COULD AND WOULD

It is granted by Determinists and Free-willers alike that if I am to blame for some action X which I have done, it is requisite that I could have acted otherwise. One knotty question which has been discussed a great deal in recent years is what is the precise meaning of the words " could have " in the expression " I could have acted differently ".

Moore suggested many years ago in his book *Ethics*[1] that the statement " I could have acted differently " is to be paraphrased as a conditional statement, and the suggestion has found wide favour. It has seemed very attractive to philosophers on account of the solution it seems to offer to the age-old antinomy of Free Will and Determinism. But a new turn was given to the discussion by the late J. L. Austin's famous British Academy Lecture (1956) " Ifs and Cans ". In this paper Austin very carefully examines the grammar of the verb " can " in several of its tenses and moods and arrives at the conclusion that the conditional interpretation of " can " is untenable. Since then several papers have appeared in philosophical journals discussing the question from fresh points of view. It is my intention in this paper to consider some of these recent criticisms of Austin's critique of Moore; and if possible, to try to carry the discussion a little further in the direction pointed out by Austin.

I

I shall begin by summarizing Moore's thesis and Austin's criticism of it.

Moore, in the course of outlining a theory of right and wrong, says that wherever an action can be said to be right or wrong, it must be true that the agent could in, *some* sense, have done some other action instead. He next proceeds to enquire what this sense

is, for the principle of causality seems to imply that no one could have ever done anything except what he actually did do. These two views—each of which is generally accepted—seem to be opposed, one maintaining that *we could* have, and the other that we could *not* have, done anything except what we did actually do. One way in which the two could be reconciled is to suppose that the words " can " and " could have " are used in two different senses in the two statements. Moore suggests that when we say that we *could* have done something other than what we in fact did what we really mean is that we could have done it *if* we had chosen, and not that we absolutely could have done it. Now to say that we could have done something other than what we did, *if* we had chosen, is perfectly compatible with holding that we absolutely could *not* have done anything other than what we in fact did. So if the conditional " could have if. . . . " is enough for our having free will, free will and determinism are perfectly compatible; for the fact that our actions would have been different *if* our choices were different does not conflict with the fact that our choices being what they were, no other actions could have issued from them, which is what the principle of causality requires. Moore suggests that this sense of " could have " may be all that is required for our having free will.

Austin summarizes Moore's suggestions thus :[2]

1. " Could have " simply means " could have if I had chosen ".
2. For " could have if I had chosen " we may substitute " should have if I had chosen ".
3. The *if*-clauses in these expressions state the causal conditions upon which it would have followed that I could or should have done the thing different from what I actually did do.

About this account Austin asks three questions, each of which he answers in the negative. (1) Does " could have if I had chosen "

mean the same, in general or ever, as " should have if I had chosen "? (2) In either of these expressions, is the *if* the *if* of causal condition? (3) In sentences having " can " or " could have " as main verb, are we required or entitled always to supply an *if*-clause, and in particular the clause " if I had chosen " ? The following are some of his reasons for negative answers.

(1) *Could* is very different from *should* or *would*. What a man *could* do is not at all the same as what he would do. " I could have walked a mile if I had chosen " says something about my opportunities or powers; whereas " I should have walked a mile if I had chosen ", which is an unusual specimen of English, would mean that if I had chosen to walk a mile, I should (jolly well) have done so; that is, it would be an assertion about my strength of character.

(2) The *if* in " could have if I had chosen " is not the *if* of causal condition, according to Austin, and he uses a very neat and devastating argument to prove his point.[3] In a conditional statement of the form " If *p* then *q* " it is always possible to infer the contrapositive " If not–*q* then not–*p* ", but *never* possible to infer " *q*, whether *p* or not " or " *q* " simpliciter. But in the case of the alleged conditional " I could have if I had chosen " these possibilities and impossibilities of inference are precisely reversed. The contrapositive of " I could have done X if I had chosen " would be " If I could not have done X then I had not chosen "; but it is difficult to say what, if anything, this odd-looking sentence means. On the other hand, from " I could have done X if I had chosen " we can certainly infer " I could have done X whether I had chosen or not ", and in any case, " I could have " period. It absolutely follows from this demonstration that the *if* in " I could have if I had chosen " is not the *if* of causal condition. Austin further points out that examples can be easily found of the ordinary conditional *if* in connection with *can*, and that in such cases the usual inferences from the conditional statement can be clearly drawn.

