

## THE IDEA OF FREEDOM

### Study Topics principles of freedom

#### **9.0 Intuitive Action**

By an act of thinking I link up my individual faculty (my will) with the universal world-process. The conceptual content of an act of will is not deduced from the action. It is got by intuition.

#### **9.1 Conceptually Determined Action**

If the conceptual intuition (ideal content) of my act of will occurs before the corresponding percept (the action), then the content of what I do is determined by my ideas. The conceptual intuition of an act of will is determined only by the conceptual system itself. In other words, the determining factors for my will are to be found, not in the perceptual, but only in the conceptual world.

#### **9.2 Motive Of Will**

The conceptual factor, or motive, is the momentary determining cause of an act of will. The motive of an act of will can be only a pure concept, or else a concept with a definite relation to perception, i.e., a mental picture.

#### **9.3 Characterological Disposition**

The characterological disposition is formed by the more or less permanent content of our subjective life, that is, by the content of our mental pictures and feelings. It is determined especially by my life of feeling.

#### **9.4 Levels Of Morality**

The levels of driving force are: instinct, feelings, thinking and forming mental pictures, and conceptual thinking. The levels of motive are egoism, moral authority, moral insight, and conceptual intuition.

#### **9.5 Moral Intuition**

Among the levels of characterological disposition, we have singled out as the highest the one that works as pure thinking or practical reason. Among the motives, we have singled out conceptual intuition as the highest. On closer inspection it will at once be seen that at this level of morality driving force and motive coincide.

#### **9.6 Moral Motive**

How can an action be individually made to fit the special case and the special situation, and yet at the same time be determined by intuition in a purely ideal way? This objection rests upon a confusion of the moral motive with the perceptible content of an action. Of course, my "I" takes notice of these perceptual contents, but it does not allow itself to be determined by them.

#### **9.7 Ethical Individualism**

The sum of ideas which are effective in us, the concrete content of our intuitions, constitutes what is individual in each of us. To let this content express itself in life is both the highest moral driving force and the highest motive a man can have. We may call this point of view ethical individualism.

#### **9.8 Love For The Objective**

While I am performing the action I am influenced by a moral maxim in so far as it can live in me intuitively; it is bound up with my love for the objective that I want to realize through my action. I do not work out mentally whether my action is good or bad; I carry it out because I love it.

#### **9.9 Expression Of Ideals In Individual Way**

The animal instinct which drives a man to a criminal act does not belong to what is individual in him. The fact that something ideal expresses itself in its own unique way through these instincts, passions, and feelings, constitutes my individuality.

#### **9.10 Harmony Of Intentions**

If we both draw our intuitions really from the world of ideas, and do not obey mere external impulses (physical or moral), then we can not but meet one another in striving for the same aims, in having the same intentions.

#### **9.11 Concept of the Free Human Being**

The intellectual life overcomes his twofold nature by means of knowledge, the moral life succeeds through the actual realization of the free spirit.

## 9.12 Moral World Order

Man does not exist in order to found a moral order of the world. The social order arises so that it may react favorably upon the individual.

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## 9.0 Intuitive Action

[1] THE concept "tree" is conditioned for our knowledge by the percept "tree." There is only one determinate concept which I can select from the general system of concepts and apply to a given percept. The connection of concept and percept is mediately and objectively determined by thought in conformity with the percept. The connection between a percept and its concept is recognized after the act of perception, but the relevance of the one to the other is determined by the character of each.

[2] In willing the situation is different. The percept is here the content of my existence as an individual, whereas the concept is the universal element in me. What is brought into ideal relation to the external world by means of the concept, is an immediate experience of my own, a percept of my Self. More precisely, it is a percept of my Self as active, as producing effects on the external world. In apprehending my own acts of will, I connect a concept with a corresponding percept, viz., with the particular volition. In other words, by an act of thought I link up my individual faculty (my will) with the universal world-process.

The content of a concept corresponding to an external percept appearing within the field of my experience, is given through intuition. Intuition is the source for the content of my whole conceptual system. The percept shows me only which concept I have to apply, in any given instance, out of the aggregate of my intuitions. The content of a concept is, indeed, conditioned by the percept, but it is not produced by it. On the contrary, it is intuitively given and connected with the percept by an act of thought. The same is true of the conceptual content of an act of will which is just as little capable of being deduced from this act. It is got by intuition.

