

## FREE WILL AND VALUE

MAUSHUMI GUHA

In this paper, I shall explore the relationship, if any, between the concept of a person as a *free* individual and the concept of a person as a *responsible* and *moral* individual. I shall develop my argument in a manner as to show an intimate connection between *freedom* and *value* in our conceptual framework. I shall attempt to show, that our conception of a human agent or a human *person* essentially involves the conception of one, who has freedom of the will and is thereby responsible for one's actions. To define the limits of my enquiry, I shall concentrate on three articles 'Freedom of the will and the concept of a person' by H. G. Frankfurt (1971)<sup>1</sup>, 'Responsibility for self' by C. Taylor (1976) and 'Free agency' by G. Watson (1975). The article by Frankfurt contains a view that I consider inadequate for a complete understanding of the *sense* in which a *person* can be called a *free* and *responsible* individual. After an attempt to show the inadequacies of that view, I shall launch into my positive thesis. In that, I shall take the help of the other two articles, which in my opinion provide a better understanding of the relation between freedom and value in the context of human action.

### *The Will of a person and the Two Senses of 'rational'*

In his article, Frankfurt reacts to an earlier conception of a person as someone who can be ascribed both physical and psychological characteristics<sup>2</sup>. Central to Frankfurt's conception of a person is the structure of the will. According to him, the will of a person is defined by both first order and second-order desires. Second-order desires are desires about desires. On the one hand, a person is capable of having desires like,

'I want to have a cup of tea' and 'I want to read this article' and on the other, she is capable of having desires like, 'I *want* to want to have a cup of tea' and 'I *want to want to* read this article'. This capacity to have second-order desires enables a person to *evaluate* her first-order desires. As Frankfurt says, a person has 'the capacity for reflective self-evaluation'.

The difference between first-order and second-order desires easily leads to the difference between a *will* and a *desire*. Suppose, in the examples given above, I want my desire to read the article to *take effect* and so, instead of a tea break, I continue to read. Under the circumstances, my *desire* to read the article becomes my *will* -it *makes me read* the article. Whereas, my desire to have tea is a mere desire that is subdued, even though I *like* the idea of having tea. It is not translated into action and so it does not constitute a will. As Frankfurt says, 'An agent's will is an *effective* desire'. So, even though every will is a desire, every desire is not a will.

It is clear from the above discussion that not all first-order desires constitute a person's will. In a similar way, not all second-order desires go to make a person's will either. All 'second order desires relevant to the formation of the will are what Frankfurt calls, 'second-order volitions',. To take the examples given above, my *desire to* desire to read the article is a second-order *volition* because it makes my *desire to read the article*, a will, It makes that desire *materialise*. But my *desire to* desire to have tea is *not* a second-order volition because it does *not* allow my *desire to have tea* to take effect. So it seems, that a kind of evaluation<sup>3</sup> takes place at the level of second-order desires. A person has 'the capacity for reflective self-evaluation' not just because she has second-order *desires*, but because she has second-order *volitions*.

If a person is one who has second-order volitions, a non-person is one who does not. Frankfurt calls a non-person, a 'wanton'. Going by his conception, a wanton is one who either has no control over her first-order desires, or has no desire to control them. This is mostly because she has no second-order desires whatsoever. Even if she does have *some* second-order desires, they are not of the kind that makes volitions. A rat that eats corn and destroys crops is a wanton by Frankfurt's definition, because it does not *think* whether it *wants* to destroy the crops or not (in all probability, it does not even *know* that it is *destroying* the crops). It has no

second-order desires about its first-order desire to eat corn. It simply has a desire and it acts to fulfil that desire. On the other hand, a drug-addict may consume prohibited drugs even though she has a second-order *desire not to have the desire* to have drugs. By Frankfurt's definition, even she is a wanton because her second-order desire does not move her to act. She does not stop from having drugs. Her second-order desire is not a volition.

