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MEANING AND FREE WILL

It has become customary in philosophy to treat the free-will issue as "simply a matter of words," as "a mere verbal dispute." And indeed one can hardly deny that the question of whether or not human beings or human actions are to be called free depends on the meaning we give to the term "free." But once this is granted, a number of interesting problems arises which are not usually given due consideration in connection with this issue—problems partly of a general semantic nature, and partly associated with the word "free" in particular.

I

If we say, "It all depends on what you mean by the word 'free,' " we might first proceed to inquire of various persons what they meant by the word. But if we did this, we would soon find, not so much that different persons used the term in different ways—this would be easy, for then we would classify it as an ambiguous word and simply list the various senses of it—but that they had no clear idea in mind at all, that they could not say what they did mean by it. Most people, confronted by the question "What do you mean by 'free' when you say that we are free?" could only sputter, "I mean—well, I mean that we're free, that's all!"

This brings us at once to a problem of a general nature which we may well pause over before coming to our specific issue. It is a commonplace of semantics that meanings are not intrinsic to words or sentences, but that they are *given* meaning by the users of language. Meanings, that is to say, are not inherent but conferred. To use Schlick's happy analogy, which cannot be repeated too often, the meaning of a sentence is not like a nut, which we have to crack to get at the meat (meaning) inside,[1] the meaning is not inside at all, but conferred from without, and the same symbol could acquire a different meaning simply by reason of a different fiat, a different act of conferring. Thus, we come to say in some specific dispute, it's not quite accurate to say that it's a question of what the words mean, rather it's a question of what we mean by the words.

It is true that this approach succeeds in solving many problems which would remain puzzling without an awareness of this fact. To take a non-

[1] Moritz Schlick, "Meaning and Verification," *Philosophical Review*, Vol. XLV (1936), p. 348.

philosophical example first, when someone says, "She didn't marry him because of his money," instead of asking ourselves "What does this statement mean?" we should ask ourselves, "What did the speaker mean to assert? Did he mean (intend) to say that she did marry him but not on account of his money, or that she didn't marry him and the reason for her failure to marry him was the fact that he had money?" Ultimately we must always get back to what the speaker intended, not to what the statement in itself "means." To ask what the statement in itself "means" would be like asking "How is ' m-i-n-u-t-e' pronounced?" failing to recognize that the answer depends on whether the word is intended as a noun referring to sixty seconds of time or as an adjective characterizing anything that is extremely small.

Thus we ask ourselves whether the standard A-proposition "All S's are P's" means "*If* there are S's, then all of them are P's" or "There *are* S's and *all* of them are P's." Or again, we ask, "Does 'Lions are fierce' mean 'All lions are fierce' or only 'Some lions are fierce,' and if the former, is the meaning of this rendered by 'If there are lions, then all of them are fierce'?" etc. For a definite answer to such questions we would have to go back to the person who uttered the original sentence and ask him, "See here, when you said that all S's are P's, did you intend as part of what you were asserting, that there *are* S's, or were you leaving that an open question?" etc.

And the old puzzle about the barber who shaves everyone who doesn't shave himself should, on this analysis, be easily resolved if we ask the person who presents the puzzle to us, "Did you, or did you not, when you made the assertion, intend to include the barber himself among those persons whom the barber shaves?" The seeming paradox is due to the unclarified nature of the question. The question is unclear, at least as regards the barber himself, and it is up to the speaker to make clearer what his original formulation has left unclear, by specifically including or excluding the barber from the group of those who are shaved by the barber.

The moral of all this, of course, is that sentences in themselves do not possess meaning; it is misleading to speak of "the meaning of sentences" at all; meaning being conferred in every case by the speaker, the sentence's meaning is only like the light of the moon: without the sun to give it light, it would possess none. And for an analysis of the light we must go to the sun.

Yet this very fact is puzzling. If the question "What did you mean by sentence S?" is the same as the question "What did you have in mind when you uttered sentence S?" or perhaps "What did you intend to convey by sentence S?" it is all too often the case that sentence S covers a whole nest of confusions and unclarities, and that the speaker had nothing definite in mind at all when he uttered sentence S; and when asked what it is that

he wanted to convey, he can only repeat the sentence or give it a slightly new emphasis, or substitute another sentence at least as unclear as the first one.

Thus we seem to have lost as much ground as we have gained. By showing how misleading it is to ask "What does sentence S mean?" (because different people may give different meanings to the same set of words), we have been aided in resolving such questions as "What is the meaning of 'She didn't marry him because of his money'?" It helps us because the speaker almost certainly intended one or another of the alternatives. But it is the cases where the speaker is mute that puzzle us. When he had nothing definite in mind at all, what are we to say of the meaning? If it is not to be located in the sentence, and we must refer the meaning to the speaker, where are we to locate the meaning when the speaker fails us?

(One might allege that we can indeed talk about "the meaning of the sentence," not forgetting of course that meaning is conferred and not inherent. We can speak of Jones's statement as meaning so-and-so if and only if Jones, when he uttered the statement, meant that so-and-so by it. This, of course, only puts our difficulty in another form: we must now ask what the sentence means when Jones can't say what it was he meant by it. Nevertheless it is often convenient to speak of "the meaning of sentences," in this derived sense.)

Philosophers often make hard-and-fast distinctions between meaningful and meaningless sentences; and the examples they use generally prejudice the issue in the direction of making such hard-and-fast distinctions seem reasonable. They cite nonsense-syllables, groups of words without nouns and verbs, perhaps self-contradictory sentences, and other verbal absurdities as "meaningless"; on the other hand, "two plus Two is four" and "Cats catch mice" are examples of "meaningful" sentences. But the twilight-zone between these two territories, it seems to me, covers a great part of our actual daily discourse. When someone says that music expresses emotions, I am inclined to agree; I would hesitate to call his sentence meaningless; yet I am at a loss to know what the speaker means (nor do requests for explication usually yield any result), and I would not know exactly what I meant if I asserted it myself. Would I mean that music evokes emotions, at least in some listeners? then of course it is true. Would I mean that the composer had emotions when he wrote the work? then of course it is true also. That he wrote his composition in such a way as to arouse, or try to arouse, certain kinds of emotions in his listeners? then it is probably true as well. Or perhaps I would mean something different still. It is hard to say. I have used sentences like this all my life, and felt that people had very little trouble in understanding me; yet I do not know. Can we say that the sentence has meaning over and above what I and

other persons who use it give it? Surely not. But if it means merely what we give it, then it is the nature of our gift that is in doubt.

