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FREE-WILL AND RESPONSIBILITY.

THE question of free-will and necessity is often spoken of as incapable of solution, and the controversy on the subject is supposed to be interminable. Milton* regards a discussion on free-will as a fitting occupation for the more speculative of his fallen angels,—a refined form of eternal punishment. On the theological aspects of the question, of which Milton was chiefly thinking, I do not intend to say much at present,—the seeming contradiction between the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God on the one hand and the freedom of the individual human being on the other. I do not think that, even in the special region of theological controversy, that question bulks as largely as it did in the seventeenth century. The doctrines of predestination and election nowadays occupy comparatively little thought even among those whose religious ideas are mostly due to Calvinistic theology. I do not suppose that, apart from a few old-fashioned students, many of those who are most zealous about what they call "evangelical truth," consider the differences that separate Wesleyans from Calvinistic Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Congregationalists. One does not hear of Arminianism as a dangerous heresy at the present time: on the contrary, the de-

* "Paradise Lost," Bk. II., 557, *seq.*

fenders of orthodoxy seem often to forget that there was ever a suspicion of heresy attached to the assertion of man's free-will. "Free-will" (in some undefined form or other) is usually supposed to be an essential doctrine that the champions of religion and morality are bound to maintain against the doctrine of necessity which is asserted by the champions of scientific thought. The "antinomy," or contradiction in thought, which troubles the modern mind, is not expressed in the form of an opposition between the eternal decrees of the Almighty on the one side and on the other the freedom of the human will, which is supposed to be implied in man's responsibility to God; but in the form of an opposition between the necessity of the causal nexus, which is presupposed by all the sciences of nature and of human nature on the one side, and on the other the freedom of the human will which is supposed to be implied in man's responsibility even to his fellow-men. From a metaphysical point of view the necessity of nature may seem to be only an element in the eternal decrees of God: but it is the requirements of science and not the requirements of systematic theology which seem to trouble the present-day defenders of free-will. There is an appearance of conflict between what is scientifically true and what is supposed to be good moral doctrine. Now an opposition between science and morality, if it is a real opposition, is a very serious matter; and it is an opposition which people cannot escape, as they think they escape the older form of the difficulty by simply disregarding theology and metaphysics as a futile waste of thought. It is worth while attempting to discuss it in order to see whether the opposition is a real one or not, and whether it may not be due to some misunderstanding of the term "necessity" on the one hand and of the term "moral responsibility" on the other. We are always too apt to discuss whether a thing is true or not, without asking first what it means and whether it means anything at all.

First of all, then, let us see what "necessity" means as postulated by science. It means nothing except the necessity of logical sequence: A is the cause of B; if A happens B must happen,—*i.e.*, from A I can infer B. If you throw a ball up

in the air, it *must* come down again. The "must" here is not the "must" of command, as if there were some despot outside the whole universe who arbitrarily interfered with what, apart from his interference, would be the course of events we might reasonably expect. The "if—must" is simply an expression for the course of events which we may and do reasonably expect. The necessity of natural causation is presupposed by all scientific investigation; but this presupposition is identical with our presupposition that nature is an intelligible whole, a universe, and not simply a chaos of isolated and disconnected events. Our presupposition in interpreting nature is simply that nature is capable of being interpreted. There can be no science of nature unless we do assume that nature is intelligible and coherent. We understand very little of nature as yet; a great deal we human beings may never be able to understand. But all science proceeds on the assumption that phenomena are connected together in such a way that if, and when, we are sufficiently acquainted with the conditions under which an event happens, we can predict the happening of that event, whenever the conditions are fulfilled. The statement of a scientific "cause," the statement of a law of nature, is never strictly accurate unless we put in the "if," or perhaps several "ifs." If you throw a ball up in the air, it must come down again, if nothing interferes with gravitation. If the ball should alight on the roof of a house, or be caught in the branches of a tree, or by the hands of a human being, it may not come down to the earth so long as these obstacles are in the way. If you swallow a sufficient quantity of poison you will die, unless you can have a sufficient antidote administered soon enough; and so on.

Now, if there is to be a science of psychology dealing with the phenomena of the human mind, if there is to be a science of sociology dealing with the phenomena of human society, the principle of "necessity" must apply to the phenomena of human life in the same sense in which it applies to the phenomena of nature, but in the same sense only. When it is said that a frequent experience of two phenomena in immediate combination—say a double knock and the post-

man delivering letters—will lead to a mental association being formed such that the thought of the one phenomenon tends to recall the thought of the other phenomenon, it is not meant that at any given time you will necessarily think of the postman, but only that if you hear a double knock you will most probably think of the postman, unless you happen to have a playful friend who imitates the postman's knock, or unless there be some other counteracting cause to interfere with the association. So, if it is said that centuries of oppression and misgovernment tend to incapacitate a people from managing their affairs well when they obtain their liberty, it is not meant that any given people must necessarily mismanage their affairs, but that under such conditions, unless their leaders show conspicuous energy and ability, a people are most likely to do so.