To say that a wanton is not capable of second-order volitions is not to say that she completely lacks rational capacities<sup>4</sup>. For instance, the drug-addict mentioned above may be a great mathematician or a famous lawyer. Even if we do not go that far, she may be able to make rational calculations to see how much money is required to buy a packet of heroin etc. What Frankfurt seems to say is, that the *way* in which a *wanton* may be called 'rational' and the *way* in which a *person* may be called 'rational', are *defferent*. A wanton is 'rational' in the minimal sense of that term, the sense in which she is capable of calculating how to make ends and means meet. A person, on the other hand, is rational in a more developed sense of that term, a sense in which she is capable of evaluating her desires and actions *practically* or *prudently*. She is *rational* because she aims at coherence, and thinks how to maximise the fulfilment of desires by maintaining order and consistency at the same time. Frankfurt says, 'What distinguishes a rational wanton from other rational agents is that [s]he is not concerned with the desirability of [her] desires themselves'. Unlike a drug-addict or an alcoholic, if a rational *person* wants to smoke or drink, she does not *succumb* to her desire without giving it some serious thought. She *thinks* whether her desire is one that she would *want to satisfy* or not-whether it is a desire that should itself be desired or not. In other words, she uses her rational capacities to decide whether she wants her *desire* to have drugs to be her *will* or not.

From the above discussion emerge two senses of the term 'rational'. For Frankfurt, a person is rational in the second sense of the term. That is the sense in which she is capable of making prudent choices, of taking practical decisions. For instance, a person who always uses the pedestrian crossing and follows traffic rules is practical, for that way she avoids accidents as far as possible. She is sensible and rational because she

understands that a smooth flow of traffic will not only protect her life but also cause minimum loss of time. In being rational, she makes use of her capacity to evaluate her first-order desires and decisions, keeping in mind their practical implications.

### ***Freedom of Action and Freedom of the Will***

The question is, does rationality in the above sense (in the sense in which Frankfurt conceives a rational person) imply the activity of a free will? In other words, how does Frankfurt conceive the relation between a free will and a person? More importantly, what *is* a free will according to Frankfurt? Frankfurt thinks that a person can be called a 'free agent' in two ways. This is because the word 'free' can be used to denote either a free *act* or a free *will*. A person may either have a free will or enjoy freedom of action. So she can be said to be a free agent either because she enjoys freedom of the will or because she acts freely. The way in which an *action* is *free* is *different* from and *independent* of the way in which the *will* is *free*. A person need not necessarily have both freedom of action and a free will. So, for Frankfurt, the concept of a *free will* is not essential to the concept of a person.

How is the freedom of action different from the freedom of the will? The freedom of action has to do with the fulfilment of first-order desires. The freedom of the will has to do with the fulfilment of second-order volitions. I may *have* tea when I *want* to have tea. Then my *act* of having tea is a *free* one. If a first-order desire is translated into action, then that *action* is free. Animals can be said to enjoy freedom of action in this sense. A rabbit *wants* to eat a carrot and *eats* one. Nobody *prevents* it from eating a carrot. So, it is *free* to eat a carrot. We can understand the notion of a *free will* by drawing an analogy with the notion of a *free action*. A person is *free to act* when she is free to *do* what she *wants* to do. A person has a *free will* when she is *free to will* what she *wants* to will. To take an example, I may *want* to have tea and I may also *want* my *desire* to have tea, to *materialise*. Then, if I *have* tea, not only do I *act* freely, my action expresses my *second-order volition* to have the *will* to have tea. A person does *not* have the freedom to *act* when she is not free to translate her first-order desires into actions. Analogously, a person does *not* have a *free will* when she *has* first-order desires that she *does not want to become*

*effective* but which *take effect nonetheless*, or when she *cannot* have effective first order desires that she *wants* to be effective.

