

# VOLITION AND ALLIED CAUSAL CONCEPTS

By **Avi Sion** PH.D.

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It can be purchased, in print and e-book editions, in [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [Lulu.com](http://Lulu.com) and many other online booksellers.

The present document contains **excerpts** from this book, namely: The Abstract; the Contents; and Sample text (Chapters 5-6).

**Avi Sion** (Ph.D. Philosophy) is a researcher and writer in logic, philosophy, and spirituality. He has, since 1990, published original writings on the theory and practice of inductive and deductive logic, phenomenology, epistemology, aetiology, psychology, meditation, ethics, and much more. Over a period of some 28 years, he has published 27 books. He resides in Geneva, Switzerland.

It is very difficult to briefly summarize Avi Sion's philosophy, because it is so wide-ranging. He has labeled it '**Logical Philosophy**', because it is firmly grounded in formal logic, inductive as well as deductive. This original philosophy is dedicated to demonstrating the efficacy of human reason by detailing its actual means; and to show that the epistemological and ethical skepticism which has been increasingly fashionable and destructive since the Enlightenment was (contrary to appearances) quite illogical – the product of ignorant, incompetent and dishonest thinking.

# Abstract

*Volition and Allied Causal Concepts* is a work of aetiology and metapsychology. Aetiology is the branch of philosophy and logic devoted to the study of causality (the cause-effect relation) in all its forms; and metapsychology is the study of the basic concepts common to all psychological discourse, most of which are causal.

**Volition** (or free will) is to be distinguished from causation and natural spontaneity. The latter categories, i.e. deterministic causality and its negation, have been treated in a separate work, *The Logic of Causation*. Volition may be characterized as personal causality, a relation between an agent (the self or soul) and his actions (acts of will). Unlike causation, this relation cannot be entirely defined using conditional (if-then) propositions. Although we can say that the agent is a *sine qua non* of his actions, we cannot say that the agent is invariably (in all or specific circumstances) followed by his actions. It appears that both an act of will and its negation remain possible to a soul in any given set of circumstances. This defines freedom of the will; and implies the responsibility of the agent for his actions. Introspection provides knowledge of particular acts of will.

The existence of freewill implies a distinction between necessary causation (determinism independent of volition) and inertial causation (determinism, except when some contrary will interferes). An act of will occurs on a spiritual plane. It may have natural (mental or physical) consequences; those that inevitably follow it may be regarded as directly willed, whereas those that vary according to circumstances must be considered indirectly willed. Volition presupposes some degree of consciousness. So-called involuntary acts of will involve a minimum of attention, whereas mindful acts are fully conscious. Even pure whim involves intention. Most volitions moreover involve valuation, some sort of projection of goals, deliberation on means, choice and decision. To judge responsibility, various distinctions are called for, like that between intentional, incidental and accidental consequences.

Volitional action can be affected through the terms and conditions of the world surrounding its agent, but also more intimately through the **influence** of concrete or abstract aspects of that world that the subject has cognized. The causal concept of influence, and its implication of cognition (of inner or outer information, including emotions), are crucial to measuring the effort involved in volition. Influences make willing easier or harder, yet do not curtail its essential freedom. All the causal concepts used in psychological explanation – affections, appetites, instincts, habits, obsessions, compulsions, urges and impulses – can be elucidated thanks to this important finding. Much of human (and animal) behavior can thus be both acknowledged as volitional and as variously influenced.

*Volition and Allied Causal Concepts* is a work of ambitious scope, intent on finally resolving philosophical and logical issues that have always impeded progress in psychology. It clarifies the structure and workings of the psyche, facilitating hygienic and therapeutic endeavors. The relation between volition and physical laws is discussed, as is the place of volition in biology. Concepts used in biology, analogous to that of purpose, are incidentally analyzed. Theological issues are also dealt with, as are some topics in ethics and law.

