

MIND

A QUARTERLY REVIEW

OF

PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.

I.—FREE-WILL: AN ANALYSIS.

By SHADWORTH H. HODGSON.

THE question concerning the nature and reality of Free-will is one which will probably long retain its interest, notwithstanding that many look upon it rather as a speculative plaything, lending itself to the display of idle ingenuity, than as a problem possessing practical importance, due to its direct bearing on the theory of Conduct. The latter view, however, must of necessity be taken by those who regard the ideas of Conscience, Duty, and Moral Responsibility, as the essential and fundamental tenets of their ethical system, while moralists of the opposite type, who make the attainment of Happiness their ruling principle, will naturally lean towards the former. In their case the reason is evident. The action known by the name of choosing is confessedly pre-supposed in all moral conduct. Happiness, the End aimed at by it, furnishes, in their view, the criteria of all right conduct. To instruct the judgment, so as to know true happiness from false, the greater from the less, the real from the apparent, is for them the cardinal problem of Ethic. Hence they have no inducement to spend time in analysing that part or element in acts of choice which is alike in all, when the reality of those acts, as distinguished from their analysis, is never called in question.

The case stands very differently with moralists of the opposite type. For them the criterion of right action lies, not in the End to be attained by action, as something to be enjoyed, but in action itself, considered as the operation or functioning of an agent, from whose nature it springs and whose nature it modifies, leaving indelible traces in his character. The acts of choosing, in their common and essential nature, are here the really important matter, not their issue in happiness or the reverse. The agent's own self-consciousness is the judge of whether they are right or wrong, performances or infractions of duty. He stands before the tribunal of his own self-consciousness, and in this, primarily at least, his sense of moral responsibility consists. It is evident that, for moralists of this type, the analysis of acts of choice, simply as such, is all-important. The reality of duty, of the judgments of conscience, and of moral responsibility, depends upon the reality of freedom in acts of choosing. If that freedom is unreal, their whole ethical theory is unsound. Hence, so long as there are moralists of this type, so long will the question of Free-will retain its interest. This must serve as my apology for venturing once more to discuss the well-worn theme.

Placing myself, then, at the point of view of the Ethic of Duty, as opposed to the Ethic of Happiness, I propose to take account of that theory of volition which denies its freedom, and which, if tenable, would rob the words *duty*, *conscience*, *right*, and *wrong*, of all distinctive meaning, and at the same time make of Ethic a positive, instead of a practical and philosophical science. I mean the theory which maintains, that immanent volitions are really not free but compelled actions, or which, in other words, denies the fact of Free-will. The question relates, not to overt acts, but to immanent volitions or acts of choice; and it is usually admitted, as indeed it would be impossible to deny, that in choosing we have the feeling known as the *sense of freedom*, a feeling *as if* we were free to choose. What is denied is, that this feeling affords any evidence for freedom as a reality; and this with perfect justice, until both the meaning and the fact of freedom have been ascertained by analysis, independently of that feeling which we call the *sense* of it.

The real nature of volitional action is thus brought into question. And it is evident that, if we have indeed no power to choose otherwise than we choose actually, in any single instance of immanent volition, it is of little practical consequence what names we give to the different parts of the mechanism of choosing, or how we describe the rules by

which we seem to strive to choose, as we call it, aright. Without real freedom of choice there could be no real moral responsibility, and the sense of it, if it were still felt, would have, like the sense of freedom, to be classed as an illusion. The question, then, is one of the deepest significance for Ethic. In fact we might, in the Ethic of duty, consider the whole ethical domain as divisible into two main portions, the first being that of the nature of volition considered in respect of its freedom, the second that of the nature of right volition, in case, but only in case, the enquiry under the first head should issue in favour of Free-will. The question of Free-will and that of Conscience are together exhaustive of ethical phenomena.

I propose, then, once more to consider the ethically prior question of Free-will, and to give a brief, though I hope also a sound and sufficient, solution of the difficulties with which it has been invested. And in the first place it is clear, that freedom of action has a definite meaning as applied to the overt acts, and bodily movements of persons in everyday life; and also that there are such actions and movements, the freedom of which is a reality. We say, for instance, that a man is free to act and move, when his limbs are unfettered, and his motions unimpeded by external hindrances; or as Hobbes puts it, "Liberty is the absence of all the impediments to action that are not contained in the nature and intrinsic quality of the agent".¹ The question is, whether freedom or liberty is also, and equally, and in the same sense, a reality, when regarded as belonging to immanent acts of choice, as it is when it belongs to overt bodily movements. Or in other words, Is there such a thing as freedom in adopting one desire to the exclusion of others, in immanent action? Is there ever an "absence of all the impediments" to choice "that are not contained in the nature and intrinsic quality of the agent" choosing?