So we have seen how the word 'free' can be used in two different ways, to describe a free *action* and a free *will*. Let us see how Frankfurt shows, that the freedom of action and the freedom of the will are *independent* of each other. According to him, the freedom of action is *not* a *sufficient* condition for the freedom of the will. An individual can have the freedom to *act* without having the *will* to be free. This is best illustrated in the case of animals. The rabbit, which eats a carrot because it *wants* to, enjoys freedom of action. But it would not be relevant to say of it, that it enjoys a *free will*, because in eating a carrot it does not exercise a *will* at all. This is because it does not have any second order desire about its desire to eat a carrot. So, we can talk of the freedom of action without having to talk of the freedom of the will.

According to Frankfurt, the freedom of action is *not* a *necessary* condition for the freedom of the will either. It might so happen that a person is free to *will* something, but is not free to *act* on that will. For instance, there are many women in India who would like to have an education. Even though they have the will, they do not have the means to achieve what they want (either because they do not have money or because they do not have their guardian's permission). They are free to have the will but they are not free to act on that will. Frankfurt would say that examples like this show that freedom of action is not a necessary condition for the freedom of the will.

### ***Freedom and Responsibility, the two senses of 'Responsibility'***

The notions of freedom and responsibility are closely tied up in our conceptual framework. We are given to believing that a person is an individual who necessarily enjoys freedom of the will. We also tend to believe that the concept of responsibility can be understood only in relation to the concept of a free will. So we usually believe, that a person is responsible for herself and is answerable for her actions *because* she enjoys a *free will*. As we have seen in the above section, Frankfurt does not believe that there is a necessary connection between the notion of a person and that of a free will. Instead, he conceives a person as one for

whom the freedom of the will may be a 'problem', because she may either have it or not have it. If that is the case and if we are to say that a person is responsible for her actions, then we would have to say that the notion of responsibility is not tied to that of a free will. So, according to Frankfurt, responsibility can be ascribed to a person even if she enjoys only the freedom of action, without at the same time having a free will. The argument seems to run like this- if a person is one, to whom we can ascribe responsibility, but if she does not *necessarily* have a free *will*, then responsibility must *also* be linked to her capacity to *act* freely.

Here, Frankfurt seems to evoke two senses of the term 'responsibility', which run parallel to the two senses of the term 'freedom'. In the first sense, a person can be responsible for her actions if she *acts* freely. This is the barest sense of 'responsibility', so one does not probe further to see whether a person's actions were devised by a free *will* or not. I shall call this, the 'weak' sense of responsibility. But a person can be responsible in a *stronger* sense, when she is responsible not only for *doing* what she did, but also for *willing* to do what she did. I shall call this, the 'strong' sense of responsibility. For Frankfurt, a person *can* be responsible in this *strong* sense because she is *rational*, where the word 'rational' is used in the sense of being prudent or practical. It is because she is rational and she can have a free will, that she can be responsible. Therefore, the ideal person for Frankfurt is a being whose second-order volitions are expressions of prudent reasoning, and who can be responsible in the strong sense because of her capacity to exercise her will freely. That is for Frankfurt, a person at her *best*, and the best we can hope for- a person with a free will and the capacity to act in accordance with some practical, rational principles.

### ***The Inadequacy of Frankfurt's Thesis***

Even though Frankfurt realises that the word 'rational' can be used in more than one sense, he fails to capture what I believe to be the most important sense of that term-the *moral* one. A person, in my opinion, is a moral agent. She has a sense of right and wrong, of good and bad (in the moral senses of those terms). So a person as a *rational* agent is not just logical or prudent, but *moral*. A person, in principle, enjoys a free will and

can be called 'responsible' only in the *strong* sense. The weak sense of 'responsibility' is not applicable to human persons. This is because freedom of action and freedom of the will cannot be dissociated in the context of a person. But to say that a person is 'responsible' in the 'strong' sense is not to say that a person has a free will in Frankfurt's sense. A free will must express itself through the making of moral judgements and the translation of them into actions. In other words, a person can be called 'responsible' *because* she is capable of making moral judgements and of acting according to them. Lastly, it is not enough to say that a person has a free will when she is free to will what she *wants* to will. For freedom is not an expression of some arbitrary or random choice. Since freedom and responsibility go hand in hand, all free choice and free action must be moral- rational and responsible.