The opponents of "necessity" generally confuse it with fatalism. The difference between the necessity which I have been trying to explain and fatalism is just the difference between a statement of what under certain conditions may be foreseen and a statement of what must happen whatever the conditions may be. The necessitarian says, as every reasonable person might say, if you have sufficient ability, and if you have a sufficiently good training, and if you keep your health, you will succeed in your business, unless some particularly unfavorable combination of circumstances are against you. The fatalist or the fortune-teller predicts success irrespective of all conditions—in spite of all conditions. You are born under a lucky planet; you have certain lines on your hand, *therefore* you must succeed. Necessity means an orderly, intelligible world in which like causes produce like events. Fatalism or fortune-telling implies a chaotic world in which events may happen any how, or, at least, in which there are arbitrary interferences with the orderly sequence of events. Fate is thus the very opposite of necessity.

J. S. Mill sought to avoid the misleading associations apt to be connected with the word "necessity" by calling his theory not "necessitarianism" but "determinism." I do not think anything was really gained by the substitution of the latter

term. It is quite as capable of gathering misleading associations round it as the other. To say that the will is "determined" by motives, and that these are "determined" by the character and circumstances of the individual, and so on, may be misunderstood to mean that some outside force intrudes and overrules the intelligible connection between cause and effect. For these misunderstandings, it must be admitted that necessitarians or determinists are a good deal to blame. They have often spoken as if the laws of nature were some despotic external authority against which man struggled in vain; they have ignored the fact that in so speaking they were opposing man to nature at the very moment when they were professedly reducing him to a part of nature, and ignoring the fact that nature, including human volitions, is not the same as nature exclusive of human volitions.

I pass now to the other side of the antinomy. What is meant by free-will? If we define free acts as those acts (of course, thoughts, volitions, etc., are "acts") of which the cause is in the agent himself,—a definition of "the voluntary" which satisfied Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas,—there is no conflict between necessitarianism, as just explained, and free-will. But such a definition is very wide and general; "the cause being in the agent" is a phrase that needs further analysis: (1) Where the cause of some movement of a person's body is external to the person—*i.e.*, where the person is not properly an agent, but is only a passive object or instrument,—there, clearly, there is not "freedom," nor is there responsibility. If you are knocked down by the fall of some scaffolding, or if you are seized by a couple of policemen and carried off to the police-station, you are not a free agent in falling down or in being carried off, and you are not held directly responsible for falling down or for being carried off, though you may be responsible by going near the scaffolding or for arousing the suspicions that have led to your being arrested. (2) Where the compulsion exercised is not directly a physical compulsion, the case is more complicated. If a brigand holds a pistol at your head and demands "Your money or your life!" your handing over your purse to him is obviously a

voluntary act in a sense in which we could not apply the term to your having the purse torn from you by force. In the one case *you* do not act, in the other *you* do, though under terror of physical compulsion. Responsibility enters more largely into this second case than into the first. Still, the responsibility does not seem complete. The person who does even wrong or base acts under fear of death or great pain or suffering to himself or to others may be excused in a way in which he could not be excused if these threats of violence were absent. Yet there is no absolute gap between the handing over a purse to the brigand who holds at your head a pistol, which you know to be loaded and which you know he is likely to use, and assenting to a disagreeable arrangement through a remote fear of possible unpleasant consequences to yourself or to other persons; both are voluntary acts, "free" acts, in the sense of being acts springing from your own volition to move your muscles. But both may be called "involuntary" acts in the sense of being acts that you do with reluctance and with a feeling of pain and aversion. (3) We are only said to act quite freely, quite voluntarily, when the act is one that we do "with our whole heart," one that we choose not only in the sense that it is our act, for which we are in some degree responsible, but in the sense that we put ourselves into it, so to speak. For such acts, acts which are the outcome of our inclinations, we are obviously responsible in the fullest sense.