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## Sample text (chapters 5-6)

### 5. Influence and Freedom

#### 1. Influence occurs via consciousness

An important and complex concept in causal logic, and specifically in the logic of volition, is that of *influence*. This refers to the impact on one's volitional act, before or while it occurs, of some cognized natural event(s) and/or other volition(s) by oneself or other agent(s). Note well, the agent of volition concerned must have cognized the natural event(s) and/or other volition(s) in question, for the latter to count as 'influences'. The distinguishing characteristic of influence, compared to other 'conditions' surrounding volition, is *the intermediary of consciousness*.

The philosophical importance of this concept is due to the confusion of most people relative to the concept of freedom of the will. On the one hand, most people in practice believe the will is free somehow; on the other hand, they realize it is varyingly affected by surrounding natural events and persons. These givens seem theoretically irreconcilable because the latter is mistaken for conditioning or partial causation, whereas it is influence, a different, subtler sort of causality.

For example: a man's muscles are *conditions* affecting his volitions, in that he can *in fact* lift a certain weight with them and also in that he cannot lift more weight than they physically make possible; these same muscles however become *influences* on his volitions, only when *thinking* of their supposed limited strength he chooses another course than he would if they seemed stronger or weaker. Note well the subtle difference. Conditions and influences both *affect* actions, but not in comparable ways.

Influence is a *special kind of conditioning*, differing from an ordinary condition in that it operates specifically through the medium of consciousness, i.e. of *any kind of cognitive process*. The *influencing object* is one that has been sensed or imagined, perceived or conceived, remembered or projected, found evident or inferred, induced or deduced, or in any way thought about. *What it influences*, strictly speaking, is the Subject of such cognitions or thoughts, i.e. the eventual Agent of volition. When the agent finally 'makes up his mind' and wills something, he does so either in the direction of or against the *tendency* implied by the influence at hand.

Thus, influences imply positive or negative tendencies, temptations or spurs to voluntary action. If such tendency was in the direction of the eventual will, the will was facilitated by it; if such tendency was against the eventual will, the will had to overcome it. The agent is always free to accept or refuse to 'follow' a given influence, i.e. to 'yield' to its weight or 'resist' it.

The concept of *effort* refers to a degree of will. Volition is not an either-or proposition, something one switches on or off; it has degrees. Powerful will is required to overcome strong opposing influences; a weak agent is easily influenced to go against his will. Thus, we may speak of *amount of effort* involved in an act of will. If influences are favorable, the effort required to complete them is comparatively minimal. If influences are counteractive, the agent must pump proportionately more effort to get his way.



We may also view effort as a measure of the agent's responsibility, his causal contribution or ownership of the action and its outcomes. The more effort he requires, the more wholly 'his own' they are. The less effort he requires, the greater the part played in them by surrounding influences.

The *postulate of freedom of the will* is that an influence is never alone sufficient to produce some effect, irrespective of the will of the agent concerned. Granting surrounding conditions allow the power of will in a given case, the agent always has 'final say' to resist the tendency implied by the influence, though such resistance might require a maximum of effort. As of when conditioning occurs via consciousness, i.e. in the way of influence, *necessity does not apply*, though the effort required to overcome influence may be daunting. Wherever necessity *does* apply, one cannot say that there was possibility of will, *nor therefore* speak of influence. The subject was simply overwhelmed, proving in this case to be not an agent but a mere patient. He may have been an observer of the events, but he was in this case a passive recipient of natural forces.

*If this postulate is correct, it means that consciousness of an object cannot by itself move a spiritual entity (soul, subject) to action, by way of complete causation. Though such consciousness may play a major causative part in the action, approaching one hundred percent, still the action cannot effectively occur without the final approval and participation of the spiritual entity concerned. If necessity is indeed observed occurring, then the conditioning involved was not via consciousness of the object but directly due to the object.*

Note that not only an influence cannot by itself ever move an agent into action, but also – granting the possibility of pure whim – the agent can well move himself in the absence of any influences. Therefore, influence is neither sufficient nor necessary for volition.