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## 9.1 Conceptually Determined Action

[3] If now the conceptual intuition (ideal content) of my act of will occurs before the corresponding percept, then the content of what I do is determined by my ideas. The reason why I select from the number of possible intuitions just this special one, cannot be sought in an object of perception, but is to be found rather in the purely ideal interdependence of the members of my system of concepts. In other words, the determining factors for my will are to be found, not in the perceptual, but only in the conceptual world. My will is determined by my idea .

The conceptual system which corresponds to the external world is conditioned by this external world. We must determine from the percept itself what concept corresponds to it; and how, in turn, this concept will fit in with the rest of my system of ideas, depends on its intuitive content. The percept thus conditions directly its concept and, thereby, indirectly also its place in the conceptual system of my world. But the ideal content of an act of will, which is drawn from the conceptual system and which precedes the act of will, is determined only by the conceptual system itself.

*the determining factors for my will are found only in the conceptual world*

An act of will which depends on nothing but this ideal content must itself be regarded as ideal, that is, as determined by an idea. This does not imply, of course, that all acts of will are determined only by ideas. All factors which determine the human individual have an influence on his will.

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## 9.2 Motive Of Will

[4] In a particular act of will we must distinguish two factors: the motive, and the spring of action. The motive is the conceptual factor, the spring of action is the perceptual factor in will. The conceptual factor, or motive, is the momentary determining cause of an act of will, the spring of action is the permanent determining factor in the individual. The motive of an act of will can be only a pure concept, or else a concept with a definite relation to perception, i.e., a mental picture. Universal and individual concepts (mental pictures) become motives of will by influencing the human individual and determining him to

action in a particular direction. One and the same concept, however, or one and the same mental picture, influences different individuals differently. They determine different men to different actions. An act of will is, therefore, not merely the outcome of the concept or the mental picture, but also of the individual make-up of human beings. This individual make-up we will call, following Edward van Hartmann, the "characterological disposition." The manner in which concept and mental picture act on the characterological disposition of a man gives to his life a definite moral or ethical stamp.

<b>Two Factors of Act of Will</b>				
<b>Motive</b>	Conceptual factor	Momentary cause	Pure concept or mental picture	Goal, purpose of action
<b>Spring of Action (Driving force)</b>	Perceptual factor	Permanent factor	Individual make-up (characterological disposition)	Habitual ideas and feelings drive action

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### 9.3 Characterological Disposition

[5] The characterological disposition consists of the more or less permanent content of the individual's life, that is, of his habitual ideas and feelings. Whether an idea which enters my mind at this moment stimulates me to an act of will or not, depends on its relation to my other ideal contents, and also to my peculiar modes of feeling. My ideal content, in turn, is conditioned by the sum total of those concepts which have, in the course of my individual life, come in contact with percepts, that is, have become mental pictures. This, again, depends on my greater or lesser capacity for intuition, and on the range of my perception, that is, on the subjective and objective factors of my experiences, on the structure of my mind and on my environment. My affective life more especially determines my characterological disposition. Whether I shall make a certain mental picture or concept the motive for action will depend on whether it gives me pleasure or pain.



Walking brings me pleasure.

These are the factors which we have to consider in an act of will. The immediately present mental picture or concept, which becomes the motive, determines the end or the purpose of my will; my characterological disposition determines me to direct my activity towards this end. The idea of taking a walk in the next half-hour determines the end of my action. But this idea is raised to the level of a motive only if it meets with a suitable characterological disposition, that is, if during my past life I have formed the mental pictures of the wholesomeness of walking and the value of health; and further, if the mental picture of walking is accompanied by a feeling of pleasure.

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### 9.4 Levels Of Morality

[6] We must, therefore, distinguish (1) the possible subjective dispositions which are likely to turn given mental pictures and concepts into motives, and (2) the possible mental pictures and concepts which are capable of so influencing my characterological disposition that an act of will results. The former are for morality the springs of action, the latter its ends.

#### SPRINGS OF ACTION

[7] The springs of action in the moral life can be discovered by analyzing the elements of which individual life is composed.

#### Instinct (will)

[8] The first level of individual life is that of perception, more particularly sense-perception. This is the stage of our individual lives in which a percept translates itself into will immediately, without the intervention of either a feeling or a concept. The spring of action here involved may be called simply

instinct. Our lower, purely animal, needs (hunger, sexual intercourse, etc.) find their satisfaction in this way. The main characteristic of instinctive life is the immediacy with which the percept starts off the act of will. This kind of determination of the will, which belongs originally only to the life of the lower senses, may however become extended also to the percepts of the higher senses. We may react to the percept of a certain event in the external world without reflecting on what we do, and without any special feeling connecting itself with the percept. We have examples of this especially in our ordinary conventional intercourse with men. The spring of this kind of action is called tact or moral good taste. The more often such immediate reactions to a percept occur, the more the agent will prove himself able to act purely under the guidance of tact; that is, tact becomes his characterological disposition.