Now, so far as this goes, there is nothing yet to conflict with the statement that our volitions are due to causes in the same sense—and in the same sense only—as any other events are. Fear of pain, inclination towards an object are causes of our volition in the same sense in which rain and sunshine are causes of the growth of plants. "Yes," it may be said, "but the more important cause is left out in these statements. The plant's own nature is among the causes of its growth (a rose will not grow into a thistle), and so the individual in each case is the most important and the real cause. The external circumstances are only the occasion of his acting." But the plant's own nature, the person's own

nature are not theoretically incapable of further analysis,—however difficult or impossible at present it may seem to understand them. Just as in the Indian mythology the world is supposed to rest on an elephant and the elephant on a tortoise, but there the search for causes comes to an end, so in practical matters we are often contented with a very short exploration of causes. The self-choosing how to act, choosing sometimes against inclination and sometimes with inclination, is the point beyond which we do not go in the ordinary analysis of conduct which is sufficient, *e.g.*, for the procedure of the law courts. When conduct is brought home to a person as the result of his own choice, he is held responsible for it. But where the lawyer may be content to stop, the psychologist and the moralist must go farther; and so must any person conscientiously examining his own conduct. Why did we choose this course rather than the other? We may wonder, perhaps, how we could have been so foolish; but if we are quite candid with ourselves, and have sufficiently good memories and sufficiently clear insight into our own habits of thinking and feeling, we shall discover what it was that made us choose the course we did. There is a fallacy of retrospection, if I may so call it, which is very apt to vitiate our examination of our own conduct in the past. We suppose ourselves back at the moment of choice with the same knowledge and experience that we have acquired since, in part as the result of that choice and of its consequences; and, besides, we suppose ourselves back at the moment of choice with the possible alternatives spread out before us in the same calm, clear light as that in which we are now looking on them. We forget that emotion remembered in tranquillity is a very different thing from emotion as actually felt. Now this familiar fallacy of retrospection seems to me to have a good deal to do with the belief that our choice is something undetermined and arbitrary; we picture ourselves in a calm and indifferent mood, surveying the possible logical alternatives, and we are loath to recognize that *in the frame of mind in which we were at the moment of choice* our choice was the inevitable outcome of that frame of mind, in the same sense in which an explosion is the inevitable outcome of

a match applied to a cask of powder. If the match had gone out before it touched the powder, or if the powder had had its quality affected by damp, the result would have been different; and so it would have been with our conduct if our frame of mind had been altered. It may be seen here how, not determinism, but indeterminism is allied to fatalism. Indeterminism, like fatalism, supposes a want of continuity between different parts of psychical experience. To say that I must inevitably choose in a particular way, whatever frame of mind I am in, is to assert that the effect is independent of its cause. To say that I am equally able and equally likely to choose in one way or in its opposite, although my frame of mind is of a certain sort, is to assert, also, that the effect is independent of its cause. The necessitarian or determinist theory asserts that, if my frame of mind is of a certain sort, certain consequences will follow; it implies a connection between cause and effect. In other words, the motives of action are asserted to be causes of the same kind, so far as inevitableness of sequence and possibility of prediction are concerned, as the causes of physical events; and it is implied that if we could analyze with sufficient care we should always be able to see how volitions were the outcome of motives, and how motives were the outcome of our character and circumstances, and how our character was the outcome of previous acts and abstentions from acting, and so on.

The opponents of determinism are alarmed by this chain of cause and effect leading backward into infinity, and they try to stop somewhere and to find a real beginning. (1) The boldest attempt is to try to break the chain at the nearest link, and to say that we are able to act *without motives.* (2) Most "libertarians," however, nowadays disclaim this theory of absolute indeterminism, and say that we do not act without motives, but that we can make our own motives. "The will is as the strongest motive is," but it is we who make a certain motive the strongest. Now this sounds much more plausible, and is in less manifest contradiction with science than the first theory. But the assertion that we can determine which motive shall be strongest does

not necessarily conflict with anything that the cautious determinist maintains. In urging that motives are the outcome of our character as acted on by circumstances and reacting on them, the determinist allows the character of the individual—*i.e.*, the real person—to be a cause of his motives. To assert that you can only tell how a person is likely to act if, and so far as, you know his character, is to assert that the motives are not external forces by which the individual is blindly pulled or pushed, but that they are the outcome of the person's own real self as that has come to be. If, however, the libertarian does not concede this, but insists that we come to an absolute beginning somewhere, he is only putting more elephants and tortoises under the original elephant and tortoise, but is still leaving his world poised upon nothing. He hesitates to assert directly that we can act without motives, but if he practically asserts that there are certain actions farther back, viz., volitions, which are independent of motives, he only kicks indeterminism out at the front door to let it in again at the back. Thus, so far as this second theory differs from that of the determinist, it is only the first theory over again.