It is also easily made evident that, in the latter kind of actions, as in the former, there must be a real and positively known agent, as a requisite constituent of a real and positively known action. A real action is nothing more nor less than a real agent in operation. Real freedom is a property or character inherent in such actions. In order, then, to have a positive knowledge of real freedom, we must have some positive knowledge of the real actions in which it is inherent; and to have a positive knowledge of real actions, we must

¹ *Of Liberty and Necessity*; Hobbes' English Works, edit. Molesworth, vol. iv. p. 278.

have some positive knowledge of the real agent, whose actions they are.

The neglect of these requirements leads straightway to two opposite sophisms, which customarily contend with each other for possession of the field of action. I mean, that to set up an abstract or transcendental Mind or Ego as the Subject or real agent in all conscious action, is to set up as a reality something of which we have no positive knowledge, and which, so far as our knowledge goes, is an unreality. Upon which the result follows, that this unreal agent may be treated either (1) as pure activity, and thus as an absolute originator of action, which is the sophism of the Indeterminists, or (2) as pure passivity, that is, as an inert recipient of impulses, which is the sophism of the Compulsory Determinists. The plain fact, which cuts the ground from below the feet of both, is, that an abstract entity, like the Mind or Ego so imagined, can neither act nor be acted on, being a mere descriptive word hypostasised, empty and unreal. We are deluded by the grammatical construction of "I," as a nominative case, with verbs active and passive; and so led on to attribute to it a separate and substantial existence, without asking either for the analysis of the perception we have of it, or for the real conditions upon which that perception proximately depends. These two last-named things are the realities involved in the term "I"; and before we can discuss the question of Free-will as a reality, we must have in our thoughts a real agent and real actions, positively known to consciousness in both ways, as the object-matter of the discussion.

Of the Indeterminist sophism it is not necessary to speak at length. Its effect is to maintain the reality of Free-will as a fact, however fallacious may be the reasons alleged in support of it; and then, the fact being admitted, and the consequence of moral responsibility drawn, the real mechanism of action, and of self-conscious judgment of action, remains unimpaired, as the object-matter of ethical analysis. The errors involved in the original sophism are of a theoretical nature, the practical consequences of which are confined to the discredit which they cast on the fact of Free-will, when their fallacy is discovered. The empty and fictitious Ego of the Indeterminists is really a superfluous encumbrance of their ethical theory, from first to last; and at every stage of their ethical argument the real facts can be seen shining through, or at least can easily be read into, their fallacious language, without doing any violence to the facts themselves. But this is no defence of the theoretical error

which is at the root of the sophism. Their Ego, taken literally, and as they mean it to be taken, is a non-entity, and involves the inconceivable idea of action originated *ex nihilo*. Such action would be strictly what we intend by the word *chance*; the idea of *real chance* itself being also inconceivable. No such action can possibly be the ground of moral responsibility, in which the idea and fact of Law are everywhere involved. An agent who was perpetually originating actions *ex nihilo, mero motu*, without antecedent motives, would be wholly lawless as well as inconceivable. If free-will and moral responsibility could only be maintained on the footing of ideas of this stamp, they must of necessity be regarded as illusions.

Perhaps, in passing, I may be allowed to express a regret that a writer to whom moral and religious thought owes a deep debt of gratitude, Dr. James Martineau, should have counted me as an opponent of Free-will, apparently on the ground of my Determinism, in his important work *A Study of Religion* (1888), vol. ii., pp. 237-239, where he does me the honour of controverting what he takes to be my views on this question. He seems unacquainted with what I have at different times written on the subject in this Review prior to the date of his work,¹ and to be aware only of a short Letter published in the *Spectator* for January 25, 1879, which I should hardly have thought it worth his while to notice, and the drift of which he totally misapprehends. Its purpose was, not to combat Free-will, but to show that those who hold it must logically be Determinists, in the proper sense of that term.

Dr. Martineau, to judge *inter alia* from his mode of stating the main question at p. 199, seems also unaware that the time-honoured controversy between "Necessarians" and "Libertarians" enters on an entirely new phase, and assumes a wholly different character, from the moment when a positively knowable physical substance, the neuro-cerebral system with its physical adjuncts, whatever these may turn out to be, instead of an hypostasised word, such as *Mind* or *Ego*, is taken as the real Agent or Subject of conscious action.

Venerable as the assumption of an immaterial agent may be, it is still nothing more than a traditional assumption.

¹ (1) "Dr. Ward on Free-will," *MIND* No. 18, April, 1880; (2) "Free-will: A Rejoinder," No. 21, Jan., 1881; (3) "Free-will and Compulsory Determinism: A Dialogue" (originally read before the Aristotelian Society), No. 40, Oct., 1885.

