action when we wish to make it clear that the agent was not compelled to do what he did and not to reject the suggestion that it was involuntary. And this remains true even though an action's being voluntary is as a matter of fact incompatible with its being involuntary. On the other hand, to say that an action was

involuntary is to deny that it was intentional. As a result, it can safely be said that sneezes, twitches and the like are, as examples of involuntary actions, also examples of unintentional actions since the former is a sub-class of the latter.

Now the reason why we have insisted on the fact that involuntary actions do not offset voluntary ones is to dispel the illusion that here at last we may have found a criterion, albeit a negative one, for voluntary actions, namely, their not being involuntary. For it is only in virtue of the fact that voluntary actions are intentional that an action's being voluntary can be said to exclude its being involuntary. As a result, once again the conclusion is forced upon us that the identifying marks of a voluntary action are related to its role as a kind of intentional action, the specific purpose of which is to offset those actions the agent performs under compulsion.

As for unintentional actions, of which involuntary actions are a sub-class, we should say something about them if only because certain actions have often been thought to be of this kind when they are in reality intentional. I have in mind in this connexion not involuntary actions but the consequences of an intentional action that the agent knows will result from that action, but to which he is more or less indifferent. It is, admittedly, true that the

agent does not aim to bring them about. Thus, if we were to confine the scope of intentional actions to what the agent aimed to bring about, then they could not be called intentional. But there seems to be little justification for this procedure.

If what we have said is true, then Hampshire and Hart are wrong when they say, to use their example, that the loud noise involved in shooting at someone is not something the agent did intentionally and not something he intended even though he knew it would be an unavoidable result of what he was doing.[24] First of all, it seems clear that,,in these circumstances, making the loud noise would be intentional and this characteristic of the action would be underlined in the appropriate legal or moral circumstances. and, needless to say, this is true whether we decide, as we have done, to confine curselves to those intentional actions that are intended or not. Secondly, unless we stipulate that intending is to be confined to what the agent aims to do, the agent could be said to have intended to make a loud noise. For example, if the agent intending to shoot at someone replied, upon being told by his companion what his action would involve, that he intended to shoot anyway, then there would be nothing peculiar about his companion's informing us that his friend intended to make a loud noise.

---

24. Hampshire, L. and Hart, H.L.A., p.7.

None of this is new. On the contrary, as D'Arcy puts it in interpreting Bentham:

> Provided there be no missuposal, advisedness with regard to the presence of a given circumstance, and its materiality, to a given consequence extend the intionality from the act to that consequence. If Tyrrel's act of shooting the arrow was intentional, and advised as to the circumstances of its likely direction and speed, the King's approach, and so on, then the consequence of the King's death was also intentional. 'Perhaps he did not positively wish it; but for all that, in a certain sense he intended it.'[25]

And D'Arcy makes it clear that for Bentham an act is advised with regard to a given circumstance if the agent is aware of the existence of that circumstance, or of its materiality to a given consequence. Provided, then, that the person is not mistakenly persuaded of the existence of that circumstance, or of its materiality to a given consequence, "advisedness with regard to the presence of a given circumstance, and its materiality to a given consequence, extend the intentionality from the act to that consequence."[26]

It should be noted, moreover, that for Bentham it is only in a certain sense that Tyrrel can be said to have intended to kill the King. The implication would seem to be that there is another sense in which he cannot be said to have intended to kill the King. And the only candidate

---

25. D'Arcy, Eric, p.104.

26. D'Arcy, Eric, p.104.

would seem to be intending as aiming, as we have maintained all along.

Another observation before leaving Bentham: he, like us, is very much concerned to emphasize the person's awareness in this context and, I suspect, for the same reason. For it would be sheer folly to insist that the person intends all the consequences of that which he aims to do. On the other hand, the fact that he does intend the known consequences is proof positive of the irrelevance in this context of the person's attitude towards those consequences.

This explains why Miss Anscombe seems to be wrong, although closer examination of her remarks reveals that she is not, when she says, to use her example, that a person's replenishing the house water-supply with poisoned water is not intentional if he can truly reply to the question 'Why did you replenish the house water-supply with poisoned water?' 'I didn't care about that, I wanted my pay and just did my usual job'.[27] But any misunderstanding there might be here is cleared up when she remarks a little later that such a reply will not absolve the person from guilt of murder.[28] In other words, she is making an implicit appeal to our distinction between intending and

---

27. Anscombe, G.E.M., pp.41-42.

28. Anscombe, G.E.M., p.45.

aiming since his not being absolved from guilt of murder can only be explained if the action was intentional; and Anscombe's real point is that it was not what the person aimed to do. Obviously, when we are concerned with the latter notion, the person's attitude to the consequences of his action is not at all irrelevant; and Anscombe was right in pointing this out.

Hampshire and Hart, for their part, may also be talking of intending when they really have aiming in mind when they maintain that of the person in their example "it would be misleading to say he intentionally made the noise, or that he intended to make the noise; for this would suggest that this is what the agent would say that he was doing, if asked."[29] For what the person would say he was doing if asked does not set definite limits on what he did intentionally or what he intended where intending is not made to involve aiming, although it does, I think, set definite limits on what he intended where intending is made to involve aiming. That is, the agent is in a privileged position when it comes to describing what he aimed to do. And even then we have to qualify our remarks. For, to use Hampshire and Hart's example again, if the agent gave all the indications of making a concerted effort to shoot at someone, then the onus would be upon him to prove that that

---

29. Hampshire, S. and Hart, H.L.A., p.7.

was not what he was aiming at doing and it would not likely be enough for him simply to deny that he had been aiming at shooting the other person. Likewise, in Anscombe's example, as she herself indicates, if the person was hired by the poisoner to pump the water, knowing that it was poisoned, it will do him no good to say that he does not care and that he just wants the money.[30] On the contrary, by accepting the commission by the acceptance and performance of which he gets the money, he puts himself in a position where he can be said to aim to pump the poisoned water.

---

30. Anscombe, G.E.M., p.44.

Chapter II

INTENDING AND ACTING

A

We have argued that if any class of actions is to be the bearer of non-causal freedom and thereby allow us to make sense of the responsible person's awareness of the moral demand it will be the class of intentional actions. It is now time to show that an action's being intentional is logically incompatible with its being causally determined. And a necessary step in this process is to determine in general what this procedure involves. Broadly speaking, those who seek to defend a non-causal variety of freedom of intentional action can concentrate either on the action or the intention or both. And historically those who have chosen the second of these alternatives have been very much concerned with the notion of decision since deciding and intending are so intimately related. The second of these alternatives is, moreover, the one we have chosen. This amounts to saying that, although we believe there are non-causally free decisions, we believe the relationship between the intention resulting from such a decision and the action to be a causal one. As a result, the task before us has both a negative and a positive aspect: we must try to

refute those who hold that the relationship between an intention and an action is other than a causal one and we must show that decisions are non-causally free. Nor should it occasion much surprise that an important part of our task is to refute a position held by certain libertarians. On the contrary, in the hoary debate over non-causal freedom it is only to be expected that the opposing camps would end by differing on certain issues even among themselves. Thus, it is not only a question of choosing a camp but also of choosing a tent within it, preferably one that is well-constructed.

In line with this approach, moreover, we shall, after trying to show that intentions cause actions, go on to list some of the limitations on the scope of decisions. In this way we shall avoid certain misinterpretations to which a defence of the non-causal freedom of decision has been subjected. But more of this later.

2

Let us go into the reasons given by those who maintain that the relationship between an intention and an action is other than a causal one. One reason that Professor A.I. Melden gives in his book Free Action is based on the contention that there can be no logically necessary connexion between a cause and an effect. This, we are told,

is what Hume taught us if he taught us nothing else. There is, however, such a connexion between an intention and an action; for an intention cannot be described without reference to the action intended; and this is merely another way of saying that an intention is an intention to do something.[1] Now, I think the first thing one wants to say here is that Melden seems to be confusing the descriptions of things with the things themselves. How else could he be led to believe that what is true of a relationship between the former must somehow be equally true of the relationship between the latter? Or, to talk in terms of concepts instead of descriptions, how else could he be led to believe that a logical relationship between concepts must somehow be reflected in a logical relationship between that to which they apply? The asnwer would seem to be that he could be led in no other way to believing this short of a full-fledged commitment to the view that there is no real distinction to be made between concepts and their objects. But Melden, I take it, is not an idealist; he does not believe, officially at least, that the best way to carry out an empirical investigation is to carry out a conceptual one. And the relationship between having an intention and acting upon it is surely the proper object of an empirical investigation in

---

1. Melden, A.I., Free Action, pp.52-53, 88-89, 93. Melden applies this argument to willing and motives but he would seem to have intentions in mind as well.

the broadest sense of the term.

But even if we ignore the confusion between concepts and objects, Melden's argument is rebutted by a counter-argument employed by Mr. Brice Noel Fleming in his article "On Intention". I can do no better than to quote him:

> x cannot be the cause of y if the occurrence of x either entails or is entailed by the occurrence of y: for example, a man's taking a wife cannot be the cause of his getting married. This is the sort of necessary connection that is incompatible with x's being the cause of y: but this is not the sort of necessary connection that holds between an intention and the action intended. Most intentions have to be carried out; but any particular intention can fail to be carried out. I can intend to close the door without closing it, and I can close the door without intending to. The intention is one thing, the action intended another; and so far it remains possible for them to be causally as well as necessarily connected.[2]

Before leaving Melden I think it should be indicated that, although he does not distinguish between the intentional object of the intention or if you prefer, the objective reality of the intention on the one hand and the performed action or, again, if you prefer, the formal reality of the intention on the the other hand, nothing can be made to turn on this. More specifically, it cannot form the basis of an additional criticism of Melden's position.

---

2. Fleming, Brice Noel, "On Intention", The Philosophical Review, LXXIII, p.320.

It could do this only if what was intended (the intentional object of the intention or its objective reality) and what was performed (the formal reality of the intention) were not one and the same thing. For then, to maintain, as Melden does, that an intention cannot be described without reference to the action intended would be entirely different from maintaining that an intention cannot be described without reference to the action intended and performed. But the truth of the matter is that it is the same action now intended and then performed. Indeed, if it were not, it would follow that we could never perform what we intended. But this is absurd.

But let us return to more immediate concerns. It should not be concluded that because the intention is one thing and the action another the two are only accidentally related. And if the notion of causality is being interpreted in such a way as to imply this, then we shall have to stop interpreting it in this way. Indeed, one reason for our earlier emphasis on the conative aspect of intending was to deny just such an accidental relationship. For in its absence we should have to say that the agent just as a matter of brute fact happened to do what he intended to do. Thus, to use a concrete example, the fact that, intending to go to the cinema, he actually went there instead of going to the football stadium, would have to be attri-

buted to the way things just happen to happen. This, however is absurd. To quote a very apposite passage from Fleming, even if what he has to say there is not entirely satisfactory:

> ..... intentions have much more than a sometime, apparently accidental conjunction with the doing of the actions intended. If we are to have intentions, what we mean to do and what we in fact do must not be at odds most of the time; otherwise, thinking that we are going to do things would be, at the best, more like what we now call thinking about doing them, or even idle daydreaming. And this is putting the point weakly. For in the case in question, actions could not be actions as they are now, because at least part of the meaning of "acting" or "doing something" depends on the nonaccidental, customary, coincidence of plan and performance; as a rule, what is planned, in the sense of "intended" gets performed. Or, at least, we could say, what we do is significant in the way it is because as a rule, it embodies what we plan; just as what we plan is significant in the way it is because, as a rule, it leads to its embodiment in what we do. And since in the case in question there would be neither continuity nor development in our lives as there is now, our sense of ourselves as active beings would be impossible. Our lives could not make the sense they do now, and it is hard to see how they could make any sense at all.[3]

Still, why is this not entirely satisfactory? With what do we wish to take issue? It is with the phrase "as a rule" that Fleming uses three times in the passage we have just quoted. For example, he says that, as a rule, what is planned, in the sense of "intended" gets performed.

---

3. Fleming, Brice Noel, p.318.

Now, the trouble with his use of this phrase in this and related contexts in the passage quoted is that despite the true and interesting things the passage contains about the consequences of the view being rejected it might au fond serve only to make the passage restate just such a view. For, if by his use of "as a rule" Fleming means to refer to what regularly happens,,and this is one way we use the phrase in question, then there is no guarantee that what the agent intends and what he does are not just accidentally conjoined . After all, there is nothing logically wrong with accidents that occur regularly. On the other hand, if by his use of "as a rule" Fleming means to refer to what the agent does as a matter of policy, then it is surely false to say that the agent as a matter of policy does what he intends. For this would suggest that in the absence of such a policy the agent might very well go through life never doing what he intends. After all, why adopt a policy unless it is possible to flout it and to flout it systematically. But, as Fleming has been at pains to point out, it is not possible to go through life never doing what we intend and still have the notions of intention and action that we do have. Finally, if by his use of "as a rule" Fleming means to refer to an actual rule to the effect that what is intended must get performed, then he is surely wrong because there is no such rule. Nor would it do any

good if he were referring to an actual rule of language to the effect that when the agent says he intends to do something he must do it or be charged with misusing language because, again, there is no such rule. Indeed, even though people regularly do what they say they intend to do, nothing is changed in this regard since, a great many contemporary philosophers to the contrary, a linguistic regularity is not a linguistic rule. As a result, it must be concluded that Fleming has not shown us the reason why intending and doing what is intended are not just accidentally conjoined, although he has shown us some of the curious consequences that would result if they were accidentally conjoined. But to show why they are not accidentally conjoined he would have had to insist as we have all along on the conative aspect of intending.

Our emphasis on the conative aspect of intending should not, as we hinted earlier, lead one to identify intending with the narrower notion of trying. Hampshire and Hart seem to do just this when they say that a person who intends to do something is logically committed to believing that he will at least try to do it.[4] We can, however, think of cases where the agent intends to do such and such an action partly because he is convinced that he will not have to try. This is particularly true where the agent is

---

4. Hampshire and Hart, p.11.

not at all enthusiastic about doing something and where he is not prepared to go out of his way to do it. On the other hand, however, we should not be taken to mean that the agent even here does not have to be prepared to expend a certain amount of physical and mental energy. But all that proves is that trying is not to be confused with this latter process. Nor should we be taken to mean that intending to do something does not in the great majority of cases result in trying to do it. To deny this would be to deny an obvious truth. Fortunately, we do not have to deny this in order to deny that intending and trying are logically related.