(3) There is a third view which is sometimes maintained (*e.g.*, by Dr. Temple in his "Bampton Lectures"), that we are very seldom "free" in the full sense of acting apart from and contrary to motives; but that occasionally a miracle takes place, the chain of causation is broken through, and the will is for a moment free. If this only means that people often do unexpected things, or that by a great effort a person may escape from the bondage of a habit, it is true enough; but the unexpected is not that which happens without a cause, but only that of which the cause has been unforeseen or that of which the cause may remain unknown. Such occasional freedom would be the same thing as "chance"; and for scientific thought chance is only a name for our ignorance. When a scientific biologist allows himself to speak of *spontaneous* or *accidental* variations, he only means variations of which as yet the cause is unknown. If the doctrine of occasional freedom means anything more than the happening of the unexpected, it implies occasional indeterminism. So that

we have really only one theory to discuss,—viz., that of indeterminism, or acting without motives, in such a way that prediction is not merely practically, but theoretically impossible.

Now, this theory is often supposed to be that of "the plain man," of the person who is unsophisticated by metaphysical speculations or scientific hypotheses. So far from this being the case, it would be nearer the truth to say that the theory was an invention of some of the schoolmen. Duns Scotus and William of Occam asserted that the Divine will and the human will were both "free" in the sense of having an arbitrary freedom of choice. The plain man is led to think that the free-will theory is his theory, simply because he does not face the whole problem; he is content with one tortoise under his elephant, and he stops there. Furthermore, he is repelled by the theory of determinism, because he is made to believe that it means fatalism. In all our actions (including volitions) for which we are responsible, there must be some motive determining our action. If we say a person acted without a motive, and yet hold him responsible for his action, we are speaking inaccurately. We may mean that his motive was not such as would have influenced a reasonable human being; and by this we probably mean that he had no motive such as would have influenced ourselves. That every action for which a person is held responsible must proceed from a motive is implied in the old Roman legal question,—so often misunderstood and misapplied,—*Cui bono?* (*i.e.*, who benefits by it?) If a person is accused of a murder, and it is impossible to see any motive which could have induced him to commit this murder, a presumption is created in favor of his innocence or else—we should add—of his insanity.*

When we find ourselves without a sufficient motive to decide our choice, we may ask some one else to decide for us, or we may "toss up." But our decision to "toss up" is not itself unmotived. It is due probably to the discomfort of

* The nature of insanity I need not here discuss. No libertarian psychologist is likely to wish to rest his case on the conduct of lunatics.

indecision, the feeling that we are wasting time, or something of that sort. Suppose I am going out for a walk, and cannot make up my mind whether to turn to the right or the left. I may purposely let my decision depend on some mere "chance" in order to start myself definitely in one direction.

In arguing for the truth of determinism as against indeterminism, there is no need to deny the obvious psychological fact of indecision. But it seems rather a strange thing to think that indecision is a necessary characteristic of moral and responsible action. The plain man, who is an honest man, would rather resent being told that, when he found a purse belonging to somebody else, nobody could really tell whether he would keep it or restore it to its owner. If the honest man is a quick-tempered person, you had better get out of his way after telling him that. There are, of course, "doubtful characters;" but those are just the people on whom the police have to keep an eye—in order that fear of the policeman may form a stronger motive than the temptation to pick conveniently accessible pockets. The people who are constantly wavering between right and wrong are, surely, not the only class of persons who can act morally and be held responsible for their actions. As Mr. Bradley has very ingeniously put it, it is a strange way of proving man to be accountable to make him out to be an altogether unaccountable creature.*
What we call the "reliable" person is just the person whose actions you can forecast. Would it not be absurd, if the most satisfactory person morally were just the person who through want of indecision was not properly responsible?

Of course, I do not mean that the mere facility of predicting a person's conduct proves that he is responsible. A person subject to some habitual delusion may be quite certain to act in a particular way under a particular set of circumstances. A dipsomaniac may be certain to get drunk when liquor is placed in his way. A suicidal maniac may be certain to cut his throat if knives are left about when the fit is on him. In these cases particular actions follow a particular external

* "Ethical Studies," p. 11.

stimuli, just as a plant turns to the sunlight or a cat springs at a mouse. The rational will of the man is temporarily or permanently, in certain respects at least, in abeyance. Mere facility of prediction does not necessarily imply responsibility; but the power of predicting conduct is not inconsistent with responsibility. On the contrary, as I have just been urging, the thoroughly upright and responsible person is the person whose conduct can be predicted with more certainty than the conduct of the person of weak and unsettled character.

If we appeal to the plain man,—*i.e.*, to the ordinary experience and practice of people who are not interested in attacking or defending a philosophical dogma,—it is obvious enough that we are constantly in the habit of making fairly successful predictions about human conduct. When we make engagements with some people, we know that they will be on the spot punctually to the minute; other people we know are almost equally certain to be so many minutes late. If you arrange a picnic, you can generally be more certain that the people who have promised to come will turn up than that the day will be fine—in Great Britain. That is to say, we can predict human conduct in some matters with greater certainty than we can predict the weather. When it comes to forecasting the conduct of human beings on a large scale, the risk of failure is diminished. A shopkeeper who lays in a stock of goods for the season is predicting that a certain number of persons, more or less, will desire to purchase a certain quality and quantity of goods. He knows that a certain way of displaying his goods in the shop-windows, or certain forms of advertisement, will increase his sales. The whole huge advertising business, which relieves the ugliness of some of our streets and railway stations and disfigures the beauty of much of our scenery, is a proof of the possibility of predicting human conduct and of the fact that volitions are the outcome of motives.