(E.g. " I can squeeze through if I am thin enough ".) He suggests that the *if* in the sentence under consideration is the *if* of doubt or hesitation. As examples of such an *if* he cites " There are biscuits on the sideboard if you want them " and " I paid you back yesterday, if you remember ", and he gives reasons for thinking that the *if* in " I could have if I had chosen " is similar.

(3) " Could have " may be, and often is, a past conditional which requires an *if*–clause to complete the sense; but it may be, and often is, the *past* (*definite*) *indicative* of the verb " can ". Sometimes " I could have " means " I was in a position to ", and sometimes " I should have been in a position to " : two parts of the verb " can " take the same shape. In the sentence " I could have done X if I had chosen ", " I could have done X " is an assertion, positive and complete, that I could have. And that is why we can infer from " I could have if I had chosen " that I could have absolutely.

II

Now some philosophers have found fault with some of Austin's arguments and conclusions. Kurt Baier, for example, in a paper entitled " Could and Would "[4] undertakes to prove (1) that the *if* in " I could have if I had chosen " is the *if* of sufficient condition, and not of doubt or hesitation; (2) that " I could have if I had chosen " and " I should have if I had chosen " entail each other and therefore " make the same claim "; and (3) that therefore freedom and determinism are not incompatible, and so Moore was right after all. I propose to consider some of Baier's arguments and argue that his criticisms of Austin are mistaken.

Baier's first criticism of Austin is that the latter's account of the *if* in " I could have if I had chosen " is mistaken : it cannot be the *if* of doubt or hesitation, but is in fact the *if* of sufficient condition. Austin's account might fit some cases of " I can if.... ", perhaps even some cases of " I can if I choose " and " I could if

I chose ", but it does not fit " I *could have* if....". In the first two cases, where we consider cases where I have not yet chosen and not yet acted, there is indeed room for doubt and hesitation. But in the case of " N could have done X if he had chosen ", since the agent has already chosen and acted, there is no room for doubt or hesitation as to how he chose or would have chosen. I don't think that this argument is sound. Baier says that " N could have done X if he had chosen " clearly implies that N did not do X and had not chosen to do X; there is therefore no doubt at all as to what he chose. But if in the case of " N can do X if he chooses " the doubt " But would he choose ? " is possible, why cant a counterfactual doubt " But would he have chosen ? " be felt about " N could have done X if he had chosen " ? I do not see any reason why it cannot. I do not think therefore that Baier's criticism of this point is sound. However that may be, Baier's next criticism is certainly mistaken. He claims that in " N could have done X if he had chosen " the *if*–clause states the sufficient condition of what the main clause states. The *if* here implies that all the necessary conditions of N's doing X are satisfied, and the addition of the condition of choosing to do X is sufficient to bring about X. But here a question arises : Of what does our *if*–clause state an unfulfilled sufficient condition ? " The answer ", replies Baier, " is that it states a *sufficient* condition....of the occurrence of those events which constitute the agent's ' doing X' ". The main clause in " N could have done X if he had chosen " is " N *could* have done X "; so the *if*–clause ought to state the condition of what " N could have done X " states. And what it states is surely not that the events constituting the agent's doing X *would* have occurred, but the very different thing that he *could* have done X. To be sure, this is not all that Baier says, though I confess that what he says is confusing. He concedes to Austin his contention that in " I could have done it if I had chosen " " I could have " is a positive and complete assertion. " Austin is therefore quite right ", he says, " to insist that in ' I would have

