

1: Clarification of the Controversy

In this chapter, we clarify the issue with which the remainder of this work is concerned. “Freedom” has many meanings; we begin by distinguishing them, and then formally define “free choice.” Next we describe the experience of choice, and show how this experience gives rise to a sense of freedom and leads to the judgment that one is free. We carefully analyze this judgment. Finally, we propose *Sfc/Nfc* as the formulation of the issue with which we shall deal, and explain precisely what we mean by this formulation.

A. Meanings of the word “freedom”

The word “freedom” has several distinct but related and easily confused meanings.¹ We first sort out the meanings other than the one with which we are mainly concerned.

There is no single generic meaning of “freedom.” The various meanings of the word do not signify species of a genus. Rather, there is a family of meanings sharing some common elements which themselves shift in sense in various uses of the word.

What are these common elements? At least the following: something acting or behaving, the activity or behavior, and something else which could be, but is not actually, in opposition to the activity or behavior. In the uses of “freedom” applied to persons, the meaning includes someone acting, the activity, and something which in some sense could be, but is not actually, in opposition to the activity.

To distinguish various senses of “freedom,” we specify these elements and describe their organization in the various uses of the word.

In one sense, “freedom” means physical freedom. In this sense, anything which behaves spontaneously—that is, without external constraint or restraint—can be said to be free.

In this sense of “freedom” even nonorganic entities can be called “free”; one speaks, for example, of “freely falling bodies.” Animals also are called “free” in this sense; an animal in the wild is free while one in captivity is not. Similarly, a person who is drugged so that he is in a coma lacks physical freedom. A person can be called “free” in this sense if he acts spontaneously, not being constrained by someone else or restrained by prison bars and chains.

Physical freedom is subject to degree and depends on conditions. The more restrained something is by circumstances, the less room there is for its spontaneous behavior, and the less free it is. Also, the more constrained something is in its behavior, the less its behavior is its own, the less it seems active and the more it seems passive; hence the less free one takes it to be.

In a second sense, “freedom” means freedom to do as one pleases. In this sense, a person is called “free” if there is no one ordering him to do what he does not wish to do or forbidding him to do what he desires to do.

The adolescent demand for freedom from authority is often a demand for freedom in this sense. In this sense of “freedom,” a slave, to the extent that he is a slave, is not free. A slave’s lack of freedom need not reduce his physical freedom, although this too may be restricted. But a slave lacks freedom precisely in the sense that his action fulfills the demand of another, and only indirectly if at all any desire of his own. Historically, the quest for personal liberty from enslaving institutions also involves a quest for freedom in this sense.

Freedom to do as one pleases is subject to degree; how much of it one enjoys depends on circumstances. The more burdened one is by requirements laid upon him by others, the less scope he has to do as he pleases. The more influential one is in his relations with others, the more scope he has to do as he pleases.

“Freedom” is also used, but less commonly, to signify what we call “ideal freedom.” In this sense of “freedom,” individuals and societies are said to be “free” if they are not prevented from acting in accord with an ideal, whatever that ideal might be. If one is free in this sense, he has overcome or successfully avoided the obstacles to fulfilling an ideal.

With ideal freedom in mind, St. Paul considered the sinner not to be free, since the sinner is bound by his sin to fall short of the ideal of uprightness. Paul considered Christians free, because their redemption by Christ freed them for uprightness. Similarly, Freud considered the neurotic not to be free. But the cured patient, freed of his neurosis, is able to behave in accord with a psychological ideal.

One has ideal freedom if he is not blocked in efforts to do as he ought to do.

Often, what one ought to do and what one would like to do are opposed to each other. However, most ideals for human behavior are proposed with the expectation that, at some point, doing as one pleases and doing as one ought will coincide.

Ideal freedom has as many varieties as there are diverse conceptions of the ideal condition of the person and diverse views of the obstacles to be faced in fulfilling the ideal. One way of conceiving the ideal human condition is as a perfect society, such as Marx's ideal community. Ideal freedom in this case cannot be attained by isolated individuals but only by society as a whole. Yet the general concept of ideal freedom remains the same: persons have it when they *can* act as they ideally *would* act.

Another unfamiliar concept can be expressed by "freedom"—the emergence of novelty. This freedom obtains when factors which tend toward repetition are overcome.

The creative artist may be called "free" in this sense because he introduces something new and is not merely repeating previous accomplishments. Some philosophers have regarded the whole of reality as an ongoing process—rather like the creative process of art—in which novelties regularly emerge. Such philosophies admit an element of indeterminism in nature and do not reduce emerging novelties to antecedent conditions and their laws.