Thus, note well, we are not here involved in verbal manipulations. Freedom of the will is a thesis, a hypothesis, concerning the causal relations possible in the domain of the spirit. Consciousness may well occur in cases where there is no volition, i.e. where causation (necessity) takes over; but when this happens, consciousness has played no part in the effect. Consciousness becomes a condition only as of when causation recedes, and a space is leftover for volition to intervene; in that event, consciousness (or its objects, through it) becomes influential, and the will remains free (to at least some extent).

All volition seems subject to some influences to some degree. This seems evident of human volition, which usually occurs in response to an apparent mental and material context, though it could be argued to be at times indifferent to all influences. Other animals, likewise, and perhaps much more so, have powers of volition subject to influence.

With regard to God, our theoretical conception of Him by extrapolation to extremes suggests we should consider God as the quintessential 'unmoved mover', i.e. His volitions as always entirely independent of influences. That need not be taken to mean He acts without regard to anything, but rather that His power of will is so superior to influences severally or collectively that the latter are effectively negligible. A tiny drop of water cannot affect the ocean!

As for the relation between God and lower volitional beings, we should consider that just as God retains the power to interfere in causative processes (i.e. to Him all natural laws are inertial rather than necessary, as earlier discussed), He retains the power to 'overwhelm' the willpower of any creature's soul. Thus, the power of will of any limited creature is in principle always conditional upon the infinite God's continued tolerance. However, the Divine power to dominate or overwhelm

lesser wills seems unused in practice (judging by our religious documents, at least<sup>1</sup>). Rather, God seems to *condition and/or influence* lesser wills – giving agents life or prematurely killing them, or affecting their bodily, mental or external environments, or again making items appear that (strongly or to some extent) influence them in some way. This Divine preference is assumed to stem from an ethical motive, to sustain freedom of the will and therefore personal responsibility<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. Knowledge of effort, influence and freedom

Effort and influence are, clearly, derivative concepts of cognition and volition. The empirical basis of our knowledge of them is therefore the same as for cognition and volition, primarily introspection or subjective apprehension. This direct self-knowledge, which I call intuition (or apperception), concerns objects that do not *per se* have inner or outer phenomenal qualities – i.e. no shape, shading or color, no sound, no smell or taste, no touch qualities – although they may produce perceptible objects.

Just as we intuit our own will, so we intuit the amount of effort we have put into it. Colloquially, we say that effort is ‘felt’. ‘Physical effort’ is experienced as a sensation in the body; but ‘mental effort’, or more precisely ‘spiritual effort’, is a more subtle experience, which may or not give rise to discernable phenomena. Measurement of effort is therefore, of course, not exact and absolute, but rough and comparative. It depends not only on the immediate intuition, but also on personal memory of past intuitions for purposes of calibration.

If estimate of effort is inexact with regard to oneself, it is all the more so with reference to the effort of others. We can only guess it, by analogy to one’s own experience and by observation of indirect indices, like (in the case of physical effects of it) the sweat on someone’s brow or his facial expressions or bodily postures. Thus, as for will, knowledge of effort is generally based on adductive arguments.

It is not inconceivable that one day soon biologists succeed in measuring effort more objectively and scientifically, by means of physical instruments. Quantification of effort would then become more precise and verifiable. Such practices will of course involve adductive reasoning, an initial hypothesis that such and such detectable physiological or neurological phenomena may be interpreted as proportional to the effort of will. But in the meantime, we do have a rough yardstick in our personal experience.

Influence is a more abstract concept, not experienced or measurable directly, but constructed with reference to amounts of effort involved in willful action (making it easier or harder). An object is said to influence one’s action if *its appearance* to oneself directly or indirectly affects or conditions

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<sup>1</sup> I make no claim to special knowledge of the Divine, of course. As a philosopher, I merely conceive possibilities, cogent hypotheses, concerning God. Here, I note that while ‘overwhelming of lesser wills’ would seem doctrinally consistent with the idea of God’s omnipotence, it is not a doctrine stressed within Judaism and similar religions.