Etiquette

### Feeling



[9] The second level of human life is feeling. Definite feelings accompany the percepts of the external world. These feelings may become springs of action. When I see a hungry man, my pity for him may become the spring of my action. Such feelings, for example, are modesty, pride, sense of honour, humility, remorse, pity, revenge, gratitude, piety, loyalty, love, and duty.

### Thought

[10] The third and last level of life is having thoughts and forming mental pictures. A mental picture or a concept may become the motive of an action through mere reflection. Mental pictures become motives because, in the course of my life, I regularly connect certain aims of my will with percepts which recur again and again in a more or less modified form. Hence it is, that with men who are not wholly without experience, the occurrence of certain percepts is always accompanied also by the consciousness of mental pictures of actions, which they have themselves carried out in similar cases or which they have seen others carry out. These mental pictures float before their minds as determining models in all subsequent decisions; they become parts of their characterological disposition. We may give the name of practical experience to the spring of action just described. Practical experience merges gradually into purely tactful behaviour. That happens, when definite typical pictures of actions have become so closely connected in our minds with mental pictures of certain situations in life, that, in any given instance, we omit all deliberation based on experience, and pass immediately from the percept to the action.



Practical Experience

### Conceptual Thinking

[11] The highest level of individual life is that of conceptual thought without reference to any definite perceptual content. We determine the content of a concept through pure intuition on the basis of an ideal system. Such a concept contains, at first, no reference to any definite percepts. When an act of will comes about under the influence of a concept which refers to a percept, i.e., under the influence of a mental picture, then it is the percept which determines our action indirectly by way of the concept. But when we act under the influence of pure intuitions, the spring of our action is pure thought. As it is the custom in

philosophy to call pure thought "reason," we may perhaps be justified in giving the name of practical reason to the spring of action characteristic of this level of life. The clearest account of this spring of action has been given by Kreyenbuhl (*Philosophische Monatshefte*, vol. xviii, No. 3). In my opinion his article on this subject is one of the most important contributions to present-day philosophy, more especially to Ethics. Kreyenbuhl calls the spring of action, of which we are treating, the practical

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apriori, i.e., a spring of action issuing immediately from my intuition.

[12] It is clear that such a spring of action can no longer be counted in the strictest sense as part of the characterological disposition. For what is here effective in me as a spring of action is no longer something purely individual, but the ideal, and hence universal, content of my intuition. As soon as I regard the content as the valid basis and starting-point of an action, I pass over into willing, irrespective of whether the concept was already in my mind beforehand, or whether it only occurs to me immediately before the action, that is, irrespective of whether it was present in the form of a disposition in me or not.

## MOTIVES

[13] A real act of will results only when a present impulse to action, in the form of a concept or mental picture, acts on the characterological disposition. Such an impulse thereupon becomes the motive of the will.

[14] The motives of moral conduct are mental pictures and concepts. There are Moralists who see in feeling also a motive of morality; they assert, e.g., that the end of moral conduct is to secure the greatest possible quantity of pleasure for the agent. Pleasure itself, however, can never be a motive; at best only the idea of pleasure can act as motive. The mental picture of a future pleasure, but not the feeling itself, can act on my characterological disposition. For the feeling does not yet exist in the moment of action; on the contrary, it has first to be produced by the action.

## Egoism

[15] The mental picture of one's own or another's well-being is, however, rightly regarded as a motive of the will. The principle of producing the greatest quantity of pleasure for oneself through one's action, that is, to attain individual happiness, is called Egoism. The attainment of this individual happiness is sought either by thinking ruthlessly only of one's own good, and striving to attain it even at the cost of the happiness of other individuals (Pure Egoism), or by promoting the good of others, either because one anticipates indirectly a favourable influence on one's own happiness through the happiness of others, or because one fears to endanger one's own interest by injuring others (Morality of Prudence). The special content of the egoistical principle of morality will depend on the mental pictures which we form of what constitutes our own, or others' good. A man will determine the content of his egoistical striving in accordance with what he regards as one of life's good things (luxury, hope of happiness, deliverance from different evils, etc.).