### ***The Third Sense of 'Rational' - person as a moral agent***

Frankfurt's analysis of the concept of a person begins on a very encouraging note. He characterises a person as one who has the 'capacity for reflective self-evaluation'. The capacity to reflect upon the desirability of one's first order desires is a rational capacity. A person is able to decide which of her first-order desires she wants to translate into action and which she does not. Her rationality is expressed in the formation of her will. The question is, what *kind* of rational consideration goes into the formation of the will? It is true that the kinds of considerations that model the will are not merely *calculative*, but also *practical*. By distinguishing between 'calculative' and 'practical', I do not mean to exclude all kinds of calculus from the realm of practical thinking. Many would say, that practical rationality or practical reasoning involves calculations, which enable one to assign values to various possible (or available) alternatives and to arrive at the best (or most feasible) one among them. When I talk about 'being calculative' as opposed to 'being practical', I emphasize on mathematico-logical calculations. So, an individual may be able to solve complex mathematical problems but may not be able to decide what to do in a practical situation. Such things are known to happen in certain disorders of the nervous system. This distinction is also needed to maintain a qualitative difference between calculating machines and human beings. I am obviously assuming, that such machines cannot be ascribed the power of practical

reasoning in the same sense as humans.

My point against Frankfurt is that the above two kinds of considerations do not exhaust our list rational considerations. Apart from the above two types of rational thinking, a person has the capacity to engage in rational considerations of a *moral* kind as well. To take an example, I may be in the habit of feeding birds every morning, which I consider to be a good habit. Suppose that I forget to perform this ritual one morning. What happens? Either I do not feel anything about it or I do. If I do, it is most likely that I feel sorry. But my feelings may owe either to the sense that I have neglected the poor creatures or merely to the sense that I have not done something that I do as a matter of habit. People would mostly agree, that the mark of a truly rational agent (a person) being moral thinking, it would suit me (as a truly rational agent) to feel sorry for those creatures and reproach myself for my negligence (so much so that I tell myself that such lapses will not occur again, unless there is some genuine reason).

So, it seems to me, that Frankfurt's analysis of the concept of a person and the typical sense, in which we call a person 'rational', is *incomplete*. The rational 'capacity for reflective self evaluation' that a person has, is in truth a *moral* capacity. A person judges the 'desirability of (her) desires', not just from a prudential or practical perspective but also from a moral perspective. Even though Frankfurt's person is not rational in this sense, he points in the right direction when he says, '...the essence of a person lies not in reason but in will'. The will of a person is a moral will. In virtue of possessing a moral will, a person is capable not only of making prudent choices, but also of making moral judgements.

However, to say that the will of a person is a *moral* will, is not to say that a person *always embraces* the morally right, dutiful or good course of action. What it means is that a person possesses the *moral capacity* to judge and choose between what is right and what is wrong, what is dutiful and what is irresponsible, between what is good and what is bad. It might, in some cases happen, that the person is unable to take the morally acceptable path in actual practice. Such cases have to be counted as *exceptions*. In saying that, I also mean to say, that a person who chooses the moral way must in *most* cases, also *act* morally. An extreme discrepancy between the character of the *will* and that of the *action* of an individual



should raise serious doubts about whether that individual is a person at all. Yet, in some cases, a person *may not act* in a morally good way, in spite of engaging in moral deliberation. The essential difference between a person in the true sense of the term and Frankfurt's person is that the second-order volitions of the former are *not morally neutral*, while those of the latter are.

By saying that the *kind of rationality* a person ought to exhibit is that which involves moral thinking, I am not subscribing to any particular view of morality. I am not making any attempt here, to show the philosophical basis of moral thinking. The philosophical argument here is for an understanding of the concept of a 'free will', we must make an *a priori* claim about the reality of moral thinking in our daily lives. Without this assumption, we cannot do full justice to our understanding of a person as a free and rational agent. In order to explain the concept of a 'person', must be able to understand the moral implications of terms like 'good', 'bad', 'ought', 'right', 'wrong', 'commendable' etc. which only meant that we must be able to understand *something* by the terms 'moral', 'immoral' and 'amoral'. Once this is granted, we will realise that there is a missing element in Frankfurt's analysis of a person as a rational individual a very important element at that, namely, the moral element. We need not go any further to analyse the philosophical foundation of the element (that can be taken up as a separate philosophical project).