Some people would, indeed, admit that we can predict the conduct of human beings in the mass or on the average, but would urge that the impossibility of precisely predicting how any particular person will act on any particular occasion

allows a loophole for free-will in the sense of arbitrary, undetermined choice. Now, it is quite true that the most experienced shopkeeper cannot certainly predict that A or B will buy particular commodities; he may be more certain about what A will do than about what B will do, because he knows A's usual tastes better, or because B is by nature a more capricious customer than A. But on the average he may forecast a sale of a certain quantity of goods. In this uncertainty of particular prediction, however, there is nothing that is peculiar to human conduct. Of a given packet of seeds you may predict that fifty per cent. will come up, of another packet that seventy per cent. will come up, etc., but you cannot predict certainly that any particular seed will come up, though an experienced eye may see that *this* particular seed is more likely to come up than that. The principle of averages applies to voluntary human actions just as it does to any other natural phenomena, and it is vain to look for "free-will" lurking in the holes and corners of incomplete and inaccurate calculations. An argument from the fact that predictions have only a rough accuracy would prove too much; for it would prove that turnip-seed had free-will as much as men and women. As I have already had occasion to say, chance, if we are thinking carefully, is only a name for our ignorance. That we cannot in any given case make a certain prediction does not prove that events happen without a cause, "spontaneously," but only that we do not know the facts sufficiently. More perfect knowledge, which we, of course, may in this particular case never be able to obtain, would make prediction possible. As I said at the outset, the necessity of causal connection means "IF *a*, *then b*," and if we are mistaken in thinking *a* is present, we should of course be mistaken in expecting *b*, unless some other cause were present from which *b* could arise.

It is often supposed that the admission of determinism makes punishment unjust, and necessitarians have often used language which would imply that that was the case. Now, first of all, there need be no practical difficulty in the matter, provided that punishment be understood to have in view, first

and at the very least, the protection of society from injurious individuals; secondly (what is really a part of the first purpose of punishment), a deterrent effect on the minds of persons likely to be tempted to crime; and, thirdly, when it is possible, an educative effect on the mind of the criminal himself. If a theological necessitarian murderer were to argue, "It was predestinated that I should do this murder," the judge could reply: "It was also predestined that you should be hanged; you must not isolate one event and suppose that to be predestined, while you suppose that other events happen contrary to the plan of the universe as a whole. And, furthermore, you must observe, it was not predestined that you, being a most excellent and valuable citizen, should in some uncaused way commit a crime, but that you, being a dangerous character, should commit this crime, and hence it is expedient for society to have you removed." If our murderer were a psychological determinist, and argued that, his character and circumstances being what they were, it was inevitable he should commit this crime, the judge might answer, "The severest penalty of the law is enforced in order to give a very strong motive to people like you to deter them from yielding to the temptation to do criminal acts." The criminal, the socially injurious person, is a diseased member of the body politic and must be cured or amputated. I do not see that the necessitarian theory raises any difficulty about the rightness and social necessity of punishment; it does, however, call attention to the importance of considering very carefully what kinds of punishment are really the most efficient for the purposes of social well-being. Thus, punishments which are not really deterrent are inefficient punishments; they do not sufficiently protect orderly and law-abiding persons against wrong-doers. Punishments, on the other hand, which are so severe and cruel that they make juries reluctant to bring in a verdict of "guilty," are inefficient punishments, because they enlist the moral sentiments of the community against, instead of in favor of, the laws of the land, and they lead to dangerous criminals being let loose on society by unjust verdicts of acquittal. Again, punishments which make the criminal worse instead of better are

inefficient punishments. Punishments should be educative, if possible,—*i.e.*, if the protection of society can be sufficiently secured (that is always the primary consideration), it is better to try to turn a bad citizen into a good citizen than to give up the problem. The highest, the divinest form of punishment is the educative, the purgatorial.