When we trace back the various departments of knowledge to their sources in experience, we find, that the distinction between consciousness and its proximate real conditions, whatever these may be, and not the distinction between Mind and Body, is the true philosophical basis of the science of psychology. Proceeding on this basis, and looking, not for causes, but for the real conditions of the phenomena which we are investigating, we farther find that, in all psychological questions, it is indispensable to have some hypothesis or other as to the nature of the real agency upon which the phenomena of consciousness depend, and to which we refer them for explanation. An hypostasised word is useless, and worse than useless, as a working hypothesis. I therefore adopt the only alternative remaining for which there are positive grounds, namely, the neuro-cerebral system, as the immediate real condition of consciousness including volition; but always in the character of a working hypothesis only, without professing that, even if it should be verified by a sufficient experience as the true theoretical basis, it would solve the ulterior question—a question, moreover, which would be one of cause, not of real condition—How, or by what hidden nexus, consciousness is attached to a physical agent? Which question, it must also be remarked, would be equally remote from solution, in case the alternative hypothesis, that of an immaterial substance or agent, were adopted in its stead.

The alternative which I thus adopt is, in fact, that which Locke suggests, without adopting it, in a famous passage near the beginning of chapter 3, book iv., of his great *Essay*, in which, among much beside to the same purpose, he says: "We have the ideas of matter and thinking, but possibly shall never be able to know whether any mere material being thinks or no; it being impossible for us, by the contemplation of our own ideas, without revelation, to discover whether Omnipotence has not given to some systems of matter fitly disposed, a power to perceive and think, or else joined and fixed to matter so disposed a thinking immaterial substance; it being, in respect of our notions, not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive that God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a faculty of thinking, than that he should superadd to it another substance with a faculty of thinking". To me it seems much nearer our comprehension, instead of only being "not much more remote from" it, to conceive the connexion between matter and thinking immediate and direct, than to conceive a wholly imaginary immaterial sub-

stance interposed between them. And for two reasons. First because the latter hypothesis involves two assumptions of an unknown nexus instead of one. Secondly because the agent assumed by it is nothing more than a shadow-man, within or behind the real man whose actions are to be explained, and thus virtually offers the *explicandum* over again as its own *explicatio*. But to return to the consequences of the immaterialist hypothesis.

The case is very different with the opposite conclusion, drawn from the same hypothesis of an abstract and empty Ego, by using it as a pure passivity, which is the sophism of the Compulsory Determinists. The use which they make of the fiction is wholly different, though equally fallacious. They use it to deny, not to assert the fact of Free-will as a reality. With them, the pure passivity of the supposed agent secures its unreality as an agent, and consequently the unreality of its supposed acts. These so-called acts of the fictitious agent, the purely passive Ego, are resolved into a conflict of motives issuing in the emergence of one as victor over the rest, which emergence it would plainly be an illusion to call an act of choice on the part of the Ego, even supposing it to exist. Not the Ego, but whatever is from time to time the strongest motive, which imposes itself on the Ego, is the principal agent, which, by its victory over weaker motives, determines, in their view, what we fondly call the Ego's choice. The original fallacy is here precisely the same as in Indeterminism, namely, the assumption of a shadow-man, or abstract Ego. And if this were the only argument brought forward by Compulsory Determinists against the fact of Free-will, we might be content with applying the same brief criticism to both, and pass at once to consider the real mechanism of choice, in which freedom will be found an essential feature.

But there is another notable confusion of ideas, used as an argument by Compulsory Determinists, against the reality of Free-will, sometimes alone, sometimes in connexion with the fallacy of the abstract Ego, which cannot be so briefly dismissed. This confusion consists in supposing that, when the will is said to be free, the freedom intended is a freedom from subjection to laws of Nature. Now it is only Indeterminists who can intend a freedom of this kind, when they speak of the will being free. They indeed must do so, if they are consistent; inasmuch as their abstract or transcendental Ego, which is Chance personified, is *eo ipso* imagined as free from Law, in the

sense of law natural, or Uniformity of Nature and the Course of Nature. How otherwise could it originate action *ex nihilo* and *mero motu*? But Determinists, simply in virtue of their Determinism, hold and must hold the doctrine of the Uniformity of Nature, and in fact of the universal reign of Law throughout the whole range of existence. Existence is not conceivable apart from Law. The foundations of the conception of Law are laid in the most universal elements of all perception and all consciousness; I mean, in the form of all perception, Time, and in the forms of all visual and tactual perceptions, Time and Spatial Extension, together. To conceive anything whatever absolved or free from Law is to conceive its existence ceasing. Pure non-existence alone has no law.