But what, then, do we emphasize when we emphasize the conative aspect of intending as a means of elaborating on the kind of causal relationship that exists between intending and acting. I think this question is answered if we keep in mind what we said earlier about the etymology of the word "intend" (tendere, to stretch out) along with Fleming's reference to the notion of an active being which intending like anything conative presupposes. Now, as it has often been remarked, it is next to impossible to explain either the notion of an active being or conation in any non-circular sense. We know how to use the expressions because we are active beings ourselves; and this is another way of saying that for us no such explanation of these notions and,

for that matter, the nature of the causal relationship between intending and acting would be necessary even if it were possible. Explanation, after all, does come to an end. And when it does come to an end it is better to realize this fact than to import pseudo-explanations that cry out themselves for explanation. I am thinking especially of the pseudo-explanation that consists in saying that the causal relationship between an intention and an action is a contingent one. For this amounts to employing a term that is customarily and unproblematically employed to describe the negative fact that a given proposition does not entail another one to describe a relationship between two things in the world. As a result, not only do we confuse logic and reality but, by taking the notion of contingency to describe a positive relationship, we commit ourselves to a contradictio in adjecto. And things are made no better by those philosophers who speak of a radically contingent relationship between intentions and actions. What one wants to ask, is the difference between a radically contingent relationship and no relationship at all?

The fact that it is not possible to give a non-circular explanation of "active being", "conation" and ultimately "intention" suggests an important distinction between knowing what an expression means and being able to explain its meaning in a non-circular way. Nor is this

distinction relevant only to the expressions at hand. On the contrary, it is in an obvious sense equally true of such expressions as "or" and "and" for which there are no approximate synonyms; for without synonyms there can be no explanation of these expressions and a fortiori and trivially no non-circular explanation. Indeed, even for those expressions that have synonyms, we can know what the expressions mean without being able at this very moment to specify synonyms for them. And again, it is trivially true that since we cannot explain such expressions at the moment we cannot a fortiori explain them in a non-circular way either at the moment. If, on the other hand, we were not active beings, who had intentions our only reaction to such expressions as "active being" "conation" and "intention" would be one of blank incomprehension and we should not even try to explain them. Or, to make a comparison, the reaction would be not unlike the one to be expected from a totally amoral man on being told that he should hearken to his sense of moral obligation.

B

4 3.

There is another kind of logically necessary connexion that exists between an intention and the action intended; and this, too has been thought to exclude the

possibility of a causal relation between the two. At least, this seems to be the thinking of Mrs. Philippa Foot in the following passage:

> ..... where motives are intentions it is clear that they cannot be determining causes; for intending to do x and being ready to take the steps thought necessary to do x are connected not empirically but analytically. A man cannot be said to have an intention unless he is reconciled to what he believes to be the intermediate steps. We cannot speak as if the intention were something which could be determined first, and "being ready to take the necessary steps" were a second stage following on the first.[5]

Now, I think it is clear that this contention, unless it is seriously qualified, will not even appear plausible. First of all, it should be indicated that not all actions involve intermediate steps in their performance. Thus, when the agent raises his arm he does not do something else, say, move his muscles in order to move his arm.. So, here, it would be in Foot's interest if we interpreted her as saying that a man cannot be said to have an intention unless he is reconciled to carrying out the action, or, what amounts to the same thing, unless he is ready to carry it out at the appropriate time. Secondly, and this is a real difficulty, for Foot, the agent intends to do a great many things at some unspecified time in the future. For example,

---

5. Foot, Philippa, "Free Will as Involving Determinism", The Philosophical Review, LXVI, 1957, p.444, reprinted in Free Will edited by Sidney Morgenbesser and James Walsh, p.75. All future references will be made to the reprint.

he may intend to write out a cheque for all his staggering debts -- someday. But in such a case it will not do to say, as Foot is committed to saying, that, subject to the qualification already mentioned, the agent is reconciled to what he believes to be the intermediate steps. On the contrary, here, the force of the "someday" is to impress upon us the vagueness of the frame of mind in which the agent finds himself; he is only in a very ill-defined way reconciled to what he believes to be the necessary steps.

In order to avoid any possibility of confusion at this point we must distinguish the case just mentioned from the one in which the agent's carrying out his intention someday is made contingent upon certain specific conditions being satisfied. Indeed, very often the word "someday" is employed as a device for introducing a list of such conditions. Thus, the agent might very well say, "Someday, when I become manager of the firm, receive my father's legacy and marry a rich woman, I intend to write out a cheque for all my staggering debts." Here, the agent is clearly reconciled to what he believes to be the necessary steps but he is not prepared to take them in the present circumstances.

But what of the first-mentioned case where he is not so clearly reconciled to what he believes to be the necessary steps? Foot could maintain that such intentions

are imperfect. And there would be a precedent for this kind of distinction. After all, in French we can still talk of "velléités" even if it is only very rarely that we talk of "velleities" in English. A velléité is defined by Larousse as a "volonté imparfaite" or an "intention fugitive" but there seems to be no reason why we could not speak of an "intention imparfaite" or in English an imperfect intention instead of a "volonté imparfaite". And an imperfect intention could be taken to be one where the intender is not fully reconciled to what he believes to be the necessary steps to accomplishing what he intends. At any rate, some distinction along these lines would seem to be required if we are to get clear on the relation between intending and acting.

If, however, we do decide to adopt the phrase "imperfect aim" we must be consistent in our use of it. More particularly, we must resist whatever temptation there might be to talk in terms of weak aims instead. The latter, in fact, do not exist. Or at least they do not exist as they are usually described. As some philosophers will have it, a weak aim or, as they prefer to call it, a weak intention is one that a person supposedly has when he sees that something is going to happen and allows it to happen even though he could prevent it from happening. But where is the intention here? Surely, if a person intends to do anything in this case, and in the absence of further details we cannot

be sure that he does, it is either to prevent whatever it is from happening or to allow it to happen. In the first case, his failure to carry out his intention might lead us to call him weak-willed but that does not license talk of weak intentions; a weak-willed person has the ordinary kind of intention but fails to stick to it. Similarly, if he intends to allow the event to happen there is nothing unusual about the intention. But, unlike the first case, neither would there be any reason to think that he was weak-willed since he did what he intended to do. The notion of allowing something to happen may sometimes, however, involve something like what we have called an imperfect aim. Thus, to return to our original example, a man's aiming to write out a cheque for all his staggering debts -- someday may simply amount to an unwillingness on his part to do anything that would render the fulfillment of such an aim impossible.

We must, however, along with Foot, anticipate the objection that talk of imperfect intentions simply trivializes the entailment that supposedly exists between intending and being ready to take the steps thought necessary to its fulfillment. For, it might be suggested, we are now saying that there is such a relationship excepting in those cases where there is not. In other words, it might be suggested that the introduction of imperfect intentions is merely an <u>ad hoc</u> device for handling the many

exceptions that one can oppose to the rule. Now, I think this objection would be a valid one only if the notion of an imperfect intention were not indispensable in other contexts. But, as a matter of fact, it is an absolutely essential distinction that must be drawn whenever we seek to elaborate in a serious manner upon the notion of an intention. And thus it cannot be interpreted as being merely an ad hoc device that serves our and Foot's immediate purpose.

But to return to Foot. Even if we try, as we have, to put the best light upon her original contention, it will not hold; for the most she can be taken to have shown is that intending to do something entails being ready to take the steps thought necessary to doing it. But being ready to do something is not the same as actually doing it. As a result, there is still plenty of room in which to drive a causal wedge between the readiness and the doing with the result that the former could be taken to cause the latter. Moreover, if, as I believe, the entailment relation between intending to do something and being ready to take the steps believed necessary reflects a fundamental identity between the two, then we can still talk of a causal relation between intending and doing. As a result, Foot's argument to the contrary must be judged in the final analysis ineffective.

One might still be tempted, however, to try where Foot seems to have failed. Thus, one might argue that, keeping in mind all the qualifications that have been made thus far, intending to do something logically involves taking the necessary steps or, at least, the steps thought necessary to doing it and not just being ready to take the steps thought necessary. Now, anyone who wanted to argue in this way would have to make an exception of those cases where empirical obstacles might prevent the fulfillment of the intention. Moreover, it would have to be made clear that the agent does not change his mind. And even then, with the relationship between intending and acting described in so qualified a manner it is far from clear that we have not been talking about a causal relationship all along. For even a relationship that is incontestably causal can be described in the same way with the result that the cause comes to entail the effect; all one has to do is to include in the description the proviso that there are no contra-causal circumstances to be considered and the cause obtains. As a result, we must keep in mind the distinction between the causal relationship itself and our description of it just as we had to distinguish between intentions and actions and our descriptions of them. The fact that the latter relationship can be converted into a rather trivial entailment relationship in the manner indicated must not lead us into saying

that there was no causal relationship to convert. And this applies equally well to the causal relationship between intending and acting.

It does, admittedly, seem peculiar to say that someone did something because he intended to do it in reply to the question, "Why did he do it?" This, however, can be ascribed to the fact that we do not usually labour the obvious; and this amounts to saying that the reply in question, <u>although it might be true</u>, is not considered worth making. In this respect, such a reply resembles specifying that an action is intentional when there is absolutely no reason for thinking that it is anything else. In other words, in both cases the maxim of the Scandinavian philosopher of language H. Tennessen, seems to apply, namely, a remark is only remarked if remarkable. And he goes on to elaborate, "An unremarkable remark is never <u>in order</u>, it is, literally speaking, <u>uncalled for</u>. The natural, standard, ordinary, usual, everyday response to such an uncalled for utterance is .... <u>What do you mean</u>? <u>It doesn't make</u> sense". But to repeat myself, it still might be true; and as far as we philosophers are concerned, this is the only thing that matters here. In other words, we must always be ready to distinguish between what it is appropriate or inappropriate to say on the one hand and what it is true or false to say on the other hand. Indeed, the failure to make

such a distinction can lead only to a kind of intuitionistic linguistics that is no less irrelevant to our purposes for disguising itself under the name of philosophy.[6]

C

~~6~~ 4

In view of what we have just said, we are in a position to understand one reason why it has been said, mistakenly, in our view, that intentions cannot cause actions. And that reason consists in gratuitously assuming that because it is peculiar to say something it must be false. There is, however, yet another reason, and a more profound one, why some are led to deny that intentions cause actions. This is connected with the fact that if intentions cause actions, the agent's knowledge of what he is doing will be inductive knowledge; it will depend upon his having observed in the past that his intention of, say, writing out a cheque has been followed by the appropriate bodily movements. For the effect that a particular cause will have can in the final analysis be known only through extrapolating from past observations of the former's following upon the occurrence of the latter. And just because

---

6. Tennessen, H., "Remarking and Remarkability". This paper was read at the annual meeting of the Canadian Philosophical Association in Halifax in June, 1964. As far as I know it has not appeared in print.

one event followed upon another in the past is no sure guarantee that it will do likewise in the future. This remains true, moreover, no matter how many times before, to return to our example, the agent's intention of writing out a cheque has been followed by the appropriate bodily movements. For example, it may have happened so many times before that the agent did not have to look and see in order to be reasonably sure in a particular instance that they had followed his intention. Still, if he wanted to be perfectly sure, he would have to look and see; and, as a result, this would constitute the best evidence available.

All this may strike one on first glance as being somewhat strange. This is not to deny that even on first glance we can think of reasons why the agent may be unable to reply or reply wrongly when asked what he is doing. For example, someone may ask him what he is doing and he may be unable to reply or he may reply wrongly because of some physical impediment or lack of vocabulary. But, needless to say, this in itself does not allow us to conclude that the agent is not perfectly sure of what he is doing until he has looked and seen. Rather, it merely allows us to conclude that circumstances exist in which he cannot describe what he is doing. And were it not for the physical impediment or the lack of vocabulary he would be able to describe what he is doing. It does, however, on first glance seem

somewhat odd to maintain that if the agent was writing out a cheque and someone challenged him to state on the basis of the best evidence available what he was doing, he would have to observe his bodily movements or anything else and read off what he was doing from them.

I think the oddity stems from a failure to make a sufficiently clear distinction between an intention and an action. It is true that the agent does not have to observe anything in order to be sure of what he intends; although we can think of cases where he would have to observe things in order to find out what he had intended and then forgotten. In other words, the agent has an immediate awareness of, although not exclusive access to, his own intentions. And this, together with the conative aspect of intending that we have already indicated, leads to the view that he has an immediate awareness of his own intentional actions. For, if the notion of effort is involved in the very notion of an intention, then it is only to be expected that the immediate awareness the agent has of his intentions will carry over to the effort he makes to do something although not to what he actually does. Thus even blindfolded and with no sensation in his hand the agent can be immediately aware that he intends to write out a cheque and that he is trying to do so. On the other hand, he could not <u>know</u> that he was actually writing it out unless he used his eyes and

perhaps his sense of touch.[7]

To deny this, it seems to me, is to commit oneself to the belief that not only intentions but also intentional actions are intrinsically mental; for it is the intrinsically mental that the agent is immediately aware of.[8] This would mean, however, that what we normally take to be actions are not actions at all but merely a series of bodily events triggered off by what really is an action, namely, an interior event in the mind. Now, I can see no good reason to justify such a view. It seems to depend on the assumption that if the agent is convinced that he is actually doing something, he must be doing something even if it is only something mental. And from this the logical leap to saying that even when he actually does something the agent at the same time does something mental is not very great. But this assumption can be shown to be false. More precisely, as we indicated earlier, the agent can be got to agree afterwards that he was wrong in his conviction and that he had tried and failed. But if he had really done something, albeit something mental, this procedure would be inexplicable.

But how can this be made to square with our previous contention that the agent is immediately aware of

7. Fleming, Brice Noel, p.311.

8. Fleming, Brice Noel, p.313.

what he is trying to do? There is really no difficulty once we remember that such immediate awareness is associated with the notion of trying employed as means of expressing hesitation about the outcome of what is being done. In this respect it is to be contrasted with the notion of trying relevant here where the notion serves as a way of describing what the agent has already failed to do. It would, however, be quite wrong even in the former case to believe that the agent somehow sees with his mind's eye an object called a trying that no one else can see. On the contrary, his awareness that he is trying is simply part of what is involved in his recognizing the disparity between what he is tempted to describe himself as doing at the time and the state of affairs his doing will bring into existence.

I 5

Our refusal to accept intentional actions as intrinsically mental does seem to correspond with our ordinary intuitions. On the other hand, it is not enough just to argue, as we have argued all along, that intentional actions are physical occurrences we come to know in the same way we come to know any other physical occurrence. For, needless to say, the notion of a physical occurrence is a broad one. As a result, we must make it clear right

here and now, if it has not been clear all along, that we have in mind overt, bodily movements when we speak of intentional actions. This is not to say, of course, that things like muscle movements and innervating electric currents from the brain are not necessary conditions of a person's doing anything but they are not themselves doings.[9]

Incidentally, our refusal to accept intentional actions as intrinsically mental should not be interpreted as a denial that there are mental acts of an intentional nature. Such a denial would be plainly false since we can deliberate, do mental arithmetic and the like and these are intentional in nature. All we are denying is that intentional actions are mental. And no one, I think, would want to dispute that or deny that the distinction between acts and actions here drawn is a legitimate one.