Shall we call such sentences meaningful or meaningless? If we hesitate to say, it is only because the meaning of these terms is itself not clear, i.e., we are not clear about what we mean when we use them—all our definitions and explanations to the contrary notwithstanding. We are not even clear about the meaning of the word "clear" when we say that the speaker's intent is not clear; and no one, so far as I know, has ever analyzed this metaphorical word satisfactorily. Nor are we definite about the use of the word "definite" when we say that the speaker "had nothing definite in mind." Such is our language—and the state of those who use it.

Most of the statements made, e.g., by students in philosophy courses are of this nature. "Philosophy provides a pure undeviating basis for all of human existence." "Music is a logical setting forth of emotional relationships." "Art has no meaning and is therefore deliberately irrational." Or from Jacques Maritain: "Truth in art lies in its logic; the logic of the structure of living thought, the intimate geometry of nature." What are we to say of such assertions? None of them are meaningless in the way that "Pirots carulize elatically" is called meaningless, yet to what extent are we to label them as meaningful, or to indicate the meaning-in-mind of the speakers? Such sentences after all occur with the greatest frequency, and we have all uttered thousands of them ourselves; and while we are in the business of branding sentences as meaningful or meaningless, we had better pay some attention to these.

Perhaps all we can do is to arrange successive "analyses of meaning" as to "degree of clarity" (in spite of the *unclarity* of this metaphor). When someone says "She is dependent on her father," we would not be likely to call his sentence meaningless; but if we are given additional information, such as "She's not financially dependent on her father, but emotionally," we would have a better idea of its meaning, i.e., of what the speaker meant to assert; and we would have a still better one if we were told, "She tries to imitate her father, she can't make a decision when he isn't present, she must always have his advice even on the most trivial issues," etc. Now we have a much clearer idea of what it was that the speaker wanted to convey; but we could in turn make it clearer too.

What is so disconcerting about all this is that no matter how "clear" we make the formulation, or how "clear" a meaning the speaker had in mind when he made his utterance, it always seems possible to clarify it further, whereupon we arrive at something that the speaker surely did *not* have in mind. In the more rigorous branches of philosophy, for example, there is a tendency to reduce statements to the "If p then q" form. "Only black cats bring bad luck" is rendered as "If a cat brings bad luck then it is a

black cat"; and similarly "I won't stay unless he goes" becomes "If he does not go, I won't stay." But having tracked down "the meaning" this far, we can track it down still further: "Does 'If p then q' mean simply 'It is not the case that p and not q' or does it mean more?" etc.; and no speaker outside of technical philosophy is likely ever to have "had in mind" any of the interpretations of the hypothetical proposition which are rendered as "its meaning" or "its true meaning." There seems to be no limit to the possible process of refinement. And surely no one will say that until we have reached the limit of this process of analysis upon a given statement, that statement is to be branded as meaningless; few if any statements would then emerge as meaningful. But at what point in this process of gradual "clarification" is one to draw the line? We are involved here, surely, in the "slippery slope" difficulty: we don't want to stop at the top of the hill, but once we start sliding down it we can't stop short of the bottom.

More disconcerting still, perhaps, is the fact that there is no universal agreement on the direction which the "line of increasing clarity" shall take. If we said that "Unless p, then q" means "If not p, then q" and someone said "Why not say that 'If not p, then q' means 'Unless p, *q*,' taking the latter as the ultimate in clarity of meaning?" "A thought exists in my mind" means "I am thinking a thought"; but why not reverse the procedure and render the latter in terms of the former? Who is, in every case, to say which meaning is "clearer"? And how are we to know what method to employ to get at a "clearer meaning?" When the sculptor Henry Moore says that he likes sea-shells because they express the hard, hollow structure of the world, how is such an assertion (leaving aside the question of its meaningfulness) to be clarified? By analyzing the "meaning" of each individual word? by going to the museum where his sea-shell sculptures are exhibited? by reading his biography, or perhaps the biography of the earth itself? What does one even mean by referring to "his meaning?"

To many of these questions we shall fortunately not require an answer in coming to grips with the topic of this paper. However, one thing is surely evident: if we are interested not in conferring some arbitrary meaning on the word "free," but want to get at some analysis which, as we say, "really tells us what people in ordinary life mean when they use the word," then it is a genuine obstacle to discover that people as a whole cannot explicate their meaning because they have no "clear and distinct idea" in their minds at all in employing words such as this.

Now, it is true that even in employing ordinary words like "cat" people do not "have in mind" the dictionary meaning of "cat" as a domesticated carnivorous quadruped of a certain specifiable variety; nor do they have in their minds an image of all the creatures they would classify as cats;

nor do they have any definite non-imaged criterion-in-mind which would enable them to choose and label as "cat" or "non-cat" all possible instances of creatures that might fall under their surveillance—one can easily imagine creatures cat-like in some respects but not in others in which one would be hard put to it to classify. And if one asks whether such a person "really knows" what the word "cat" means unless he can do all these things, one is surely asking for a "clearer" meaning of the phrase "knowing the meaning of." Yet if there is no common criterion-in-mind, how can one proceed to analyze the meaning of the word "as ordinarily employed by English-speaking people?"

One might say that what the person "really means" is not "what he had consciously in mind at the time of utterance" but rather "what he had in the back of his mind"; and this figure of speech might be interpreted to mean "what he *would* have had in the foreground of his mind, i.e., what he *would* consciously have intended in the use of the word, if he had been prodded a bit and some Socratic method used on him." Of course, in this event his meaning must generally remain something problematic, since most people do not have Socratic method used on them, and their "real meaning"—what they would assent to be a correct analysis of what they meant, or "really had in mind all the time"—must remain a deep dark mystery.

We may then try to extract "what he really had in mind when he used the word" by observing the context in which he uses it, the kind of situation in which he employs it, and the kind of situation in which he does not, to see what is common to all the cases in which he uses it *and* peculiar to those cases. Thus we see "what he really means by 'cat' " by observing the objects to which he applies the word and noting to which objects he declines such application. (Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that we use the phrase "what he really means by 'cat' " in such a way as to be equivalent to "the characteristics common to all things he calls 'cat' and peculiar to them.")

I think that this is generally a much better procedure than simply to ask the person what he means. What he says he means is often contradicted by his verbal behavior, i.e., his actual usage of the word in practice. A good motto is, "If you want to know what a person means by a word or sentence, don't ask him—watch him use it for a while; see when he applies the word and when he doesn't."