done it if I had chosen ' as well as in ' I could have done it ', the verb in the main clause is in the indicative and the whole remark is an " assertion, *positive and complete*, that ' I could '." But if the assertion of the main clause is positive and complete, then surely the *if*–clause cannot state a condition of what the main clause states. Baier tries to get out of the seeming contradiction here by drawing a distinction between the *possession* of an ability and the *exercise* of that ability. He says that in " I could have done X if I had chosen " the *if*–clause states the condition, not of the possession of the ability to do X, but of the exercise of that ability. To explain the distinction further he says : " Remarks like ' I can play the violin ' and ' I could have played the violin ', unlike ' I play the violin ', often assert both the possession by the agent of an ability and the possibility of his exercising it on a particular occasion."[5] I am afraid this distinction is untenable. It seems to me that not to be able to exercise an ability is really not to possess it (even if temporarily). If it is impossible for me on a given occasion to exercise a certain ability, then on that occasion I do not possess it, i.e. am not able to do a certain action. I think Baier has been misled by an ambiguity of the word " ability ",. He is perhaps confusing " ability " in the sense of a skill or know-how and being able on a given occasion to do a certain action. If I am drunk, then in one sense I could still be said to possess skill as a marksman which I am only unable to exercise owing to a temporary loss of control over my limbs; but I could equally be said to have lost my skill temporarily. And in any case it could certainly be true that I was not able to hit the bull's-eye then.

Another thing which seems to be wrong about the distinction is that it involves the conception of orders of abilities and inevitably leads to a vicious infinite regress. To say that I could have done X if I had chosen means, according to Baier, that on a particular occasion I posessed the first-order ability to do X, but lacked the second-order ability to exercise it unless a certain condi-

tion (viz. that I choose to exercise it) was satisfied. And a similar remark could be made about the second-order ability which I might possess, but might not be able to exercise unless a further condition (viz. that I choose to exercise it) be satisfied. The whole distinction therefore seems to me dubious; and the only sound conclusion appears to be that to possess an ability is the same as to be able do something, and that to exercise an ability to do something is nothing more than to do it.

It may seem surprising that the *if* in "I could have done X if I had chosen" should have appeared to philosophers to be the *if* of sufficient condition. But I think that a sufficient explanation may be found in the following circumstance. The expression "I could have done X" is used sometimes simply to mean "I should have done X". For example, if I say "I could have killed him then", referring to the occasion when I was so enraged that I was on the point of killing him, I mean simply that I should have killed him. And in fact one natural way in which the statement "I could have done X if I had chosen" may be understood is to take it to mean simply "I would have done X if I had chosen". This will explain why the transition from "I could have done X if I had chosen" to "I should have done X if I had chosen" has seemed so natural to philosophers. But of course it does not justify the transition if in the first statement "I could have" is understood in its strict sense of reporting *ability*. If "I could have" is understood in this sense, then the addition of the *if*-clause "if I had chosen" seems really to make no sense, and the only way in which it may be made intelligible is by taking it to express doubt or hesitation, as Austin suggests.

III

I think it will be worth while here to look a little more closely at the verb "choose" which has been so widely canvassed for appearing in the protasis of the conditional rendering of "could have". In many ways it is a peculiar verb, and the intimate relationship of choosing with voluntary action makes it eminently

suitable for stating (or at any rate, for seeming to state) the condition of being able to do something. In morals we are concerned only with voluntary actions. The exact definition of this concept may not be easy; but I think it will be generally granted that only voluntary actions (however understood) imply responsibility and liability to praise and blame. Now being chosen is indispensable to render an action voluntary. " Choose " in such expressions as " I could have done X if I had chosen " is roughly synonymous with " decide "; and when we think of what we could have done in moral contexts, we have in mind only actions which are the outcome of decisions. Now since an action would not be voluntary unless its agent chose to do it, my choosing to do something is a constitutive condition of " *I* did it " being true. In fact, choosing is part of *doing* something.[6] So to be able to do an action necessarily includes being able to choose to do it. " I could have done X " therefore means that I not only had the skill and the opportunity, but was also in a position to choose to do X. No other verb (excluding of course verbs like " intend " which are roughly synonymous or at least closely related) can stand in the same relation to " could have " in the main clause. With any other verb filling the gap in " I could have done X if I had ...." the conditional is counter-factual, and therefore as a matter of fact in those cases it is either false or doubtful (depending on whether the condition is necessary or sufficient) that I could have done X. (E.g. I could have done it if I had had a thingummy.) " Choose " very conveniently fills the gap in the conditional rendition simply because choosing to do something is, strictly speaking, part of the concept of doing it. But for this very reason it fails to state a genuine condition, and so it renders the attempted conditional analysis a complete failure.