<sup>2</sup> Clearly, the problems of theodicy remain whether we assume God’s action to include overpowering wills, or to be limited to conditioning and influencing. It would have mattered little to victims of the Holocaust whether God saved them by overwhelming Hitler’s hate-filled will, or by killing or otherwise neutralizing him early enough.

the action, in contradistinction to an object affecting or conditioning action by *mere existence*. Note well the phenomenological differentia.

If the influence occurs only by perception of the object, it is simple, direct. If it occurs after considerable mental processing of the image of the object, it is proportionately complex, oblique. Since thought about an object perceived may have many pathways, of varying intricacy, the influence by one and the same object may be multiple, involving many theses and layers, some of which may well be conflicting. Even at the perceptual level, the various sense organs yield different aspects of the (presumably same) object. Thus, *one and the same object may give rise to many, variant influences*. We must keep this insight in mind, to avoid oversimplification in our understanding of influence and volition.

Another epistemological issue concerns our estimates of *the relative weights* of different simultaneous influences. Such estimates are based in part on generalization of personal observations (when data on conjunction and separation is available); but in large part, they are hypotheses, adhered to so long as they continue to be confirmed by our experiences of effort. Knowledge of one's own psyche is very often as tentative as that of nature, or of other people's or animals' psyches. People often think that they have 'direct insight' into, or at least 'deductive knowledge' of, inner events or relations, when in fact all they have is inductive knowledge. What is important is to realize that the latter is pretty good, quite enough.

Knowledge of freedom of the will is partly introspective, but mainly adductive. Our inner sense of freedom of will provides the occasion for the theoretical search for supporting data and postulates. We may have faith in freewill as a working hypothesis; but are still called upon to develop over the long term convincing definitions of it and arguments in its favor. The formula above proposed for freedom of the will is, I think, a good start.

The doctrine of freewill is important psychologically and socially, the foundation of morality and law. The doctrine declares our responsibility for our actions, however many and strong the forces impinging upon us may seem. Thus, a criminal cannot disclaim responsibility for his crimes, arguing he was 'driven' against his will.

We should note the doctrine's own influence on human action, by the power of suggestion: if one believes he *can* do or avoid something he is more likely to be able to do so, than if he thinks that he cannot do so no matter how much he tries. Thus, belief in freedom of the will increases one's 'freedom', and disbelief in it is an added obstacle.

### 3. Formal analysis of influence

It is empirically evident that the Agents of will are all conscious beings: they are Subjects. This observation suggests a fundamental feature of volition, that it is allied to and inconceivable without consciousness. Given that insight, we can better understand the mechanics of influence.

We have seen that a natural event or another agent can influence an agent in his will, by presenting to the latter *an idea* which, though it does not definitely determine or control his subsequent will, constitutes a more or less important parameter in its exercise. Note that the idea presented may be illusory, just as well as real; but insofar as it is aroused by something or someone, the latter is influential. Note also that the 'other agent' influencing one may be an earlier moment of one's own existence (as e.g., in the case of habits).

Influence is a causal relation of sorts, though a weak one since it is never determining due to the essential freedom of the willing soul. Our linguistic practices are evidence that we do consider

influence to be a form of causality. We often use verbs suggesting it, e.g. ‘he *caused me to do it*’ or ‘he *made me do it*’. Influence involves causation, in that some object or appearance (if only partially and contingently) gives rise to some cognition or idea. We may also consider as causation the relation between the appearance, or its cognitive effect, and *the fact that* the eventual volition, if any, is ‘made easier’ or ‘made harder’ by it. But influence in itself, as a relation between the object cognized or its cognition, on the one hand, and the outcome of volition, cannot be classified as causation, nor for that matter as volition. It is another category of causality, mediating those two.

We might express influence formally as follows: let **A** be an agent, and **W** be his will at a given time. Let object **Y** be some event *naturally occurring, or willed to occur* by some agent(s) **B** (which **B** may include agent **A** at a previous time). Let content of consciousness **X** be some belief, opinion or knowledge *aroused in A by Y* (**X** may of course simply be **Y** as cognized by **A**, or **X** may have some more complicated cognitive relation to **Y**).

