

FREEDOM OF WILL AND DETERMINISM

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There are three main arguments, in favour of freedom of will, namely psychological, ethical and theological. Psychological argument is that we intuitively perceive that we are free to choose and act, that we are free to choose to act along one particular line among others, and we feel that we could have done some other act or chosen some other alternative instead of the actually pursued one. It follows that we are free.

Ethical argument is that ethics is founded on the supposition that we have freedom to choose. A man is deemed responsible for a certain act if he can choose the act in question. It makes no sense to ask a person that he should do such-and-such a deed, if he cannot do it. In short 'ought' implies 'can'. It may be rebutted by saying that the concepts like "good", "bad," "right," "wrong" and even "ought" are just appraisal concepts without in any way hinging upon the notion of responsibility and freedom of will. But one can reasonably argue that the concept "duty" is essentially linked with the question of freedom of will. To say that it is your duty to do this act implies that you can do it. Also the questions of moral praise worthiness and moral blameworthiness are essentially linked with the question of responsibility and freedom of will. Why should a person be morally blamed or praised if he is incapable of changing the course of action? Again, it would seem non-sensical to tell a crippled man that it is his duty to carry a heavy trunk. Hence, at least those who like Kant regard the concept of duty as essential to ethics must presuppose freedom of will. Hence, admitting the ethical concept "duty" we must acknowledge that we are free. Hence free-will is entailed by ethics, if concepts like "duty" are essential to ethics. As there is such a field as ethics and we cannot afford to avoid making ethical assessments and judgments, freedom of will follows.

Theological argument may be stated as follows : God is just. He rewards the good men and punishes the evildoers. In order to punish or reward, man must be deemed responsible; otherwise it would be unjust to punish or reward a person for the deeds for which he is not responsible. Or another variation of theological argument may be summed up by saying that there is evil and pain in this world. But God is all-good. Hence, evil and pain cannot originate from God. It is man who does and spreads evil, because he is free.

Before examining the above arguments let us try to clarify idea about what is meant by freedom of will. When the actions of man are dictated by external factors or by heredity, we say he is not responsible for his actions. That is, in these particular circumstances he is not free to choose. That is, his actions are determined and the man has no power to change or stop the action. Suppose a man is pressed down by his shoulders with a heavy force and hence cannot get up. We say, he is not free to choose to get up. That is, he has no choice to get up. His posture was determined by external pressure. Similarly, a man may not be able to avoid certain tantrums and eccentricities, because he is under the influence of certain drugs or he is a victim of a certain hereditary disease. One may go further to declare that the general character of a man is determined by his physio-psychical position. Hence, a man's deeds are always determined by his physical, physiological and psychical factors. Determinism is a theory which asserts that a forthcoming action of man is wholly determined by the state of affairs present before the action. It is———determined in the sense that a man could not have acted otherwise, even though the state-of affairs would have remained the same. Hence, it is wrong to say of a person walking up and down that he could have stood still. The words "could have stood still" may mean that the person concerned possesses the general ability to stand still. But as far as the action at that particular moment is concerned, he could not have helped walking up and down. On the contrary, doctrine of free-will entails that he could have avoided walking up and down and could have chosen some other course of action. Let us now, take the arguments in favour of the doctrine of free-will one by one. Our psychological feeling

of liberty is no proof for the doctrine of free-will. The psychological argument may rather work in the opposite direction. The more we think of our acts as to how they originate or as to how our mental processes proceed, the more we find that our acts are just parts of the chains of causal nexus. By self-examination we find that certain motives work behind such-and-such an act. It is such a self-examination which led Spinoza and Freud towards strict determinism. The Freudian school of psycho-analysis would try to find out the causes for mental disorders and would course a patient by studying his mental history. Now, if psychology is a science, and we do regard it as such, we have to do away with the doctrine of free-will as described above.