D

~~9~~ 6.

To change direction for a moment and while we are on the subject of the relationship between intentions and actions, it has often been remarked, indeed, it is a commonplace, that an intention is an intention to do something. This raises the question of whether we could talk significantly

---

9. Dawes, Hicks, G., "The Nature of Willing", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, N.S., vol. XIII, 1912-13.

of intentions in a world in which no one could ever do anything. Admittedly, in order for such a question to be coherent we should have to make an exception of the act of forming an intention or deciding itself; for, while this is not an action but a mental act, it can be considered a doing in a broad sense of the term. Let us, therefore, make an exception of it and go on to pose our question. Now, for one reason already indicated it would be logically impossible to speak of intentions in our imaginary world since we could not even describe them. This, however, is not the reason in which I am primarily interested. More positively, I am interested in this regard in the dependence of intending on believing. It is this, it seems to me, and not the internal logical connexion between intending and acting, that renders our imaginary world preposterous while at the same time giving us an important insight into the nature of intending. The internal logical connexion, on the other hand, merely permits us to make a not very profitable parallel between intending and thinking since the latter, no more that the former, can be identified without reference to its object. But with the exception of imperfect intentions, intending to do something is more than simply thinking about doing it.

But how does the alleged dependence of intending on believing render our imaginary world preposterous? I think

the best way to answer this question is to ask oneself why anyone would form an intention when he firmly believed that it would be frustrated. Indeed, to say that it would be frustrated in the kind of world we have in mind would be to say too much; for such a manner of speaking could be relevant only in a world where there existed the possibility of success. This condition, however, could hardly be met in a world in which nobody could do anything. Admittedly, we are assuming that the occupants of such a world would be made aware of their congenital incapacity to do what they intended. This, in the circumstances, seems a perfectly natural assumption to make; for the perpetual frustration of what they intended would eventually convince them that in such a world it could not be otherwise. Nor does it do any good to resort to the notion of trying and maintain that the agent could try to do things in such circumstances. On the contrary, even in order to try to do something the agent would have to believe there was some possibility of success, however slight. In other words, the notion of trying, although it can be used by the agent to express his hesitation as to the result of what he is doing, is not compatible with an absolute refusal to believe in his ability to bring about such a result.

I think our admittedly imaginary example brings out the close connexion between intending and believing.

More specifically, it shows how the scope of the former can be limited by the latter. Now, this is important. Later on we are going to defend the non-causal freedom of decision and, as a result, the non-causal freedom of intentions. It is, however, all too easy to assume unthinkingly that, if decisions are free, the agent somehow enjoys an unlimited scope in what he can decide to do. Such an assumption is entirely gratuitous but the failure to make this clear has rendered the position of the defenders of free-will less than convincing in the opinion of many. Indeed, it has had the effect of rendering a view of freedom like the one to be found in the system of Spinoza more attractive than it might have otherwise been. It, at least, has the virtue of permitting the notion of belief to play a central role in the defence of freedom.

The difficulty with a view of freedom based on the intellect and not the will, however, and what renders it less satisfactory than the latter, is the model of belief it offers. More specifically, it fails to account for the fact that believing, although a state of mind, shares many of the characteristics of deciding, a form of doing, albeit not the most obvious form. For example, what the agent believes as well as what he decides is an important factor in determining whether or not he is a responsible person. We can, moreover, in line with this, think of cases where

he is praised or condemned for what he believes just as he is praised or condemned for what he decides. And this is to be at least partially explained by the fact that a person's beliefs are greatly influenced not only by what he has decided in the past but by what he decides right here and now. Thus, he might adopt a false belief because he has decided not to pay very much attention to the evidence at hand. As a result, it is essential to determine whether he could have decided otherwise than he did; if we fail to do this, we cannot determine whether the limitations imposed on the scope of his freedom by his beliefs is, as it were, self-imposed or not.

But it is not only the agent's beliefs that limit the scope of his decisions. On the contrary, the role he plays in society can be equally effective in this regard. Thus, to take just one example, a person who is not a policeman cannot decide to give a man a parking ticket. This is not to say, of course, that he cannot pretend to be a policeman and decide to go through the motions of giving him one. This, however, is not the same thing as actually being one and actually deciding to give someone a parking ticket. This particular limitation on the scope of decisions serves to remind us, moreover, that if a responsible person is one who is permanently aware of his obligations those obligations will very often differ funda-

mentally from those of which another responsible person is aware. Indeed, the very notion of obligation cannot be adequately understood apart from the particular social role of the person who has it.

One last limitation upon the scope of decisions that I should like to mention before trying to demonstrate the non-causal freedom of decisions themselves is that imposed by the agent's lacking the knowledge required for a particular decision. More precisely, it is important to remember that certain decisions are of a formal nature. For example, in mathematical logic one speaks of decision-procedures that permit one to decide whether a particular proposition is valid; and by the same token we can speak of a decision-procedure that constitutes the agent's deciding to do something. Thus, in the British system of law a judge at a trial must follow a formal routine that constitutes an essential part of his deliberations; and the failure to do so, if it is discovered by the proper authorities, will void any decision he might have made. For example, it is, let us say, discovered by the proper authorities that a certain judge decided to sentence a man to ten years in prison simply because he felt like it and in complete ignorance of the facts of the case. In such circumstances, the decision would not only be disregarded but it is at least debatable as to whether he would even

be thought to have made one.[10] In any case, he could be asked to make a decision in the case without this implying that he had been asked to reconsider a decision already made and without this implying that he had been asked to decide what he had already decided. The latter request, in any case, would amount to demanding the impossible; and this reflects the fact that one cannot decide what one has already decided, another limitation, albeit a trivial one, upon the scope of decision.

---

10. Or he might be thought at best to have made a decision in a scare-quote sense. For an elucidation of what this means see chapter 3.

Chapter III

DECIDING AND INTENDING

A

It is now time to deal with the question of whether or not decisions and, as a result, intentions are caused. Immediately, however, we shall have to delimit the notion of an intention if we want to speak in the same breath of decisions and intentions; for it is clear that the agent intends to do a great many things that have not involved his making a conscious decision. I suspect, moreover, that the word "conscious" should be stressed here because some of these intentions probably involve unconscious decisions. Now, the notion of an unconscious decision, like that of an unconscious desire, is puzzling at first glance; and, as a result, some philosophers have been led to reject both notions on the grounds that each constitutes a contradictio in adjecto. On the other hand, however, it is a fact of everyday experience that people do behave in such a way as to lead one to believe that their behaviour is the result of some kind of decision even though they are not aware of having made one. And this fact of everyday experience gains powerful support from the findings of modern psychology. Thus, one is torn between considerations of semantical

peculiarity on the one hand and a desire to remain faithful to the facts of experience on the other. The solution would seem to be a compromise that countenances unconscious decisions while at the same time recognizing that they owe their title to their resemblance with certain features associated with conscious decision-making. Nor does it matter if most or all of those features are behavioural.

It should not be thought, however, that if a particular intention does not involve a conscious decision it must involve an unconscious one. On the contrary, there is a perfectly good sense in which the agent can be said to intend to do something even though he has done nothing consciously or unconsciously that could be considered the making of a decision. This should not be surprising. We are, after all, creatures of habit whose life would be rendered excessively complex if we had to come to a decision before setting about to do anything. Indeed, one of the most important functions of habit is to allow us to dispense with such a procedure. In other words, a decision is most typically required when the agent is faced with the choice of doing or refraining from doing something out of the ordinary or something that does not constitute a part of his daily routine. Thus, it is no accident that philosophers interested in the notion of decision have normally concentrated on those decisions that constitute the turning

point in a man's life and the like. And although this kind of approach can degenerate into a kind of philosophical melodrama, it is based on an appreciation of the essentially dramatic or extraordinary element in decision.

We must, then, delimit the notion of an intention so that it will include only those intentions that result from a decision if we want to speak of the two in the same breath. We shall, moreover, in order to facilitate our task, concentrate on those decisions that are of a conscious nature. We do this, however, in full recognition of the fact that an exhaustive investigation of the nature of decision would include a detailed discussion of unconscious decisions. Fortunately, such a full investigation is not part of our aim. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that in the eyes of some it is only such an investigation that will permit us to get a proper perspective on the free-will-determinist controversy. Nor is this necessarily due to an inordinate concern with unconscious decisions. On the contrary, it might be more accurate to attribute it to a seemingly inordinate faith in the efficacy of introspection; for we also have in mind those who believe that the agent can establish whether or not he enjoys a non-causal freedom of decision by inspecting with his mind's eye what he does when he makes a decision. More specifically, we have in mind a philosopher like Professor

C.A. Campbell who is interested in those decisions that result from an effort of will; and, as far as Campbell is concerned, the agent can observe such an effort with his mind's eye.[1]

Campbell has been criticized by Professor P.H. Nowell-Smith for trying to establish the existence of free-will in introspectionist terms. The latter contends that the dispute between the defenders of free-will and the determinist is not a dispute over what the agent sees with his mind's eye but over the proper interpretation of what he sees in this fashion.[2] Now, I believe that Nowell-Smith is essentially correct in insisting on the importance of interpretation in this context. Indeed, I think Campbell himself would agree since his defence of free-will consists in more than a mere reiteration of what he sees with his mind's eye. But what he sees with his mind's eye is part of it; and Campbell is surely right in believing that if there is such a thing as free will the agent should be able to observe it in operation. Otherwise, we should have to argue that the agent does not experience his own freedom. This, however, does not seem to be very different from saying that his will is determined tout court. Therefore,

---

1. Campbell, C.A., "The Psychology of Effort of Will", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. N.S. Vol. XL, 1939-40

2. Nowell-Smith, P.H., Ethics, pp. 280-81.

in the discussion that follows we must try not to lose sight of the fact that we are arguing for a genuine experience of freedom of the will; and without that our concern with interpretation would be meaningless and indefensible. As a result, we may regard our task on the interpretative level as the essentially negative one of resisting those interpretations of the experience in question that consist in explaining it away or making it out to be something that it is not.

The causal model as applied to decisions does both of these things. The difficulty, however, consists in trying to establish which candidate to choose as the bearer of the causal standard. It is in any case insufficient to concentrate on trying to show that motives do not cause decisions; for a motive can mean different things. Thus, we <u>can</u> speak of the motive as another way of speaking of an intention; and there is nothing wrong with this way of speaking so long as we remember that an intention qualifies as a motive only insofar as it springs, as it often does, from a positive desire to do what is intended. Otherwise, an intention is not a motive and we must look elsewhere for the person's motive in deciding to do X, even though his doing X will enable him to realise his intention of doing Y. In other words, we shall come to the end of our quest only when we have established why it is important for him

to realise his intention of doing Y, which he presumably finds boring or distasteful. Secondly, we can speak of a motive to refer to things that are often but not always taken to be character traits such as ambition, vanity or indolence. Finally, it can be used to refer to a desire, or a want; and for our purposes there seems to be no reason to distinguish between the two. We must, therefore, take these different strands of meaning of the notion of a motive one at a time if we are not to get hopelessly confused.

2

The first strand we shall deal with is a motive regarded as an intention. We must ask ourselves whether an intention can cause a decision. One thing is sure: it cannot if what is intended is the same as what is decided; for it would be absurd to contend that the agent's intention, say, to write out a cheque caused him to decide to write it out. On the contrary, if he already intended to write out the cheque, there would be absolutely no point in his deciding to do it. This, incidentally, allows us to repeat what we said earlier, namely, that it would be self-defeating and absurd for the agent, unless he had forgotten in the meantime, to decide to do what he had already decided to do.

We must, however, in addition, consider those cases where the intention alleged to be the cause of a decision does not have the same object as the latter. It might, for example, be suggested that the intention to pay a bill causes the agent to decide to write out a cheque. But the difficulty with this suggestion is that an intention, unless it is what we called an imperfect one, entails the decision to adopt those means thought to be necessary to its fulfillment. And where there is a variety of means to the fulfillment of the same end with the result that none of them is necessary the intention can be said to entail the decision to adopt those means thought to be most conducive to its fulfillment. It would seem to be the latter kind of relationship that the intention to pay a bill and the decision to write out a cheque exemplify. After all, one could decide to pay in cash. Thus, if we are correct, the connexion between the intention and the decision cannot be interpreted as a causal one.

But are we correct? First of all, it might be argued that at least in what concerns those means thought to be most conducive we are seriously mistaken. For, surely, a person can intend to do something and at the same time decide upon what he takes to be the means the least conducive to its fulfillment. This is not to say, of course, that people usually behave in this way but it is a fact that they sometimes do. Now, I do not wish to deny that a

person can intend to do something and at the same time decide upon what he takes to be the means the least conducive to its fulfillment. On the other hand, however, I think it is undeniable that in such a case the means would not be the least conducive from every point of view. Indeed, what might seem to be the least conducive from a strictly limited point of view takes on a totally different appearance when we are informed of some of the other and more profound intentions that the person has. Nor should this be surprising. On the contrary, it would be surprising if it were otherwise since we should be forced to conclude that a person could intend to do something and decide upon what he took to be the means the least conducive to its fulfillment for no reason at all. And this, I suggest, would be a totally puzzling state of affairs.

To rephrase, then, our original contention: if an intention entails the decision to adopt those means thought to be necessary to its fulfillment or, at least, those means, given the person's whole battery of intentions, thought to be most conducive to its fulfillment, it follows that the connexion cannot be interpreted as a causal one.

There is, however, another line of argument that might be developed against our position. What we have in mind is really an argumentum ad hominem since it consists

in showing that our present position is inconsistent with one we adopted earlier. More specifically, it consists in showing that if, as we have maintained, the relationship between an intention and an action is a causal one there is no reason to think that the relationship between an intention and a decision is not a causal one, too. It is important to remember at this point, however, that, despite our insistence on the causal nature of the relationship between intending and acting, we did agree on the logical nature of the relationship between intending and being ready to take the steps thought necessary to its fulfillment. Now, these two separate and distinct relationships, the one causal and the other logical, are transformed into two logical relationships once we substitute decisions for actions in the first relationship. This is to be explained by the fact that there is a logical connexion in the new set of relationships thus acquired between being ready to take the steps thought necessary to the fulfillment of an intention in the one relationship and deciding to take them in the other which does not exist in the old set of relationships between being ready to take the steps thought necessary in the one relationship and actually taking them in the other. This logical connexion allows us to say that an intention, in entailing the readiness to take the steps thought necessary to its fulfillment as it was seen

to be in the second relationship, does by the principle of transitivity entail the decision to take those steps in the first relationship. In other words, the readiness to take the steps presupposes the decision to take those steps, when a decision to that effect is actually made.