But though Compulsory Determinists are right in asserting the universality of Law against the Indeterminists, who maintain a real agency absolved from it, still the fact of Law being universal is no argument against freedom in immanent volitions, any more than it is an argument against freedom in overt actions, that is, in men's bodily movements, in every day experience. All real agents and all real actions are subject to laws of nature, and cannot exist or be performed without being so. Here it is that the most striking confusion of ideas on the part of Compulsory Determinists shows itself. They confuse laws of nature with civil laws, or commands enforced by human superiors, and attribute to the former a constraining and compelling power, which belongs only to the latter. Laws of Nature are brief expressions, in human language, of facts of nature which are found to be general or uniform, either in their intrinsic character, or in the order of their collocation or occurrence. Their existence is solely in the facts, and as part of them. If we speak of them as having a separate existence, we must speak of them rather as made by, than imposed upon, the facts of which their statement is the expression. Unlike Civil Laws, they *cannot* be broken or disobeyed; for any facts which broke or disobeyed them would *ipso facto* alter the very laws which, by a metaphor, they are said to break. If freedom in volition is a real fact, it is itself an instance exemplifying laws of nature. The fact of freedom in volition is the thing to be proved or disproved, not the agreement or disagreement of its conception with the conception of laws of nature. The simple truth is, that, of those who assert freedom in volition, none but Indeterminists understand thereby freedom or exemption from natural law. The fallacy of Compulsory Determinism, which springs from this confusion of

ideas, consists in attributing a compelling power to Laws of Nature, as if they were Statutes in a Statute-book, enforced by a sovereign power, only with the *differentia* of being valid for all Time and Space.

This fatal confusion is greatly aided, even where it is not originated, by introducing the ambiguous word *Necessity* into the question, and opposing it to Liberty, without carefully distinguishing between the two meanings which the word conveys. First, it means a necessity of thought; whatever we cannot but perceive or think. In this sense, every known fact is necessary in its own place and circumstances, so far as these are truly known, and free-will itself, if known to be a fact, would be a necessity or necessary fact, in the world, of which it was a known feature. Secondly, it means compelling power, a physical force or energy too strong to be successfully resisted. In this sense, motives of conscious action, when resting on physical brain processes, may be irresistible by counter motives, and thus act as compelling forces rendering the actions resulting from them compulsory. Laws of Nature, when truly known, are necessary in the first sense, as having taken their place among thoughts which we cannot avoid accepting. Some conscious actions, but by no means all, are necessary in the second sense. The motives which compel them, and indeed all motives, to the extent of the energy which they exert, seem to inaccurate reasoners to lend their efficiency to the laws of nature which are exemplified by their action, and thus, favoured by the ambiguous term *necessity*, invest the Laws of Nature universally, in their eyes, with compulsory power.

Now among the motives which have compulsory power over actions are those which have been adopted by choice, and have thereby proved themselves the strongest of the motives in conflict at the moment of choice. Onwards from that moment of choice, in which they are adopted by volition, they exercise, for a time, a compelling power over the course of action. But what of their state, and degree of strength, before and up to the moment of choice, that is, during the period, long or short, of the deliberation which precedes it? Compulsory Determinists are apt, I think, to read back into the motives, as they were before and during the period of deliberation, the degree of strength which they possess after the moment of choice or volition which ends it, and imagine the motive which is proved to be strongest by the fact of its being chosen, and which then governs the action dictated by the choice, to have been the strongest from the beginning of the deliberation, and to have governed the deliberation or

process of choosing, as it subsequently governs the action chosen.

But a close consideration of the phenomena seems rather to point the other way, and warrant the opposite conclusion, namely, that the victorious motive owes its superior strength at the moment of choice, to the act or process of deliberation, which terminates in choice, at least as much as to its own initial degree of strength compared to the initial degrees of strength of the other motives, with which it is said to have been in conflict. The kernel of the question of Free-will lies in the question thus opened, after divesting it of the logomachies built up round it by the various confusions of thought which have been previously noticed. These confusions attached to the idea and reality of freedom; we have now to do with those which attach to the idea and reality of volition, as a specifically distinct action, to which freedom belongs, and which, in virtue of its property of freedom, takes the name of Free-will. Thus volition now becomes our immediate object of enquiry, as freedom has been hitherto.

Here then it is, that we enter upon the second part of our examination, which must finally decide for us the question of the reality of free-will, an examination into the mechanism of deliberation ending in choice. What is it to deliberate and choose? What are the essential characteristics of actions of this kind? I say of deliberation and choice, or of deliberation ending in choice, because choice involves deliberation however brief or cursory it may be, and is impossible without it, because it involves the representation of alternatives. In drawing out the whole act called choosing into two parts, deliberation and choice, a process and the moment of its termination, we are, as it were, magnifying it under the microscope of analysis, the first application of which yields this distinction. Two further steps remain to be taken, the first being a somewhat more minute analysis of acts of deliberation ending in choice, and the second a separation or contradistinction of those acts from others which are liable to be confused with them. I begin with the first, and with the first division of it.