We may also raise another important question as to whether it is meaningful to say that a person has a free-will as enunciated above. It is a matter of general observation that the more impulsively we behave, the more free we feel. But we never speak of impulsive acts as acts of free-will. Even the court acquits the person or lessens his punishment, if it is shown that the person concerned acted impulsively on extreme provocation. It is, because we regard the impulsive acts as not proceedings strictly from the personality of the person concerned, or even that the person could not be free to choose the action in that situation. Impulsive acts are regarded rather as signs of insanity than as being deemed as coming from a free-willed person. A child is comparatively more impulsive than a grown-up person, but no body would say that children are more free in their deeds than adults. This sort of reasoning leads us to the conclusion, that in order to say that a certain man is free, his actions must be determined by his character, by his interconnected motives, considerations, emotions and reasoning. Hence, the doctrine of free-will, as described above, must be reinterpreted. So, it is claimed that when we say that a man is free in his actions, it only means that his actions are determined by himself. That is, his actions spring from, and are determined by his own character and not thrust upon him from outside. Hume accordingly says: "By liberty we can mean a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of will, that is if we choose to remain at rest, we may. This hypothetical liberty is universally allowed to belong who

is not a prisoner and not in chains". In this interpretation, free-will is not opposed to determinism as such, but is opposed to constraint and fatalism. Only when the action is constrained, can we reasonably say that the man is not free. It is difficult to demarcate the border between the actions caused by general character and those caused by mental constraint. Why is the action of a kleptomaniac regarded as constrained whereas that of a general thief is regarded as free. Suppose we are provided with a certain criterion to differentiate constrained actions from unconstrained or free ones, are we justified in explaining all psychical phenomena in terms of the second interpretation of free-will and regarding our first primary condition of free-will as just unintelligible. In the first place, the notion of causation, in the sense of a link between action and its determining factors, is itself extremely vague. We shall discuss this point after considering the other two arguments. Secondly, even if the above notion or interpretation of free-will has its scientific value, it does not account for some of our deep intuitively felt experiences of a creative type, which we attain after long experience and with our developed reason. We find ourselves to free to choose and to carve out our own destiny in spite of our critical observation. We may do a certain act such that our observation cannot locate any necessary link between that action and the pre-actional situations. It seems sheer doggedness to assert that there is in fact some necessary causal nexus in such situations. Thirdly it is not a fair or reasonable assessment to say that we in fact regard the doctrine of free-will in the second interpretation, so that self-determination is necessary and entailed in the notion of free-will, and that our original interpretation of the doctrine of free-will is meaningless. We can and do sensibly raise the question of the validity of our first interpretation and this in no way entails determinism. Fourthly it runs counter to our ethical argument, to which we now turn.

Ethical Argument: In the ethical argument we noticed that for ethics, free-will is pre-requisite. The logical positivists in general, told that ethical concepts are pseudo-or false-concepts. These ethical concepts may have emotional or persuasive power, but are devoid of truth. Hence the reasoning from ethical concepts to human responsibility and free-will is as illusory

as ethics itself, so far as these concepts are based on ethics. Secondly, granted that there are valid ethical concepts, the notion of responsibility and free-will which they require must only imply the second interpretation of doctrine of free-will, which implies determinism and is not contrary to it. The argument is the same as sketched above. For moral responsibility it is essential that the action must spring from man's self or character. For accidental acts we are not held responsible. The more our acts are away from our character, that is, away from the general pattern of our behaviour, the less responsible we are supposed to. If the freedom of will is considered in the sense that our actions do not originate from our character, then these actions are regarded as accidental. Hence these actions depend on chance and exclude moral responsibility. The actions themselves may be blameable, but persons are not answerable unless they originate from their durable nature i.e. from their character. It follows, therefore, either we regard free act as accidental and then in that case the agent is not morally responsible, or we regard free act as originated from character and then in that case it is causally determined. Hence, it is concluded that free-will and determinism are not contradictory to each other; rather free-will required for moral responsibility, entails determinism. It is only opposed to *constraint*. The upholders of moral responsibility mistakenly and wrongly asserted the opposition between free-will and determinism. They were not clear about the precise meanings of free-will and determinism. Once their meanings are properly understood, the dispute vanishes. Accordingly, Hume regards the problem of liberty and necessity a verbal dispute and not a genuine problem. Hume asserts that the people have always agreed in the doctrine of both liberty and necessity, according to any reasonable sense given to the terms. The modern analysis, following the favourite logical positive approach, share this belief with Hume and believe that a few intelligible and clear definitions of liberty and necessity can end the whole controversy. The concept of moral responsibility and hence that of duty as well come to harmony with determinism by Hume an analysis. But is this verbal solution really tenable?