B

3

What of a motive for action where we have in mind a character trait such as ambition, vanity or indolence? Can they cause decisions? Philosophers like Ryle have maintained that they cannot cause anything because they are not occurrences but dispositions.[3] We tried to argue earlier, however, that, over and above the ways in which it predisposes the agent to act, a disposition is a property of the agent in a categorical sense or a part of his "nature". On the other hand, a clear distinction must be drawn between something that causes the agent to make a decision to perform some action and something that predisposes him to make a decision to do something. In the latter case it simply bestows upon him a disposition to make certain kinds of decisions. Thus, if it be ambition, the agent will be

---

3. Ryle, Gilbert, pp.83-115.

disposed to decide in a manner that will further his career and so on. This, however, has no causal implications since he could have so decided even though he had shown no previous disposition or tendency to decide in this way and could not be considered ambitious. After all, Ryle to the contrary, people can and do act out of character. This seems to show, moreover, that when we speak of the agent's motive for having decided as he did we need not be explaining the decision by reference to his character.

It might be said against this that a man can be temporarily ambitious. This leads to difficulties, however, because a man who is temporarily ambitious is not expected to do all the things that a man who is dispositionally ambitious is expected to do. As Foot has indicated, in order to make this model of explanation cover a sufficiently wide range of behaviour we should have to stop talking of temporary dispositions and concentrate on such descriptions as "a boastful mood", "a savage frame of mind", or "a fit of bad temper".[4] Incidentally, this makes clear one of the reasons why a human disposition does not have its analogue in, say, the brittleness of a piece of glass; for glass, even when it is only temporarily brittle, is expected to have all the reactions that a permanently brittle piece of glass has.

---

4. Foot, Philippa, p.447.

It is in fact Ryle's desire to assimilate motive-explanations to the piece-of-glass-breaking-when-the-stone-hit-it-because-it-was-brittle model that leads him astray. More specifically, this encourages the belief that statements like, "Jones decided to court the daughter of his employer because he was ambitious" or "Jones decided to make himself prominent in such and such a situation because he was vain" are examples of something's being explained by the assigning of a motive to it just as the glass-breaking is to be explained by the fact that the glass is brittle. In reality, however, if they are regarded in this way, they can be seen to be totally innocent of explanatory force; for deciding to court the daughter of one's employer is just acting out of ambition and deciding to make oneself prominent is just acting out of vanity. As a result, it is only to be expected that the function of these two statements is not to assign a motive to an action but to relate a particular act of ambition and a particular act of vanity to a character trait. And they fulfil this function very well but it is not the explanatory function they are often thought to have.

4

In what, then, does the assigning of a motive for an action consist when the motive in question is a character

trait? I do not think that there is one, all-encompassing answer to this question. On the contrary, several things can count as assigning a motive for an action. Thus, very often it is merely to sketch out in general what the ascription of an intention fills in in detail. For example, to assert that Jones decided to assume the role of vice-president of his firm because he was ambitious can be filled in by the further assertion that he decided in that way because he believed it to be a necessary step to his becoming president of the firm. And as we have already had occasion to note, it is not in this sense that a motive can be said to be a cause of a decision; for in this case the intention to become president of the firm is logically related to the decision in question.

Not all motives when they are character traits, however, are like ambition which might be called a forward-looking motive because it involves a further state of affairs as an end in view. Remorse, for example, is what might be called a backward-looking motive because it involves something that happened in the past or, at least, something believed to have happened in the past as a ground for action. Here in the assigning of a motive for a decision the emphasis is not on the sketching out of an intention, although, admittedly, an intention is involved. And it has nothing to do with the assigning of a cause. On the contrary, to

know that the agent has decided on a course of action because he feels remorse results from filling in certain additional details of the decision itself; and this is to be distinguished from knowing how the decision came to be, the kind of knowledge that a causal explanation would give us. Thus, we should take it that the agent's motive for deciding to do such and such was remorse if we discovered that what he decided was to beg someone's forgiveness for a wrong he believed he had done to him. For, in discovering this, we should have discovered what the deciding was done as and discovering this is an essential part of discovering what was being done.

5

This suggests a distinction that might be drawn between explaining something in causal terms and understanding something by discovering additional characteristics which it possesses. Of course, it is true that something's being caused is a characteristic of the thing, but this meaning of "characteristic" can be waived in the interests of our distinction. It becomes, moreover all the more legitimate if we remember that it is made in other areas of discourse. Thus, Freud and his disciples have often been criticized for emphasizing the causal antecedents of certain kinds of mental aberration at the expense

of the "phenomenological" or purely descriptive aspects of these aberrations. Now, whether or not this criticism is justified is of no immediate interest to me. What is of interest is that such a criticism pre-supposes and can only be understood in terms of our distinction. And this renders the latter more plausible. Indeed, unless it is that some people have been so impressed with the success of causal explanations in the empirical sciences that they have been blinded to the virtues of pure description of phenomena, one is hard pressed to explain why the distinction is so often overlooked at least in the philosophy of action.

6

It is, incidentally, no accident that we employed the notion of remorse in providing an example of a backward-looking motive; for remorse, like responsibility, can be rendered coherent only on the assumption that there is non-causal freedom. More specifically, there would be absolutely no reason for the agent to feel remorse for an action he performed unless he had reason to believe that he could have done otherwise. Nor do I mean by this that he could have done otherwise if he had decided differently. In most cases he could but that is not from our point of view very important. What is important is to establish whether he could have decided differently. For, if he

could have decided differently, then he could have done otherwise in a sense of that phrase that is of interest to a proponent of free-will. Now, it might be advanced that he could have decided differently if the causal antecedents of his decision had been different. This, of course, is the position of the determinist who refuses to attach any other intelligible meaning to the phrase "could have decided differently". He is, however, mistaken in his refusal since it leaves unexplained why the person should feel remorse for what, in the final analysis, was brought about by factors over which he had very limited or no control. For it would seem to be undeniable that at most only a relatively small number of the alleged causal antecedents would be of his making. It would, moreover, be self-defeating and absurd to attribute remorse to such an agent unless one were convinced that he did believe he could have done otherwise in the required sense of that phrase; for the act of attributing such a quality to him would of itself testify to such a conviction and render any scepticism on that count incoherent. This is not to say, of course, that there is no such thing as irrational remorse. For, it is clear, the agent may blame himself for having struck a pedestrian with his automobile when in the circumstances he could not have avoided it; and although we could quite well understand his feeling immensely saddened by this event, we should probably

consider ourselves to be on good logical as well as humanitarian ground in convincing him that he need feel no remorse. On the other hand, if we satisfied ourselves that in having strúck the pedestrian the agent was merely carrying out his decision to do so, we should feel no urge to convince him that he need feel no remorse. On the contrary, his failure to feel remorse in these circumstances would probably deeply offend our moral sensibility; and if it did not, it would say more about us than the nature of the deed.

A determinist, however, is committed to viewing remorse as something irrational. And this remains true even though only a relatively small number of determinists, of whom Spinoza is the most notable, have explicitly recognized this fact. The only alternative to the Spinozistic approach would seem to consist in regarding remorse as something the agent is taught to feel by others as a means of influencing his future behaviour. Now, it is, I think, undeniable that a person who genuinely feels remorse for what he has done is also convinced that if he had it to do over again he would now act differently. Indeed, even if he did not have to do it over again but had something to do that was similar to it in relevant respects, he would still be convinced that he would act differently. In this respect, remorse differs from regret since the agent can regret a decision even though he would do the same thing over again if

he could or would decide in the same way in similar circumstances. For example, having decided upon the career he is to follow, the agent may at times regret the decision he made and still be convinced that he would do it again if he could. This, however, does not permit us to regard remorse as something purely utilitarian in nature. On the contrary, the conviction on which the utilitarian character of remorse depends, namely, the conviction that if he had the action to do over again he would now act differently, depends upon his belief that he could have acted differently from the way he acted in the past. For, if he did not believe that he could have acted differently in the past, there would be no reason for him to believe that anything of importance would be changed in this regard merely by the passage of time. That is to say, there would be no reason for him to believe that in the absence of new causal factors, over which he had very limited or no control, he could in the final analysis act differently in the present from the way he did in the past.

7

There is yet a third kind of motive as a character trait to which in the final analysis backward-looking motives may be assimilated. And here again the assigning of this kind of motive for a decision has nothing to do with

assigning a cause and much to do with giving a fuller description of the decision itself. In saying that this third kind of motive, for which, unfortunately, we do not have a special name, is of such a type that backward-looking motives may be assimilated to it, I may be taken to have in mind backward-looking reasons-for-deciding. This, however, would be a mistake. More specifically, it would be to overlook the fact that a motive for a decision must contain within itself a reference to the objective in terms of which the decision is made or, to put it another way, that for the sake of which the decision is made. Thus, although a person may decide to borrow money because he has lost his job or decide to remain a bachelor because he sub-consciously hates his mother, neither of these is a motive for his decision. This is not to say, of course, that the former is not his reason for his decision and that the latter is not the reason for his decision where the reason is to be opposed to his reason or the reason the agent himself would give. But it is to say that neither of them is a motive. And although motives are a species of his-reason-for-deciding, they are not co-extensive with the class of his-reasons-for-deciding.

Incidentally, the fact that a motive for a decision must contain within itself a reference to the objective in terms of which the decision is made tells against the

Rylean identification of a motive with a disposition. For the agent may decide in the way, say, a patriotic person would decide and yet we still might refuse to allow that his motive for deciding in that way was patriotism. On the contrary,

> it is still open to us to ask what was his motive for so acting. His actions are quite consistent with his wanting to gain kudos or his having his eye on the post-war political scene; and they are also consistent with his wanting to help his country.[5]

And needless to say, only in the last case mentioned would the motive be patriotism.

But what is the third kind of motive as character trait that we have mentioned? It can be best introduced by referring to two examples of it. I am thinking of the motives of jealousy and love. Now, these are not backward-looking motives because they do not involve something at least believed to have happened, if it did not actually happen, as a ground for action. On the contrary, the jealous person is generally prompted to decide in the way he does by something he believes to be taking place now and the lover loves the beloved at least in part for some quality or set of qualities the latter is believed to possess now. And the emphasis is not upon an end in view that the agent intends to bring about even though this will be

---

5. Nowell-Smith, P.H., p.126.

involved if jealousy and love are to be motives. On the other hand, however, backward-looking motives and motives like those of jealousy and love have, as we have already indicated, much in common. More specifically, both help us to understand why a decision to do something that is not in itself attractive nor a means to something that is attractive may yet be taken. Thus, out of a feeling of remorse the agent may decide on a course of action that he finds from every point of view utterly boring and out of jealousy he may decide upon a course of action that he would normally find quite distasteful. And these are both to be contrasted with a forward-looking motive like ambition where, to use our example again, the agent decides to assume the role of vice-president of his firm as a necessary step to becoming president of the firm, a position he finds attractive.

D'Arcy, quite rightly, includes a sense of duty in the class of motives constructed out of the class of backward-looking motives and motives that involve something going on or existing now.[6] For a sense of duty or a sense of moral obligation also helps us to understand why the agent may decide to do something that is not attractive in itself nor a means to something that is attractive. It, too, reveals the presence of an external circumstance in the

---

6. D'Arcy, Eric, pp.155-56.

absence of which the agent, as a human being, would not be expected to decide as he does.

We must, however, be on our guard against overstating the case. The agent who decides on a course of action out of remorse, jealousy, a sense of moral obligation and so on may find something attractive in acting in this way. There is, after all, a certain satisfaction to be derived from making amends for an action for which one feels remorse, from fulfilling one's moral obligation or from harming someone of whom one is jealous. But all we are maintaining is that these actions need not be attractive in the eyes of the agent before he will decide to perform them. And this remains true in spite of the contention of some philosophers that the agent cannot decide to perform an action unless he finds it in some way attractive or unless he believes that it will serve as a means to some end that he finds in some way attractive. Or, what amounts to the same thing, it remains true in spite of the contention of some philosophers that the agent cannot decide to perform an action unless he desires to perform it. For I take it that the agent will normally desire to do what he finds to be in some way attractive. But I shall deal with this contention later especially as it relates to the sense of moral obligation.

8

Before going on to consider desires as possible causes of decision, I want to say a final word about motives as character traits. It is true, as certain philosophers have had occasion to point out, that very often we ask for the motive behind a decision when we suspect that the decision was made for a peculiar reason. And very often we ascribe a motive for a decision either to confirm the suspicion that the usual reason for such a decision is not at work or to reject the suggestion that it is not.[7] Thus, we should not normally ask why Jones decided to call a doctor when his wife was very ill because there seems to be nothing strange about this decision and the reason for making it seems obvious. On the other hand, we should normally ask why Jones decided to call a doctor if it turned out that Jones was stone-deaf and, as a result, could not hear a word the doctor said or if it turned out that his wife had only a very slight headache and Jones was apprised of this fact.

I am not, however, as impressed as some philosophers seem to be by this characteristic of the situation in which we normally ask for a motive. For, if we make this a neeessary condition of intelligibly asking for the

---

7. D'Arcy, Eric, p.141.

agent's motive for a decision, we become susceptible to the charge of having arbitrarily limited the circumstances in which we can intelligibly ask for a motive to those in which the suspicion that something remarkable or unusual is taking place happens to arouse our interest. And such a procedure is no more justified here than it was in the case of intentional actions where, as we saw, one might be tempted to say that intentions do not cause their corresponding actions because there is so little that is remarkable in this fact. There, too, it seems to be assumed that a cause, like a motive, can be intelligibly asked for only if one suspects that something remarkable or unusual is taking place. Indeed, insofar as motives and causes play fundamental roles in explaining things philosophers who adopt the procedure in question may be taken to be saying that explanations of things out of the ordinary precedes or accompanies them. Thus, it is not surprising to find D'Arcy, who does adopt the procedure in question, at least as far as motives are concerned, saying that, "One does not explain an action by mentioning something which is already known as its natural associate."[8] But the fact remains that in a perfectly acceptable sense of "explanation" its natural associates do explain an action just as the natural associates of a stone's falling explain its falling. In like

---

8. D'Arcy, Eric, p.141.

manner the natural associate of an action such as the intention to perform it may cause it and the natural associate of a decision may be its motive.

All this remains true despite the fact that in the absence of at least the suspicion that something remarkable or unusual is taking place it would be strange to ask for the agent's motive in deciding in such a way or the intention behind his action. Or, to put it another way, the strangeness, oddness or even, from the ordinary point of view, meaninglessness involved in asking such a question does not mean that such a question is in any way logically unintelligible. On the contrary, its making logical sense is a necessary condition of one's being able to find it strange or odd.