Freedom as emergence of novelty is distinct from physical freedom, because physical freedom is defined by the given spontaneity of the entity in question, whereas freedom as emergence of novelty can involve the emergence of a new spontaneity. Freedom to do as one pleases can be as repetitive and noncreative as one's desires happen to be, whereas freedom as emergence of novelty can involve an emergence of new desires. Ideal freedom presupposes a given principle in accord with which action should proceed; freedom as emergence of novelty can involve the creation of novel principles and the emergence of new ideals.²

In one sense, "political freedom" means a version of freedom to do as one pleases which applies to nations. In this sense, a country is said to be "free" when it is not subject to the rule of some other country. Nations, like individuals, can be bound in slavery or can enjoy liberty.

But there are other senses of "political freedom." In one of these, "freedom" means the participation of individuals in governing their own polity. There is political freedom of this sort in a nation to the extent that factors which would inhibit such participation are excluded. In this sense, children are not politically free. In Western liberal democracies, practically all adults are, at least to some extent. "Political freedom" can be used to refer to the social analogues of the referents of other senses of "freedom" previously distinguished.

B. “Free choice” defined

The word “freedom” also can be used to refer to freedom of choice. Since this work is concerned with *Sfc/Nfc*, we have distinguished other meanings of “freedom” mainly in order to forestall confusion. In this section, we define what we mean by “free choice” as it occurs in “Someone can make a free choice.” We do not consider our definition of “free choice” arbitrary for we think that our use of the expression is the same as some uses of it in ordinary language. Moreover, the definition we propose captures the essentials of the experience on the basis of which people often think their choices are free. This experience will be articulated in sections C through F.

Someone makes a free choice if and only if he makes a choice (*C*) in the actual world, and there is a possible world such that he does not make *C* in this possible world and everything in this possible world except his making *C* and the consequences of his making *C* is the same as in the actual world.³

The following remarks will clarify the meaning and implications of this definition.

If a choice is free the causal conditions for that choice are such that they would also be the conditions for not making that choice except insofar as these conditions include the person’s very choosing itself and the consequences of his choice. Thus, a choice’s being free is consistent with its having *necessary* causal conditions other than the choice itself; such necessary causal conditions would be called “causes of the choice” provided that “cause” not be taken to mean “sufficient condition.”

Normally, one chooses not merely to do an act or not to do it, but to do one act or another. Obviously, the two positive possibilities do not share all the same necessary conditions. However, one can choose either only insofar as the necessary conditions of both are given—or, at least, expected to be given. The two alternatives have a common set of conditions necessary for either of them being chosen—the person about to choose must be interested in both, must be aware of both, must regard the joint realization of the two as impossible. The person’s very choosing—if choice is free—makes the difference in that all other conditions necessary for carrying out both alternatives being given—or expected—and all other necessary conditions for choosing either being given, one’s very choosing is the only factor which brings it about that one alternative rather than the other is pursued.

Moreover, on our definition, a free choice would not be a chance event. Its causally sufficient condition could be specified: the necessary conditions other than the choice together with a person’s very choosing. Choosing is not a wholly isolated event; it is something a person does.⁴

Partly for this reason, a number of philosophers have suggested that free

choice would involve a special mode of causality: “non-occurrent causation” (C. D. Broad), “agent causality” (Richard Taylor and Roderick Chisholm), “self-determinism” (Frederick Ferré), and so forth.⁵ If the proposal that free choice would involve a special mode of causality means that prior to his very choosing a person somehow determines the choice he makes—for instance, because of his unique personality—then such a proposal is incompatible with our definition. However, if the proposal is intended to mean that persons make choices and that the causality of choice-making cannot be reduced to the causality which obtains between events, then this proposal is consistent with our definition.

Some philosophers describe the freedom of free choice as “contra-causal.” We regard this locution as unfortunate because it suggests that choosing freely is not itself a mode of causing but rather a mysterious interference with a determinate and mechanistic course of nature. This assumption in turn suggests that if a free choice were to occur, it would be a miraculous event—a violation of what is physically necessary.

It has often been said that “free choice” means that a person who has made a certain choice “could have done otherwise.” This expression can be used to mean that one would have done otherwise had conditions been different; used thus, “could have done otherwise” does not indicate free choice. But this expression sometimes is used to mean that one could have done otherwise under the very same conditions. Used in this way, “could have done otherwise” does indicate free choice, for it refers retrospectively and contrary to fact to a possibility which prospectively was as real as the alternative in fact chosen.⁶

If the choice is free, there is in it a creative novelty such that no conjunction of relevant causal laws and any set of true propositions describing states of affairs obtaining prior to the choice entails the proposition that this choice is made. Moreover, such a choice can alter the subsequent course of events and thus introduce further unpredictability.⁷

“Free choice” as we have defined it is not synonymous with some uses of “free will.” The expression “free will” is commonly used in contexts such as, “He did not do it under compulsion but of his own free will,” where “free will” refers to physical liberty or to the freedom to do as one pleases rather than to free choice.