This method will not always work. It does not apply, for example, to the question of the meaning of the if-then relation, or the meaning of "cause," or any of those cases where the range of application (denotation) of the term is the same regardless of what its analysis is: two people may agree on all instances of causality and acausality and yet disagree violently

on what, philosophically speaking, causality is. (This phenomenon is most likely to occur in philosophical analysis, but is not limited to this field: two persons might examine every animal in the world and agree perfectly on which ones are elephants and which ones are not, and yet disagree on what the criteria are for the inclusion of these particular animals in the class "elephants"—one person, for example, might call "elephant" any animal that draws water up its nose and squirts it into its mouth, while the other, with a different connotation, may yet agree entirely on the denotations.)

Still, this method may help us in analyzing "the meaning" of a term such as "free." If we know in what situations people are willing to use the word and in what situations they are not, shall we not have a much better idea what they "mean" by it?

But the moment we have embarked on this enterprise we shall find that not all persons are in agreement in the criteria thus revealed. There are certain fundamental similarities in the way people use the word, but certainly no identity. (This is especially true in a field which we are not considering, namely "political freedom," where some persons would consider human beings free in a "free enterprise" system, for example, while others would not.) Hence, philosophers who want to use the term "free" precisely without doing any great violence to "the sort of thing that most people most of the time mean when they use the word"—or perhaps what they could be interpreted to mean, judging by their verbal behavior—have suggested varying but overlapping criteria. The following section is concerned with this point.

II

Perhaps the most obvious conception of freedom is this: an act is free if and only if it is a voluntary act. A response that occurs spontaneously, not as a result of your willing it, such as a reflex action, is not a free act. I do not know that this view is ever held in its pure form, but it is the basis for other ones. As it stands, of course, it is ambiguous: does "voluntary" entail "premeditated?" are acts we perform semi-automatically through habit to be called free acts? To what extent is a conscious decision to act required for the act to be classified as voluntary? What of sudden outbursts of feeling? They are hardly premeditated or decided upon, yet they may have their origin in the presence or absence of habit-patterns due to self-discipline which may have been consciously decided upon. Clearly the view needs to be refined.

Now, however we may come to define "voluntary," it is perfectly possible to maintain that all voluntary acts are free acts and vice versa; after all, it is a matter of what meaning we are giving to the word "free" and we can give it this meaning if we choose. But it soon becomes apparent

that this is not the meaning which most of us *want* to give it: for there *are* classes of actions which we want to refrain from calling "free" even though they are voluntary (not that we have this denial in mind when we use the word "free"—still, it is significant that we do not use the word in some situations in which the act in question is nevertheless voluntary).

When a man tells a state secret under torture, he does choose voluntarily between telling and enduring more torture; and when he submits to a bandit's command at the point of a gun, he voluntarily chooses to submit rather than to be shot. And still such actions would not generally be called free; it is clear that they are performed under compulsion. Voluntary acts performed under compulsion would not be called free; and the cruder view is to this extent amended.

For some persons, this is as far as we need to go. Schlick, for example, says that the free-will issue is the scandal of philosophy and nothing but so much wasted ink and paper, because the whole controversy is nothing but an inexcusable confusion between compulsion and universal causality.[2] The free act is the uncompelled act, says Schlick, and controversies about causality and determinism have nothing to do with the case. When one asks whether an act done of necessity is free, the question is ambiguous: if "of necessity" means "by compulsion," then the answer is no; if, on the other hand, "of necessity" is a way of referring to "causal uniformity" in nature—the sense in which we may misleadingly speak of the laws of nature as "necessary" simply because there are no exceptions to them—then the answer is clearly yes; every act is an instance of some causal law (uniformity) or other, but this has nothing to do with its being free in the sense of uncompelled.

For Schlick, this is the end of the matter. Any attempt to discuss the matter further simply betrays a failure to perceive the clarifying distinctions that Schlick has made.

> Freedom means the opposite of compulsion; a man is *free* if he does not act under *compulsion*, and he is compelled or unfree when he is hindered from without in the realization of his natural desires. Hence he is unfree when he is locked up, or chained, or when someone forces him at the point of a gun to do what otherwise he would not do. This is quite clear, and everyone will admit that the everyday or legal notion of the lack of freedom is thus correctly interpreted, and that a man will be considered quite free . . . if no such external compulsion is exerted upon him.[3]

This all seems clear enough. And yet if we ask whether it ends the matter, whether it states what we "really mean" by "free," many of us will

[2] Moritz Schlick, *The Problems of Ethics*, Chapter VII.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 150.

feel qualms. We remember statements about human beings being pawns of their environment, victims of conditions beyond their control, the result of causal influences stemming from parents, etc., and we think, "Still, are we really free?" We do not want to say that the uniformity of nature itself binds us or renders us unfree; yet is there not something in what generations of wise men have said about man being fettered? Is there not something too facile, too sleight-of-hand, in Schlick's cutting of the Gordian knot?

It will be noticed that we have slipped from talking about acts as being free into talking about human beings as free. Both locutions are employed, I would say about 50-50. Sometimes an attempt is made to legislate definitely between the two: Stebbing, for instance, says that one must never call acts free, but only the doers of the acts.[4]

Let us pause over this for a moment. If it is we and not our acts that are to be called free, the most obvious reflection to make is that we are free to do some things and not free to do other things; we are free to lift our hands but not free to lift the moon. We cannot simply call ourselves free or unfree *in toto*; we must say at best that we are free in respect of certain actions only. G. E. Moore states the criterion as follows: we are free to do an act if we can do it *if* we want to; that which we can do if we want to is what we are free to do.[5] Some things certain people are free to do while others are not: most of us are free to move our legs, but paralytics are not; some of us are free to concentrate on philosophical reading matter for three hours at a stretch while others are not. In general, we could relate the two approaches by saying that a *person* is free *in respect of* a given action if he can do it if he wants to, and in this case his *act* is free.

Moore himself, however, has reservations that Schlick has not. He adds that there *is* a sense of "free" which fulfills the criterion he has just set forth; but that there may be *another* sense in which man cannot be said to be free in all the situations in which he could rightly be said to be so in the first sense.