C

9

But let us return to the main business at hand which is to establish whether or not motives cause decisions. Thus, far in our discussion of motives as causes of decisions we have failed to dwell on the one that is most frequently mentioned in this regard. I am thinking of a motive viewed as a desire. Broad, for example, in the process of criticizing the view that the Moral Law has a kind of

causal efficacy -- precisely what kind is of no immediate interest to us here -- maintains that what people really mean when they say this is that

> ..... Smith's belief that a certain alternative would be in accordance with the Moral Law and his desire to do what is right, were cause-factors in the total cause which determined his putting-forth of effort on the side of that alternative. Now this belief was an event, which happened when his conative emotional moral dispositions were stirred by the process of reflecting on the alternatives.[9]

Leaving aside what Broad has to say about belief and applying what he says of desire to decisions, we can see that he regards the former as events that are cause-factors in the latter. And in line with the ordinary, everyday practice of converting a causal factor into a cause tout court, we can, without doing violence to the text, interpret Broad, for all intents and purposes, as saying that a desire is a cause of action; and the action in this case is that of deciding to do something. Now, it seems to me undeniable that a desire can be an event if only in the sense that it can be an isolable occurrence whose time-span can in principle be estimated. This is not to say, however, that all desires are like this. On the contrary, very often the criteria for the application of the description, "Smith desires to do such and such" or "Smith

---

9. Broad, C.D., p.132.

desires such and such" are purely behavioural. In this respect doing something out of desire resembles doing something intentionally. But just as some intentional actions are intended, so, some actions performed out of desire are actually preceded by a desire.

There is, however, another objection to treating a desire as an isolable occurrence, and this again recalls the notion of an intention. More specifically, the objection is that a desire, like an intention, cannot be an isolable occurrence because it cannot be described without reference to what is desired. Now, it is important to understand that even if this were true, it would exclude as possible causes of decisions only those relatively rare desires that had decisions for their objects. Thus, it would exclude the agent's decision, say, to write out a cheque from being caused by a desire so to decide, but it would not exclude its being caused by his desire, say, to buy a mink coat. But is it true that a desire cannot be an isolable occurrence? I think not: the mere fact that there is such a logical connexion between the concept of a desire and its object does not show this anymore than the mere fact that there is such a logical connexion between the concept of an intention and its object shows that an intention cannot be an isolable occurrence.

10

Before going on to give our reasons for denying that a desire can cause a decision, let us dwell for a moment on an argument proffered by Foot and which purports to justify the same negative conclusion. This argument, incidentally, unlike the one with which we just dealt, has the advantage of stressing desires where their objects and their alleged effects are not identical. Foot is interested in the phrase "H wants" insofar as it means that the agent would adopt a certain course of action if there were no reason for not doing so. She continues:

> We can say, "He wants to get to London," even when he is not prepared to take the necessary steps to get to London, provided he can say "Trains are too expensive," or "Hitchhiking is too uncomfortable." If we offered him a spare railway ticket or otherwise disposed of his reasons against going, and he still did not go, we would have to say, "He didn't really want to go after all." So wanting in this sense is being prepared to act under certain conditions, though not being prepared to act under the given conditions. It is a description which could be applied to a man before we knew whether he was ready to act in a given situation, and it seems that there might then be a causal relation between the wanting and the acting where the latter took place. This is quite true; there could be a law to the effect that when the description "He wants x" applied at t 1, the description "He is taking the necessary steps to get x" applied at t 2. It would be possible to say this without making a mistake about what it is to want and inventing a hidden condition of body or mind. One could say, "Wanting in this sense

> just is being prepared to act under some conditions," and still maintain that there could be an empirical law connecting wanting with acting under a particular set of conditions. The mistake lies not in the idea that such laws are possible but in the thought that there is a reference to them in the statement that a man did one thing because he wanted something else.[10]

This, if I interpret it correctly, is a bad argument. And my reason for saying this is not that is assumes the rejection of an event-analysis of desires; although it does assume this. Rather, it is that the argument does scant justice to the type of analysis that Foot herself seems to think has an initial plausibility. For it is surely not enough to admit the possibility of an empirical law connecting wanting with acting under a particular set of conditions as Foot does and, then, seemingly at least, to deny that there actually is one merely because there is no reference to it in the statement that a man did one thing because he wanted something else. Indeed, this kind of argument is to be compared in its inconclusiveness to the one employed very often against the philosophical materialist who maintains that consciousness is logically identifiable with brain processes. More specifically, the argument is that such an identification is impossible because when we speak of states of consciousness we do not mean to refer to brain states. And the appropriate reply to it in my view is

---

10. Foot, Philippa, pp.444-45.

that someone might refer to the morning star without meaning to refer to the evening star and yet they are one and the same star. Of course, it was by empirical means that the morning star was discovered to be the same star as the evening star; but there is nothing the matter with a logical identity that is discovered by empirical means. Consequently, consciousness is not shown to be unidentifiable with brain processes simply because we can refer to the one without meaning to refer to the other.[11] Nor is wanting shown to be unconnected with an empirical law connecting it with acting under a particular set of circumstances simply because we do not mean to refer to such a law when we refer to wanting.

11

I trust the reader has not concluded from the above that I am willing to argue in favour of philosophical materialism. Nothing could be farther from the truth since the latter is incompatible with the non-causal freedom of decision that we are seeking to defend; for if consciousness were identifiable with brain processes, conscious decisions would a fortiori be identifiable with them and they would be causally determined in the same way that brain processes are. Or if "causally determined" is too strong a phrase to

---

11. Smart, J.J.C., "Sensation and Brain Processes", The Philosophical Review, LXVIII, 1959, pp.141-56.

be employed in this context, we might say that they would be subject to the same statistical correlations as brain processes.

But, how, we might be asked can we be sure that this is not the way things are? I think we have the beginning of an answer once it is seen that if we could not be sure we should have to allow for the possibility of the agent's knowing what he was going to decide to do before he actually decided. More specifically, if the agent's desire to do such and such caused him to decide to do it, there would be no reason in principle why he could not infer his decision from his desire. Nor does it do any good to object that in such a case the inference itself might constitute such a reason. For although it is true that the agent's inference that a certain desire would result in a certain decision might give rise to a desire to frustrate the first one, this could happen only if the first desire was not in reality causally efficacious. We are, however, concerned only with those desires that are supposed to be causally efficacious and it matters little whether it happens to be the original desire or the desire to frustrate it. All that matters is that there should be one desire that is causally efficacious and that the agent should know that it is. And despite the fact that any desire, including the desire to frustrate the original one, might give rise in its

turn to a desire to frustrate it, it seems undeniable that we should finally reach a point at which the agent would not desire to frustrate another one of his desires. Now, wherever this point might be, once reached, the agent would be in a position to infer his decision from his desire. Indeed, in the normal course of events the agent would act upon either his original desire or the desire to frustrate it in particular and thus stop the process. Moreover, there is little doubt that he would have to do this if he were to accomplish very much. At the same time it should not be thought that when we have reached the point at which the agent does not desire to frustrate another one of his desires his lack of desire itself constitutes a desire. Such a state of affairs would, on the contrary, be entirely paradoxical since it would permit us to introduce another desire that would frustrate the desire constituted in some strange way by the lack of desire. The result would be that we should never come to an end to the process of desiring and counter-desiring and the agent would never accomplish anything.

It is true, of course, that at this point we are assuming that the agent can decide to do such and such only if he desires to do it. In following this procedure, however, we are merely accepting, in order to facilitate the argument, one of the assumptions of those who maintain that

desires cause decisions. This is, moreover, in keeping with our original procedure of considering each candidate for the cause of decisions, be it an intention, a motive or a desire separately. On the other hand, however, I do not think that much would be changed, even if we considered the candidates in concert. For we should still have to reach a point where the agent acted on whatever it was that moved him to act and, if it moved him in a causal way, he could in principle predict this.

Incidentally, none of this commits us to denying that the agent might in some situations find it hard to determine exactly what he desired, but there seems to be no reason for saying that this state of affairs could not by any stretch of the imagination be overcome. And even if it could not, it would remain true that the agent does in most cases know what he desires. Indeed, if he did not, it is doubtful whether we should have the concept of desire that we now have. Instead, desiring to do something would come to resemble, say, the preliminary stages of cancer; and instead of asking the agent what he desired, we might ask him to submit to an examination in order to find out just as a medical doctor asks a patient to submit to an examination in order to find out if he had cancer.

Granted that the agent in most cases knows what he desires, what, it might be asked, is the matter with his

knowing beforehand what he is going to decide to do? The answer is that the two are irreconcilable. After all, why should anyone go to the trouble of deciding when he already knew what he would decide? Such a procedure, while it would not necessarily be self-defeating, like a performative contradiction, would be otiose and, therefore, absurd. For, if he knew beforehand what he was going to decide, an essential element in coming to a decision would be absent, namely, the passage from uncertainty to certainty as to what he would do. And, needless to say, a distinction must be drawn between the agent's being certain of what he is going to do and what he actually does do. Otherwise, we shall have to face the objection that there is no such passage from uncertainty to certainty involved in coming to a decision for the simple reason that no one can ever be certain that he will actually do what he decides. There is always the possibility that he will change his mind or that empirical obstacles will get in his way.

~~13~~ 12

But to return to the question of whether the agent can know beforehand what decision he is going to make. Another objection to our line of argument might rest on the simple fact that we do talk as though we could know what decision we are going to make. Mr. J.W. Roxbee Cox makes

much of this fact and provides the following examples to show that it is a fact:

1) "I have found that when I come up to the city from my home, and consider where to have my dinner, I always end up by going to a French restaurant. I have no doubt that that is what I shall decide to do when I am in town next week."

2) "Although I think one should not drink before driving, I know that I'll be persuaded as usual and agree to have a glass of whisky after the meeting."

3) "Everyone I know with young children ends up buying a television set. I haven't though much about the pros and cons, but I'm sure I'll end up by deciding to get one."

4) "I've no real desire to get married at all. But I know that after he has asked me again and badgered me, I shall give in."

5) "Playing correspondence chess, I decide on my next move after long thought, I do not intend to send it off until next week, I know that by then I shall have forgotten what I have decided; but I also know that I shall decide on the same move when I consider the question again."[12]

It is important to notice the essential irrelevance of Cox's fifth example. For here it is not a question of the agent's knowing beforehand what he will decide but merely of his knowing beforehand that, whatever his decision is, it will be one that he had made and then forgotten. And

---

12. Roxbee Cox, J.W., "Can I know Beforehand What I am Going to Decide", The Philosophical Review, LXXI, 1962, p.89.

it is his having forgotten that makes all the difference: if he had not forgotten, there would be absolutely no need for him to make another decision. Indeed, if it were the same decision except for its being distinct from the first one, it would be logically impossible for him to make it since one cannot decide what one has already decided.

But what of Cox's other examples? It seems to me that in some of them he is trading on the open-textured quality of ordinary language. Now, one example of this open-textured quality is the fact that we often say we know something or have no doubt of something and at the same time leave open the possibility of our being wrong. Thus, in the first, third and fifth of Cox's examples we could well imagine the speaker's entertaining some doubt as to what he would do despite what he had said. On the other hand, there is a perfectly acceptable and quite familiar use of "know" where such doubt would normally be paradoxical. I am thinking of that sense of "know" where one is justified in saying that one knows only if one's grounds are conclusive. In other words, one is not in a position to say that one knows in this sense unless one's grounds are of such a nature that they give one the right to disregard any further evidence. Nor does this necessarily mean that one's grounds are so strong that they logically imply that what one claims to know is true. On the contrary, as Hintikka indicates,

"It may merely mean that the grounds one has are such that any further inquiry would be pointless for the normal purposes of the speaker of the language."[13]

13

Cox, then, fails to distinguish between the two senses of "know" and it leads him into seriously overestimating the import of some of the examples he offers. More specifically, he is led into believing that the agent can know what he is going to decide beforehand when, for what I take to be the primary sense of "know", he has not and cannot show this. Nor is the failure to distinguish between the two senses of "know" the only shortcoming in Cox's approach; for in none of the examples he offers is it really clear whether the speaker is claiming to know in advance what he will decide or what decision already made he will announce at the appropriate time. Thus, in the first example, we could quite easily interpret the speaker as claiming to know what decision he will announce when he comes up to the city the next time. And the same is true to a greater or lesser degree of Cox's second, third and fourth examples.

This distinction between making a decision and announcing it can also be made in terms of informal and

---

13. Hintikka, Jaakko, p.20.

formal decisions. Thus, in Cox's first example, there is a sense in which the speaker cannot be said to have decided where to have his dinner until he has said as much. That is to say, there is a sense in which something can count as a decision only if it constitutes what the late Professor J.L. Austin called a performative utterance.[14] In other words, in this sense, deciding, like promising, consists in uttering the appropriate verbal formula in the appropriate circumstances. On the other hand, however, deciding differs from promising in having an informal counterpart which allows us to say that a person has decided to do such and such even though he has not said anything to that effect. And the informal and formal kinds of deciding are intimately related if only because the agent usually utters the appropriate verbal formula only after having come to a decision "in his heart". Indeed, if it were otherwise, the utterance of the appropriate formula would soon lose any significance it might have had. But fortunately, this does not happen because, as a matter of fact, a decision to utter the formula is usually based upon or connected with a decision made"in one's heart". In other words, the decision announced and the decision "in one's heart" have the same content. It is, however, important to see that the utterance of the ver-

---

14. Austin, J.L., "Performative Utterances", Philosophical Papers, edited by J.O. Urmson and G.L. Warnock, pp.220-239.

bal formula is itself usually based upon a decision; and this is why the agent can be said to know in advance that he is going to utter it.

14

There is yet another distinction that Cox fails to make. This is the distinction between the agent's alleged ability to know beforehand what he is going to decide and his inability to admit to himself that he decided what he has decided. Now, the second and the fourth examples that are relevant to the present discussion can both be interpreted as examplifications of this inability. Or, to put it in a slightly different way, they can both be interpreted as exemplifications of what M. Jean-Paul Sartre has called "la mauvaise foi" or in English "bad faith".[15] At the risk of over-simplifying the matter, I should suggest that bad faith is a species of insincerity; and what makes it particularly interesting is that it is insincerity towards oneself. Thus, in Cox's fourth example, which even more than the second one lends itself to this interpretation, the woman may be guilty of insincerity. She may have already decided to marry the man and yet, for various reasons, want to convince herself that she has not yet decided but will

---

15. Sartre, J.-P., "La Mauvaise Foi", L'Être et le Néant, pp.84-111.

be forced to decide against her will. To this end, she seeks to regard herself, as it were, as an object whose reactions can be known in advance and thus be predicted. But, of course, she is not an object, but an agent, and in predicting what she will be badgered into deciding she is really announcing her decision. And whether we say that it is a decision to marry the man or a decision to permit herself to be badgered into marrying him will make very little real difference.