## Moral Authority



[16] Further, the purely conceptual content of an action is to be regarded as yet another kind of motive. This content has no reference, like the mental picture of one's own pleasure, solely to the particular action, but to the deduction of an action from a system of moral principles. These moral principles, in the form of abstract concepts, may guide the individual's moral life without his worrying himself about the origin of his concepts. In that case, we feel merely the moral necessity of submitting to a moral concept, which, in the form of law, controls our actions. The justification of this necessity we leave to those who demand from us moral subjection, that is, to those whose moral authority over us we acknowledge (the head of the family, the state, social custom, the authority of the church, divine revelation). We meet with a special

kind of these moral principles when the law is not proclaimed to us by an external authority, but comes

from our own selves (moral autonomy). In this case we believe that we hear the voice, to which we have to submit ourselves, in our own souls. The name for this voice is conscience.

### Moral Insight

[17] It is a great moral advance when a man no longer takes as the motive of his action the commands of an external or internal authority, but tries to understand the reason why a given maxim of action ought to be effective as a motive in him. This is the advance from morality based on authority to action from moral insight. At this level of morality, a man will try to discover the demands of the moral life, and will let his action be determined by this knowledge. Such demands are (1) the greatest possible happiness of humanity as a whole purely for its own sake, (2) the progress of civilization, or the moral development of mankind towards ever greater perfection, (3) the realization of individual moral ends conceived by an act of pure intuition.



[18] The greatest possible happiness of humanity as a whole will naturally be differently conceived by different people. The above mentioned maxim does not imply any definite mental picture of this happiness, but rather means that every one who acknowledges this principle strives to do all that, in his opinion, most promotes the good of the whole of humanity.

[19] The progress of civilization is seen to be a special application of the moral principle just mentioned, at any rate for those to whom the goods which civilization produces bring feelings of pleasure. However, they will have

to pay the price of progress in the destruction and annihilation of many things which also contribute to the happiness of humanity. It is, however, also possible that some men look upon the progress of civilization as a moral necessity, quite apart from the feelings of pleasure which it brings. If so, the progress of civilization will be a new moral principle for them, different from the previous one.

### Conceptual Intuition

[20] Both the principle of the public good, and that of the progress of civilization, alike depend on the way in which we apply the content of our moral ideas to particular experiences (percepts). The highest principle of morality which we can conceive, however, is that which contains to start with, no such reference to particular experiences, but which springs from the source of pure intuition and does not seek until later any connection with percepts, i.e., with life. The determination of what ought to be willed issues here from a point of view very different from that of the previous two principles. Whoever accepts the principle of the public good will in all his actions ask first what his ideals contribute to this public good. The upholder of the progress of civilization as the principle of morality will act similarly. There is, however, a still higher mode of conduct which, in a given case, does not start from any single limited moral ideal, but which sees a certain value in all moral principles, always asking whether this or that is more important in a particular case. It may happen that a man considers in certain circumstances the promotion of the public good, in others that of the progress of civilization, and in yet others the furthering of his own private good, to be the right course, and makes that the motive of his action. But when all other grounds of determination take second place, then we rely, in the first place, on conceptual intuition itself. All other motives now drop out of sight, and the ideal content of an action alone becomes its motive.

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### 9.5 Moral Intuition

[21] Among the levels of characterological disposition, we have singled out as the highest that which manifests itself as pure thought, or practical reason. Among the motives, we have just singled out conceptual intuition as the highest. On nearer consideration, we now perceive that at this level of morality the spring of action and the motive coincide, i.e., that neither a predetermined characterological disposition, nor an external moral principle accepted on authority, *for such an action to be possible, we must first be capable of moral intuitions*

influence our conduct. The action, therefore, is neither a merely stereotyped one which follows the rules of a moral code, nor is it automatically performed in response to an external impulse. Rather it is determined solely through its ideal content.

[22] For such an action to be possible, we must first be capable of moral intuitions. Whoever lacks the capacity to think out for himself the moral principles that apply in each particular case, will never rise to the level of genuine individual willing.



[23] Kant's principle of morality: Act so that the principle of your action may be valid for all men —is the exact opposite of ours. His principle would mean death to all individual action. The norm for me can never be what all men would do, but rather what it is right for me to do in each special case.