And surely it is not necessary for me to multiply examples of the sort of thing we mean. In practice most of us would not call free many persons who behave voluntarily and even with calculation aforethought, and under no compulsion either of any obvious sort. A metropolitan newspaper headlines an article with the words "Boy Killer Is Doomed Long before He Is Born,"[6] and then goes on to describe how a twelve-year-old boy has just been sentenced to thirty years in Sing Sing for the murder of a girl; his

[4] L. Susan Stebbing, *Philosophy and the Physicists*, p. 242.
[5] G. E. Moore, *Ethics*, p. 205.
[6] *New York Post*, Tuesday, May 18, 1948, p. 4.

family background includes records of drunkenness, divorce, social maladjustment, epilepsy, and paresis. He early displays a tendency to sadistic activity to hide an underlying masochism and "prove that he's a man"; being coddled by his mother only worsens this tendency, until, spurned by a girl in his attempt on her, he kills her—not simply in a fit of anger, but calculatingly, deliberately. Is he free in respect of his criminal act, or for that matter in most of the acts of his life? Surely to ask this question is to answer it in the negative. Perhaps I have taken an extreme case; but it is only to show the superficiality of the Schlick analysis the more clearly. Though not everyone has criminotic tendencies, everyone has been moulded by influences which in large measure at least determine his present behavior; he is literally the product of these influences, stemming from periods prior to his "years of discretion," giving him a host of character traits that he cannot change now even if he would. So obviously does what a man is depend upon how a man comes to be, that it is small wonder that philosophers and sages have considered man far indeed from being the master of his fate. It is not as if man's will were standing high and serene above the flux of events that have moulded him; it is itself caught up in this flux, itself carried along on the current. An act is free when it is determined by the man's character, say moralists; but when there was nothing the man could do to shape his character, and even the degree of will power available to him in shaping his habits and disciplining himself to overcome the influence of his early environment is a factor over which he has no control, what are we to say of this kind of "freedom?" Is it not rather like the freedom of the machine to stamp labels on cans when it has been devised for just that purpose? Some machines can do so more efficiently than others, but only because they have been better constructed.

It is not my purpose here to establish this thesis in general, but only in one specific respect which has received comparatively little attention, namely, the field referred to by psychiatrists as that of unconscious motivation. In what follows I shall restrict my attention to it because it illustrates as clearly as anything the points I wish to make.

Let me try to summarize very briefly the psychoanalytic doctrine on this point.[7] The conscious life of the human being, including the conscious

[7] I am aware that the theory presented below is not accepted by all practicing psychoanalysts. Many non-Freudians would disagree with the conclusions presented below. But I do not believe that this fact affects my argument, as long as the concept of unconscious motivation is accepted. I am aware, too, that much of the language employed in the following descriptions is animistic and metaphorical; but as long as I am presenting a view I would prefer to "go the whole hog" and present it in its strongest possible light. The theory can in any case be made clearest by the use of such language, just as atomic theory can often be made clearest to students with the use of models.

decisions and volitions, is merely a mouthpiece for the unconscious—not directly for the enactment of unconscious drives, but of the compromise between unconscious drives and unconscious reproaches. There is a Big Three behind the scenes which the automaton called the conscious personality carries out: the id, an "eternal gimme," presents its wish and demands its immediate satisfaction; the super-ego says no to the wish immediately upon presentation, and the unconscious ego, the mediator between the two, tries to keep peace by means of compromise.[8]

To go into examples of the functioning of these three "bosses" would be endless; psychoanalytic case books supply hundreds of them. The important point for us to see in the present context is that it is the unconscious that determines what the conscious impulse and the conscious action shall be. Hamlet, for example, had a strong Oedipus wish, which was violently counteracted by super-ego reproaches; these early wishes were vividly revived in an unusual adult situation in which his uncle usurped the coveted position from Hamlet's father and won his mother besides. This situation evoked strong strictures on the part of Hamlet's super-ego, and it was this that was responsible for his notorious delay in killing his uncle. A dozen times Hamlet could have killed Claudius easily; but every time Hamlet "decided" not to: a free choice, moralists would say—but no, listen to the super-ego: "What you feel such hatred toward your uncle for, what you are plotting to kill him for, is precisely the crime which you yourself desire to commit: to kill your father and replace him in the affections of your mother. Your fate and your uncle's are bound up together." This paralyzes Hamlet into inaction. Consciously all he knows is that he is unable to act; this conscious inability he rationalizes, giving a different excuse each time.[9]

We have always been conscious of the fact that we are not masters of our fate in every respect—that there are many things which we cannot do, that nature is more powerful than we are, that we cannot disobey laws without danger of reprisals, etc. Lately we have become more conscious, too, though novelists and dramatists have always been fairly conscious of it, that we are not free with respect to the emotions that we feel—whom we love or hate, what types we admire, and the like. More lately still we have been reminded that there are unconscious motivations for our basic attractions and repulsions, our compulsive actions or inabilities to act. But what is not welcome news is that our very acts of volition, and the

[8] This view is very clearly developed in Edmund Bergler, *Divorce Won't Help*, especially Chapter I.

[9] See *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, Modern Library Edition, p. 310. (In *The Interpretation of Dreams*.) Cf. also the essay by Ernest Jones, "A Psycho-analytical Study of Hamlet."

entire train of deliberations leading up to them, are but facades for the expression of unconscious wishes, or rather, unconscious compromises and defenses.

A man is faced by a choice: shall he kill another person or not? Moralists would say, here is a free choice—the result of deliberation, an action consciously entered into. And yet, though the agent himself does not know it, and has no awareness of the forces that are at work within him, his choice is already determined for him: his conscious will is only an instrument, a slave, in the hands of a deep unconscious motivation which determines his action. If he has a great deal of what the analyst calls "free-floating guilt," he will not; but if the guilt is such as to demand immediate absorption in the form of self-damaging behavior, this accumulated guilt will have to be discharged in some criminal action. The man himself does not know what the inner clockwork is; he is like the hands on the clock, thinking they move freely over the face of the clock.

A woman has married and divorced several husbands. Now she is faced with a choice for the next marriage: shall she marry Mr. A, or Mr. B, or nobody at all? She may take considerable time to "decide" this question, and her decision may appear as a final triumph of her free will. Let us assume that A is a normal, well-adjusted, kind, and generous man, while B is a leech, an impostor, one who will become entangled constantly in quarrels with her. If she belongs to a certain classifiable psychological type, she will inevitably choose B, and she will do so even if her previous husbands have resembled B, so that one would think that she "had learned from experience." Consciously, she will of course "give the matter due consideration," etc., etc. To the psychoanalyst all this is irrelevant chaff in the wind—only a camouflage for the inner workings about which she knows nothing consciously. If she is of a certain kind of masochistic strain, as exhibited in her previous set of symptoms, she *must* choose B: her superego, always out to maximize the torment in the situation, seeing what dazzling possibilities for self-damaging behavior are promised by the choice of B, compels her to make the choice she does, and even to conceal the real basis of the choice behind an elaborate facade of rationalizations.