We have already remarked that in order to say that a certain person is

responsible for his acts only if we say that he could have acted otherwise "could Have" in this context does not mean person's ability to act otherwise nor does it mean that a person could have done otherwise if he had chosen otherwise. Because the same question may be raised about the freedom or determination of the choice in question. If the choices themselves are determined by physico-mental condition of the person, then he has no freedom to choose and act otherwise. There is a chain of causal nexus. Though his actions may not be regarded as constrained, but they can be traced back to his heredity and childhood. Hence a man cannot be regarded morally responsible. Hence the above analysis of free-will and determinism does not harmonize with the ethical notions of duty and responsibility. From this it does not follow, that free-will in our original sense is a myth and that there are no such genuine concepts like moral duty and responsibility. We shall later discuss and show that the notion of causation as implying strict determinism is itself a questionable assumption. Hence to reject the concept of moral duty and responsibility on the basis of this questionable assumption is an unwise step.

Let us now turn to the theological argument. It is really the weakest though popular argument in favour of free will. It is argued it is the man who is responsible for evil and misery in this world. God always promotes good and happiness. Again, God is just. He punishes the evil-doers and rewards the virtuous. God punishes only when man is responsible. But, human freedom contradicts omnipotence of God which theologians would eager to attribute to Him. Again, one may put forward excuse to show that small evil in the world is just to increase the goodness of the whole. Or one may straightaway deny the existence of God.

Hence we come to the conclusion that none of the above arguments prove the doctrine of free-will. But also we observed that our strong belief in favour of causality prejudices our view as regards to free-will. It is how we are used to think that one event follows another. And we regard one event responsible for the other event and this event as consequent of the first one. We are used to think that *if the event p is the cause of the event q then q must*

have followed from p. This is precisely what the doctrine of free-will denies. The analysts try to dissolve the problem by saying that the conflict between determinism and free-will is only verbal. They seem to suppose that the proponents of both these doctrines presuppose and start with the above-mentioned aspect of causation. And of course, when this is granted, the doctrine of free-will essential for human responsibility entails determinism, and is only opposed to constraint. The analysts have the point that after all what worth of meaning of free-will can we perceive beside that which entails determinism. They like Hume claim that if we cannot find any motive for our certain action, it is due to sheer ignorance. No doubt there are always motives, hidden or explicit, which lead to our actions. This assertion, as it stands, is necessary for moral responsibility. Because we remarked that a morally apprehensible action must spring from the character of a person. That is, the action must have been followed by certain motives, intensions, ideas which make up the character. If this were not so, we pointed out, it would be an accidental act, for which man is not responsible. But from this fact, *it does not follow that the action in question must inevitably have followed from the motives and incentives, precluding the possibility of occurrence of some action from the same initial motives and conditions.* By our own power of freedom of will, we may choose to put weight on motives rather on others to bring some other course of action. It may seem impossible or difficult to imagine as to what sort of connection could it be between action and preactional physico-mental conditions than that of inevitable necessity. But it is no way proof that there cannot be any. It is certainly not logically impossible. Kant, therefore, was led to recognize causation as a Category of our thinking.