### ***Support from Taylor and Watson***

Like Frankfurt, Taylor also recognises the significance of second-order evaluation in our understanding of the concept of a person. Unlike Frankfurt though, he argues that the *kind of evaluation* relevant to the concept of a person is *moral* evaluation. In his article, he distinguishes between 'weak' and 'strong' evaluation and takes the latter to be the mark of a person. He says, 'we are not beings whose only authentic evaluations are non-qualitative..if evaluation of desires is essential to our notion of the self, it is strong evaluation and not just weak evaluation which is in question'. The primary difference between weak and strong evaluation is that the former is non-qualitative while the latter is qualitative. Weak evaluation is non-qualitative because it is used 'simply to determine

convenience, or how to make different desires compossible'. Strong evaluation is qualitative because it involves the classification of desires into 'such categories as higher or lower, virtuous or vicious... noble or base'. The former makes no difference to the moral quality of one's life. The latter does.

In weak evaluation, a course of action is *taken to be good* simply because it is desired. All further calculations depend on that basic premise, which is not questioned. In a strong evaluation, that basic premise is itself questioned what is questioned is the very *desirability* of a desire, where 'desirability' is '*moral desirability*'. So, the first and most important step in a strong evaluation is to decide whether what is desired *ought* to be desired or not. Therefore, in a strong evaluation, if something is *judged to be good*, it is judged so not because it is *desired*, but because it is *morally desirable*. So, if something is judged to be *good* in a strong evaluation, it is judged to be *morally good*.

Watson seems to make a similar observation in his article when he distinguishes between 'wanting' and 'valuing' He says, '...it is one thing to think a state of affairs good, worth while, or worthy of promotion, and another simply to desire or want that state of affairs to obtain. Since the notion of value is tied to (cannot be understood independently of) those of the good and worthy, it is one thing to value (think good) a state of affairs and another to desire that it obtain. However, to think a thing good is at the same time to desire it. The essence of Frankfurt's second-order volition lies not in the fact that it is a *desire* about a desire, but in the fact that it is an *evaluation* of a desire. A second-order volition expresses what a person most *values*, not just what a person most *wants*. That means, the evaluation of desires is a rational, moral activity. A person is one who is capable of evaluating her desires. As Watson says, a person '...cannot dissociate (her) self from all normative judgements without forfeiting all standpoints and therewith (her) identity as an agent'.

### ***Responsibility and Freedom of the Will***

For Frankfurt, a person is *not* one who *essentially* enjoys freedom of the *will*. He says, 'It is only because a person has volitions of the second-order that (she) is capable both of enjoying and of lacking freedom of the

will'. So, he distinguishes between free will and freedom of action and conceives responsibility in two ways in the weak and strong senses. Weak responsibility is that which is found in relation to the freedom of action-if a person is free to act, then she is responsible for her actions in the weak sense. Strong responsibility is associated with freedom of the will if a person has a free will, then she is responsible for her actions in the strong sense. Also, for Frankfurt, having a free *will* and being responsible in the *strong* sense, are conditions that are satisfied if a person is able to judge her first order desires *prudently*. I will first show, that in the context of human freedom, the idea of free action is intimately connected with the idea of a free will-free will and the freedom to act cannot be divorced. I will then show, that the concept of 'responsibility', in the context of human person, cannot be understood independent of the concept of a 'free will' weak responsibility is not relevant in this context. Lastly, I will show that the concepts of freedom, responsibility and rationality are intimately linked with the idea of moral thinking. So the concepts of free will, responsibility and rationality are to be understood in relation with the concept of a person as a moral agent.