A man is addicted to gambling. In the service of his addiction he loses all his money, spends what belongs to his wife, even sells his property and neglects his children. For a time perhaps he stops; then, inevitably, he takes it up again, although he himself may think he chose to. The man does not know that he is a victim rather than an agent; or, if he sometimes senses that he is in the throes of something-he-knows-not-what, he will have no inkling of its character and will soon relapse into the illusion that he (his conscious self) is freely deciding the course of his own actions. What he does not know, of course, is that he is still taking out on his

mother the original lesion to his infantile narcissism, getting back at her for her fancied refusal of his infantile wishes—and this by rejecting everything identified with her, namely education, discipline, logic, common sense, training. At the roulette wheel, almost alone among adult activities, chance —the opposite of all these things—rules supreme; and his addiction represents his continued and emphatic reiteration of his rejection of Mother and all she represents to his unconscious.

This pseudo-aggression of his is of course masochistic in its effects. In the long run he always loses; he can never quit while he is winning. And far from playing in order to win, rather one can say that his losing is a *sine qua non* of his psychic equilibrium (as it was for example with Dostoyevsky): guilt demands punishment, and in the ego's "deal" with the super-ego the super-ego has granted satisfaction of infantile wishes in return for the self-damaging conditions obtaining. Winning would upset the neurotic equilibrium.[10]

A man has wash-compulsion. He must be constantly washing his hands —he uses up perhaps 400 towels a day. Asked why he does this, he says, "I need to, my hands are dirty"; and if it is pointed out to him that they are not really dirty, he says "They feel dirty anyway, I feel better when I wash them." So once again he washes them. He "freely decides" every time; he feels that he must wash them, he deliberates for a moment perhaps, but always ends by washing them. What he does not see, of course, is the invisible wires inside him pulling him inevitably to do the thing he does: the infantile id-wish concerns preoccupation with dirt, the super-ego charges him with this, and the terrified ego must respond, "No, I don't like dirt, see how clean I like to be, look how I wash my hands!"

Let us see what further "free acts" the same patient engages in (this is an actual case history): he is taken to a concentration camp, and given the worst of treatment by the Nazi guards. In the camp he no longer chooses to be clean, does not even try to be—on the contrary, his choice is now to wallow in filth as much as he can. All he is aware of now is a disinclination to be clean, and every time he must choose he chooses not to be. Behind the scenes, however, another drama is being enacted: the super-ego, perceiving that enough torment is being administered from the outside, can afford to cease pressing its charges in this quarter—the outside world is doing the torturing now, so the super-ego is relieved of the responsibility. Thus the ego is relieved of the agony of constantly making terrified replies

[10] See Edmund Bergler's article on the pathological gambler in *Diseases of the Nervous System* (1943). Also "Suppositions about the Mechanism of Criminosis," *Journal of Criminal Psychopathology* (1944) and "Clinical Contributions to the Psychogenesis of Alcohol Addiction," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 5: 434 (1944).

in the form of washing to prove that the super-ego is wrong. The defense no longer being needed, the person slides back into what is his natural predilection anyway, for filth. This becomes too much even for the Nazi guards: they take hold of him one day, saying "We'll teach you how to be clean!" drag him into the snow, and pour bucket after bucket of icy water over him until he freezes to death. Such is the end-result of an original id-wish, caught in the machinations of a destroying super-ego.

Let us take, finally, a less colorful, more everyday example. A student at a university, possessing wealth, charm, and all that is usually considered essential to popularity, begins to develop the following personality-pattern: although well taught in the graces of social conversation, he always makes a *faux pas* somewhere, and always in the worst possible situation; to his friends he makes cutting remarks which hurt deeply—and always apparently aimed in such a way as to hurt the most: a remark that would not hurt A but would hurt B he invariably makes to B rather than to A, and so on. None of this is conscious. Ordinarily he is considerate of people, but he contrives always (unconsciously) to impose on just those friends who would resent it most, and at just the times when he should know that he should not impose: at 3 o'clock in the morning, without forewarning, he phones a friend in a near-by city demanding to stay at his apartment for the weekend; naturally the friend is offended, but the person himself is not aware that he has provoked the grievance ("common sense" suffers a temporary eclipse when the neurotic pattern sets in, and one's intelligence, far from being of help in such a situation, is used in the interest of the neurosis), and when the friend is cool to him the next time they meet, he wonders why and feels unjustly treated. Aggressive behavior on his part invites resentment and aggression in turn, but all that he consciously sees is other's behavior toward him—and he considers himself the innocent victim of an unjustified "persecution."

Each of these choices is, from the moralist's point of view, free: he chose to phone his friend at 3 a.m.; he chose to make the cutting remark that he did, etc. What he does not know is that an ineradicable masochistic pattern has set in. His unconscious is far more shrewd and clever than is his conscious intellect; it sees with uncanny accuracy just what kind of behavior will damage him most, and unerringly forces him into that behavior. Consciously, the student "doesn't know why he did it"—he gives different "reasons" at different times, but they are all, once again, rationalizations cloaking the unconscious mechanism which propels him willy-nilly into actions that his "common sense" eschews.

The more of this sort of thing you see, the more you can see what the psychoanalyst means when he talks about "the illusion of free-will." And the more of a psychiatrist you become, the more you are overcome with a

sense of what an illusion this precious free-will really is. In some kinds of cases most of us can see it already: it takes no psychiatrist to look at the epileptic and sigh with sadness at the thought that soon this person before you will be as one possessed, not the same thoughtful intelligent person you knew. But people are not aware of this in other contexts, for example when they express surprise at how a person whom they have been so good to could treat them so badly. Let us suppose that you help a person financially or morally or in some other way, so that he is in your debt; suppose further that he is one of the many neurotics who unconsciously identify kindness with weakness and aggression with strength, then he will unconsciously take your kindness to him as weakness and use it as the occasion for enacting some aggression against you. He can't help it, he may regret it himself later; still, he will be driven to do it. If we gain a little knowledge of psychiatry, we can look at him with pity, that a person otherwise so worthy should be so unreliable—but we will exercise realism too and be aware that there are some types of people that you cannot be good to in "free" acts of their conscious volition, they will use your own goodness against you.

Sometimes the persons themselves will become dimly aware that "something behind the scenes" is determining their behavior. The divorcee will sometimes view herself with detachment, as if she were some machine (and indeed the psychoanalyst does call her a "repeating-machine"): "I know I'm caught in a net, that I'll fall in love with this guy and marry him and the whole ridiculous merry-go-round will start all over again."

We talk about free will, and we say, yes, the person is free to do so-and-so if he can do so *if* he wants to—and we forget that his wanting to is itself caught up in the stream of determinism, that unconscious forces drive him into the wanting or not wanting to do the thing in question. The idea of the puppet whose motions are manipulated from behind by invisible wires, or better still, by springs inside, is no mere figure of speech. The analogy is a telling one at almost every point.