Then, we can say “**X influences A to will W**”, *provided* “**A with awareness of X requires less effort to will W, than A without awareness of X**” – that is, provided **X** inclines *towards* **W**, the will of **A**. If, alternatively, **X** inclined *away from* **W**, then **A** would need *more* effort to will **W** with **X** than without it, and we would say that “**X influences A not-to will W**”.

These forms define positive and negative influence, both of which may be referred as simply ‘influence’, leaving the direction of influence (for or against) indefinite. If the effort requirement is exactly equal either way, there is effectively *no* influence. The amounts of effort involved are known in various ways, as earlier discussed. Note that in everyday discourse the implied forms “**X inclines to W**” and “**X inclines away from W**” are sometimes be taken as equivalent to the forms of influence, because it is tacitly understood that **X** was cognized by **A** and **A** willed **W**.

We can of course, *mutatis mutandis*, similarly clarify various forms of influence involving not**X** and/or not**W** as terms, such as “not**X** influences **A** to will not**W**”.

In practice, we would consider that whatever gives rise to an influence is itself an influence. That is, the occasion of **X** that we have labeled **Y**, or its natural causatives or its volitional agent **B** – can all be called influences once **X** is so established. But, *note well*, whether that practice is strictly speaking valid needs to be discussed. The issue is a logical one, concerning causal chaining or syllogism. It is left open for now.

Thus, to review the process of influence in sequence:

- a. Something (**Y**) natural occurs, or is made to occur through the will of some agent or agents (**B**, which may be or include **A**).
- b. That occurrence (**Y**) comes to the attention of a subject (**A**), or causatively produces some physical, mental or spiritual affect in him that he becomes aware of, and possibly thinks about further (**X**).
- c. This subject (**A**) then engages in some act of will (**W**), whether a direct volition or an indirect one.
- d. And it so happens that such will (**W**) involved less effort for that agent (**A**) in the presence of that thought (**X**) than in its absence.
- e. Then the thought (**X**) can be said to have positively influenced the agent (**A**) in so willing (**W**).

Note that **Y** and **X** may be one or two. If **A** is directly aware of **Y**, then it is the term of reference. If, however, **A** is not aware of **Y**, but of some effect of it labeled **X**, then **X** is the influential term. The influential term is whatever is the object of cognition, i.e. some appearance, be it real or illusory, faint or intense, far or near. The cognition involved may be sensation (then **X** is a physical

phenomenon) or introspective perception (then X is a mental phenomenon), or even intuition. In the latter case, A is aware of prior reactions of his own soul (so X is a spiritual event). Objects of sensory perception include things observed outside or within one's body, including visceral emotions. Mental objects include<sup>3</sup> memories, imaginations, and possibly mental emotions. The object of awareness may also be an abstraction (then X is a conceptual object, a term within a more or less complex thought). Usually, all these means of cognition are involved, in various combinations.

It should be remarked that the causation by Y of X is a principle to be separately established, but which need not be known to A to be operative. More interesting is the question concerning the comparison of amount of effort, involved for A to will W in the presence or absence of X. For A might well be aware of his effort while he wills W in the presence of X; but that does not tell him what effort he would feel in the absence of X! The answer is that *one does not need to be aware of the influence of something for such influence to be operative*. Consciousness is crucial, but it is the consciousness by A of X, not the consciousness by A of his effort with or without X or of the influence of X. The agent need not at all take notice of the effort expended, though his attention is likely to grow with the effort expended.

Indeed, the agent may positively think or claim to think that something has no influence which in fact has some influence, or inversely that something which in fact has no influence has some! In such cases, note, the thought or claim must be considered as a separate, superimposed item, which may or not have a degree of influence of its own, quite apart from the fact.