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### 9.6 Moral Motive

[24] A superficial criticism might urge against these arguments: How can an action be individually adapted to the special case and the special situation, and yet at the same time be ideally determined by pure intuition? This objection rests on a confusion of the moral motive with the perceptual content of an action. The latter, indeed, may be a motive, and is actually a motive when we act for the progress of culture, or from pure egoism, etc., but in action based on pure moral intuition it never is a motive. Of course, my Self takes notice of these perceptual contents, but it does not allow itself to be determined by them. The content is used only to construct a theoretical concept, but the corresponding moral concept is not derived from the object. The theoretical concept of a given situation which faces me, is a moral concept also, only if I adopt the standpoint of a particular moral principle. If I base all my conduct on the principle of the progress of civilization, then my way through life is tied down to a fixed route. From every occurrence which comes to my notice and attracts my interest, there springs a moral duty, viz., to do my

*at a higher level these moral labels disappear, and my action is determined in each particular instance by my idea*

tiny share towards using this occurrence in the service of the progress of civilization. In addition to the concept which reveals to me the connections of events or objects according to the laws of nature, there is also a moral label attached to them which contains for me, as a moral agent, ethical directions as to how I have to conduct myself. At a higher level these moral labels disappear, and

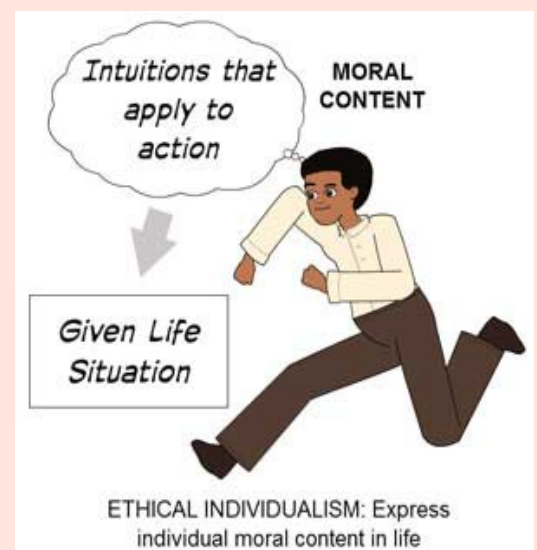
my action is determined in each particular instance by my idea; and more particularly by the idea which is suggested to me by the concrete instance.

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### 9.7 Ethical Individualism

[25] Men vary greatly in their capacity for intuition. In some, ideas bubble up like a spring, others acquire them with much labour. The situations in which men live, and which are the scenes of their actions, are no less widely different. The conduct of a man will depend, therefore, on the manner in which his faculty of intuition reacts to a given situation. The aggregate of the ideas which are effective in us, the concrete content of our intuitions, constitute that which is individual in each of us, notwithstanding the universal character of our ideas. In so far as this intuitive content has reference to action, it constitutes the moral substance of the individual. To let this substance express itself in his life is the moral principle of the man who regards all other moral principles as subordinate. We may call this point of view Ethical Individualism.

[26] The determining factor of an action, in any concrete instance, is the discovery of the corresponding purely individual intuition. At this level of morality, there can be no question of general moral concepts (norms, laws). General norms always presuppose concrete facts from which they can be deduced. But facts have first to be created by human action.



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### 9.8 Love For The Objective

[27] When we look for the regulating principles (the conceptual principles guiding the actions of individuals, peoples, epochs), we obtain a system of Ethics which is not a science of moral norms, but rather a science of morality as a natural fact. Only the laws discovered in this way are related to human action as the laws of nature are related to particular phenomena. These laws, however, are very far from being identical with the principles on which we base our actions. When I, or another, subsequently review my action we can discover what moral principles came into play in it. But so long as I am acting, I am influenced not by these moral principles but by my love for the object, which I want to realize through my action. I ask no man and no moral code, whether I shall perform this action or not. On the contrary, I carry it out as soon as I have formed the idea of it. This alone makes it my action.



If a man acts because he accepts certain moral norms, his action is the outcome of the principles which compose his moral code. He merely carries out orders. He is a superior kind of automaton. Inject some stimulus to action into his mind, and at once the clock-work of his moral principles will begin to work and run its prescribed course, so as to issue in an action which is Christian, or humane, or unselfish, or calculated to promote the progress of culture. It is only when I follow solely my love for the object, that it is I, myself, who act. At this level of morality, I acknowledge no lord over me, neither an external authority, nor the so-called voice of my conscience. I acknowledge no external principle of my action, because I have found in myself the ground for my action, viz., my love of

the action. I do not ask whether my action is good or bad; I perform it, because I am in love with it. Neither do I ask myself how another man would act in my position. On the contrary, I act as I, this unique individuality, will to act. No general usage, no common custom, no general maxim current among men, no moral norm guides me, but my love for the action. I feel no compulsion, neither the compulsion of nature which dominates me through my instincts, nor the compulsion of the moral commandments. My will is simply to realize what in me lies.