And the pity of it is that it all started so early, before we knew what was happening. The personality-structure is inelastic after the age of five, and comparatively so in most cases after the age of three. Whether one acquires a neurosis or not is determined by that age—and just as involuntarily as if it had been a curse of God. If, for example, a masochistic pattern was set up, under pressure of hyper-narcissism combined with real or fancied infantile deprivation, then the masochistic snowball was on its course downhill long before we or anybody else know what was happening, and long before anyone could do anything about it. To speak of human beings as "puppets" in such a context is no mere metaphor, but a stark rendering of a literal fact: only the psychiatrist knows what puppets people

really are; and it is no wonder that the protestations of philosophers that "the act which is the result of a volition, a deliberation, a conscious decision, is free" leave these persons, to speak mildly, somewhat cold.

But, one may object, all the states thus far described have been abnormal, neurotic ones. The well-adjusted (normal) person at least is free.

Leaving aside the question of now clearly and on what grounds one can distinguish the neurotic from the normal, let me use an illustration of a proclivity that everyone would call normal, namely, the decision of a man to support his wife and possibly a family, and consider briefly its genesis.[11]

Every baby comes into the world with a full-fledged case of megalomania—interested only in himself, naively assuming that he is the center of the universe and that others are present only to fulfill his wishes, and furious when his own wants are not satisfied immediately no matter for what reason. Gratitude, even for all the time and worry and care expended on him by the mother, is an emotion entirely foreign to the infant, and as he grows older it is inculcated in him only with the greatest difficulty; his natural tendency is to assume that everything that happens to him is due to himself, except for denials and frustrations, which are due to the "cruel, denying" outer world, in particular the mother; and that he owes nothing to anyone, is dependent on no one. This omnipotence-complex, or illusion of non-dependence, has been called the "autarchic fiction." Such a conception of the world is actually fostered in the child by the conduct of adults, who automatically attempt to fulfill the infant's every wish concerning nourishment, sleep, and attention. The child misconceives causality and sees in these wish-fulfillments not the results of maternal kindness and love, but simply the result of his own omnipotence.

This fiction of omnipotence is gradually destroyed by experience, and its destruction is probably the deepest disappointment of the early years of life. First of all, the infant discovers that he is the victim of organic urges and necessities: hunger, defecation, urination. More important, he discovers that the maternal breast, which he has not previously distinguished from his own body (he has not needed to, since it was available when he wanted it), is not a part of himself after all, but of another creature upon whom he is dependent. He is forced to recognize this, e.g., when he wants nourishment and it is at the moment not present; even a small delay is most damaging to the "autarchic fiction." Most painful of all is the experience of weaning, probably the greatest tragedy in every baby's life, when his dependence is most cruelly emphasized; it is a frustrating experience because what he wants is no longer there at all; and if he has been able to some extent to preserve the illusion of non-dependence heretofore,

[11] Edmund Bergler, *The Battle of the Conscience*, Chapter I.

he is not able to do so now—it is plain that the source of his nourishment is not dependent on him, but he on it. The shattering of the autarchic fiction is a great disillusionment to every child, a tremendous blow to his ego which he will, in one way or another, spend the rest of his life trying to repair. How does he do this?

First of all, his reaction to frustration is anger and fury; and he responds by kicking, biting, etc., the only ways he knows. But he is motorically helpless, and these measures are ineffective, and only serve to emphasize his dependence the more. Moreover, against such responses of the child the parental reaction is one of prohibition, generally accompanied by physical force of some kind. Generally the child soon learns that this form of rebellion is profitless, and brings him more harm than good. He wants to respond to frustration with violent aggression, and at the same time learns that he will be punished for such aggression, and that in any case the latter is ineffectual. What face-saving solution does he find? Since he must "face facts," since he must in any case "conform" if he is to have any peace at all, he tries to make it seem as if he himself is the source of the commands and prohibitions: the *external* prohibitive force is *internalized*—and here we have the origin of conscience. By making the prohibitive agency seem to come from within himself, the child can "save face"—as if saying, "The prohibition comes from within me, not from outside, so I'm not subservient to external rule, I'm only obeying rules I've set up myself," thus to some extent saving the autarchic fiction, and at the same time avoiding unpleasant consequences directed against himself by complying with parental commands.

Moreover, the boy[12] has unconsciously never forgiven the mother for his dependence on her in early life, for nourishment and all other things. It has upset his illusion of non-dependence. These feelings have been repressed and are not remembered; but they are acted out in later life in many ways —e.g., in the constant deprecation man has for woman's duties such as cooking and housework of all sorts ("All she does is stay home and get together a few meals, and she calls that work"), and especially in the man's identification with the mother in his sex experiences with women. By identifying with someone one cancels out in effect the person with whom he identifies—replacing that person, unconsciously denying his existence, and the man, identifying with his early mother, playing the active role in "giving" to his wife as his mother has "given" to him, is in effect the denial of his mother's existence, a fact which is narcissistically embarrassing to

[12] The girl's development after this point is somewhat different. Society demands more aggressiveness of the adult male, hence there are more super-ego strictures on tendencies toward passivity in the male; accordingly his defenses must be stronger.

his ego because it is chiefly responsible for shattering his autarchic fiction. In supporting his wife, he can unconsciously deny that his mother gave to him, and that he was dependent on her giving. Why is it that the husband plays the provider, and wants his wife to be dependent on no one else, although twenty years before he was nothing but a parasitic baby? This is a face-saving device on his part: he can act out the reasoning "See, I'm not the parasitic baby, on the contrary I'm the provider, the giver." His playing the provider is a constant face-saving device, to deny his early dependence which is so embarrassing to his ego. It is no wonder that men generally dislike to be reminded of their babyhood, when they were dependent on woman.

Thus we have here a perfectly normal adult reaction which is unconsciously motivated. The man "chooses" to support a family—and his choice is as unconsciously motivated as anything could be. (I have described here only the "normal" state of affairs, uncomplicated by the well-nigh infinite number of variations that occur in actual practice.)

Now, what of the notion of responsibility? What happens to it on our analysis?

Let us begin with an example, not a fictitious one. A woman and her two-year-old baby are riding on a train to Montreal in mid-winter. The child is ill. The woman wants badly to get to her destination. She is, unknown to herself, the victim of a neurotic conflict whose nature is irrelevant here except for the fact that it forces her to behave aggressively toward the child, partly to spite her husband whom she despises and who loves the child, but chiefly to ward off super-ego charges of masochistic attachment. Consciously she loves the child, and when she says this she says it sincerely, but she most behave aggressively toward it nevertheless, just as many children love their mothers but are nasty to them most of the time in neurotic pseudo-aggression. The child becomes more ill as the train approaches Montreal; the heating system of the train is not working, and the conductor advises the woman to get off the train at the next town and get the child to a hospital at once. The woman says no, she must get to Montreal. Shortly afterward, as the child's condition worsens, and the mother does all she can to keep it alive, without, however, leaving the train, for she declares that it is absolutely necessary that she reach her destination. But before she gets there the child is dead. After that, of course, the mother grieves, blames herself, weeps hysterically, and joins the church to gain surcease from the guilt that constantly overwhelms her when she thinks of how her aggressive behavior has killed her child.