The above formula is relevant only to the logician, or to whoever wishes to establish the existence of a causal relation of influence between something (X) and an agent (A) engaged in a volition (W). Just as the relation of causation, for instance between Y and X at this moment, cannot be established with one observation, but only through repeated observation over time – so with influence. We cannot say for sure that X influences A to will W with reference to any one observation, like the amount of effort in the presence of X. We must refer also to other events, such as the effort in the absence of X.

And indeed, here as with induction of causation in general, certainty is proportional to the frequency of such observations. The more often we have observed the conjunction, the more confident of a causal relation we become. *Knowledge of influence is empirical and inductive*.

Notice the relation between the object X (as cognized by A) and the amount of effort (say E, for A to will W) – it is a standard causative relation. It consists of two if-then propositions (natural hypotheticals), “if X, then effort E(X)” and “if notX, then effort E(notX)”, and a comparative proposition “effort E(X) is less than effort E(notX)”. Nothing special – the procedures for such knowledge are commonplace. This refers to the case of positive influence by X. In the case of negative influence by X, E(X) would be greater than E(notX); and in the case of no influence, the effort needed would be the same either way.

Of course, any calculation of effort must take into account not just one influence, but all influences currently active for or against the intended will. The total effort requirement call it E, would be the effort requirement if the will was uninfluenced by anything (E<sub>0</sub>), plus all the additional efforts required to overcome negative influences (E<sub>-</sub>), minus all the reduced efforts made possible by positive influences (E<sub>+</sub>). That is,  $E = E_0 + E_- - E_+$ .

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<sup>3</sup> One could here also include telepathic communications, if we suppose that telepathy exists.

Effort is something the volitional agent must call forth out of himself or put forward, as a precondition to his succeeding in doing his will. Effort is known to us by inner experience; but the agent need not be conscious of his effort every time he exercises it. Nevertheless, in our definition of influence we have assumed that some effort is always involved in volition, and that its quantity varies, being greater in some circumstances than in others. Whether or not it is focused on, effort is there wherever volition occurs. Volition implies effort.

Also remember, effort is relative. The quantities of effort required for each action vary from individual to individual, and even within the lifetime of a given individual. I may find a job easier to do today than yesterday, for a variety of reasons (e.g. I no longer have a cold); and some other person may find the same job more difficult any day (being less muscular or brainy than me, say).

#### 4. Incitement

We have distinguished influence from ordinary conditioning, with reference to the consciousness that mediates the cause and effect in the case of influence. We have pointed out that influences may equally be natural events or events brought about by volition or both, provided in any case the one influenced has cognized these events. Let us now consider more closely the possible interactions of different volitional agents.

One or more volitional agent(s) may impact on another in the way of ordinary conditioning, i.e. by causation. For example, a man while knocked out is tied up by others; as he awakens, he tries unsuccessfully to move his arms and legs, before becoming conscious that he is tied up. His attempt to move are acts of will, whose limited scope is not due to influence but to causation, since he did not notice the rope before trying (but rather became aware of his predicament by trying). If the man happens to be Samson or Superman, he might break the ropes on first trial: his will has overcome the man-made obstacle they present. On the other hand, if the man feels or sees the rope before trying to move, his will is then braced against the resistance of the ropes – and in that case, it is appropriate to say that influence is involved.

A subsidiary concept of influence, by one or more volitional agent(s) of another, is incitement – which may be defined as *intentional influence*. In the case of *unintentional* or accidental influence the influencing agent(s) will something with certain purposes in mind, which do not include the goal of influencing the other agent in a certain direction; yet that other agent is indeed influenced, since he cognized that previous will or its outcomes and acted in the same direction, or against it, in relation to such cognition. We have incitement, by contrast, if the one of the goals of the influencing agent(s) was in fact to influence the other agent a certain way, interfering with his life, presenting him with some enticement or obstacle.

We may formalize incitement by means of propositions like “**X incites A to will W**”. This is a specialized form of “X influences A to will W”, which it implies, where X is something willed by some agent(s) B, *who intend(s)* agent A to will W. (Thus for the positive form; similarly, *mutatis mutandis* for the negative form and for forms with negative terms.)