Frankfurt says that freedom of action is not a necessary condition for the freedom of the will. Can we really understand what it is to have a free will without the freedom of action? Without optimal freedom of action, freedom of the will becomes meaningless<sup>5</sup>. A will is, by definition, an 'effective desire' a desire one wants to translate into action. If an individual is never able to act according to her will, can we regard her will to be free? In fact, it is difficult to conceive an individual who has a free will and yet does not enjoy freedom of action under ordinary circumstances. By Frankfurt's own standards, a second-order volition is a desire to put a first-order desire into action. Unless such second-order volitions lead all the way to activity, they do not deserve the name 'volition'. I do not mean to say that *all* volitions are satisfied in action or that *all* actions are acts of volition. I only mean to say that under usual conditions, volitions should be translated into the relevant actions. In the very concept of a will or volition, one can feel the force of action. To have a free will is to be able to come as close as possible, to action. It is necessary that a person who has a free will, also act freely in more cases than not. So, free will and free action

are not conceptually or logically independent as Frankfurt claims.

Frankfurt also says that the freedom of action is not a sufficient condition for the freedom of the will. In the context of human freedom, can we really make sense of *free* action without *free will*? Within that context, we must distinguish between spontaneous, habitual and impulsive activity on the one hand, and discrete, rational and moral activity on the other. It is only the latter kind of activity that defines a person. When a rabbit eats a carrot because it wants to eat, it is acting on instinct. There does not arise any question about its acting on a *free will*. To take Frankfurt's own example, if someone is moved 'naturally' by kindness, then kindness is a mere disposition in her. It is not different from eating because one is hungry or sleeping when one is sleepy. Such activity does not involve any second-level thinking at all. Someone who acts on mere instincts and dispositions cannot be called a 'person' by any standard. Such an individual cannot be called a responsible and moral being<sup>6</sup>. Mere *compliance* with first-order desires is not the kind of freedom desirable in a person. Therefore, the distinction between freedom of the will and the freedom of action loses significance in the context of human freedom. If that is so, the *weak* sense of 'responsibility' also loses significance in that context. So, responsibility can be ascribed to a person only by linking it with freedom of the will. The kind of responsibility relevant to a person is then, *strong* responsibility.

But that is not all. The *kind* of strong responsibility relevant to person goes with the *third* kind of rationality-rationality in the *moral* sense. Just being strong-willed and translating second-order volitions into actions is not the mark of a person as a free and responsible agent (as Frankfurt would have it). A person must be capable of making moral judgements and of acting according to them. For example, if a strong-willed person decides to translate her *desire to go on a world tour* into action, that does not make her a responsible individual. Apart from considering the practical implications of the trip (how much money she would be spending, how much time et cetera), she must consider the moral implications of it as well (whether she is leaving her incapacitated parents alone, whether she is leaving her work incomplete et cetera). So, unlike Frankfurt, we do not commonly believe that a person has 'all the freedom it is possible to desire

or to conceive' when she has a free will and is rational in the prudential sense. The kind of freedom that we desire and which is certainly possible to conceive is the kind that comes with moral thinking.

What we commonly believe to be the essential characteristic of a person is, therefore, a free and moral will. Having such a free and moral will is a logical assumption that we make when we hold a person responsible for something. An individual, who has no capacity to evaluate things freely and morally, is not one whom we can hold responsible. Let me give an example to show how the concepts of freedom and responsibility take a deeper shade of meaning in human persons. A tiger who turns into a man-eater can be 'held responsible' in the 'weak' sense of that expression. Even if we *do* hold it responsible in that sense, we do not believe that the tiger became a man-eater by exercising its *own free will*. On the other hand, if a bank-robber shoots a hapless customer, we hold him responsible for his action not only *because* he performed that action but because he *chose* to perform that action and exercised his free will in doing so. That means, the robber could have exercised his free will in morally acceptable way, by choosing *not* to shoot at the customer. It is evident that the *kind* of responsibility tied to the freedom of action found in *non-persons* (like animals and children, is *not* the *kind* of responsibility tied to the freedom of action found in *persons*. This is linked with the idea that a person has the freedom to judge the moral worth of a course of action. So, it is only a person who is capable of identifying herself *strongly* with a certain course of action. The actions of a person are statements of the *kind* of being she is-the kind of being she *decides* to be.