Was she responsible for her deed? In ordinary life, after making a mistake, we say, "Chalk it up to experience." Here we say, "Chalk it up to the neurosis." No, she is not responsible. She could not help it if her neurosis forced her to act this way—she didn't even know what was going on be-

hind the scenes, she merely acted out the part assigned to her. This is far more true than is generally realized: criminal actions in general are not actions for which their agents are responsible; the agents are passive, not active—they are victims of a neurotic conflict. Their very hyper-activity is unconsciously determined.

To say this is, of course, not to say that we should not punish criminals. Clearly, for our own protection, we must remove them from our midst so that they can no longer molest and endanger organized society. And, of course, if we use the word "responsible" in such a way that justly to hold someone responsible for a deed is by definition identical with being justified in punishing him, then we can and do hold people responsible. But this is like the sense of "free" in which free acts are voluntary ones. It does not go deep enough. In a deeper sense we cannot hold the person responsible: we may hold his neurosis responsible, but he is not responsible for his neurosis, particularly since the age at which its onset was inevitable was an age before he could even speak.

The neurosis is responsible—but isn't the neurosis a part of *him*? We have been speaking all the time as if the person and his unconscious were two separate beings; but isn't he one personality, including conscious and unconscious departments together?

I do not wish to deny this. But it hardly helps us here; for what people want when they talk about freedom, and what they hold to when they champion it, is the idea that the *conscious* will is the master of their destiny. "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul"—and they surely mean their conscious selves, the self that they can recognize and search and introspect. Between an unconscious that willy-nilly determines your actions, and an external force which pushes you, there is little if anything to choose. The unconscious is just *as if* it were an outside force; and indeed, psychiatrists will assert that the inner Hitler can torment you far more than any external Hitler can. Thus the kind of freedom that people want, the only kind they will settle for, is precisely the kind that psychiatry says that they cannot have.

Heretofore it was pretty generally thought that, while we could not rightly blame a person for the color of his eyes or the morality of his parents, or even for what he did at the age of three, or to a large extent what impulses he had and whom he fell in love with, one *could* do so for other of his adult activities, particularly the acts he performed voluntarily and with premeditation. Later this attitude was shaken. Many voluntary acts came to be recognized, at least in some circles, as compelled by the unconscious. Some philosophers recognized this too—Ayer[13] talks about the kleptomaniac

[13] A. J. Ayer, "Freedom and Necessity," *Polemic* (September–October 1946), pp. 40–43.

being unfree, and about a person being unfree when another person exerts a habitual ascendancy over his personality. But this is as far as he goes. The usual examples, such as the kelptomaniac and the schizophrenic, apparently satisfy most philosophers, and with these exceptions removed, the rest of mankind is permitted to wander in the vast and alluring fields of freedom and responsibility. So far, the inroads upon freedom left the vast majority of humanity untouched; they began to hit home when psychiatrists began to realize, though philosophers did not, that the domination of the conscious by the unconscious extended, not merely to a few exceptional individuals, but to all human beings, that the "big three behind the scenes" are not respecters of persons, and dominate us all, even including that *sanctum sanctorum* of freedom, our conscious will. To be sure, the domination in the case of "normal" individuals is somewhat more benevolent than the tyranny and despotism exercised in neurotic cases, and therefore the former have evoked less comment; but the principle remains in all cases the same: the unconscious is the master of every fate and the captain of every soul.

We speak of a machine turning out good products most of the time but every once in a while it turns out a "lemon." We do not, of course, hold the product responsible for this, but the machine, and via the machine, its maker. Is it silly to extend to inanimate objects the idea of responsibility? Of course. But is it any less silly to employ the notion in speaking of human creatures? Are not the two kinds of cases analogous in countless important ways? Occasionally a child turns out badly too, even when his environment and training are the same as that of his brothers and sisters who turn out "all right." He is the "bad penny." His acts of rebellion against parental discipline in adult life (such as the case of the gambler, already cited) are traceable to early experiences of real or fancied denial of infantile wishes. Sometimes the denial has been real, though many denials are absolutely necessary if the child is to grow up to observe the common decencies of civilized life; sometimes, if the child has an unusual quantity of narcissism, every event that occurs is interpreted by him as a denial of his wishes, and nothing a parent could do, even granting every humanly possible wish, would help. In any event, the later neurosis can be attributed to this. Can the person himself be held responsible? Hardly. If he engages in activities which are a menace to society, he must be put into prison, of course, but responsibility is another matter. The time when the events occurred which rendered his neurotic behavior inevitable was a time long before he was capable of thought and decision. As an adult, he is a victim of a world he never made—only this world is inside him.

What about the children who turn out "all right"? All we can say is that "it's just lucky for them" that what happened to their unfortunate

brother didn't happen to them; *through no virtue of their own* they are not doomed to the life of unconscious guilt, expiation, conscious depression, terrified ego-gestures for the appeasement of a tyrannical super-ego that he is. The machine turned them out with a minimum of damage. But if the brother cannot be blamed for his evils, neither can they be praised for their good. It will take society a long time to come round to this attitude. We do not blame people for the color of their eyes, but we have not attained the same attitude toward their socially significant activities.

We all agree that machines turn out "lemons", we all agree that nature turns out misfits in the realm of biology—the blind, the crippled, the diseased; but we hesitate to include the realm of the personality, for here, it seems, is the last retreat of our dignity as human beings. Our ego can endure anything but this; this island at least must remain above the encroaching flood. But may not precisely the same analysis be made here also? Nature turns out psychological "lemons" too, in far greater quantities than any other kind; and indeed all of us are "lemons" in some respect or other, the difference being one of degree. Some of us are lucky enough not to have a gambling-neurosis or criminotic tendencies or masochistic mother-attachment or overdimensional repetition-compulsion to make our lives miserable, but most of our actions, those usually considered the most important, are unconsciously dominated just the same. And, if a neurosis may be likened to a curse of God, let those of us, the elect, who are enabled to enjoy a measure of life's happiness without the hell-fire of neurotic guilt, take this, not as our own achievement, but simply for what it is—a gift of God.