Many of the profoundest philosophers have urged that in the ethical idea of punishment the idea of retribution must be present; not vengeance, not the anger of an individual spending itself on the suffering of the offender, but the assertion of the majesty of the whole society against its rebellious part. Retribution, however, as so understood, seems to me only another, and, perhaps, a somewhat misleading, way of expressing what I have called the protective and the educative functions of punishment combined. The society must assert itself against its rebellious member, and, if the rebellious member is to be reconciled to the whole, he must recognize that the suffering which recoils on his head is a just suffering. The only theory of punishment which seems to me irreconcilable with a necessitarian theory of the will is an irrational theory of punishment; a theory of arbitrary and purposeless infliction of suffering; a theory such as may be found in some of the crude popular versions of Calvinistic theology,—the theory of *Holy Willie's Prayer*, according to which the vast majority of human beings are to be tortured forever without being cured of their wickedness, while Holy Willie, being one of the elect, has, with equal purposelessness (provided that some very thorough change did not take place in his character), a happy time in heaven.

On the other hand, no rational theory of punishment seems to be compatible with any acceptance of indeterminism, even in the smallest degree or in the backmost corners of the soul. If a human being can will anything without motives or can will to will without motives, what is the use of supplying him with motives to abstain from evil? If there is anywhere any break or interruption in the causal chain, how can it be just to punish the part of the man that is affected by external and internal causes for what may have resulted from some

intrusion of an uncaused will belonging to a totally different order of being? Indeterminism makes punishment useless and it makes it inexcusable.

A word must be said here about certain modern theories of crime which regard crime as a form of disease. Probably a considerable proportion of criminals, perhaps nearly all habitual criminals, are persons of abnormal nervous organization. But society must be protected against them, just as it is protected against dangerous lunatics; and, if we drop the name "punishment," we must retain such modes of protection and cure as prove themselves most effectual; and, for the sake of the large number of persons of weak character who need strong motives to deter them from crime, we must have such modes of dealing with antisocial conduct as will serve as an effectual deterrent.

The determinist theory has suffered greatly from the crude and injudicious way in which it has too often been presented. Thus, when it is argued that human volitions are the outcome of "character" and "circumstances," both the advocates of the theory and its opponents are apt to think of these as if they were two determinate quantities which simply needed to be joined together in order to give the result. Now, in the first place, "circumstances" which we may speak of as being "the same" are not the same, as antecedents of volition, to persons of different characters. A purse lying on the road is one circumstance to an honest character and a quite different circumstance to a dishonest or "doubtful" character. Secondly, the character is not something fixed and constant, but is being continually modified, however slightly, by circumstances, or rather by its own reaction upon circumstances; for the character is the real "self," and to say that actions are self-determined is the same thing as to say that they are determined by the character. In speaking of the causal nexus, or the causal chain, we are too apt to be led away by the easy image or picture of a continuous series, as if the movement of causation were all in one direction, and as if causes and effects could always be clearly separated off as antecedents and consequents in time. And to this fallacious simplification of the

problem we are apt to add another, by thinking of a combination of causes as if it simply meant the adding of two quantities, each of which remained unaffected in quality by the other. Now, this is a false way of thinking about any organic life—even the lowest (I need not here discuss whether it is correct even as applied to inorganic existences). A plant's growth, its "behavior," is not a mathematical resultant of so much soil and air and sunshine added on to a given quantity—the plant's nature; the plant's behavior is the outcome of its own nature as reacting on external stimuli. The environment in which a plant finds itself may determine whether it will have luxuriant or scanty foliage, and, within limits, whether its blossoms are single or double, nay, even whether they are darker or lighter in color; but the environment will not turn a hyacinth into a tulip nor a blue hyacinth into a red one. That is the result of the plant's own nature. The power of variation which some plants inherit is very considerable, but there is a very definite limit. In the case of human beings the power of variation is very much greater, although even here there are limits.

This brings me to the subject of heredity; and it is in the name of the doctrine of heredity that the theory of necessity is often most aggressively asserted nowadays. This is partly the effect of a reaction. In the last century the significance of hereditary differences was too generally neglected in political and social theories. It was too often assumed by the "advanced thinkers" of those days that all human beings were born nearly equal and nearly similar, and that the enormous differences between them were entirely due to difference of education, difference of opportunities, difference of social surroundings. Nowadays, with biological theories in every one's mind, or, at least, biological phrases on every one's tongue, the tendency is rather the other way. Race is often treated as if it counted for everything and training as if it counted for almost nothing. The theory of heredity is often asserted in such a way that it seems only a new form of the Calvinistic doctrine of election. In this there is a good deal of exaggeration. Even among the higher animals below man