The definition of free choice, it should be noted, does not entail the possibility of the execution of one’s choice. Freedom in other senses sometimes is a necessary condition for executing one’s choice. Bertrand Russell once remarked that although we can do as we please, we cannot please as we please.⁸ Our point here is that *if* there are free choices then we can choose as we choose even if it turns out that we cannot do as we choose.

C. Choice—what it is not

We must next describe a distinctive way in which someone is said to “make a choice.”⁹ The expression is used in the relevant sense in the sentence: “John made a choice to join the Peace Corps.” In this experience, we think, are to be found the phenomena which give rise to the conviction that people make free choices. Of course, the mere fact that someone has an experience which leads him to judge that he makes free choices does not of itself guarantee the reality of such freedom.

The experience we are concerned with often is called “making up one’s mind” or “decision.” “Choice” and “decision” and “making up one’s mind” have other uses. “Choice” sometimes refers to overt behavior—for example, taking a certain french pastry from a tray. Such picking of one object from an available set of objects may or may not involve the experience of choice in which we are interested. “Decision” sometimes refers to an act which is essentially cognitive—for example, a literary critic decides that Shakespeare indeed wrote “Hamlet.” The experience of making such a judgment is not an experience of choosing what to do. The expression “to make up one’s mind” also is sometimes used in an essentially cognitive sense. This expression, however, brings out the reflexive character of the activity we are going to describe. The same aspect of the experienced activity is emphasized by certain expressions in other languages, for example, by the French, “Je me décide.”

For brevity’s sake, we refer to the experience with which we are concerned simply as “choice.”

Choice is not a theoretical construct, but is a phenomenon which can be described. There are, however, certain related phenomena which must be distinguished from choice. These include being interested, wishing, and behaving.

One is interested in anything of which he is aware and which makes a practical difference to him. Interest can be prior to choice. One must be interested in at least two different possibilities before any question of choice arises.

“Wishing” does not indicate an indeterminacy to be settled. It is often used in contexts in which there is some obstacle in the way of effective action. Wishing can precede deliberation and choice, and then the obstacle to action can be the need to choose how to act for that for which one wishes. Wishing also can follow choice, as when one finds a chosen course of action blocked but still wishes for the attainment of that for which he had chosen to act. Then too, one can wish for what he thinks is simply unattainable; such wishing neither precedes nor follows choice but is irrelevant to it.

Behavior which comes about by choice is obviously distinct from choice. It

is possible to choose to do something and then to discover that one cannot do what one had chosen to do. For example, one can make up his mind to take an automobile trip but be prevented from doing so by lack of gasoline. The distinction between choice and behavior is clear from their separation in such cases.

Besides the experiences of interest, wishing, and behavior, there are also certain experiences of being drawn into action without deliberation. These are not experiences of choice; they must be distinguished from it. There are various such experiences.

One may feel an overwhelming need which cannot be resisted—for example, a starving man may feel an overwhelming need to eat, so that when food becomes available he eats it without hesitation. A person under torture may resist for a time, but, finally, overcome by his agony, blurt out information which is sought. In such cases, one does not choose to act; one is driven to act. No making of a choice is experienced; in fact, the experience can be one of being compelled to act contrary to what one had chosen to do.

There are also many cases in which one's behavior follows an impulse without reflection or hesitation. For example, as one is reading he becomes aware that he is thirsty, and as he comes to the end of a section goes for a drink. If someone were to ask why he behaved thus, he might reply: "I just felt like it; I felt thirsty." This reason was not a ground for choosing to drink rather than not to drink. Rather, he was aware of no alternative. Given the motive, without awareness of anything opposing, one acts without hesitation.

Experiences of acting in accord with a habitual pattern of behavior are very common. For example, one gets up in the morning, dresses, has breakfast, and sets off for work—all without hesitation, deliberation, and choice. The habitual pattern perhaps was established by choices at some more or less remote time in the past, and the habitual pattern could perhaps be altered if one reflected upon it and saw any reason to alter it. However, as the habitual behavior pattern is usually carried out, it simply does not involve any choices at all.

Acting in accord with overwhelming need, acting spontaneously, and acting habitually must be distinguished from acting upon choice. Choice follows hesitation and indecision. One must make up one's mind because it is unmade; it is in some disarray.

The preceding attempt to distinguish choice from related experiences can be challenged by two objections. On the one hand, a behaviorist might object that talk about "experiences" such as choice is misleading and question-begging in the present context. On the other hand, a phenomenologist might object that our attempt to distinguish choice from related experiences vastly oversimplifies the complexity of concrete experience.