Again, science itself has led us to discredit the notion of causation as necessary and inescapable link between events or states. Scientists are no longer sure about the occurrence of any particular event and the statistical regularities have taken the place of the notion of causation. Causal laws cannot be applied with exactitude in the electronic universe. A radium atom breaks up spontaneously, but the moment of this break-up cannot be predicted. Only the behaviour on the average may be determined. It would be a sheer obstinacy to stick to the old dogma of causation, when we have scientific

evidence against it. If this is the situation of the physical universe, it is all the more doubtful to base our mental workings on causation.

The question arises wherein lies the freedom of will. Sometimes it is held by philosophers that the life of reason is the life of freedom. Life of reason is taken to mean some principles of actions. For example, according to Kant, good or dutiful actions are subjected to moral law, which in turn is based on reason. And only these actions are free. If we take this interpretation of Kant's conception of freedom of will it is unsatisfactory. Free actions may be bad actions. It is only when we are capable to do bad or good actions with free choice that we are held responsible. A responsible moral agent can be said to be 'obliged' by moral law but is not determined by it. "Ought" excludes "must". So, we cannot say that man's responsible or dutiful actions are determined by moral law. Determinism by rational or moral or by some other law is determinism all the same. Hence we should look for some other solution to vindicate the claim of free-will.

It is a matter of conscious experience that we feel more free when we are more creative. The moments of creation are felt to be moments of freedom. Man is not a machine, neither a gadget of certain machine. Man is creative: he creates tools, he creates methods to achieve certain goals, good or bad. No two events in man's history seem to be absolutely alike and there is abundant scope of creativity and ingenuity. So our solution is that free-will lies in our creativity. Our solution satisfies the requirement of moral responsibility. Our first requirement of moral responsibility was that action must relate or belong to man's personality. Obviously, our creative action belong to our personality, to our mental build-up. second necessary requirements of moral responsibility for a certain action is that *the doer could have acted otherwise*, although the doer would have the same circumstances. It is clear that creative actions are unpredictable. We do not know what action is forthcoming till the action is really performed. Once it is performed, we may link this creative action to our preactional physico-mental state. But this link is no necessary unavoidable. We cannot say that given such pre-conditions, This certain creative action may provide a general guide

for further predictions such that given similar circumstances, actions similar to the original creative action will follow. That is creative action may lead to the formation of habit. It becomes a general characteristics of habit. But an habitual action may again broken by our creative effort and action. Hence creative actions are sufficient for moral responsibility. The essence of moral responsibility as creative activity may serve to distinguish those actions where men are to be held responsible and where he may not. It may be said kleptomaniacs or inadmenn are not responsible for their actions because they surpass the creative control of these persons. Again our notion of freedom of will as creativity explains why a moral judgment is always passed on the general character of person. Character; built up by our creative effort, and therefore for any individual act, the judgment on the general character of the person is involved. Again the notion of creativity as essence of free-will shows that free-will may be exerted outside the moral sphere. Of course we do not regard every free action belonging to moral sphere. We had also observed that for our scientific purpose we need some connection or link between events. And when we link our actions with our mental processes, we observe that the actions were determined. How to harmonize this paradoxical situation: that is, when we do actions we feel free but when we critically examine it we find it determined. But this seeming impossibility of observing freedom and determination (in the sense of link between events) is no proof against free-will. In physical science we also find parall inspace. We find that it is impossible to determine precisely the position and motion of an electron at the same time. This phenomenon may be called principle of indeterminacy or complementary. We also find that it is impossible to measure the pitch of musical note at the instant at which it is sounded. It is because that in order to estimate the pitch precisely we need a long train of sound waves, whereas in order to observe the instant we need a very short train. So the pitch and instant are complementary. Similarly, it may be said that liberty and determinism are complementary. We have already noticed how a creative action may become habitual and hence we find link or determination between events.

Hence we have been able to show that freedom of will is not an impossi-

bility. That, it is a genuine problem and not merely verbal one. We may not be able to resolve all our problems connected with free-will and responsibility and there may be various objections to our solution, but we have shown that there can be means to solve this problem.