*only when I follow my love for my objective is it I myself who act*

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### 9.9 Expression Of Ideals In Individual Way

[28] Those who hold to general moral norms will reply to these arguments that, if every one has the right to live himself out and to do what he pleases, there can be no distinction between a good and a bad action, every fraudulent impulse in me has the same right to issue in action as the intention to serve the general good. It is not the mere fact of my having conceived the idea of an action which ought to determine me as a moral agent, but the further examination of whether it is a good or an evil action. Only if it is good ought I to carry it out.

[29] In reply I would say that I am not talking of children or of men who follow their animal or social instincts. I am talking of men who are capable of raising themselves to the level of the ideal content of the world. It is only in an age in which immature men regard the blind instincts as part of a man's individuality, that the act of a criminal can be described as living out one's individuality in the same sense in which the embodiment in action of a pure intuition can be so described.



Individualists?

The animal instinct which drives a man to a criminal act does not belong to what is individual in him, but rather to that which is most general in him, to that which is equally present in all individuals. The individual element in me is not my organism with its instincts and feelings, but rather the unified world of ideas which reveals itself through this organism. My instincts, cravings, passions, justify no further assertion about me than that I belong to the general species man. The fact that something ideal expresses itself in its own unique way through these

*that something "ideal" expresses itself in its own unique way through these instincts, passions, and feelings, constitutes my individuality*



instincts, passions, and feelings, constitutes my individuality. My instincts and cravings make me the sort of man of whom there are twelve to the dozen. The unique character of the idea, by means of which I distinguish myself within the dozen as "I," makes of me an individual. Only a being other than myself could distinguish me from others by the difference in my animal nature. By thought, i.e., by the active grasping of the ideal element working itself out through my organism, I distinguish myself from others. Hence it is impossible to say of the action of a criminal that it issues from the idea within him. Indeed, the characteristic feature of criminal actions is precisely that they spring from the non-ideal elements in man.

[30] An act the grounds for which lie in the ideal part of my individual nature is free. Every other act, whether done under the compulsion of nature or under the obligation imposed by a moral norm, is unfree.

[31] That man alone is free who in every moment of his life is able to obey only himself. A moral act is my act only when it can be called free in this sense.

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### 9.10 Harmony Of Intentions

[32] Action on the basis of freedom does not exclude, but include, the moral laws. It only shows that it stands on a higher level than actions which are dictated by these laws. Why should my act serve the general good less well when I do it from pure love of it, than when I perform it because it is a duty to serve the general good? The concept of duty excludes freedom, because it will not acknowledge the right of individuality, but demands the subjection of individuality to a general norm. Freedom of action is conceivable only from the standpoint of Ethical Individualism.

[33] But how about the possibility of social life for men, if each aims only at asserting his own individuality? This question expresses yet another objection on the part of Moralism. The Moralist believes that a social community is possible only if all men are held together by a common moral order. This shows that the Moralist does not understand the community of the world of ideas. He does not realize that the world of ideas which inspires me is no other than that which inspires my fellow-men. I differ from my neighbour, not at all because we are living in two entirely different mental worlds, but because from our common world of ideas we receive different intuitions. He desires to live out his intuitions, I mine. If we both draw our intuitions really from the world of ideas, and do not obey mere external impulses (physical or moral), then we can not but meet one another in striving for the same aims, in having the same intentions. A moral misunderstanding, a clash of aims, is impossible between men who are free. Only the morally unfree who blindly follow their natural instincts or the commands of duty, turn their backs on their neighbours, if these do not obey the same instincts and the same laws as themselves. Live and let live is the fundamental principle of the free man. He knows no "ought." How he shall will in any given case will be determined for him by his faculty of ideas.



If we draw our intuitions from the world of ideas, and do not obey external impulses (physical or moral), then we can not but meet one another in striving for the same aims, in having the same intentions.

[34] If sociability were not deeply rooted in human nature, no external laws would be able to inoculate us with it. It is only because human individuals are akin in spirit that they can live out their lives side by side. The free man lives out his life in the full confidence that all other free men belong to one spiritual world with himself, and that their intentions will coincide with his. The free man does not demand agreement from his fellow-men, but he expects it none the less, believing that it is inherent in human nature.