In this context, let us take a look at Watson's distinction between one's 'valuation system' and one's 'motivational system'. A person's valuation system consists of moral considerations or moral values, which when used in actual practice, enable her to decide which course of action she *ought* to undertake in a given situation. A person's motivational system consists of those conditions, which make her act in a certain way in a certain situation. According to Watson, a free agent must possess a valuation system, that is, she should be able to make judgements of the sort, 'I ought to do this under the given circumstance'. She 'must assign values to alternative states of affairs, that is, rank them in terms of worth'.

More importantly, her 'valuational system must have some (considerable) grip upon (her) motivational system'. So, Watson's conception of a free agent is one who 'has the capacity to translate (her) values into action, (she is one whose) actions flow from (her) evaluational system'.

### ***Free Will and Moral Value***

We have seen that the freedom of the will and the capacity for second order evaluation are essentially connected in our conceptual framework. We have also seen, that when we evaluate our desires, we use certain standards. These are rational, moral standards. The question is, why must second-order evaluation be moral? Why must we choose between *moral* alternatives? Why isn't freedom, the *freedom to choose* and to *do whatever one wants to do*? In other words, why must choice be *rational* choice?

To be free is to be capable of self-evaluation. Self-evaluation must be rational. So, to be free, one has to remain within the bounds of moral reason. Outside this rational standard, freedom loses its meaning and borders on randomness. Outside such a standard, true choice becomes inconceivable. As Taylor says, '...a choice utterly unrelated to the desirability of the alternatives would not be intelligible as a choice'. The value of such rational choice lies in its capacity to decide for a person, what *kind* of being she is going to be. In other words, freedom in the human context is essentially linked with moral value.

### **NOTES**

1. All quotations from Frankfurt have been taken from this article. Similarly, all quotations from Taylor and Watson have been taken from their respective articles.
2. Referring particularly to Strawson's concept of person as found in his *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1959) and also to Ayer's conception of the same, which is to be found in his *A Concept of a Person* New York : St. Martin's, 1963. As quoted in Frankfurt 1971.
3. My disagreement with Frankfurt is about the *kind* of evaluation that takes place at this level. This will become clear when I discuss the *types of rationality* that Frankfurt talks about and the types of rationality that I

have in mind.

4. She may not completely lack the capacity to evaluate her first-order desires but she may lack the capacity to evaluate it *in a particular way*.
5. I am not making any *logical* claim about the relationship between free will and freedom of action. I am arguing *against* such a claim made by Frankfurt. My intention is to show, that the kind of *logical independence* Frankfurt demands, between free will and free action, cannot be supported. In fact, there is a strong *conceptual link* between these two types of freedom, when it is the freedom of a *person* we are talking about. We cannot call an individual a 'person', if she has only the freedom to will and not the freedom to act. Without the optimal freedom to act, freedom of the will would be nothing but the freedom to think and to imagine.

I can think of two cases in which an individual may not have the freedom to act. In one case, there may be physical (physiological) obstacles towards the enjoyment of such freedom, as in case of a man in a wheelchair. In the other case, the freedom to act may have been curbed externally, as in case of a girl in prison. In the former case, it is most likely that the man is aware of the constraints under which he has to act and so, he will not *will* to do anything that he cannot actually do. Of course, he is free to dream, to hope, to imagine a time when he is free from those constraints. There is also the chance that medical advancements will enable him to regain normalcy. But until that happens, he will most likely be aware that he cannot do certain things. In the latter case as well, the girl will be aware that she has to act within some restraints. For example, she can imagine that she is having dinner with her parents at home but she must at the same time be aware that she cannot actually do so. It would perhaps be right to say that she has no *will* to have dinner with her parents but she *wishes* she could. My point is, that it is usual for a person to form her will keeping in mind her capacity to put that will into action. A will without the desire and the capacity to translate into action, is not a will at all.