Here, the will X of B could be any perceivable physical activity or product thereof, such as a push or pull, a punch or arm-lock, a gesture or speech, a written text, or whatever. Such will, note well, has to have as one of its goals the orientation of A in a certain sense. The mere awareness by B that A *might perchance* be so led does not qualify as intention; B has to *want* that result. Though A must cognize X (and that before willing W), he does *not* have to cognize any of the intentions of B. But X must in fact influence A to will W, i.e. reduce the effort needed for A to will W and thus the likelihood of his doing so. Influence without intention and intention without influence are

equally inadequate to qualify for incitement. And of course, just as influence does not eliminate freedom of the will, so incitement does not.

Thus, whereas influence refers to the consciousness of the influenced agent, incitement refers to both that and the consciousness of the influencing agent(s). The concept of incitement has gray areas, with regard to who and what (and where and when) the intentions involved are aimed at. We must distinguish *specificities* of intention, ranging from general intentions to more and more defined ones. The former intend a kind of result, whereas the latter focus on a designated agent performing a precisely specified action. For example, advertisers want to sell a product to as many people as possible; but it would not be accurate to say that they incited Mr. Smith in particular to buy a particular sample of it (even on a given date in a given shop).

The most obvious case of incitement is *physical* coercion or intimidation. This may involve actual blows or incarceration, to someone or to others that this person cares for, or merely the threat of such direct or indirect physical suffering, with a view to get the victim to do or not-do something. The legal authorities may resort to such measures to protect society. Or thugs of all kinds may use them for their own selfish ends. Depending on one's courage, training and motivation, one may often resist such attempts at domination. Sometimes, individuals try to and fail; sometimes, yielding to fear of pain, they do not try at all. People usually manage to defend themselves collectively, if not individually.

Intimidation, involving the threat of force to someone or the use of it against his loved ones, is of course a *psychological* rather than physical means of incitement. Indeed, most incitement is psychological, ranging from promises of some advantage or reward to threats of some disadvantage or punishment. The promise or threat is often very tacit and vague, though sometimes explicit and defined; it may in either case be true or false. Its content may fall under any existential category: it may be physical, psychological, spiritual, economic, social, political, or whatever.

Incitement by means of *language* in any form (gestures and sounds, speech in words, written language) is considered as special enough to be named distinctively, say as 'persuasion'<sup>4</sup>. We may make further distinctions with reference to the interrelation involved: 'ordering' (by an authority or superior), 'entreating' (by an equal or inferior), 'instructing' (by a teacher), 'example giving' or 'emotionally inspiring' (by a role model), 'advising' (by a friend), and so forth. Often, pressure is applied by seemingly merely giving information (true, false or uncertain), without specifying what it is in aid of; an idea is imbedded in a mind, with the likelihood that it will lead to certain desired conclusions and actions. A promised reward for a certain course of action is an 'incentive'; a promised penalty is a 'disincentive'. If an incentive turns out to have been a false promise, it was probably intended as 'bait'.

Note that in relationships of influence between two or more volitional agents, the interaction of wills may be competitive or cooperative. We should not necessarily view the influencer(s) as active and the influenced agent as passive. The agents may have conflicting or shared purposes, with or without intention to do so. They may work at cross-purposes or together, struggling or in harmony, in a variety of relations – for examples, as commercial partners or political opponents, as equal co-workers or as boss and employee or as master and slave, as parents and children or as teacher and student.

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term very broadly, including both fair persuasion and persuasion by distortion.

All such relations can in principle be defined by analyzing the intentions of the players involved. Some interactions are *de facto*, some are contractual, mutual agreements by word of mouth or in writing; some are more or less enforceable, some not. We see here how the whole range of human or animal social life becomes an object of aetiological study.