Deliberation, prior to the act of choice which terminates it, plainly involves (1) a consciousness of incompatible or alternative desires, (2) a comparison of their relative degrees of desirability, and (3) a prior volition to compare the alternatives and to adopt, in the immediate future, that which shall appear the most desirable; which adoption is the act of choice which terminates the deliberation, and completes the volition as a whole. The prior volition

spoken of does not enter into the volition which we are supposed to be considering, except as setting on foot and maintaining the acts of deliberation and choice of which it consists. Deliberation is therefore primarily a process of thinking directed to know something, and volition enters into it in no other way than as it enters into all processes of conscious thought and judgment, of which deliberation with a view to action is the practical mode. This does not prevent its immediate, as distinguished from its ulterior, purpose being knowledge. Its ulterior purpose is in the action which as a whole it helps to determine.

Next, as to the act of choice which terminates the deliberation. This is undistinguishable, in point of nature, from acts of selective attention in perception and thought, such as enter into the deliberative process, and with which I must here assume that we are already familiar. Its distinctive character as an act of choice consists in its standing as the outcome and termination of a deliberative process, the End at which the prior volition, above spoken of, aimed. It is immediately known by two features only, one of which gives it the character of an *act*, the other the character of an act of *choice*. The first of these consists in the sense of effort or tension, which may be great or small according as the alternative desire adopted is more or less distinctly felt either as disagreeable, or as difficult of retention or execution, in comparison with the desires which are rejected on the ground of their being less desirable on the whole. I need not stay here to prove what has been abundantly proved by others, Prof. W. James and Dr. Münsterberg for instance, that this element of conscious choice, namely, the sense of effort accompanying the experience of it, is not an immediate concomitant of any efferent innervation, and therefore cannot be said to be a sense or perception of neural or cerebral activity. At the same time, the distinction between action or activity on the one hand, and feeling, perception, and thought on the other, so far as it is an immediately perceived distinction within consciousness, seems to be given ultimately by the sense of effort only, which thus becomes the *differentia* of conscious action, the mark by which we distinguish in conscious processes their apparent character of activity or conation, from their character of feeling, and from their character of cognition.

The other feature in acts of choice, to which their selective character is due, consists in a consciousness of a decisive change in the relative desirabilities of the alterna-

tive desires represented in the deliberation, including the retention and intensifying of one, the weakening or disappearance of the others. This also is immediately known only as a consciousness, not of the cerebral re-action or discharge, acting either by way of stimulation or by way of inhibition, upon which it immediately depends, but of a preponderance of desirability (for whatever reason) in, and exclusive occupation of consciousness by, one of the alternatives supported by the cerebral processes which underlie the previous deliberation; of which processes the cerebral re-action or discharge spoken of, which is the real act of choice, is the concluding member. This consciousness is the consciousness of what we call *our* selection of the most desirable alternative and dismissal of the rest; and otherwise than as so perceived we have no direct knowledge of our own act, any more than we have direct knowledge of physical objects and agencies, otherwise than as they are perceived in consciousness. So also of the neural discharge, or whatever else may constitute the real act of choice, we are, at the time of its taking place, wholly unconscious; our knowledge of it is merely inferential. We are conscious only of its effects in consciousness, that is to say, of the retention and intensifying of the desired alternative, the weakening or vanishing of the others.

Two things result from this analysis. First, in what we call the Identity of the Ego, the identity is really that of the process-content of consciousness, and cannot be anything else, if that identity is immediately perceived, as is commonly and truly supposed. This, in cases of choice, is perceived as an identity between what is anticipated before the moment of choice, namely, that a selection is about to be made between given alternatives, and what is remembered after the moment of choice, namely, that a selection has been made between those same alternatives. The sameness of the alternatives, in anticipation and in remembrance of the intervening moment of choice, yields the experience of the sameness of the whole process-content of consciousness, including the experience of the choice itself. It is only in retrospect that we are originally conscious of this identity; but of course, when we have once become familiar with it as a constantly recurring feature of experience, our knowledge or awareness of it may be distinctly present, by association, at any moment, whether of retrospect or of anticipation; that is to say, self-consciousness may then accompany any conscious process.—Secondly, in what we call the Activity of the Ego in choice, the activity

is neither an activity in the supposed Ego, nor immediately perceived as an activity at all. The sense of effort, which is an immediately perceived ingredient in our experience of choosing, is the sole ultimate ground of our distinguishing some process-contents of consciousness as activities, and this neither tells us what an activity is, nor that it is inherent in an Ego or in consciousness.

In these two points, taken in combination with neuro-cerebral processes, we have, as I contend, the true (though far from complete) psychological explanation of those phenomena which we call, in common-sense language, *our own conscious actions*. The psychological explanation of all phenomena, as they are apprehended by common sense, consists in turning them, by analysis, into neural processes together with their concomitant and dependent process-contents of consciousness; both elements of the explanation being of a verifiable nature, and together constituting a different mode of representing the phenomena which they are required to account for. This alone is true psychological analysis. Contrast this with the pretended explanation afforded by inventing an abstract or transcendental Mind or Ego, a shadow-man as I have called it above, and referring the phenomena to its agency, without any change in the common-sense mode of apprehending them. This is nothing but the *explicanda* repeated, *plus* an unverifiable hypothesis.