We answer the behaviorist objection first. The distinction we have made by referring to experience could be made equally well for our purposes by referring

to linguistic behavior. The distinct uses of such expressions as “choosing” and “wishing” as well as ordinary uses of such expressions as “I freely chose to do x ” and “I made up my own mind to do x ” are data of a sort which the behaviorist must admit.

To the phenomenologist’s objection we respond that experience is indeed more complex than our brief descriptions suggest. However, despite the great richness of experience, we maintain that experience does include at least some clear-cut examples of deliberation, choice, wish, and so on, of which the descriptions we propose, so far as they go, are correct.

D. An example of choice

A young man receives a notice to report for induction into the army. He considers various possibilities. He might leave the country; he might stay in the country but not report for induction; or he might report as the notice requires. Each course of action has potential advantages and disadvantages. If he leaves the country he could live in safety and avoid reporting for induction to serve in a war which he might consider immoral. But this alternative carries the disadvantage of extended, perhaps permanent, exile. If he stays in the country and evades the draft, he avoids both exile and service, but risks imprisonment. If he reports as required, he accepts all the disadvantages of military service, including participation in a military action which he perhaps considers immoral. But if he reports, he preserves his citizenship and avoids the risk of prison. The young man considers the possibilities and makes up his mind, let us suppose, to report for induction.

There are many other examples of choice. A student considers whether to spend an evening at a beer party, or to stay in his room to study for an important test; he makes up his mind one way or the other. Someone considers whether to go out of town for a holiday weekend, or to stay and visit with a friend who will be in town that weekend; he chooses one alternative. A young person considers whether to go into law school, with the idea of entering practice in that profession, or to go on to graduate school and a career in scholarship; he decides for one or the other.

The experience of making choices occurs repeatedly throughout life; it is not unusual.

E. The beginnings of choice

The initial context for choosing is an experienced conflict of desires or interests. If the young man of our example had not felt an aversion both to reporting for induction and to the consequences of refusing to do so, he would

not have had to make a choice. The situation opens incompatible possibilities, at least the two possibilities of either acting or refraining from action. Some felt emotion, interest, impulse, or inclination draws him toward each of the alternatives. The conflict leads to hesitation; immediate behavior is blocked. He stops and thinks.

The experience of choice is framed by definite alternatives, each of which presents itself as attractive in one or more ways. Yet each alternative also has its limitations; none promises complete satisfaction. The first stage of the experience of choice is being moved to consider alternatives, rather than simply being drawn by an unopposed motive to act without reflection.

It is important to notice that many factors—of which a person might or might not be aware—limit the alternatives which present themselves. If one's disposition and temperament have been formed in such a way that certain possibilities do not arouse interest, then he will not consider them as alternatives for choice. If one is ignorant of certain possibilities or mistakenly thinks courses of action impossible which in fact are possible, then such alternatives will be excluded from the very beginning. For example, a young person being brought up in unfavorable conditions of poverty and discrimination might be aware of very few possibilities, and his early formation might allow even fewer of these to become live options.

Another important point is that moral conflicts are not the only cases in which choices are called for. Situations requiring "will power" to overcome a temptation against one's moral standard can give rise to deliberation and lead to choice. But moral concerns are only one sort of motive which can give rise to choice situations, and moral conflicts are absent from many such situations.¹⁰ A student choosing between law school and graduate school need not see his option as one between moral good and evil.

The beginnings of choice are present in any situation in which one is unsettled about his own future action. Choice does not concern the actions of others, except insofar as one is acting with them, or they are acting under one's direction. Alternatives must be open, or at least must seem to be open. Choice is concerned with the future, not with the past. The past appears settled, and choice is directly concerned with prospective action. The outcome of the situation is felt to be open only to the extent that one supposes it can be affected by what one can actually do.

The possibilities which appear to be open—the alternatives confronting the young man who has received his draft notice—seem to be live options. They are genuine possibilities *for him*; he is really interested to some extent in each of them. Of course, an apparent alternative might not be real—perhaps the border has been closed so that the alternative of going to a foreign country is no longer available. It can still appear to be an alternative and can even be chosen, so long

as the young man is not aware of its impossibility. In other words, the possibility must be open so far as he knows; it need not really be open.

To one who is faced with the necessity of making a choice, it seems that the alternatives are really open and unsettled, all things considered. Normally the first thing one does is to examine the situation to see whether there are not factors already taken for granted which can settle the apparently unsettled situation, thus obviating the need for real deliberation and choice.