much that is often supposed to be due to heredity is due to education. Thus, pigeons do not succeed in rearing families of young ones unless they have an experienced couple among them to teach the domestic virtues. As we go higher in the scale of animal intelligence, less, relatively, is due to inherited instinct and more to the social inheritance,—*i.e.*, to education and environment. And when we come to man, the use of language and the existence of definite institutions make possible a storing up and transmission of the results of experience which is impossible among the lower animals. The brain of the civilized man is said to differ less from that of the lowest savage than that of the lowest savage differs from that of the highest ape; but the intelligence of the civilized man, his power of thinking, his power of controlling nature to his own ends, excels that of the savage more than the power of thinking of the savage excels that of the highest ape. What makes the difference? It is not mere heredity. It is the accumulated social inheritance of the civilized man, who is the "heir of all the ages." Thus, we think wrongly about human society when we regard its destiny as determined solely by natural selection and by heredity. Man is not the mere product of natural forces: he can think, he can reflect, he can turn round on the natural forces that have produced him and direct them to some extent; he can even defy them with some success. Within limits, of course; and it can only bring disaster to forget these limits set by heredity. As the homely proverb says, "You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." You cannot make an Isaac Newton, a Darwin, or a Tennyson out of every child at the board-schools, not even if you give them free admission to the best secondary schools, free education at the universities, free access to the best libraries. But what you can do is this: you can make the average child into a more intelligent and more useful citizen than he could possibly become if left unable even to read and write, and without any of the discipline of education. And the same is the case with the effect of moral surroundings. You cannot make every one into a saint or hero, but you can do a great deal to prevent degradation. Till the effect of good, healthy sur-

roundings is tried, you cannot be certain how much of the vitiated characters you find is due to an incurable hereditary taint, and how much simply to the effect of a bad upbringing. It is moral cowardice and intellectual falsehood to throw all the blame on "nature" without trying all that can be done by "nurture." And even with those who are proved to come of a hopelessly bad stock, cannot something be done by isolating them, to prevent a continual contamination of others and a continual propagation of the unfit? I cannot deal with that problem here. I only wish to point out that there is no real, scientific warrant for folding our hands and leaving everything to what we call "nature,"—which, as thus used, only means nature with the greater and the best part of human nature left out of it. For we must never forget that human thoughts, human aspirations, human ideals are as much a part of the phenomena which make up this causally-connected universe as the instincts and appetites that are common to man and the other animals.

People sometimes speak as if "free-will" were not true, or, at least, were incapable of being proved true, and yet were, in this same sense, a doctrine necessary for morality, a useful lie.* Now this is a somewhat dangerous attitude of mind, which accepts a fundamental contradiction between science and morality. But is it so certain that the free-will doctrine is more favorable to the interests of morality than the necessitarian? Robert Owen urged the doctrine of necessitarianism in the interests of his endeavors after social reform. The free-will doctrine,—the notion that at any moment any human being is "free" to choose between right and wrong, and that all moral evil and a great part of the physical evil in the world are due entirely to the wrong choice of individuals who might equally well have chosen rightly,—this notion has undoubtedly helped to blind people to the necessity of putting individuals in good surroundings, of giving them strong motives to choose

* This is not Kant's doctrine, but a caricature of Kant. Kant admits all that the necessitarian asks for. He only adds, though in a way that is open to many objections, that psychological necessitarianism leaves the metaphysical basis of morality unexplained.

rightly. The free-will doctrine applied in this way has been bad for society. It is also bad for the individual. The idea that at any moment we are free to choose aright leads to a neglect of the fact that habits are gradually, though silently, growing up which may make it almost impossible for us to choose a year hence in the way in which we may still be able to choose now. We do not expect a plant to grow vigorous and strong under unfavorable conditions. We are too apt to expect human beings to do so. "Lead us not into temptation." What is the meaning of that prayer, if not that surroundings do act upon the will? And those who seek a good life must not only avoid temptations, but must get into healthy surroundings as much as they can. A negative morality is a one-sided ideal, and it is a very inadequate discipline for the soul. The great defect of ascetic morality has been, not its rigid system of discipline (we all need discipline in our lives), but its negative character. The good life is made to seem simply a series of denials, of abstinences. For the average human being this is a somewhat dangerous training,—apt to produce terrible reactions. It is not enough to cast out an unclean spirit and leave the house empty, however swept and garnished. Such a spirit is very apt to return with seven other spirits more evil than himself. Many very devout and serious persons, absorbed in their own religious life, have been slow to recognize this; and that is probably one explanation why such persons have so often failed more conspicuously in bringing up their children than more worldly persons who have had a considerable number of varied and healthy interests. "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do" is an excellent warning even for those who have cast out Satan from their creed. It is a moral duty not merely to avoid evil, but to cultivate varied and healthy interests. And this is also the best way of avoiding evil. A morbid concentration of thought on the things that ought not to be done is apt even to lead to the doing of them. There is a good deal of sound moral doctrine to be got out of a full recognition of the truth which there is in psychological determinism.