IV

There are some more difficulties of a serious nature which the conditional rendering of " could have " statements inevitably encounters. It will be remembered that Moore suggests two such

renderings and prefers one of them. The preferred analysis runs : " I could have done X " really means " I *should* have done X if I had chosen ". A question which naturally arises is : But could I have chosen ? For if it were a fact that I could not have chosen (say on account of having been drugged), then it would follow that I should have done X (at least in the voluntary sense of " done "), though it would still be true that I should have done X *if* I had chosen : the fact that both the protasis and the apodosis are false does not affect the truth of the conditional. But this will not do for our purposes. The conditional rendering of " I could have " has therefore to be supplemented by the addition of another clause " and I could have chosen ". But what of the " could have " in this clause ? Must we analyse it as " I should have chosen to do X if I had chosen to choose (to do X) " ? Apart from the very important consideration that this last statement hardly makes sense, there is the further objection that we can ask about this second *if*–clause whether I could have chosen. And so on *ad infinitum*. It is easy to see that this regress is vicious, for unless we can say at some state that I could have chosen *absolutely*, we cannot say that I should have done X. I think that this argument really shows that we must admit an absolute unconditional sense of " could have ". But if we admit it at a later stage of the regress why not admit it at the very start and avoid the regress altogether ?

Insuperable difficulties break out in the other analysis also. This runs : " I could have done X " means " I could have done X if I had chosen ". Such a paraphrase, if taken strictly, would imply that the verb " can " cannot occur without a conditional clause appended to it. Against such a suggestion Austin has given a very ingenious argument to show that it is very unlikely that there should be such a verb in a language. The argument is as follows:[7]

> For let the verb in question be *to X* : then we shall never say simply " I X ", but always " I X if I Y " : but then also,

> according to the accepted rules, if it is true that " I X if I Y ", and *also* true (which it surely must sometimes be) that " I do, in fact, Y ", it must surely follow that " I X ", simpliciter, without any *if* about it any longer.

Applying this general argument to the particular case of " can " we get the following result. " I can do X " means " I can do X if I choose ". Suppose now that we affirm the condition; then we should be able to affirm the consequent, " I can do X ". Now what does this conclusion mean ? We have now two statements which look exactly alike, viz " I can do X " which is the original statement which was expanded into a conditional and the " I can do X " which is the conclusion of a *modus ponens* syllogism. Is the " I can " which is the conclusion also to be regarded as a suppressed conditional, waiting to be expanded in the manner of the first expansion ? If so, then we write out another conditional with an *if*–clause " if I choose " appended to it, and repeat the operation recommended by Austin. Again we shall reach the same result. And no matter how often we repeat the operation we still have on our hands a " can "–statement waiting to be expanded into a conditional This result is certainly very awkward, and it should be a reminder to us that the alleged conditional expansion is not a normal conditional at all. This result reinforces the similar result reached by means of another argument of Austin's, viz. that from " I can if I choose " we can infer " I can whether I choose or not ", or " I can " simply.