For example, a couple wishes to make a month-long tour of Europe. A number of factors are already settled, and they take these factors for granted when they go to the travel agency. For example, the tour must leave after the first of July and return before the end of August. The total cost cannot exceed \$4,000. The tour must allow them time to visit a small town in Eastern Germany, from which the husband's family emigrated. The travel agent produces information about a number of tours, which he thinks might be of interest to the couple. Studying this information, they discover that some of the tours leave too early or return too late; some cost too much, or will not allow them time to visit the village in Eastern Germany. In fact, only one tour which they can find satisfies all of the conditions they had set in advance. They decide to take that one. They might say that they "choose" that tour.

In one sense of "choose," of course, they do choose it. However, the same choice could be made by a computer, if it were properly programmed and fed the information concerning the conditions a tour would have to meet to satisfy the couple's requirements. Given the assumptions and the actual conditions of the alternatives, there really is no open possibility except one. However, it might have seemed to the couple, when they first received the information from the travel agent, that they faced several live options, and that they would have to choose among them by criteria supplementary to those already settled.

Many choice-situations are similar to this example, and someone might argue that all choice-situations are of this sort. However, sometimes an individual feels that he has considered all available information but thinks that alternatives still remain open and does not think that anything already given will lead to a unique resolution of the question as to what is to be done.

Of course, when a person does something following a calculation which has led to the exclusion of every possibility but one, just as when he does something without needing to stop and reflect, he can proceed with a sense of "freedom"—meaning physical freedom or the freedom to do as one pleases. He need not feel constrained, compelled, restrained, or in any way forced. But he is not deliberating and choosing, and thus there is no question of free choice.

In cases of this sort, deliberation and choice perhaps occurred previously. If the couple of our example chose the conditions which settled their decision in favor of the tour which they took, then this prior choice might have seemed to

them free and the later decision also might seem free. The sense of freedom might be especially strong in a person who is prepared at any time to reconsider his choice of the conditions of a decision. Thus, if the couple were not altogether committed to making the tour until they chose the particular one they accepted, then their choice of that particular tour included the final decision to make the trip. Until then, the choice was only tentative and conditional.

F. Deliberation and choice

Given alternative possible courses of action, one must settle among them if one is going to act at all. This settling among alternatives begins with active, practical reflection upon the alternatives—such reflection is called “deliberation.” Deliberation forms a bridge between the opening situation, in which hesitation occurs in virtue of a conflict of desires or interests, and the closing act of making a choice.

Deliberation is active thinking; it is not merely vacillation. The opening situation does include vacillation, as motives for each alternative present themselves, and no alternative seems satisfactory in every respect. Deliberation begins when one starts to reflect on the possibilities, to consider the various motives, to seek actively for a resolution of the impasse.

The possible reasons for each choice need not all be present and clearly articulated at the beginning of deliberation. The marshalling of considerations and clarification of possible reasons are part of deliberation. As one proceeds in deliberating, one sees that certain possibilities which seemed viable at the beginning are not, while one comes to see other alternatives of which one was not initially aware. Deliberation prepares a clear reason for acting in accord with each alternative which remains under consideration. Whatever choice is eventually made, one will be in a position to say why that choice was made by recalling the considerations already adduced in deliberation in favor of the alternative finally chosen.

Deliberation begins with uncertainty. One does not know what he is going to do. But uncertainty about one's future action often carries with it a certain unsettledness about one's present self. In important choices one has the feeling that whatever one chooses, the outcome will more or less significantly alter or confirm one's identity. As a person deliberates, he considers what difference it would make to himself to carry out each of the alternatives.

One can deliberate about possible actions without knowing when the opportunity for action will arrive. For example, a person can deliberate about where he will spend his next vacation without knowing when he will next have a vacation. Such deliberation can lead to a choice based on a condition not within one's power, provided that the condition is not known to be impossible. For example, a person can make up his mind to go on a certain vacation if he is

given enough time off from work or a large enough bonus to finance the trip. Such advance deliberation also can lead to a tentative decision; one can decide to take a certain trip unless some other, more interesting possibility arises.

There is no incompatibility between carrying on deliberation and having a basis on which one can guess the outcome. Perhaps a person has a strong inclination to one alternative at the outset and on the basis of past experience with similar inclinations judges that he will most likely decide to follow it, for he has usually followed similar inclinations in similar situations before. A person in this frame of mind is still able to deliberate. However, if he knew for certain what he was going to do, there would seem to be no alternative and the possibility of deliberation would be removed.¹¹

A person engaged in deliberation feels he can go on deliberating or can stop. After a time reflection no longer yields any additional considerations. One finds himself reviewing the same ground. Still, further reflection *might* turn up something new. So one can continue to reflect. If choice is not urgent, one can set aside the deliberation with a view to considering the matter later when some further factors might come into view.