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### 9.11 Concept of the Free Human Being

[35] There are many who will say that the concept of the free man which I have here developed, is a chimera nowhere to be found realized, and that we have got to deal with actual human beings, from whom we can expect morality only if they obey some moral law, i.e., if they regard their moral task as a duty and do not simply follow their inclinations and loves. I do not deny this. Only a blind man could do that. But, if so, away with all this hypocrisy of morality! Let us say simply that human nature must be compelled to act as long as it is not free. Whether the compulsion of man's unfree nature is effected by physical force or through moral laws, whether man is unfree because he indulges his unmeasured sexual desire, or because he is bound tight in the bonds of conventional morality, is quite immaterial. Only let us not assert that such a man can rightly call his actions his own, seeing that he is driven to them by an external force. But in the midst of all this network of compulsion, there arise free spirits who in all the welter of customs, legal codes, religious observances, etc., learn to be true to themselves. They are free in so far as they obey only themselves; unfree in so far as they submit to control. Which of us can say that he is really free in all his actions? Yet in each of us there dwells something deeper in which the free man finds expression.

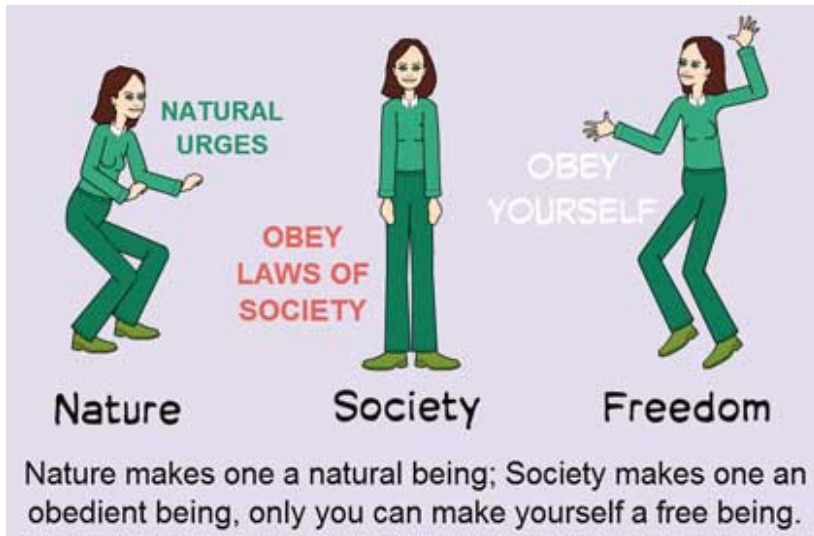
[36] Our life is made up of free and unfree actions. We cannot, however, form a final and adequate concept of human nature without coming upon the free spirit as its purest expression. After all, we are men in the fullest sense only in so far as we are free.

[37] This is an ideal, many will say. Doubtless; but it is an ideal which is a real element in us working up to the surface of our nature. It is no ideal born of mere imagination or dream, but one which has life, and which manifests itself clearly even in the least developed form of its existence. If men were nothing but natural objects, the search for ideals, that is, for ideas which as yet are not actual but the realization of which we demand, would be an impossibility. In dealing with external objects the idea is determined by the percept. We have done our share when we have recognized the connection between idea and percept. But with a human being the case is different. The content of his existence is not determined without him. His concept (free spirit) is not a priori united objectively with the perceptual content "man," so that knowledge need only register the fact subsequently. Man must by his own act unite his concept with the percept "man."

Concept and percept coincide with one another in this instance, only in so far as the individual himself makes them coincide. This he can do only if he has found the concept of the free spirit, that is, if he has found the concept of his own Self. In the objective world a boundary-line is drawn by our organization between percept and concept. Knowledge breaks down this barrier. In our subjective nature this barrier is no less present. The individual overcomes it in the course of his development, by embodying his concept of himself in his outward existence. Hence man's moral life and his intellectual life lead him both alike to his twofold nature, perception (immediate experience) and thought. The intellectual life overcomes his twofold nature by means of knowledge, the moral life succeeds through the actual realization of the free spirit. Every being has its inborn concept (the laws of its being and action), but in external objects

this concept is indissolubly bound up with the percept, and separated from it only in the organization of human minds. In human beings concept and percept are, at first, actually separated, to be just as actually reunited by them. Some one might object that to our percept of a man there corresponds at every moment of his life a definite concept, just as with external objects. I can construct for myself the concept of an average man, and I may also have given to me a percept to fit this pattern. Suppose now I add to this the concept of a free spirit, then I have two concepts for the same object.