D. J. O'connor in a paper entitled " Possibility and Choice "[8] tries to avoid this awkward result by suggesting that there the " can " in the conditional statement and the " can " in the categorical conclusion do not mean the same thing. In " I can do X " " ' can ' warns the hearer that the operation of the main verb is subject to the operation of all of an unspecified group of, let us say, *n* necessary conditions ", whereas in " I can do X if I choose " " ' can ' hints at only *n*–1 such conditions, one of them having now

been made explicit by the *if*–clause."[9] All this talk of *n* and *n*–1 conditions seems to me perplexing and suspiciously like a hocus-pocus. But even if it is all cogent we still do not know what is the status of " I can " of the conclusion, which is different from the " I can " which is expanded into the major premise of the *modus ponens*. I am afraid therefore that we must conclude that O'Connor's attempt to show that " I can if I choose " is a normal conditional is a failure.

V

I propose next to examine in greater detail the concept of voluntary action. I believe that our troubles over the conflict between Free Will and determinism are mostly the result of our failure to understand this concept properly. I shall begin with a few remarks on the uses of the words " act ", " action " and " agent ".

Now it is well-known that these words have several very different senses. They may be used in connection with human beings as well as inanimate objects. I wish to isolate and identify a concept of action which is such that an action is something *done* and its doer is a human being. Almost any verb may have for its subject names of human beings as well as of inanimate objects. But there is a clear difference in the meaning conveyed in the two cases. We say indifferently that an aviator and a bullet fly through the air; that a doctor and his medicine cure the patient; that an incendiary as well as the fire he started burnt the house down. We speak of the action of moist air on iron, and we also speak of the actions of men. And in chemistry there are agents (e.g. a whitening agent) and reagents. Nevertheless the sense in which a human being acts or is an agent is very different from that in which moist air acts on iron or a whitening agent is an agent. When we want to find out the agent of an action, we ask : *Who did* so and so ? Though we speak of the action of one inanimate thing upon another, we do not speak of inanimate things as *doing actions*,

and we do not ask about an event which does not involve human agency, Who did this event (?) ? This sense of agency is all-important for moral philosophy, and if we are not able to characterise it presisely that is no reason why we may not admit its importance. Roughly speaking we may say that agency in this sense implies a more or less conscious goal-seeking behaviour : it involves a more or less clear prevision of the goal and a deliberate choice of means to that end. It is not implied that every such action is preceded by a process of full-fledged deliberation and decision. But it is always potentially deliberate in the sense that if circumstances had required deliberation and choice would have taken place. Where agency in this sense is absent, the action is not voluntary, and neither is it subject to praise or blame.

The distinction can be seen clearly reflected in our use of the verbs " can " and " will " (" shall " with the first person). We say that water can freeze at 60° Fahrenheit, meaning that such an event is possible (e.g. at high altitudes); but when we say that I *can do* something (say solve a problem, or climb a tree, or ruin somebody), we do not mean merely that certain *events* are possible; we mean that my *doing* (active, deliberate, intentional, or voluntary doing) of these actions is possible. " I can do X " reports an ability, which is the possibility of *somebody's doing* something, and which cannot be reduced simply to the possibility of certain *events taking place.*

Similarly with " will " and " shall ". In the non-human world " will " indicates only futurity, prediction; but when the grammatical subject of " will " is the name of some human being it often expresses *intention.* " I shall eat my breakfast " expresses my intention of doing an action; but " It will rain ", " There will be an eclipse tomorrow " are simple predictions, where the question of *doing* anything is out of place. Similar remarks apply to " would have " and " should have ". " A famine would have broken out if the monsoons had not luckily set in " is a very different

statement from " I should have come to the station to receive you had I known you were coming " or " I would have lent you money if you had asked for it ". The latter statements report that some voluntary actions would have been done; they imply that I *would* have made a certain voluntary decision in the circumstances mentioned. To be sure, " I would have " and " I should have " do not always express agency. For example, " I would have become sick if I had smoked that cigar ", or " I would have died if the bullet had entered my heart " do not say anything about what I would have or should have chosen or decided to do.