I can think of another case in which the freedom to act has been unjustly curbed. Take for example, one of our freedom fighters. In spite of her will to fight, the British authorities curbed her freedom. They imprisoned her. Would I say that she was not a *person* by standards? I would put it

differently. I would say, that her status as a person has been forcefully taken away or curbed. Violations of rights are of many types. There may be violations of the rights of animals and all those that under normal conditions have the freedom to act. (It is still a matter of debate whether the curbing of the freedom to act is in the case of non-persons, a curbing of the freedom of the will. For it is questionable whether non-persons have a will at all. If they do, I cannot see why they should not be considered persons. I, for one, have nothing against calling a parrot, 'a person', given that it has a free will along with the freedom to act). Again, there may be violations of the rights of persons, who under normal circumstances have the freedom not only to act but also to will. If there is a violation of their freedom to act, then there is a violation of their freedom to will. In other words, if their freedom to act is forcefully taken away, there is a gross violation of their status as *persons*. Rape, for example, is a not just physical violation. It is a violation of the will.

I have in mind, not only those that are *below* the level of persons but also those who are *above* that level-sub-persons and super-persons, so to say. Among sub-persons, I include not only animals but also human children or those human beings whose rational faculties have not developed in the normal way. They may have the freedom to act, but they cannot be said to have a free will. Similarly, if there is an individual who always acts compassionately, who does not have to think before performing a moral act, whose faculties are so developed that she requires no second-order deliberation before performing an act, then that individual is not a person either. She is more than a person. A person is one for whom moral issues arise, one who requires to think about such issues and to choose between moral alternatives. In choosing one alternative over another, a person exercises her free will. Someone who does not face moral dilemmas because she always acts morally is not a person but a super person.

#### REFERENCES

- Frankfurt, H. G. 1971. 'Freedom of the will and the concept of a person', *Journal of Philosophy* 68, 1:5-20
- Taylor, C. 1976. Responsibility for self. In *The Identities of Persons*, ed. A.



O. Rorty, 281-99. University of California Press.

Watson, G. 1975. 'Free agency'. *Journal of Philosophy* 72, 8:205-20

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am grateful to Prof. Jane Heal, President, St. John's College, Cambridge University for providing me with the articles mentioned above.

My sincere thanks and regards go to Dr. Amita Chatterjee, Department of Philosophy, Jadavpur University, for her constant guidance and for helping me improve the philosophical quality of my paper.

## INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY PUBLICATIONS

Daya Krishna and A. M. Ghose (eds) **Contemporary Philosophical Problems : Some Classical Indian Perspectives**, Rs. 10/-

S.V. Bokil (Tran) **Elements of Metaphysics Within the Reach of Everyone**  
Rs. 25/-

A.P. Rao, **Three Lecturers on John Rawls**, Rs. 10/-

Ramchandra Gandhi (ed) **Language, Tradition and Modern Civilization**,  
Rs. 50/-

S. S. Barlingay, **Beliefs, Reasons and Reflection**, Rs. 70/-

Daya Krishna, A.M. Ghose and P.K. Srivastav (eds) **The Philosophy of Kalidas Bhattacharyya**, Rs. 60/-

M.P. Marathe, Meena A. Kelkar and P. P. Gokhale (eds) **Studies In Jainism**,  
Rs. 50/-

R. Sundara Rajan, **Innovative Competence and Social Change**, Rs. 25/-

S.S. Barlingay (ed), **A. Critical Survey of Completed Reserach Work in Philosophy in Indian University (upto 1980), Part I**, Rs. 50/-

R. K. Gupta, **Exercises in Conceptual Understanding**, Rs. 25/-

Vidyut Aklujkar, **Primacy of Linguistic Units**. Rs. 30/-

Rajendra Prasad, **Regularity, Normativity & Rules of Language** Rs. 100/-

*Contact :* The Editor,  
**Indian Philosophical Quarterly**,  
Department of Philosophy,  
University of Poona,  
Pune 411 007.