15

Thus far we have been criticizing Cox for failing to make several important distinctions in proffering the examples where the agent says that he knows beforehand what he is going to decide. But what if Cox had made these distinctions and had still insisted that the agent could be said to know what he is going to decide beforehand in what we can now see to be the relevant sense of that expression? Is there any way of showing that he would be wrong or must we simply depend upon our ordinary intuitions? I think there is a way of showing that he would be wrong; and this depends on the assumption that a person who was alleged to know what he was going to decide beforehand could not seriously be taken to be in a state of indecision. On the contrary, he would be decided on the course of action

he was going to pursue. Nor does this assumption beg the question at issue of whether or not the agent can know beforehand what he is going to decide; for he can be decided on a course of action without actually having made a decision to that effect. Indeed, being decided, like being certain, relates primarily to the agent's state of mind and only secondarily to how he got into that state of mind. And just as the agent's being certain of what he was going to decide to do would, as we indicated earlier, be incompatible with a genuine decision, so, his being decided would be incompatible with his still having to decide what to do. But it could not be considered incompatible if the agent knew beforehand what he was going to decide. Therefore, it cannot be true that the agent knows beforehand what he is going to decide.

16

Let us anticipate one possible objection. We are not suggesting that the agent makes a decision in order to pass from a state of uncertainty about what he will decide to a state of certainty about what he has decided. Similarly, we are not suggesting that he makes a decision in order to be decided. On the contrary, both these states of mind are simply the inevitable consequences of any decision to do something. But if they had to be intended, then

it would be possible to think of instances where they were not intended and where decisions were made without their accompanying or following upon them.

17

There is a more serious objection to be considered; and this has to do with an assumption behind the procedure we adopted. We have proceeded on the assumption that a determinist could not admit the impossibility of the agent's knowing his decision beforehand. He is not, however, strictly speaking obliged to do this. More positively, he could agree that it is impossible for the agent to know beforehand what he is going to decide; and then he could go on to point out that as a matter of fact the agent is seldom in a position to know beforehand what he is going to decide. As a result, he might contend, even if decisions are caused, the agent can still make them so long as he is in ignorance of some or all of the causal factors involved. Moreover, even where he is not in ignorance of the causal factors involved, we can only conclude that what were sufficient causal factors are sufficient causal factors no longer. But this does not mean that a new set of causal factors cannot take its place in bringing about a decision. Thus, he might conclude, we have not refuted his position although we might have said something interesting and true

about the relationship between deciding and knowing.

The trouble with this argument is that it fails to take into account the practical implications of determinism regarded as a general principle; for I should want to argue that a decision would be pointless if the agent could know that it was caused even though he did not know what the specific cause was. Thus, if we are concerned with a determinism of desire, I should want to maintain that a decision would be pointless if the agent could know his decision would be caused by <u>any</u> desire whatsoever. Indeed, the supposed cause would not even have to be a desire to bring about this state of affairs. It could be an intention or a motive or something else. And insofar as it could be the first two, what we are about to say can be interpreted as an additional criticism of the view that they cause decisions. But let us concentrate on desires. It should not be surprising that a decision would be pointless if the agent could know his decision would be caused by any desire whatsoever; for it surely is a common enough belief, shared by the agent, that if a decision is to count for something it must, to use a colloquialism, "be up to him". Moreover, as an adjunct to this there is the belief, also shared by the agent, that if the decision were not up to him this could only be because the matter had already been "decided" one way or the other for him. And by this I do not mean <u>here</u> to refer to the

belief that the agent himself would necessarily be decided as to what course of action to follow but that any decision he might make would merely put a rubber stamp on the causally efficacious desire. In other words, one would come to realise that decisions are otiose and pointless and, in the interests of economy, one would be tempted to eliminate them altogether.

18

There are at least two kinds of reply that the determinist might be tempted to make to our criticism of his position. The first, and the more promising one, would be to the effect that the causal efficacy of the desire works through the process of deciding; as a result, if the agent did not go through the process of making a decision he might very well act differently from the way he would if he had gone through such a process. That his going through this process or his failure to do so was itself causally determined would not, it hardly needs saying, make any real difference to the question at hand.

I think we should first of all notice what the implications of this line of argument would be for the nature of deciding itself. It is, I think, undeniable that it forces us to regard decisions as something the agent makes in order to do what he desires. Or, at least, it

would be hard to discover any other rationale in these circumstances for the process of decision-making. And here I am assuming that the agent is au courant of what, if the determinist is to be believed, decisions really are. As a result, he is not at all tempted to over-estimate the importance of decision-making as those who believe in the freedom of the will supposedly are. Now, in such a situation we should be able to envisage a case in which the agent, although he desires to do such and such, does not desire it enough to go to the trouble of making a decision in order to render his desire efficacious. In other words, we should be able to envisage a case in which the agent decides not to decide. For, at least on some occasions his not desiring it enough to go to the trouble of making a decision would result in his deciding not to go to the trouble of making a decision. If, moreover, we should be able to envisage this, we should also be able to envisage a case in which the agent does decide to go to the trouble of deciding. The truth of the matter, however, is that we can envisage neither one. Indeed, it is impossible to know exactly what it would mean to engage in either one of these activities; and matters are not helped by the fact that both of them give rise to an infinite regress. On the other hand, we are not, it hardly needs saying, suggesting that the difficulties described arise when it is a question of deciding not to make a

formal decision or deciding to make this kind of decision. But, then, it is not this kind of decision that the determinist has in mind here.

It is considerations of the kind we have just treated that Mr. Richard Taylor might be thinking of when he insists that decision-making and determinism are incompatible and rejects, as we do, the rejoinder that a desire or whatever can work through a decision.. As he puts it in a rather rhetorical passage where he talks of deliberation instead of deciding:

> It is no good here, incidentally, to introduce such vague and familiar slogans as "Deliberation might, after all, be a natural process," or "Deliberation is only the way some perhaps psychological, causes work themselves out," and so on. If such remarks are unpacked, and "natural processes" are found to be nothing but causal chains, and "causes" are understood to be causes of the usual kind -- namely, antecedent conditions, psychological or other, which are sufficient for, and thus render inevitable, whatever it is that they cause -- then far from being rejoinders to what has been said they only illustrate something that is painfully well known; namely, that philosophers, no less than the vulgar, are perfectly capable of holding speculative opinions that are inconsistent with some of their own beliefs of common sense.[16]

Oddly enough certain determinists have thought that such a consequence could be denied simply by affirming that they are both determinists and makers of decisions. In

---

16. Taylor, Richard, "Deliberation and Foreknowledge", American Philosophical Quarterly, vol. 1, 1964, p.77.

this respect, they remind me of those philosophers who affirm that they are solipsists and make a sincere effort to convince others that they should be solipsists too; or to give another example, they remind one of those sceptics who assert that we cannot really know anything, not even that we cannot really know anything. In all three cases, it seems to be assumed that showing a view to be held by oneself, especially if one happens to be a philosopher, is a guarantee of its consistency. But this, of course, is absurd and does not merit serious attention since the philosopher, no less than the layman, is not immune from inconsistency; and the mere fact of being aware of an inconsistency does not make it any less an inconsistency.[17]

19

Another difficulty with the determinist reply under consideration is that it distorts the decision-making process. For to make everything depend upon a desire, even a desire working itself through a decision, is in the final analysis to give weight to the desire and to nothing else. The result is that the weighing of the pros and cons involved in deciding cannot, as we ordinarily tend to think, have any influence upon the weights themselves; it can only register the weights as they already are. Indeed, on this view,

---

17. Taylor, Richard, p.77.

insofar as decision-making involves a form of activity, it consists purely and simply in a registration of weights; and it should not be forgotten, even if a desire works itself through a decision, the latter is a distinct form of activity. But to assimilate decision-making to a registration of weights is to ignore the difficulties and hesitations arising from the fact that the agent has often to decide whether or not to accept those weights at their face-value. For, although the agent may not have direct control over the content and force or weight of his desires, it is hard to believe that the process of deciding itself cannot sometimes constitute a kind of counter-vailing force of its own. At any rate, if it cannot, it becomes very hard to understand why we persist in thinking that the agent has a truly creative role to play in the decision-making procedure as opposed to that of someone who merely registers what is already there.

But, it will be asked, in what can this creative role consist? Or, better still, in what can the counter-vailing force of a decision consist? There is, it hardly needs saying, no easy answer to this question. Indeed, I am not at all sure that the question is not mal posé from the beginning since it seems to assume that a decision cannot provide this counter-vailing force from its own resources but must depend on something else. And right away the notion of

desire comes to mind, but it could just as well be a number of other things. On the other hand, however, if we did not have recourse to something external to the decision in order to account for the force with which it is provided, this force seems to be rendered inexplicable. But in this regard the same is true of this notion as was seen to be true of the notion of an active being of which it is only in reality another example. That is to say, we know that it is for a decision to have a force of its own because we are essentially beings who make decisions. As a result, although no explanations or, at least, no non-circular explanation of the notion in question is possible, neither is it necessary.

This is, I fully realise, to make the position of those who would defend freedom of the will depend at a crucial point upon the distinction between the agent and the spectator. This is not surprising. Indeed, it seems to be the only way to explain the acerbity and the futility of so many of the encounters between determinists and proponents of the freedom of the will. For what seems incomprehensible and totally obscure to the former seems obvious and ineluctable to the latter. On the other hand, however, it is hard to believe that the incomprehensibility and obscurity that the determinist bemoans in the position of those who would defend freedom of the will is not theory-laden,

whatever the theory might be. Otherwise, the difficulties and distortions involved in his approach to the making of decisions are hard to understand. For, after all, one cannot help but observe that he made decisions long before he was a determinist.

20

But lest we forget, there is, as we have already noted, another kind of reply that the determinist might make to our criticism that he renders decisions otiose and pointless, or, to put it slightly more positively, that he converts them into rubber stamps for causally efficacious desires. More specifically, he might reply that rubber stamps serve a purpose. Thus, it might be argued that, as a kind of rubber stamp, the agent's announcement of his decision serves as a way of giving others his word or authority for saying that he is going to do such and such. In other words, on this view, the already mentioned difference between deciding and announcing a decision is minimized if not abolished and decisions are seen to be a kind of performative utterance on the same order as promising or taking a vow. And to those of us who express our reluctance to accept such a view it might be suggested that we are committing the descriptive fallacy. We are assuming that the only function of language is to describe things and, as a

result, we confuse doing something by uttering certain obvious ritual phrases with describing what is being done.

There can be little doubt of the attractiveness of this view for the determinist. For, if it is true, it allows him to assign a significant role to the notion of a decision without even having to allow, if he is at all reluctant to do so, that deciding is a process over and above desiring. Indeed, on such a view, deciding is not a process at all excepting insofar as uttering a form of words may be described in this way. Unfortunately, however, for the determinist, the view cannot be sustained. First of all, the refusal to allow any significant distinction between deciding and announcing a decision is, as our earlier remarks on this score were meant to show, a perfectly gratuitous one. And secondly, even if we were to allow the determinist to run roughshod over a significant distinction in this way, he would still have to explain why the decision to announce a decision would not on his view be otiose and pointless.

21

It will be urged that we do sometimes want to say that a decision has been made even when it is obvious to everyone that it has been caused. For example, no one would want to deny that a person in the grips of an obsession

or a person acting under some internal compulsion can sometimes be said to make decisions. It, then, however, becomes important to explicate the sense in which this is true. Now, it seems to me that this is true only in what might be called a "scare-quote" sense of deciding. And this brings us back to the metaphor of the rubber stamp; for just as we might be inclined to say that Elizabeth II "ruled" Great Britain because, among other things, her seal of approval must be got for any new legislation, so, one would be inclined to say that the obsessive compulsive who "decides" to wash his hands for the fiftieth time that day "decides" only in the sense that he gives, as it were, his seal of approval to what has in another sense already been decided.

The analogy with the Queen's seal of approval can, moreover, be sustained in another way. More specifically, the ritual that the Queen goes through in giving her seal of approval to new legislation is to be compared with the ritual of deciding that the obsessive compulsive acts out. That is to say, the latter might wrinkle his brow, scratch his head, go through a process of weighing the pros and cons and so forth but not in any truly significant sense come to a decision. Nor is this peculiar to such extreme cases as that of the obsessive compulsive. On the contrary, it would seem to apply to all of those cases in which what is alleged to be a process of deciding what to do fails to re-

sult in the agent's being decided. Thus, it is only by courtesy that we should allow someone to have made a decision when we knew that his decision did not terminate his indecision: the person who can never make up his mind on a certain matter may decide first in this way and then in that way and yet never really decide at all. Indeed, "making up his mind" is the key phrase here and I should suggest that it follows upon any real decision.

But let us return for a moment to our obsessive compuslive, who seems on first glance to be so ideally suited to the needs of the determinist. What is often over-looked when it is said that such a person's decisions are caused is that in many cases he does not make a decision at all. And by saying this I mean to exclude the "scare-quote" sense of deciding as well. If, for example, we assume that our obsessive compulsive was trying to resist the temptation to wash his hands for the fiftieth time, then it would hardly do to say that his failure to resist constituted a decision to this effect on his part. On the contrary, by his attempt to resist he would probably get himself into such a frantic state that in the end he would lose all control and make a dash for the wash basin. On the other hand, however, this is not to deny that his attempt to resist may not have the effect of a delaying action. Indeed, insofar as the attempt to resist, as opposed to the failure to resist,

is itself the result of a decision, this is a case in which the decision of an obsessive compulsive is something, although not much, more than a rubber stamp. But the fact remains that his failure to resist would leave no place in which the notion of a decision could get hold.

Incidentally, if what we have said here is true, it can easily be adapted to tell against one of the things Mr. R.M. Hare has to say on the subject of moral weakness, of which he seems, if I interpret him correctly, to regard obsessive compulsion as an extreme example. Thus, Hare seems to think that the morally weak man will always answer the question, "What shall I do?" in a way that conflicts with his sense of moral obligation and then go on to act in such a manner. This, at any rate, is how I interpret the following passage where I have underlined the most relevant portion.

> It is therefore not a consequence of our account of the matter, which stresses the impossibility of resisting the temptation, that the morally weak man is exempt from adverse moral judgment. In terms of the preceding chapter, the question 'What shall I do?' arises for him as it does in the case of physical impossibility; and even if we can be sure that he will answer it in a certain way it may nevertheless be of value to say that he ought not to act so, in order to assert the general prescriptive principle.[18]

In reality, however, if the weak-willed person gives any

---

18. Hare, R.M., Freedom and Reason, p.80.

answer to this question it is likely to be of such a kind that it does not conflict with his moral obligation and can thus serve as a kind of delaying action just like a decision to this effect. In other words, it is not what he says but what he does that is in conflict with his sense of moral obligation as a general rule, although there are exceptions. And it is this disparity between saying and doing that makes the notion of moral weakness so interesting. If, on the other hand, Hare was right in believing that it is in the nature of the case both what the weak-willed person says and what he does that are in conflict with his sense of moral obligation, then it would be impossible in all cases, and not just in an exceptional few as matters now stand, to distinguish between the weak-willed person and the evil-willed person. Or, to continue with what we said earlier in a context where we emphasized what the person intends instead of what he says, a weak-willed person, instead of failing to carry out his intention, would, on Hare's view, succeed in doing what he intended. And since, on this same view, he would intend to act in such a way as to flout his sense of moral obligation, there would be no significant difference between him and the evil-willed person. But this, one hardly needs to be reminded, is for the great majority of cases simply not true.