Let us, however, quit metaphysics and put the situation schematically in the form of a deductive argument.

1. An occurrence over which we had no control is something we cannot be held responsible for.

2. Events E, occurring during our babyhood, were events over which we had no control.

3. Therefore events E were events which we cannot be held responsible for.

4. But if there is something we cannot be held responsible for, neither can we be held responsible for something that inevitably results from it.

5. Events E have as inevitable consequence Neurosis N, which in turn has as inevitable consequence Behavior B.

6. Since N is the inevitable consequence of E and B is the inevitable consequence of N, B is the inevitable consequence of E.

7. Hence, not being responsible for E, we cannot be responsible for B.

In Samuel Butler's Utopian satire *Erewhon* there occurs the following passage, in which a judge is passing sentence on a prisoner:

> It is all very well for you to say that you came of unhealthy parents, and had a severe accident in hour childhood which permanently undermined your constitution; excuses such as these are the ordinary refuge of the criminal; but they cannot for one moment be listened to by the ear of justice. I am not here to enter upon curious metaphysical questions as to the origin of this or that—questions to which there would be no end were their introduction once tolerated, and which would result in throwing the only guilt on the tissues of the primordial cell, or on the elementary gases. There is no question of how you came to be wicked, but only this—namely, are you wicked or not? This has been decided in the affirmative, neither can I hesitate for a single moment to say that it has been decided justly. You are a bad and dangerous person, and stand branded in the eyes of your fellow countrymen with one of the most heinous known offenses.[14]

As moralists read this passage, they may perhaps nod with approval. But the joke is on them. The sting comes when we realize what the crime is for which the prisoner is being sentenced: namely, consumption. The defendant is reminded that during the previous year he was sentenced for aggravated bronchitis, and is warned that he should profit from experience in the future. Butler is employing here his familiar method of presenting some human tendency (in this case, holding people responsible for what isn't their fault) to a ridiculous extreme and thereby reducing it to absurdity. How soon will mankind appreciate the keen edge of Butler's bitter irony? How long will they continue to read such a passage, but fail to smile, or yet to wince?

III

Our discussion thus far has developed into a kind of double-headed monster. We started to talk about analysis of meaning, and we have ended by taking a journey into the realm of the unconscious. Can we unite the two heads into one, or at least make them look at each other?

I think the second possibility is not a remote one. Surely we have shown that the "meaning of a word" is not the same as "what we had in mind in using the word," and the word "free" is a concrete illustration of this. The psychoanalytic examples we have adduced have (if one was not acquainted with them before) added, so to speak, a new dimension to the term "free." In our ordinary use of this word we probably had nothing in mind as concrete as the sort of thing brought to light in our examples; but now that we have, we hesitate to label many actions as free which previously we had so labeled without hesitation. And we would, I think, call people "free" in far fewer respects than we would have previously.

Can human beings, in the light of psychiatric knowledge, be called "free" in any respect at all?

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[14] Samuel Butler, *Erewhon* (Modern Library edition), p. 107.

We must remember that every term that can be significantly used must have a significant opposite. If the opposite cannot significantly be asserted, neither can its original. If the term "unfree" can be significantly used, so can the term "free." Even though there may be no actual denotation of a term naming an opposite, one must know what it would be like—what it would mean to speak of it; even though there are no white crows, it must be significant, as indeed it is, to speak of them. Now is the case of freedom like that of the white crows that don't exist but can be significantly spoken of, or like the black crows that do exist and can be significantly spoken of as well?

Unless "freedom" is taken to mean the same as "lack of cause" and a principle of universal causality is taken for granted, I think the latter must be the case.

If we asked the psychoanalysts for their opinion on this, they would doubtless reply somewhat as follows. They would say that they were not accustomed to using the term "free" at all, but that if they had to suggest a criterion for distinguishing the free from the unfree, they would say that a person's freedom occurs in inverse proportion to his neuroticism; the more he is compelled in his behavior by a *malevolent* unconscious, the less free he is. We speak of degrees of freedom—and the psychologically normal and well-adjusted individual is comparatively the freest, even though most of his behavior is determined by his unconscious.

But suppose it is the determination of his behavior by his unconscious, no matter what kind, that we balk at? We may then say that a man is free only to the extent that his behavior is *not* unconsciously motivated at all. If this be our criterion, most of our behavior could not be called free: everything, including both impulses and volitions, having to do with our basic attitudes toward life, the general tenor of our tastes, whether we become philosophers or artists or business men, our whole affective life including our preferences for blondes or brunettes, active or passive, older or younger, has its inevitable basis in the unconscious. Only those comparatively vanilla-flavored aspects of life—such as our behavior toward people who don't really matter to us—are exempted from this rule.

These, I think, are the two principal criteria for distinguishing freedom from the lack of it which we might set up on the basis of psychoanalytic knowledge. Conceivably we might set up others. In every case, of course, it remains trivially true that "it all depends on how we choose to use the word." The facts are what they are, regardless of how we choose to label them. But if we choose to label facts in a way which is out of accordance with people's deep-seated and traditional methods of labeling them, as we would be doing if we labeled "free" human actions which we know as much

about as we now do through modern psychiatry, then we shall only be manipulating words to mislead our fellow creatures.

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EXTRACTO

El sentido más simple de la expresión "acto libre" es "acto voluntario," pero muchos no se contentarían con tal explicación. En otro sentido, un acto es libre cuando la persona puede hacerlo *si* así lo decide. En este sentido, somos libres de abrir la puerta, pero no de desviar la luna de su surso. Esto se admite con frecuencia, en derecho e incluso en filosofía, pero también está sujeto a ciertas objeciones; es decir, muchas personas rechazarían el término "libre" tratándose de actos que, sin embaro, llenan el requisito indicado. Y no sólo rechazarían ese término para muchos actos que resultan de la elección del agente—como la decisión de entregar nuestro dinero a un bandido que nos amenace con una pistola—,sino que incluso no lo aplicarían en casos en que no exista amenaza alguna. No lo aplicarían tratándose de personas neuróticas, cuya conducta, aunque resulte de una eleción consciente, está a su vez condicionada por motivos neuróticos inconscientes, como en el caso de mujeres frecuentemente divorciadas, o en aquellos casos en que el agente, aunque su acción resultara de su elección y de su deseo de llevarla a cabo, fuera impelido a elegirla por fuerzas que estuvieran fuera de su dominio. Particularmente cuando nos damos cuenta de ciertos principios psiquiátricos, expuestos en el presente trabajo, esto limita la esfera de la libertad humana mucho más de lo que habían supuesto previamente los filósofos.