Similar remarks apply to the verb " cause ". Heat causes bodies to expand and the rain causes floods. But so do I cause a movement of my limbs or of things in my neighbourhood. When I push a chair or pull a table or reach for a glass of water *I* cause a movement in my neighbourhood as well as in my limbs; and I do these things intentionally, with the purpose of reaching some goal, which cannot be said about heat or rain. Again there is a great difference between " I caused *him* to do so and so " and " Heat causes bodies to expand ". In the first statement not only is there a reference to my intentions and powers; there is also a reference to the intentions and goals of the person whom I cause to do something. I bring about a change in his environment, and in those changed circumstances he *does* something to reach his goals. If, for example, I hold a man at the point of a revolver and cause him to hand me his wallet, he does it deliberately (unless indeed he acts in a panic and so strictly speaking does not act at all), sacrificing a less important goal to safeguard a more important one.

If this distinction between actions involving agency and those which dont involve agency is borne in mind, it will be seen how mistaken is the doctrine that in the conditional rendition of a " could have " statement the *if*–clause states a causal condition of a person doing something. For example, it sounds nonsensical

to say that my choosing to do X would have caused me to do X. If I were not a conscious, voluntary agent, we could understand how some event could be a sufficient condition of another event taking place in me. But since I am a knowing and willing agent, the language of causation does not apply to me in the same sense in which it applies to the causation of inanimate events. "The weather would have been warm if the sun were shining". Here the sun's shining would have caused warm weather in the perfectly familiar sense of causation dealt with in the sciences. But it is not at all clear in what sense the language of causation applies to agents doing actions and making other agents do them.

VI

I shall conclude this somewhat desultory paper with a brief history of the concept of cause. I think that a glance at this history will show that the entanglement of the subject of freedom with determinism is largely the result of a confusion.

That everything has a cause man has believed from very early times. Now the archetype of the causal connection in primitive thought was the connection between the agent and his action or the physical product of his action. The causation of physical events was understood to be of this kind only, and primitive man sought the causes of natural phenomena in man-like beings with desires and wills. It was much later that this animistic conception was given up in the investigation of physical nature, and another conception was substituted in its place. This was the uniformity view of causation. The earlier view held that the cause had the power to *produce* the effect and that it produced the effect by its causal *activity*. Since no such causes could be discovered operating behind natural phenomena, "causation" lost its old *activistic* meaning. All that was now meant by saying that A was the cause of B was that events like

A invariably preceded events like B. On this view the cause also is an event, and all talk of its *efficiency* or *power* becomes meaningless.

This was all to the good. But soon afterwards the sciences of biology and psychology arose, and it was inevitable that the scientist should try to reduce biological and psychological phenomena to causal laws in the same sense of uniformities of sequence. The actions of men were regarded as events, and they were supposed to be caused by earlier events in exactly the same way as physical events; i.e. they were uniformly preceded by certain events. They followed uniformly upon desires, and desires were the occurrent manisfestations of continuant dispositions, to the organisation of which the name "character" was given. The deterministic scheme which was so eminently successful in the physical sciences was extending its boundaries to include the whole of mental life.

What gave pause to the scientist in his triumphal march was the realization that the voluntary actions of men seemed to lead a double life. As natural events they were no doubt caused in the sense of following a uniform pattern of sequence; but as moral phenomena they were liable to blame and praise, and therefore seemed to require freedom. Thence arose the antinomy of freedom and necessity and the valiant efforts of philosophers to reconcile the two.

We have found, in the course of this paper, that one such attempted reconciliation ends in a failure. And it has been shown several times that other efforts have fared no better. The solution of the antinomy must, it appears, be sought in other some other quarter.

I suggest that where philosophers have gone wrong in their efforts is that they have tried to force upon the voluntary behaviour of men a conceptual scheme which is valid only for the inanimate world. If the primitive philosopher was wrong in trying

to understand physical phenomena after the pattern of human behaviour, the modern philosopher is equally wrong in trying to understand human behaviour after the pattern of physical phenomena. Where no agents could be found, it was entirely wise to stop looking for them and to start understanding causation in a different way. And I suggest that it would be equally wise to stop reducing the causality of the agent to the uniformity type of causality. Philosophers seem to have forgotten completely the original meaning of the word " cause " and they think that the causes of our actions must be of the same kind as the causes of physical events. But this effort ends, as we have seen, in a blind alley. The only thing to do in the circumstances is to retrace our steps and try anew to understand the grammar of our language which we use in speaking of our actions.