But to return to our obsessive compulsive, it would

seem, then, that the obsessive compulsive either decides to do things only in a "scare-quote" sense of the term that can at best constitute a delaying action or he does not decide to do things at all. And from this it follows that any attempt to assimilate conduct in general to the pattern of conduct exemplified by the obsessive conpulsive must result in one's holding that we must talk of decisions in the scare-quote sense or not at all. Nor does it do any good here to insist that the determinist need not attempt to assimilate the two patterns of conduct. For such a view could be sustained only if it had been shown <u>on determinist grounds</u> that, whereas what the obsessive compulsive does is independent of his decision, the decision of a normal person has an appreciable influence on what he does. But this not only has not been shown but it completely ignores what we said a little earlier about the difficulties the determinist encounters in trying to outline a sense in which the decision of a normal person can have an appreciable influence on what he does. This is not to say, of course that the determinist cannot find other points of dissimilarity between the obsessive-compulsive and the normal person. As far as decisions are concerned, however, the dissimilarity, I must confess, escapes me as soon as I assume along with the determinist that decisions are caused. And nothing that has been said so far has served to enlighten me on this matter.

If what we have said is true, those philosophers like Professor John Hospers who maintain that all decisions in the final analysis are determined by the unconscious must, if they are to be consistent, abandon the notion of a decision as we know it.[19] Moreover, the onus is upon them to prove the truth of what to most of us seems manifestly false, namely, that the way most of us decide what to do differs in no essential respects from the way the obsessive compulsive decides. And it is not enough to do as Hospers does and make an appeal to what practising psychoanalysts would say since this merely provokes one to question its truth.[20]

22

But what if someone were to stoutly affirm that no one ever really makes a decision? Admittedly, this must strike the layman and even the determinist in his non-philosophical moments as paradoxical and this in itself would seem to constitute a good reason for rejecting the doctrine. But let us look at it a little more closely, anyway. First of all, however, we should make it clear that we shall not try to <u>disprove</u> the doctrine in question. Indeed, I do not think it can be <u>disproved</u> that

---

19. Hospers, John, "Free-Will and Psychoanalysis", <u>Readings in Ethical Theory</u>, edited by Wilfred Sellars and John Hospers, pp.560-575.

20. Hospers, John, pp.574-75.

people do not make decisions anymore than it can be _disproved_ that they do not sometimes sit on _tables_ and _chairs_. At least, this is true if the evidence of common-sense and everyday experience have been rejected from the beginning as they have been here. But to return to the business at hand. There is something curious in the fact that the determinist would want to deny that anyone ever makes a decision to do something and yet presumably does not want to deny that he makes a decision as to what is the case. In other words, the question arises as to whether there can be _decidings that_ unless there are _decidings to_. Now, I think it would be to over-state the case to maintain that the existence of the former implies the existence of the latter. At the same time, however, the two have more in common than the determinist seems to realise. For example, there is a marked similarity between the evidence for deciding that such and such is the case and a reason, be it in the form of a desire or not, for deciding to make it be the case. For example, in both cases an appeal to evaluative terms like "good", "bad", "strong" and "weak" is relevant. On the other hand, if I am not mistaken, these terms are not ordinarily employed when we give ourselves over to the language of causality. Indeed, it is hard to know what could be meant by describing a cause in such terms. But we know very well what is meant when it is a question of evidence or reasons because, unlike causes,

both are evaluated in terms of standards or criteria. In other words, the agent has to weigh the evidence in the one case and the reasons in the other. And this is a highly sophisticated and complex process in which he contributes at least as much as he accepts.

Against this it might be objected that there is a perfectly acceptable sense in which a cause can be said to be adequate even if it is not described as "good", "bad", "strong" and "weak". As a result, the objection continues, there is grounds for believing that a cause can be evaluated, since this is an evaluative term, in the same way as a piece of evidence or a reason. Now, it is true that we can speak of a cause as being adequate to its effect. But this does not constitute an evaluation of the cause. On the contrary, it is merely to contribute to the definition of the notion of causality itself. In other words, here, the term "adequate" is not being employed for the purposes of evaluation at all. Indeed, it could not be otherwise since a cause that is adequate to its effect will bring about that effect whatever our evaluation of the cause might be. And this distinguishes a cause from the evidence leading to a decision that such and such is the case and from a reason leading to a decision to make such and such be the case.

Incidentally, nothing in what we have said about these two kinds of decision, it hardly needs saying, amounts

to denying that there is an important difference between deciding that such and such is the case and deciding to make such and such be the case. The former, as it has already been remarked, is bound in a very intimate manner to the evidence believed to be available for it. In fact, so close is the connexion that one is tempted to deny even the relevance of the agent's desires, here a species of reason, to this kind of decision; for, it might be suggested, here what one desires to be the case and what the evidence leads one to decide to be the case are two very different things. This, however, is an over-statement. It not only overlooks the subjective element that all too often enters into our seemingly objective decisions, but, more important, it overlooks the obvious fact that what a person desires is often very good evidence for his deciding that such and such is the case. For example, the fact that the person desires to drink all the time might constitute good evidence for his decision that he has diabetes. On the other hand, however, it is clear in this case that what the person decides to be the case and what he desires are two different things. As a result, there can be no question here of his desiring constituting a reason for his decision as opposed to constituting evidence for it.

23

But, surely, it will be argued, whatever the case

may be, the comparison between deciding that such and such is the case and deciding to make such and such be the case is of dubious value from our point of view. For, even if the criteria in terms of which we call evidence good or strong do not define the notion of a decision, still, once the criteria for such evidence are thought to be satisfied the decision that such and such is the case will ordinarily follow upon it. But this, it will be suggested, cannot be true of a reason for deciding to make such and such be the case since, otherwise, the decision would not be free. In other words, we are being put on our guard against substituting what might be called a determinism of reasons for a determinism of desire.

It seems to me, however, that the warning is unnecessary; and the failure to see this results from regarding the agent's reasons for deciding to do such and such as something external to him and as something that somehow is imposed upon him. Indeed, the view in question is only a more general version of the externalist view of the moral "ought". As such, it involves the same difficulties. More particularly, just as the agent can intelligibly ask why he should decide in accordance with a moral "ought" imposed from the outside by, say, a divine law-giver, so, he can intelligibly ask why he should decide in accordance with a reason suggested to him by someone or something else. On

the other hand, once the agent has satisfied himself that the reason is a compelling one, he can no longer intelligibly ask why his decision should be governed by it. It has now become his reason and is no longer something external to him. And the same is true of the moral "ought".

I think, moreover, that the externalist view of reasons for deciding, if consistently followed through, leads to an assimilation of the agent's reason for deciding to a cause. This is so because a cause is usually thought to be external to the agent. Thus, we talk of the cause and not of his cause. Now, if such an assimilation were acceptable, we should, I think, find that we could talk interchangeably of the cause or the reason; and we should attach little importance to the expression "his reason". Indeed, that is just what we do find in the literature of psychoanalysis where causal determinism is presupposed from the beginning and where the reason the patient sincerely gives for his decision is thought to be important only insofar as it helps one to discover the reason. Such an approach in my view, however, is tenable only if we are willing to renounce the notion of man as a rational being; for, if we are unwilling ever to take the agent's reason for a decision at its face-value, then in a significant sense we are refusing to treat him as a rational being.

24

It will no doubt be objected that the term "rational" can be employed in several different ways. Thus, it might be suggested that on one interpretation of the term "rational" even a person in whom the disparity between what he takes to be his reasons for deciding on a course of action and the real reasons is chronic could be said to be rational. But this could only mean that he was, like everything else, subject to the laws of nature and, in this sense, even a stone can be said to behave rationally. Or, to put it in another way, all that is being said here is that both the unfortunate person with whom we are dealing and the stone behave in a way that permits of rational explanation; and this is to be opposed to the inexplicable occurrence of a random event, whatever that would be. Thus, in the final analysis it is the explanation of the occurrence and not the occurrence itself that we have in mind when we speak of rationality in this context. And, needless to say, a causal explanation does qualify as one type of rational explanation.

But not the only type. It has, however, been the belief that it is the only type that accounts for the confusion between a causally free decision and a random one. Such a confusion is implicit in passages like the following:

> Far from "free-will" being a necessary foundation of morality "free-will" would make

> all morality, of the kind we know and the "free-will"-ists want, absolutely impossible. The central condition of moral life is responsibility. So central is it, that it is now acknowledged as such in all the penal codes of civilized countries. But, if man has, instead of a determinate nature, "free-will" responsibility can in no way be fixed. Education, too, is necessarily impossible. Hence all punishment would have to be retributive. Moral strife, as well as legal penalties, would bear all the stigmata of unmitigated, imbecile cruelty. This is not the case however if man has an absolutely determinate nature. Education is possible. And therefore although crime loses none of its evil character, punishment can lose all of its inhuman sting. The necessary condition of human morality is responsibility not irresponsibility; reliability not unreliability; certainty not uncertainty; a firm will, not a "free" will.[21]

Now the confusion of thought that this passage exemplifies hardly requires comment. Indeed, one can only reflect on the irony of the fact that we resisted the temptation to which some philosophers have succumbed to deny that a causal explanation is in the final analysis a rational explanation at all. For it has been argued by some that a causal explanation is not really an explanation at all and a fortiori not a rational explanation. Professor W.T. Stace, for example, argues for this position, as can be seen in the following passage,

> Cold solidifies water. Cold is the cause (or part of the cause); ice is the effect. But it is impossible to see why cold should cause solidification. The cause and effect do not resemble each other in any way, nor can one see any connection between them. That

---

21. The Philosophy of Spinoza, Selected with a Life of Spinoza and an Introduction by John Ratner. The quotation is from p.XII of the introduction.

> cold solidifies water is an unexplained and mysterious fact which nobody could possibly foresee. For anything one could predict to the contrary, cold might just as well turn water into steam.[22]

Nor is Stace failing to take account in his argument of our ignorance of intermediate causes. On the contrary, as he points out himself, the same difficulty would arise with regard to cold and some intermediate cause as arises with cold and solidified water. On the other hand, however, I am not sure Stace is not overstating the case when he contends that a reference to causes does not explain anything. Indeed, such a contention verges on the paradoxical. In any case, the fact remains that a causal explanation of a genuine decision, even if it were possible, would be less satisfactory than the corresponding explanation in terms of the agent's reasons for deciding. And it is less satisfactory for the reason Stace gives. Thus, it is ironic when some philosophers, obsessed with the causal model of explanation, refuse to regard an explanation of a decision in terms of the agent's reasons as an explanation at all.

25

In terms of what we have just said we can now ask ourselves what kind of explanation is an explanation of a decision by reference to the agent's desires? Is it a

---

22. Stace, W.T., The Philosophy of Hegel, p.51.

causal one or does a desire constitute a reason for deciding in such and such a way? It is clear, I think, that most typically a desire constitutes a reason for deciding to act in such and such a way. This, however, is not always the case since, as our example of the obsessive-compulsive illustrated, a person can be the victim of his own desires; but in this case the decision is a decision only in the "scare-quote" sense of the term. On the other hand, we must not say with some philosophers that a desire is the only reason for deciding on such and such a course of action. This is a mistake that has been made by philosophers from Hobbes to Nowell-Smith; for the latter's substitution of "pro-attitude" for "desire" does not change anything of substance.[23] Furthermore, it is a mistake that lends a certain plausibility to determinism and it is no accident that philosophers like Hobbes and Nowell-Smith are determinists. And by this I do not mean that the one mistaken view entails the other. But I do mean that the first view makes it easier to slide into the second since philosophers seem to have found it relatively easy to make the fatal leap from saying that a desire is the only reason for deciding to do such and such to saying that a person is always more or less a victim of his own desires.

In order to prevent this from happening one has only

---

23. Nowell-Smith, P.H., pp.111-116.

to keep in mind reasons for deciding on a course of action that have little or nothing to do with desires and do not allow themselves to be confused with causes the way desires do. For example, there is little temptation to say that a decision arising out of one's awareness of one's moral obligations is a decision only in a "scare-quote" sense because one's awareness of one's moral obligations is a cause as opposed to a reason.

It might be objected that the agent would not be swayed by his awareness of moral obligation unless he desired to be so swayed. And this might be given as evidence that in the final analysis desires are the only reasons for deciding. This objection, however, in my view, is entirely misconceived. More specifically, it rests upon an ambiguity in the notion of desire. Thus, the agent may decide on a certain course of action because he has a positive desire to follow that course of action and he may say as much; and here there can be no doubt that the desire constitutes a reason for his decision. On the other hand, to speak of a desire, especially when the agent displays little enthusiasm for what he is about to do, is often just another way of speaking of the interest he must take, no matter how slight it may be, in the action before he will decide to perform it. As a result, when we are told, as we often are, that the agent's awareness of obligation must be supplemented

by a desire to do what he takes himself to be obliged to do before he will actually do it, we are really being told that such awareness must be accompanied by an interest in doing what he takes himself to be obliged to do before he will actually do it. And it is only on this interpretation that we can account for the analytic nature of the dictum that the agent decides to do only what he desires to do; for it amounts to saying that the agent decides to do only what he is not totally indifferent to doing. Nor can there be much doubt that the dictum, as it is usually interpreted, does become an analytic truth.

26

Incidentally, if what we have said is true, it might go some way towards solving a paradox that a great many moral philosophers have posed for themselves. The paradox briefly is this: on the one hand it seems true that the agent cannot base a decision on his sense of obligation unless he desires to do so but, on the other hand, this seems to imply that all reasons for deciding must be interested ones not merely in the sense that the agent is not totally indifferent to performing the action in question but in the sense that they are intimately connected with what he takes to be his own good. And this is just another way of saying that in the final analysis no one ever has a purely

moral reson for deciding to do what he does decide. Now, a great many moral philosophers, quite rightly I think, have balked at accepting a conclusion which implies that "morality needs an external sanction." But such a reaction seems inconsistent with accepting the view that the agent cannot base a decision on his sense of obligation unless he desires to do so. Nor does it really solve the paradox to introduce a desire to base a decision on a sense of obligation purely because one has a sense of obligation. For, although in this way one could argue that not all reasons for deciding are, at least in any obvious sense, interested, it would remain true that no one ever has a purely moral reason for deciding to do what he does decide. Or, to put it in a slightly different way, interested reasons and moral reasons for deciding do not exhaust the possibilities since the desire to decide on the basis of one's sense of obligation is both disinterested and non-moral.