[38] Such an objection is one-sided. As object of perception I am subject to perpetual change. As a child I was one thing, another as a youth, yet another as a man. Moreover, at every moment I am different, as perceived, from what I was the moment before. These changes may take place in such a way that either it is always only the same (average) man who exhibits himself in them, or that they represent the expression of a free spirit. Such are the changes which my actions, as objects of perception, undergo.

[39] In the perceptual object "man" there is given the possibility of transformation, just as in the plant-seed there lies the

possibility of growth into a fully developed plant. The plant transforms itself in growth, because of the objective law of nature which is inherent in it. The human being remains in his undeveloped state, unless he takes hold of the material for transformation within him and develops himself through his own energy. Nature makes of man merely a natural being; Society makes of him a being who acts in obedience to law; only he himself can make a free man of himself. At a definite stage in his development Nature releases man from her fetters; Society carries his development a step further; he alone can give himself the final polish.

[40] The theory of free morality, then, does not assert that the free spirit is the only form in which man can exist. It looks upon the freedom of the spirit only as the last stage in man's evolution. This is not to deny that conduct in obedience to norms has its legitimate place as a stage in development. The point is that we cannot acknowledge it to be the absolute standpoint in morality. For the free spirit transcends norms, in the sense that he is insensible to them as commands, but regulates his conduct in accordance with his impulses (intuitions).



[41] When Kant apostrophizes duty: "Duty! Thou sublime and mighty name, that dost embrace nothing charming or insinuating, but requirest submission," thou that "holdest forth a law . . . before which all inclinations are dumb, even though they secretly counter-work it," then the free spirit replies: "Freedom! thou kindly and humane name, which dost embrace within thyself all that is morally most charming, all that insinuates itself most into my humanity, and which makest me the servant of nobody, which holdest forth no law, but waitest what my inclination itself will proclaim as law, because it resists every law that is forced upon it."

[42] This is the contrast of morality according to law and according to freedom.

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### 9.12 Moral World Order

[43] The Philistine who looks upon the state as embodied morality is sure to look upon the free spirit as a danger to the state. But that is only because his view is narrowly focused on a limited period of time. If he were able to look beyond, he would soon find that it is but on rare occasions that the free spirit needs to go beyond the laws of his state, and that it never needs to confront them with any real contradiction. For the laws of the state, one and all, have had their origin in the intuitions of free spirits, just like all other objective laws of morality. There is no traditional law enforced by the authority of a family, which was not, once upon a time, intuitively conceived and laid down by an ancestor. Similarly the conventional laws of morality are first of all established by particular men, and the laws of the state are always born in the brain of a statesman. These free spirits have



The Philistine looks upon the free spirit as a danger.

set up laws over the rest of mankind, and only he is unfree who forgets this origin and makes them either divine commands, or objective moral duties, or the authoritative voice of his own conscience. He, on the other hand, who does not forget the origin of laws, but looks for it in man, will respect them as belonging to the same world of ideas which is the source also of his own moral intuitions. If he thinks his intuitions better than the existing laws, he will try to put them into the place of the latter. If he thinks the laws justified, he will act in accordance with them as if they were his own intuitions.

[44] Man does not exist in order to found a moral order of the world. Anyone who maintains that he does, stands in his theory of man still at that same point, at which natural science stood when it believed that a bull has horns in order that it may butt. Scientists, happily, have cast the concept of objective purposes in nature into the limbo of dead theories. For Ethics, it is more difficult to achieve the same emancipation. But just as horns do not exist for the sake of butting, but butting because of horns, so man does not exist for the sake of morality, but morality exists through man. The free man acts because he has a moral idea, he does not act in order to be moral. Human individuals are the presupposition of a moral world order.

[45] The human individual is the fountain of all morality and the centre of all life. State and society exist only because they have necessarily grown out of the life of individuals. That state and society, in turn, *the social order arises, so that it may react favorably upon the individual* should react upon the lives of individuals, is no more difficult to comprehend, than that the butting which is the result of the existence of horns, reacts in turn upon the further development of the horns, which would become atrophied by prolonged disuse. Similarly the individual must degenerate, if he leads an isolated existence beyond the pale of human society. That is just the reason why the social order arises, viz., that it may react favourably upon the individual.