I now pass to the second main head of the analysis. The actions from which acts of deliberation ending in choice are contradistinguished by the characteristics mentioned, but which are liable to be confused with them, owing to their common characteristics of consciousness and desire, are actions in which no alternative desires are contemplated, still less compared with a view to adopt that which shall appear the most desirable. They are actions in which some one desire is adopted as soon as it arises in consciousness, thus preventing alternative desires from rising above the threshold, and excluding all possibility of deliberation. Reactions of this kind, though accompanied by consciousness, are not volitions in the strict sense, but fall under the description, due, I believe, to Dr. W. B. Carpenter, of consensual reflex actions. They are not volitions, since they include no choice between alternatives, and so are not consciously selective, while all true volition is choice. They are cases of action determined by a single unresisted motive, evidenced by a desire. There is no trace of free-will here. The motive and the action determined by it may be free,

inasmuch as they may be unhindered by impediments extraneous to themselves ; but that is not the question. The will is not concerned in them at all. They may be cases of free action, or perhaps more strictly reflex process, but they are not cases of free volition.

We must, however, be careful to distinguish, from these wholly undeliberative actions, those in which there is a moment of deliberation, though it may be excessively brief. It is these which throw the most light on the nature and function of volition, from the very nearness in which they stand to non-volitional action ; thus enabling us to define the limits of what may be called the "inner man," by the union of selective re-action with self-consciousness, without having recourse to the hypothesis of an abstract or transcendental Ego. I have in view cases in which we are aware that the one desire, which seems to take immediate possession of consciousness, is opposed by other desires, which we do not choose to entertain, but immediately reject and put aside by directing attention to the one presented. These are plainly cases of volition and choice, since we are conscious of there being alternatives, and distinctly choose to avoid considering them. We adopt, almost instantaneously, by an act of choice, the single desire which has positively presented itself in consciousness.

Under actions of this class there are two cases, broadly distinguished from each other. One is where the desire, almost instantaneously adopted, is adopted because the choosing power, or will, is weak ; the other, because it is strong. In the first case, the almost instantaneous decision is arrived at owing to the overmastering strength of the desire adopted, compared to the desire for deliberating before adopting it. In the second case, its being arrived at is owing to frequent previous deliberations, and frequent acts of choice in accordance with them, which have rendered deliberation in any later instance unnecessary. In actions falling under the first head, the will is mastered by a powerful motive ; in those falling under the second, the motive which it follows receives its strength from the will itself, in the character of a deliberating agency. Still, in both cases, there is deliberation, and, as will be seen presently, to the extent of the deliberation there is freedom.

In these cases, in which deliberation is at a minimum, but which no one will deny to be conscious volitional actions, we see exemplified the analysis of volition into deliberation and choice, which was given above. Volition is thus a complex action, and the mechanism of brain processes, on which

it depends, must be complex also. But since volition, though complex, is indivisible, as we have also seen ; that is to say, is a single action, the constituents of which cannot be separated without destroying its volitional character ; we must infer, that the brain processes also, on which it depends, act together normally as an organic whole, in whatever way they may be combined in the brain structure, and in however many places of the brain structure the same combination of processes may be repeated. It follows, that another essential characteristic of volition is, that the agent who deliberates is the agent who chooses, since the parts of the mechanism subserving the volition form together an organic whole, which is the real agent of the total action. In other words, it is essentially characteristic of volition to be self-determination, or rather, more precisely, the self-determination of a self-determining agent.

We have, moreover, just seen, that the power of deliberation ending in choice, which is volition, may be, on the one hand, weakened by some particular overmastering motive down to the point at which it ceases to be volition by the disappearance of deliberation altogether, and on the other hand strengthened by the habit of deliberating and choosing, up to the point at which, again in the case of particular motives, it likewise ceases to be volition, by a similar disappearance of deliberation from its action. Volition, therefore, holds a middle position between these two extremes, an action retaining its volitional character only so long as it contains a certain minimum of deliberation and consequent choice among its actual features or constituents. The results for the individual Subject, in point of general volitional power and strength of character, are of course widely different, stand indeed in the most trenchantly marked contrast, in the two cases. But both cases alike show, that action which was once volition may lose its volitional character, and become a fixed and indurated mode of action, which is habitually and spontaneously repeated, on every occurrence of the appropriate stimuli.