It is worth noting that deliberation itself can become the subject of a second-level deliberation and choice. Thus, one can shift from deliberating about the original problem to deliberating about whether to terminate deliberation or to go on with it.

While a person is still deliberating, he sees alternative courses of action as possibilities. He sees the various choices to initiate those courses of action as all genuinely possible. He expresses this possibility: "I can make this choice, and then again I can make that one." This possibility is not mere contingency. It is not as if a person were expecting one or another set of events, all of which were beyond his control. Rather, the possible choices appear to be within his power. "It is really up to me what I am going to do," expresses this experience.

When one sees an animal vacillate between two courses of action—for example, pursuit of food and obedience to a command to stay—one might say that it "can do either one." By this one would mean that one knows of nothing constraining or restraining the animal—that it has physical freedom. One need not suppose the animal to be considering possibilities, as if it were about to choose. Rather, one supposes that the animal's impulses settle the issue, that the stronger impulse prevails. A human person, however, when he is about to choose thinks that he himself is going to settle the issue.

Thus, when the youth of our example considered that he could submit to induction, leave the country, or stay and risk going to prison, "could" did not mean mere logical possibility or causal contingency. A person supposes that he himself makes his choice and that nothing makes him make the choice he makes. In other words, he thinks that the causal conditions apart from his own choosing are not sufficient to bring his choosing about.

The act of choice involves focusing of attention on one alternative, the one chosen. But there is more to choice than focus of attention. Even in the very act of choosing, one can remain aware of what he is not choosing, as evidenced by the feeling one sometimes has of surrendering what was attractive in the rejected alternative. After choice, the choice does not come unmade when one turns his attention to other matters.¹²

As we have seen, a person deliberates with an awareness of possibilities and with a belief that he can and must settle among them. He does not experience something *happening* which he can identify as the choice itself. A person does not encounter his choices; he makes his choices. The experience of choice is an experience of doing something; it is not an experience of undergoing anything.

The connotation of passivity in the word “experience” is misleading if it makes one suppose that consciousness of choosing—at the moment of choice—is passive in the way in which having a dream, feeling dizzy, or hearing a noise is passive. A person’s own choosing is not given to himself; in this sense, choice is not a datum.¹³

Even if choosing is not a datum at the moment of choice, one is directly aware of it. One can tell that he has made a choice immediately upon making it. In retrospect, of course, choice can be noted to be a datum. One is clearly aware of having moved from deliberation about possibilities to the state of having made up his mind; choice divides the two. Thus one’s knowledge of his own choices is not inferential.

G. From experience to judgment

Reflecting upon the phenomena described, we distinguish three aspects of the experience. First, one experiences a state of affairs in which his desire or interest is aroused by alternative possibilities, without experiencing anything limiting the possibilities to one. Second, one feels that it is within his power to take one alternative or another, and that nothing but the exercise of this power will realize one of the alternatives. Third, one is aware of making his choice, without being aware of anything else making him make that choice. We call these three aspects taken together “a sense of freedom.”

But having a sense of freedom must be distinguished from the judgments one makes on the basis of this experience. Corresponding to each aspect of the experience, there is a judgment. These judgments might be expressed as follows. Corresponding to the first aspect: “I could do this and then again I could do that; the alternatives are really open possibilities.” Corresponding to the second aspect: “It is in my own power to do this or that; it is up to me alone to settle which I shall do.” Corresponding to the third aspect: “I made up my own mind, and nothing made me choose as I did.” If someone asserts any of

these three judgments, he implies that the choice to which he refers is free.

Each of the three judgments has a positive and a negative aspect. The positive aspects of the judgments—"I could do this and then again I could do that," "it is in my own power to do this or that," and "I made up my own mind"—reflect what is present in the experience. A person is aware of possibilities as desirable but incompatible; he is aware that no possibility is attractive in every respect; and he is aware that he can make his own evaluation of the diverse respects in which various possibilities are desirable. The negative aspects of the judgments—"the possibilities are really open," "it is up to me alone," and "nothing made me choose as I did"—cannot in the same way express what is present in experience.

In a certain sense, any judgment involves more than experience. If one experiences rain falling on his head, in judging that rain is falling on his head, he makes a truth-claim which he does not make simply by having the experience. An experience can be illusory, but an experience cannot be false. Many judgments based upon experience also presuppose the truth of assumptions which are so much taken for granted that they are not noted. For example, one who experiences himself flipping a switch and seeing a light go on thinks that his flipping the switch makes the light go on, since he takes for granted assumptions about the way in which the electrical apparatus works.