But how are we to explain the persistence of the conviction that there <u>are</u> purely moral reasons for deciding? How are we to explain the deep-seated belief that such a reason is good and sufficient and requires no external support? I think the reason why we mistakenly think that there is something to be explained here is that we fail to notice that "desire" is being used equivocally. For it is trivially

true that the agent cannot base a decision on his sense of obligation unless he desires to do so where desiring to do so is equivalent to being not totally indifferent to performing the action in question. On the other hand, however, if we mean something more than that by our use of "desire", then, clearly, it is false to say that the agent cannot base a decision on his sense of obligation unless he desires to do so. On the contrary, what he takes himself to be obliged to decide and what he desires to decide might actually conflict. And to deny this is to deny an obvious fact.

27

Before leaving this question, I think we might point to a difficulty that those moral philosophers find themselves in when they try to resolve the conflict between obligation and interest in the sense of what the agent takes to be his own good by an appeal to a desire to base a decision on a sense of obligation purely because one has a sense of obligation. The difficulty is that if we make an appeal to such a desire we shall have to admit the possibility of conflict between it and the desire to decide in accordance with what one takes to be one's own good. And there seems to be no reason not to treat such a conflict as an open question to be resolved by means of a decision. On

the other hand, however, there seems to be something peculiarly inappropriate in speaking of a decision in this context. For one wants to say that when the agent sincerely acknowledges that such and such a decision is in accordance with his sense of obligation and when he is not entirely indifferent to the performance of the action involved he has already in effect made the decision; and if this is true, his being in a state of indecision here is quite irrational.[24]

Let me anticipate an objection. I am not denying that the agent can on occasion acknowledge such and such a decision to be in accordance with his sense of obligation, be not entirely indifferent to the performance of the action involved and yet refrain from making the decision. That is to say, I am not denying that the agent can suffer from weakness of the will and the like. But is is important to see that it is weakness of the will and, as such, an exception to the rule; for no one, I take it, would want to maintain that weakness of the will is not an abnormal condition. On the other hand, however, I am denying that in the normal course of events the agent can sincerely acknowledge a decision to be in accordance with his sense of obligation, be not entirely indifferent to the performance of the action involved and yet leave open the question of whether or not he will make that decision. And I could

---

24. Falk, W.D., "Ought and Motivation", Readings in Ethical Theory, edited by Wilfred Sellars and John Hospers, pp.492-510.

understand a denial of this denial only as a roundabout way of saying that he did not sincerely acknowledge the decision to be in accordance with his sense of obligation. As a result, I conclude that, insofar as the appeal to a special desire to decide in terms of one's sense of obligation would allow us to take this denial of a denial at its face value, it must be a mistaken procedure.

Chapter IV

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY: A CONCLUSION

A

For a long while now we have been arguing that decisions and by implication intentions are not caused. And we have thought it necessary to argue for this position in order to defend the non-causal freedom of intentional actions. Now, right away someone might object that the non-causal freedom of decisions is not enough to establish a corresponding freedom of intentional actions. More positively, he might argue that in addition the relationship between an intention and an action would have to be shown to be a non-causal one. But since we have argued that it is a causal one, we should, on this view, be misdescribing what we have been doing in claiming to have argued for the non-causal freedom of intentional actions. I think, however, that in this case the problem is more than anything else one of definition. More specifically, it is a problem of defining the criteria in terms of which we can say that an intentional action is non-causally free. And as such it is not a problem of determining whether our description of what we have been doing is true or false; for this will depend upon the criteria for an intentional action that we are employing.

It might be suggested, in the light of what we have just said, that we should examine the adequacy of the competing criteria in terms of which we can say that an intentional action is non-causally free. The difficulty with this suggestion, however, is that it would require us to go too far afield. There might, for example, be reasons of a systematic nature that lead one to insist on being shown both that intentions and the actions rising out of them are uncaused before allowing that intentional actions are non-causally free. Or it might just be a matter of defining the notion of a non-causally free intentional action in this way in accordance with an "intuition". And in both cases it would be an analytic truth that a non-causally free intentional action would be characterized by both the intention and the action being uncaused. The only difference would be that in the former case some attempt could be made to justify treating it as an analytic truth while, apart from the "intuition" itself, no such attempt could be made in the latter case. This, however, should not lead us to overlook the fact that even in both cases we should have to be prepared to consider more than just the notion of a non-causally free intentional action. And since we are not prepared to do this, we shall not argue for the acceptance of <u>our</u> definition of the notion of a non-causally free intentional action but just go ahead and employ it.

If this procedure strikes one as being too arbitrary, it may help to reflect that in the history of philosophy there is a long list of philosophers who have thought it sufficient to show that man is a free agent that his decisions are uncaused. Indeed, the problem of non-causal freedom has traditionally been taken to be identical with the problem of non-causally free choice or decision. This, admittedly, does not justify our procedure in any final sense, but it does at least lend it a certain prima facie plausibility.

2

If within the confines of our definition of the notion of a non-causally free action it is granted that we have shown there to be such actions, then we can talk meaningfully of a sense of moral obligation. This, in turn, is a necessary condition of our being able to make sense out of the concept of responsibility in its most basic application where it depends upon having and acting from a sense of moral obligation. But all this raises a very difficult problem with which we shall now have to deal. The problem can be put in terms of a question. Granted that we have shown intentional actions to be non-causally free, how can this possibly render the sense of moral obligation coherent if we have this sense of moral obligation even when we are

not performing intentional actions and are, therefore, not free? For, it will be argued, intentional actions are occurrences and, as such, they occur at intervals or, if you like spasmodically. As a result, the freedom that is supposed to characterize them must also occur at intervals or be spasmodic. On the other hand, however, the sense or consciousness of moral obligation is by its very nature something continuous. And for this reason it is hard to see how the former can allow us, as we have maintained that it does, to talk meaningfully of the latter. Indeed, it is, we shall be told, hard to see how the one can have anything to do with the other.

It hardly needs saying that we must resist the temptation to extricate ourselves from this difficulty by treating our consciousness of moral obligation as something spasmodic. For, although that would make the non-causal freedom of intentional action relevant to our consciousness of moral obligation, the price would be exceedingly high. More specifically, the price would be the denial that any sense can be attached to a dispositional form of responsibility, the one that we have held to be the most basic. And this follows from the fact that if we were only spasmodically or at intervals conscious of moral obligation we could not be responsible persons who are by the very meaning of that phrase continuously aware of it.

It is clear that we must reverse the process. In-

stead of treating our consciousness of moral obligation as something spasmodic in the way that intentional actions are alleged to be, we must, if the freedom they imply is to mean anything, show that intentional actions constitute a continuum in the way that our consciousness of the moral command and a fortiori consciousness itself does. But how are we to do this? On the surface it seems clear that intentional actions are occurrences and to argue otherwise would be absurd. On the other hand, I think that we can, once beneath the surface, talk sensibly of a continuum of intentional action. Nor do we have to go very far beneath the surface; for there is nothing queer in the suggestion that a man is continuously performing intentional actions. It only seems queer because we have a strong tendency to isolate a particular action or set of actions that happen, for one reason or another, to interest us and to blot out those actions that precede and follow upon it. And there is nothing the matter with this procedure so long as we recognize the element of arbitrariness involved in it.

This element of arbitrariness is, however, so obvious that it is easy to overlook it. It is easy, for example, to think that, because we usually sum up our day's activities in terms of a few specific things that we did, this constitutes an exhaustive list of our activities for that day. But this is no more than to fashion the objective

reality after our own interests. For the truth of the matter is, as Hampshire puts it, that "Any man is continuously and without interruption responding to situations with actions that are to a greater or lesser degree deliberate and thoughtful."[1] Nor should this fact surprise anyone. On the contrary, it would be surprising if it were otherwise since it would force us to renounce the ordinary model of consciousness as a continuum. For it is, I think, undeniable that before we can justifiably attribute consciousness at all to anyone he must, in normal circumstances, give some answer or be able to give some answer to the question, "What are you doing?" even if all he is doing is getting ready to receive an assailant's next blow.

It is true that the agent may not always be right in the answer he gives; but if he has reason to think he might make a mistake in this regard, he can always resort to the notion of trying to overcome the possible disparity between what is being done at the time and the state of affairs that this doing will bring into existence. With this qualification in mind we can with approval quote Hampshire once again:

> At any moment in any man's waking and conscious life there is always a set of possible true answers to the question - 'What is he doing now?' For human beings, to be conscious is to have active inten-

---

1. Hampshire, Stuart, Thought and Action, p.116.

> tions. Within the set of possible true answers to this question there is a smaller set of answers which the person himself would give if he was asked what he was doing.[2]

It has been thought by many philosophers, especially those in sympathy with the classical empiricist tradition, that there is no significant relationship between consciousness and one's ability to say what one is doing. Consequently, it has been thought possible to conceive of conscious human beings who perform no actions. Indeed, in the classical empiricist tradition the very notion of an action becomes problematic and in attempting to explain it it has usually been explained away. In any case, it seems clear that there would be no significant relationship between consciousness and one's ability to say what one is doing only if we could sensibly treat consciousness as somehow being an end in itself. And this would have to be contrasted with treating it as a means to an end or as an instrument. Now, I can see no conclusive way of showing that consciousness is not to be treated in this way. On the other hand, however, there seems to be no good reason for treating it in this way and we have tried to provide one reason for not treating it in this way. For, if the attribution of consciousness to anyone presupposes his being able to give some answer to the question, "What are you doing?", then there is a good reason to suppose that

---

2. Hampshire, Stuart, p.169.

consciousness is an adjunct to and an instrument for action. And it is only because we are constantly performing intentional actions that a continuous consciousness can be attributed to us.

3

We can see, then that the freedom of intentional actions does serve to render our sense of moral obligation coherent. Nor should this have been surprising from the start. On the contrary, it would have been surprising even seriously to have entertained the possibility of its being otherwise; for, if our consciousness of moral obligation was incoherent, this could only be because the notion of moral obligation itself was incoherent. But this would to deprive us of our very title of moral agents. Now, there are, undoubtedly, some people who are willing to suffer such a deprivation: one has only to think of any number of social and physical scientists along with, I hope, a minority group of philosophers who are willing to deny any meaning to the notion of responsibility and suggest that we dispense with it altogether. And it certainly was an implication of our earlier remarks that such a procedure would= commit one to renouncing any attempt to render our consciousness of moral obligation coherent. After all, if the notion of responsibility implied the notion of a conscious-

ness whose content is moral obligation, then the denial of the first notion will imply the denial of the second. We, for our part, however, would argue that nothing could be more pregnant with paradox than just this denial.

4

But that is another matter. What we must do now is to distinguish our approach to the problem of freedom from another one with which it might be confused. That latter consists in inferring non-causal freedom from the fact that we are responsible being possessed of a moral consciousness. Now, we have not followed the same procedure. On the contrary, although we accepted the fact at the beginning that we were responsible beings possessed of a moral consciousness, we have tried to argue on independent grounds for the existence of a non-causal freedom. Thus, if the approach from which we have distinguished our own can be said to constitute the approach of the moral libertarian, then another name will have to be found for ours. On the other hand, if the approach of the moral libertarian is taken to consist in showing that causally free activity is inextricably bound up with moral activity, then we can with full justice lay claim to the title in question; for we have argued from the beginning that a responsible agent is continuously aware of the moral demand. As a result, whatever he does will be done against the background of his moral

consciousness. And if as an agent he is aware of his freedom, as a moral agent he is aware of the essentially moral nature of this freedom.

5

The notion of a moral consciousness constituting a permanent background for our actions has troubled some people because it seems to exclude the possibility of morally neutral action. For, surely, it is argued, much of what we do is of no moral consequence and does not require any background provided by the moral consciousness. Nor, it is argued, does it do any good to appeal once again to the distinction between background and foreground awareness. After all, the objection is not, as it was when we originally appealed to this distinction, that we are converting man into a morally obsessed wretch. Rather, it is that, even when he has only a background awareness of moral obligation, this excludes the possibility of morally neutral actions.

I think, however, that the objection can be met by an appeal to another distinction, namely, that between what the moral consciousness <u>demands</u> and what it <u>permits</u>. That is to say, very often the moral agent finds himself in a position where his moral consciousness does not dictate what he is to do or refrain from doing. And in this limited sense what he does will be morally neutral. But it is a

limited sense since even here he is under an obligation to gain the assurance of his moral consciousness that what he does or refrains from doing is indifferent to it. Maclagan, rightly I think, has interpreted this obligation as an instance of the obligation to avoid wrong-doing. As he puts it, "if there is a duty to avoid wrong-doing there is correspondingly a duty to satisfy ourselves so far as we can that in pursuing a certain course we shall not be doing wrong."[3]

Our objector, moreover, is not entirely correct when he maintains that the distinction between background and foreground awareness has absolutely no relevance to the matter at hand. For the assurance that the agent receives from his moral consciousness is, generally speaking, an assurance that dwells in the background. Indeed, it is for this very reason that one is tempted to believe in the absolute moral neutrality of certain actions; since such an assurance of the moral consciousness rarely occupies the centre of our attention, we are inclined, in reflecting on the contents of consciousness, to overlook its existence altogether. But this, as I have tried to show, would be mistaken.

---

3. Maclagan, W.G., p.99.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(Only books are listed and only those that are alluded to elsewhere in the work at hand).

Anscombe, G.E.M., Intention, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1957.

Austin, J.L., Philosophical Papers, ed. J.C. Urmson and G.J. Warnock, Oxford; The Clarendon Press, 1961.

Bradley, F.H., Ethical Studies, second edition, Oxford Paperbacks, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 19621

Broad, C.D., Ethics and the History of Philosophy, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1952.

D'Arcy, Eric, Human Acts, Oxford University Press, 1963.

Free Will, ed. Sidney Morgenbesser and James Walsh, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962.

Hampshire, Stuart, Thought and Action, Chatto and Windus, London, 1959.

Hare, R.M., Freedom and Reason, Oxford Paperbacks, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963.

Hintikka, Jaakko, Knowledge and Belief, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1962.

Johnson, W.E., Logic, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1964.

Maclagan, W.G., The Theological Frontier of Ethics, Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1961.

Melden, A.I., Free Action, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1961.

Mill, J.S., A Critical Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, fourth edition, Longman's, London, 1872.

Nowell-Smith, P.H., Ethics, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1954.

Readings in Ethical Theory, ed. Wilfred Sellars and John Hospers, Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc., New York, 1952.

Ryle, Gilbert, The Concept of Mind, Hutchinson's University Library, London, 1949.

Sartre, J.-P., L'Être et le Néant, Librairie Gallimard, 1937.

Schopenhauer, Arthur, Two Essays, translated by Mme Karl Hillebrand, London, 1891.

The Philosophy of Spinoza, introduction by John Ratner, The Modern Library, New York, 1954.

Stace, W.T., The Philosophy of Hegel, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1955.