The great difference between these two modes, in which volitional action may become habitual and spontaneous, lies in this, that the former is owing to the action of a motive or desire originally extraneous to volition, the latter to the action of volition itself. The first alone has interest for us in the present question, since it alone exhibits volition as fettered or impeded in its action by a motive or desire which it has not sufficient power to resist. That such cases occur is undeniable. And even where the force of some over-

mastering desire does not go to the length of destroying the power of deliberation altogether, still, to whatever degree it obtains the mastery, and weakens the power of deliberation, to that extent it fetters the action of volition, and impairs its character as an agency which is consciously self-determining.

A question is thus raised which brings us at last to the root of the whole matter—Where and how are we to draw the line between volition itself and desires or motives which are extraneous to it, and fetter its action from without? The answer must be drawn from what has been already said concerning the essential characteristics of volition. A desire or motive wholly undeliberated upon is extraneous to volitional action, but deliberating upon it incorporates it therewith; and it may be added, that the act of choice, which terminates the deliberation, incorporates the desire or motive adopted with the nature and habits of the agent. It is thus through deliberation that what is originally extraneous and pre-volitional becomes part and parcel of volition, by having its operation delayed until it has been brought into competition with other desires or motives, and modified by the already existing habits and powers of the cerebral organs concerned in deliberating; so that the result, which is the act of choice, is the result of this deliberative competition and modification, and not of any single desire or motive which enters into it, taken alone.

The physical brain process or action, which supports a concomitant conscious process of deliberation and choice, is, taken alone, a process of organic and living mechanism, not teleological, that is, not guided by conscious purpose. But inasmuch as the consciousness which it supports includes anticipation, comparison, judgment, and purpose, the action taken as a whole, (physical process and conscious process together), has a teleologic or purposive character. And thus it is, both that in volition the living mechanism of action ceases to be a "blind" mechanism, and also that in volition we have the first origination of the idea of design and teleology. We know our own character by means of the consciousness which accompanies and depends upon the physical brain process, and whenever we think of ourselves as concrete agents, including both processes, we think of ourselves as acting for anticipated Ends, that is, by design or purpose. So far we think truly; but at the same time it is true, that the design or anticipated End, taken in abstraction from the physical half of the process, or as if it belonged to the conscious half only, is no real link in the train of our

action, and has no real efficiency in producing its results. Final Causes, as they are called, are no real conditions in determining action.

Until physiology shall have made considerably greater progress than it has made hitherto, even at the present day, we have no means of distinguishing and describing the minuter physical steps and organic parts concerned in the concrete process spoken of, but are driven to describe them solely by the several steps and parts of the conscious half of the whole concrete process. But we know enough to be aware, that this is no argument against either the reality or the indispensability of the physical half of the process, as the proximate real condition of the other half. Described in terms of consciousness, deliberation means representing and comparing different and antagonistic desires, with a view to ascertain their relative degrees of desirability. It may be a long or a short process in different cases, and may include the recall into memory or imagination of the most remote consequences and connexions of the desires compared, as well as the consideration of parallel or analogous cases, or instructive examples, and also the summoning up of other desires and aims besides those originally in debate, to serve either as their allies or their substitutes. But whether the process be long or short, simple or complex, the effect of deliberating on the question at all is inevitably that of making the whole content of the process of deliberation part and parcel of the content of the volition, in which the deliberation is included. Desires or motives which make no part of deliberation continue, as originally they are, extraneous to volition. But they cease to be extraneous to it, the moment they become objects of deliberation, with a view to choosing between them.—The importance of these results for Ethic consists in the evidence they afford, that there is a class of actions, namely, volitions, or deliberations ending in choice, which cannot be dissociated from any positive idea which we can form of our Self. For just as water does not cease to be water, because it can be analysed into hydrogen and oxygen, so the Self does not cease to be a Self because it can be analysed into brain and consciousness. But on these points it is not here the place to enlarge.

This, then, being the nature of Volition, we are brought face to face with our final question—Is volition free, and in what sense? Or in another shape—Is Free-will a reality? Now these are questions which, after the foregoing analysis and discrimination, almost answer themselves. Since volition is deliberation and choice in a real

agent, its freedom must consist in the absence of impediments to deliberating and choosing. And since it is clear that as real agents we do deliberate and choose, the freedom to do so must be commensurate with and inseparable from the act of so doing, that is, the act of volition. Will means and implies Free-will; and unless free has no existence. Volition and Freedom of volition begin and end together. Freedom in willing is merely the power to will.