Some negative judgments—for example, a judgment distinguishing two objects of perception—do not go beyond experience in ways other than affirmative judgments do. However, some negative judgments require a further step beyond experience. For example, if one looks in the refrigerator for cheese and finds none there, the judgment that there is no cheese in the refrigerator is not based upon data alone. The negative judgment can be false without the experience being illusory—for example, if the cheese is there but hidden from sight. A negative judgment based on the absence of data presupposes a framework of expectations in which the absence of those data normally grounds the negative judgment; although this framework is an epistemic condition for making the negative judgment, it is not part of the state of affairs articulated in the proposition asserted in the negative judgment.

Other examples might help to clarify the point. If someone asks me whether I have eaten breakfast and if I do not recall having done so, I judge that I have not yet eaten breakfast. One assumes that the absence of memory of an event which would have been so recent warrants the judgment that it did not occur. But this assumption is a framework of the judgment, not a premise from which the proposition affirmed is deduced. I do not infer that I have not eaten breakfast, although the judgment could be mistaken if the usual conditions set by the appropriate framework happen not to be fulfilled. Similarly, if I perceive nothing which would prevent me from doing something which I know how to do, then I judge that I can do it.

If this analysis is correct, it follows that when someone judges that he has made a free choice, his judgment is likely to seem to him self-evident, since it is not an inference but is grounded directly in his experience. At the same time, since this judgment presupposes a framework of expectations, the judgment will be false if the expectations are mistaken. Therefore, the judgment can be challenged without challenging the data as they appear to the person who makes the judgment.

For example, the judgment, "I have not yet eaten breakfast," made by someone who has just suffered a severe blow to the head, could be challenged without challenging the accuracy of the individual's description of his current experience, since in such a situation there is a plausible ground for questioning the assumption that absence of memory of an event which would have been so recent warrants the judgment that the event did not occur. Similarly, the judgment, "I freely chose x ," can be challenged without challenging the accuracy of a person's description of his experience of choice. There are plausible grounds—for example, grounds suggested by modern psychology—for questioning the assumption that absence of awareness of a causal condition other than one's own choosing warrants the judgment that there is no such condition.

The phenomena summed up in the "sense of freedom" are not identical with the judgment that one is free. The sense of freedom and the judgment that one is making a free choice are to be distinguished.

The preceding point makes clear that in describing the experience of choice we have not asserted that people make free choices. One can admit the entire description of choice presented here, yet still hold that no one makes any free choice. One who holds this will challenge the framework of expectations in virtue of which many people make the judgment that they have made a free choice. For this framework, he will substitute some such assumption as the following: "Even if I am not conscious of anything which makes me choose as I do, there must be something which brings my choice about."

The significance of the experience of choice, as we have described it, is that if someone accepts it at face value, including the negative aspects, he will judge that he chooses freely; in retrospect, he will think that under the very same conditions he could have chosen otherwise than he in fact chose.

The foregoing description of the experience of choice and the analysis of the corresponding judgments show that the expression "free choice" has a reference in experience. While there are other semantic problems which must be treated prior to an attempt to resolve *Sfc/Nfc*, one serious obstacle to considering the controversy genuine is removed by establishing a reference for "free choice" without prejudging whether there are free choices.¹⁴

Should anyone challenge the foregoing formulation of the experience of choice and the corresponding judgments, our reply is that at least some people

would accept this formulation as an expression of their experience and the way they talk about it.

Whether *Sfc* or *Nfc* is true remains to be settled. Some have argued that the experience of choice is sufficient to establish *Sfc*. In chapter two, section A, we show that arguments articulated along these lines are question-begging.

H. The controversy about free choice

Having defined “free choice” and having described the experience of choice, we begin an examination of *Sfc/Nfc*.

Sfc is the position we defend in this book. We think *Sfc/Nfc* formulates in a precise way a central issue in the historical debate about free will and determinism. Before beginning to examine the various arguments in this controversy, we clarify the meaning of our formulation of it and explain why we have adopted this formulation.

Sfc is not equivalent to the proposition that it is logically possible that someone make a free choice. *Sfc* presupposes the truth of the latter proposition. We shall defend this truth in chapter three, section B, by criticizing fatalism—the position that *Nfc* is logically necessary.

Sfc is not equivalent to the proposition that if someone makes a choice, then that choice is necessarily free. It has been argued that if there ever is a choice—such as we have described in sections B through F—then it is logically necessary that such a choice be free. The premises for this conclusion are that a determined choice would be in principle predictable, that it is logically possible for anyone to know what is in principle predictable, and that it is logically impossible for anyone to know what he is about to choose.¹⁵

These premises might seem to entail—but do not entail—that a determined choice is a contradiction in terms. The argument involves a fallacy. From the conjunction of *p* and the impossibility of *p* and *q*, it does not follow that *q* is impossible, but only that *q* is not the case. From the fact that it is logically impossible for a person both to know his decision beforehand and to make it, it follows only that a certain event either cannot be predicted by that person or cannot be his decision. This conclusion is compatible with someone’s choice being predicted by anyone else and with the logical possibility, although not the actuality, of the individual’s predicting it himself. It is logically impossible for a certain individual to be standing up and not standing up at the same time, and at a given moment—for example, when he is lying down—he is not standing up, but even at that moment it is logically possible, although not the case, that he be standing up.