At the same time there is an element of truth in the belief

that free-will is a morally useful idea, an element of truth which is neglected by most exponents of determinism: I mean the importance of getting people to think that they *can* do a thing. The idea of oneself as acting in a certain way becomes a new factor in the mind; it may attract desires and feelings round it, and so become a new motive determining conduct. A man may be turned from idle and evil courses by the image of himself as a good man and a useful citizen, provided, of course, this image of himself as acting rightly is not merely a piece of day-dreaming, but an ideal that stimulates effort. Herein lies the good of examples in morality. That "men of like passions with ourselves" should overcome difficulties and sloth and temptation restores faith in the possibilities of the human nature we share with them. But in all this there is no contradiction of scientific determinism. There is nothing in any carefully understood scientific truth to contradict the enormous modificability and adaptability of the normal human being—within limits, certainly, but limits which we have no right to fix too narrowly till every effort has been made. It is this modificability of human nature which gives so much power to external influences whether good or evil.

Ideas which seem entirely to contradict freedom may have the same beneficial effect as the idea of freedom. The theological doctrine of prevenient and irresistible grace has helped those who have accepted it, and who have felt themselves "saved" by such grace, to change almost the whole course of their lives, believing that it was no longer frail, corrupt human nature that was acting, but God's omnipotence working in them to will and to do that which is good. Probably more persons have been helped to reform their conduct by a sincere belief in some such high Augustinian or Calvinistic doctrine than have been helped by a belief in the arbitrary power of choice at any moment. The latter seems to me only a safe doctrine in the minds of persons of good character who are likely therefore to choose aright, and whose confidence in their freedom is really a confidence in their strength. The theological doctrine of grace in its extreme form has also undoubtedly considerable dangers. It may lead to spiritual pride and

contempt for ordinary "carnal" morality on the one side and to despair and helpless misery on the other. But it contains in a mystical and somewhat irrational form the important philosophical and ethical truths that man as a moral being is raised above the merely natural; it accentuates just that element which the necessitarian theory, as ordinarily stated, leaves out,—the gap between man and mere unconscious, unreflecting nature. The protest of the advocates of free-will against necessitarianism seems to me a protest, in a mistaken form, in favor of this neglected truth. Man thinks, and therefore his thoughts, his aspirations, his ideals, become a factor in his conduct and raise him above the mere passive instrument of natural (*i.e.*, animal) appetites and impulses. The necessitarian too often represents men as merely passive, as merely a series of events; man is an agent, and is more than a mere series of events. He can act, to use a famous phrase, not merely according to law but with a consciousness of law.

To conclude, I must call attention to the ambiguity in the term "freedom" as applied to the will. Man is "free" in the sense that the actions for which he can be held responsible are the outcome of his own conscious self, and not determined by external causes. But this is only the negative sense of freedom. He is free in a higher sense only when he acts according to the dictates of his reason, when his reason determines the content of his volitions, when motives are not merely motives as distinct from mere impulses, but are such motives as his reason approves. In this sense of freedom there is no appearance even of an opposition between freedom and necessity. Freedom in this sense is opposed to slavery, and is identical with rationality. Freedom in this sense may be described as the end or aim of morality. In the other sense it is only its presupposition. Freedom in this higher sense is the very opposite of arbitrary caprice. It is the freedom, not of lawlessness, but of self-government ("autonomy of the will," in Kant's phrase). We are not self-governing to start with, nor do we become so by being left to "the freedom of our own will,"—*i.e.*, to the blind guidance of instinct and impulse. Self-government, so far as we ever

attain it, is the result of training and discipline which must at first be given us by others, and can only afterwards be directed by ourselves.

Benjamin Franklin tells us in his Autobiography how at one time he tried to form a band of young men united by no elaborate theological doctrines but chiefly by the common desire of helping each other to lead good and useful lives—an "ethical society," in fact, in one at least of its aspects. To this society he proposed to give what seems to us the rather curious name of "The Society of the Free and Easy." "Free," he explains, "as being, by the general practice and habits of the virtues, free from the dominion of vice, and particularly by the practice of industry and frugality, free from debt, which exposes a man to constraint and a species of slavery to his creditors." Franklin had a somewhat prosaic way of preaching great and good causes, but he brings out in his odd title this important aspect of freedom,—that same aspect which Spinoza was thinking of when he identified "the slavery of man" with the strength of the passions and the freedom of man with the power of the reason. Free-will in the sense of incalculable, unmotived caprice would not be worth having, even if it were an intelligible idea; free-will, in this higher sense, is the will that can only exist by obedience to the dictates of reason. "Where there is no law there is no freedom" is a sound maxim in ethics as well as in politics.*

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* On the difference between the negative and positive meanings of "freedom" in ethics and politics, I cannot do better than simply refer those who are not already acquainted with it to the discussion of the subject in T. H. Green's "Works," vol. ii., p. 308, *seq.*