Consider it thus. Volition is completed in the act of choosing, that is of giving exclusive attention to, one out of several represented alternative desires, an adoption which is still future, still to be made, during the period of deliberation and up to the moment of choice. This element of futurity in the action is that which makes us characterise it as free. The freedom of the action of choosing is the action itself characterised by its relation to the future, its termination in the actual moment of choice. But this is only saying in other words, that it is not the action as completed but the action as having the power of being completed—the action *in potentia* not *in actu*—that we call free. Up to the moment of completion, the moment of choice, *i.e.*, during deliberation, comparison, and weighing of alternative motives or desires, the volition is not an act of choice, but a power of choosing. That power in the volition is its freedom.—Now the agent in volition is a self-determining agent. And what volition is freedom is, since freedom is the power of doing what volition does. Free-will is therefore the power of self-determination in conscious acts of choice, volition being the self-determination in its entirety. Volition is the name for the whole action, of which Freedom is the potential state, and Choice or Resolve the completing act. When we have chosen we are no longer free to choose, but we are free until we have chosen. Those fetters of the will which depend on prior acts of choice are all self-forged.

From the foregoing account it can easily be seen what is meant by the sense of freedom, and what relation it bears to real freedom in volition. The sense of being free in choosing is a feeling which we experience during deliberation, and up to its termination in actual choice. And the term *sense of freedom* describes our awareness of being engaged in deliberation and ignorant which alternative we shall select. Until we know what this process in reality is, and in what its freedom really consists, we do not and cannot know the meaning of the term *sense of freedom*; for it is plain, that freedom is not itself a feeling which is

its own evidence, as sensations or emotions are, say for instance, light or sound, grief or joy, anger or love, in all of which the feeling and the felt are one in point of content. It was therefore admitted at the outset, that the sense of freedom was not of itself evidence, that freedom, its so-called object, was a reality. But now, by showing that freedom is a reality, it is also shown that the feeling which is the awareness or sense of it is no illusion, but is the perception of a certain feature in volitions as processes of consciousness, which shares the reality of the volitions themselves, and therefore also of the brain processes upon which volitions depend.

The case is very similar to that of sense of effort, which also comes forward in acts of choice, as already shown. Each of these feelings is the perception or awareness of a particular feature in the content of volition as a process of consciousness; neither has a positive object of its own, apart from that feature in the volition, of which it is the awareness. Neither the real effort nor the real freedom in the brain processes which support volition, is the object perceived by what we call sense of effort and sense of freedom. Sense of effort is a representation of the difficulty of attending to one out of several contents of consciousness, as experienced in previous instances of selective attention. And if Dr. Münsterberg's theory is correct, the difficulty so represented may be resolved ultimately, in every case, into the feeling of muscular strain or tension, received through afferent nerve channels. Sense of freedom is much simpler, but still is a representation of something which is independently present in consciousness. It is the representation of our ignorance of the issue of a deliberation which is at present in progress.

One more remark I would make, before quitting the subject of Free-will. It is, that the kind or quality of the desires or motives, adopted or rejected in deliberation and choice, is wholly irrelevant to the question of freedom. That question concerns, not what we choose, but whether we choose at all, in any real sense of the word. Yet no doctrine is more common, especially among nominal upholders of free-will, than to represent true freedom of the will as consisting in a man's following his best impulses, obeying the dictates of his conscience, or going on to attain ever higher degrees of moral excellence or self-perfection. A great confusion of thought is here involved. Goodness of will is not the same thing as freedom of will. Its freedom is the condition of its goodness and badness alike.

A power to choose only the good is a contradiction in terms; and were such a power (*per impossibile*) to be attained, it would be at once the highest perfection of the character, and the *euthanasia* of Free-will. The will would then no longer choose at all; it would have done with choosing; and the brain mechanism would thenceforward work spontaneously and habitually, no longer volitionally. The will in its new shape would indeed be free;—but free from what? From the influence of evil desires and motives, not from impediments to its power of choosing between bad motives and good ones.

It will perhaps be said, that every advance made by the will in moral perfection opens a further vista of alternatives, no longer, perhaps, between the bad and the good, but between the good and the better; and that the absolute best lies at an unattainable, and in fact infinite distance. The more the power of choosing is strengthened, the more new alternatives will arise for choice. And this is perfectly true. But it does not touch the question as to what the essentials of free choice are. These are the same, whatever be the quality of the alternatives between which we have to choose, whatever the stage or degree of moral perfection, which we may have reached in our onward progress. It is as the basis of moral action, the ground in actual fact of moral responsibility for our actions, that it concerns us to establish the reality of Free-will, the reality of the power to choose between alternative desires or motives. The results which may be reached by a consistent course of choosing rightly are another matter, and so also, it must be added, are the results which will follow from pursuing an opposite line of choice. The will may be strengthened in pursuit of evil, as well as in pursuit of good. The results of either course are equally certain, the character of the individual Subject equally dependent upon the course of action which he chooses to pursue. It is in deciding upon the particular course to be pursued that the question of Free-will has its connexion with the question of Conscience. But the question of what we ought to choose is not the question whether we can choose at all. Unless the power of choosing is first established as a reality, the question, what kinds of choice are best, is left unconnected with the character of any real and self-determining agent.