Sfc is not equivalent to the proposition that someone has *actually* made a free choice. If the latter proposition is true, then so is the former; however, *Sfc* might

be true even if no one ever actually makes a choice. Not all capacities are exercised.

Sfc entails the propositions that some human person has the capacity to make a free choice and that the alternative possibilities between which a person deliberates are not always foreclosed by some factor other than the person's choosing itself.

The following remarks will clarify the meaning of this formulation.

By "capacity" in this formulation we mean nothing other than what people ordinarily mean when they speak of the capacity to see, the capacity to understand, and so on. One refers to such abilities because those who see or understand have a capacity to do so even when they do not actually see or understand. A person in a dreamless sleep does not lose his sight or his intelligence—these are capacities.

In section B we defined what we mean in this formulation by "free choice." In sections C through F we described the phenomena of choice which will be given if there is a capacity to make a free choice and if that capacity is exercised. As we have already made clear, this is not to say that the mere fact that people have experiences such as we have described shows that anyone does or can make a free choice.

Those who argue that there is no capacity to make a free choice seek to show that there is some sort of impossibility in man's having such a capacity. For example, they might say that such an ability would require that something—namely, the free choice—might be without any sufficient reason for its being so rather than otherwise.

Those who argue that the alternative possibilities between which persons deliberate always are foreclosed by some factor other than the person's choosing itself seek to show that such open alternatives are causally impossible. For example, they might say that all events are covered by laws (or lawlike statements) such that anything which could be the object of a choice—this alternative or that alternative—would be determined by natural necessity. "Natural necessity" as used here need not refer only to physical necessity; it can also refer to psychological necessity, the nonlogical necessity of reasons for acting if they are considered not to be natural causes, and so on.

The terms in *Nfc* are to be understood in the same way as the terms in *Sfc*, since *Nfc* is the contradictory of *Sfc*. We formulate the controversy about free will and determinism as *Sfc/Nfc*, because *Nfc* is the least that anyone who wishes to deny the reality of free choice is likely to claim. It would not be sufficient for him to claim that while human beings can make free choices, no one ever happens to make one. It is unnecessary for him to claim—as the fatalist does—that it is logically impossible for anyone to make a free choice. He precisely claims either that no human person has the ability to make a free choice, or that no alternative possibilities ever are determinable only by a free

choice, or both. In order to establish *Nfc*, the *PNfc* must proceed by excluding in principle—that is, as somehow impossible—either the ability to choose or the nondeterminateness of alternatives.

Our formulation of the issue we are examining also ought to be satisfactory to the defender of free choice. Many defenders of free choice have argued precisely for *Sfc*. Others have argued for the stronger thesis, which entails *Sfc*, that someone *does* make a free choice. The latter approach, however, usually has involved the assumption that a certain choice can be identified as free. There are special problems in the identification of free choices. Therefore, it is easier, and sufficient, for the defense of free choice, to limit the ground one attempts to defend by claiming only that someone can make a free choice.

Historically, many defenders of *Nfc* have called themselves or have been called “determinists.” We avoid “determinism” as a label for the position we reject, because the *PNfc* often rejects this label. He frequently regards himself as a compatibilist and distinguishes his position from what he is willing to call “determinism.” At the same time, a fatalist asserts *Nfc*, but “fatalism” and “determinism” usually are used to refer to distinct positions. Moreover, “determinism” often is used to refer to a cosmological or metaphysical thesis according to which every event has a cause, or to a state of affairs articulated by such a thesis. Universal determinism entails *Nfc*, and a *PNfc* can appeal to universal determinism to support his position. However, *Nfc* also can be and often has been asserted on grounds distinct from such a worldview.

We shall discuss various forms of compatibilism, including soft determinism, in chapter four. In chapter three we shall discuss fatalism, determinism, and other grounds for affirming *Nfc*.

Historically, many defenders of *Sfc* have called themselves or have been called by others “defenders of freedom of the will,” “libertarians,” “indeterminists,” “self-determinists,” and so on. We avoid using any of these expressions to refer to our own position, because each of them has connotations irrelevant to what we defend. Many of these connotations will become clear in chapter two, in which we review arguments which, if successful, would support *Sfc*.