The determinist account of " cause " only allows causes which are themselves events, and which do not really cause anything, but simply regularly precede. Voluntary actions considered as events may or may not have causes in this sense of uniform antecedents. But they certainly have causes in another sense of the term, that of the doer of an action. Now the agent is not an event, as the cause is in the " scientific " sense; it is a thing or substance. It is not an occurrent, but a continuant. Its causation is, therefore, not occurrent causation, but continuant causation.[10] If this is remembered the problem of free will might appear in a different and perhaps a clearer light.

How is this causality of the agent to be understood ? I am afraid I havent much to say in answer to this question beyond a few rather obvious things. A full working out of the concept will require much greater powers than I possess. I shall therefore content myself with stating the obvious things and hoping that the skeleton I present will be given flesh and blood by abler men.

(1) There can be no doubt that the agent is regarded in some perfectly natural and normal sense as the cause of his

actions. Not only our inner experience, but our treatment of ourselves and other human beings declare this. No distinction is more patent than that between "My leg rises" (as in the knee-cap reflex) and "I raise my leg". When we say "I did so and and so" we believe that the entity referred to by the personal pronoun "I" is the author or the producer of the action. And when we say of someone else that so and so is *his* action, we regard him as directly producing or causing the action by the exercise of some power which he possesses.

(2) It is fairly clear that this causation cannot be assimilated to the causation understood simply as regular sequence. To say that one event A is the cause of another event B means neither more nor less than that events of the kind A have been found (and will be found) invariably preceding events of the kind B; and this kind of statement can be made only on the basis of induction from a large number of observations of the said sequence. But this procedure is not required (indeed it is quite irrelevant) for saying about a person that he did or will do so and so. In particular for me to be able to say that I did so and so it is not at all necessary to observe any past sequences. When I raise my hand, I know *directly*, without any information about any past occurrences, that *I* raised it, that *I* am its author, that *I* brought about the change in question. And though I have no similar first-hand information of the inner experiences of other agents, it is my own kind of causality that I ascribe to them when I say that *they* do or did something.

(3) The causality of the agent differs from causality understood as uniform sequence in yet another respect. As we have already hinted earlier the agent is not an event or an occurrence. He is a thing, a substance (to use an old-fashioned word), or a continuant (to use a new word). No doubt this distinction between things and events, continuants and occurrences, raises difficult questions which will have to be patiently tackled and

solved. Nevertheless the difference between the two is so patent that it will have to be taken as an irreducible datum for which room must be found in any sound moral philosophy. A philosophy which explains it away cannot hope to be true.

I therefore conclude that we are all familiar with a causality called acting, which belongs to a human being considered as an agent or a doer of actions. It is this agent who knows, feels, wills and acts. It is he who is held responsible for his actions, praised and blamed, rewarded and punished for them. It is he who feels the call of duty and feels remorse when he fails to respond to it. And it is for this agent that freedom is claimed as the precondition of his moral responsibility and of deserving praise and blame, rewards and punishments. To keep *him* out of our accounts of the causation of actions is to completely distort our views of moral activity. It is to the attempt to do without him that most of our ills in this branch of philosophy are due.

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NOTES

1. Chapter VI, " Free Will ".
2. *Philosophical Papers*, pp. 155–56.
3. *Loc. cit.*, p. 157.
4. *Analysis Supplement*, No. 1, January 1963, pp. 20–25.
5. *Loc. cit.*, p. 24.
6. The reader is referred to some further remarks on the concept of doing which I make in Section V.
7. *Loc, cit* , p. 164.
8. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume XXXIV, 1960, p. 10.
9. *Loc. cit.*, p. 10.
10. See Broad : *Ethics and History of Philosophy*, " Determinism, Indeterminism and Liberatarinism ". pp. 214–16.