An important issue in this context is that of parsing *responsibility*. Volitional acts are primarily the responsibility of their agent, no matter how much they are influenced by external factors or persons, since he has free will. Nevertheless, in a more nuanced sense of the term, his responsibility may be mitigated with reference to the influences impinging on him. If something good was very easy to do, the praise in doing it is less marked than if it was difficult. If something bad was very hard to do, the blame in doing it is more marked than if it was easy. Our concern may be moral or legal.

When we consider human influences, and especially intentional ones, sharing the praise or blame is necessary, since more than one agent is involved in the result. Obviously, unintentional influence implies a lesser share of responsibility for the influencer than intentional influence (i.e. incitement). In some cases, the scenario relates to an association between two or more persons who perform some deed in common. We might then ask, who played what role, and what their mutual relationships were, to determine the hierarchies of responsibility involved. Such judgments are not based on exact science (to date). Many virtues are needed to arrive at a fair judgment, among them respect for facts, attention to detail, impartiality, the sense of justice, a pure spirit, wisdom.<sup>5</sup>

## 6. Further Analysis of Influence

### 1. Some features of influence

We defined influence as the relationship, to the action of a volitional agent, of contents of consciousness that make his exercise of will easier or harder. To ‘make easier or harder’ means that: in the presence of these objects, provided one is minimally aware of them just before acting, the effort of will needed for some purpose is increased or decreased *by comparison to* that needed in their absence. If they are not contents of consciousness, they are effectively absent as influences, whether present or absent as facts.

The contents of consciousness involved may be experienced material, mental or even intuitive objects. That is, they may be concrete environmental or physiological factors or conditions, or phenomenal contents of mind (memories, imaginations, verbal thoughts, emotions, whatever), or again acts or attitudes within the agent himself. The operative contents of consciousness may also include abstractions from any such experiences (that is, concepts, inferences, any intellectual considerations). The degree of consciousness involved may be intense (‘conscious’), peripheral (‘subconscious’) or virtually nil (‘unconscious’); this may or not affect the degree of influence.

But in any case, the medium of consciousness is essential to characterization of something as an influence. If something has an effect on an agent’s actions independent of consciousness, i.e. (as we say) ‘objectively’, we may speak of ordinary conditioning, but not of influence. Thus, for

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<sup>5</sup> I particularly recommend in this context the already mentioned work of Hart and Honoré.



instance, a person's natural constitution (such as brain makeup or bodily structure, in comparison to other individuals of the same species or to other species) certainly affect his actions, but not in the way of influence. These may well yet be influences – if their apprehension plays a role in his actions. For example, if a man seeing his poor physical appearance in a mirror is discouraged from pursuing a woman – his ugliness ceases to be a mere condition and becomes an influence (on his own volition<sup>6</sup>).

Influences are not sufficient conditions for will; but are 'efficient' in the sense that without them or others like them the willed act would be improbable, though still possible somehow. Positive influences make things more readily accessible (facilitate); negative influences make things more difficult (hinder). It depends which way one is headed.

A simple way to represent these tendencies is to visualize someone moving an object up or down a hill: the hillside (or the force of gravity) is analogous to a positive influence on a person moving the object down, but analogous to a negative influence on a person moving it up. The degree of influence may be illustrated by the inclination of the hillside. If it is steep, influence is great, pro or con. If it is not steep, the influence is small, pro or con. If the inclination is strong in a favorable direction (downhill), little effort is needed to achieve the desired end; but if it is unfavorably strong (uphill), much effort is required. If the inclination is not strong, comparatively more effort will be needed for positive goals (down) and comparatively less effort for negative ones (up) – comparatively to a stronger inclination, that is.

For this reason, we often speak of people's proclivities or inclinations. The term inclination carries a useful image, suggesting a landscape with valleys or canals symbolizing the easy (more inertial) paths, and hills or other obstacles as requiring special (more volitional) effort to go over or overcome. We can imagine a marble (one's will) traveling over such variable landscape, subject to alternative developments and the conditions of transition at different times from one to the other. The landscape idea allows us to view effort not merely in terms of modifying the paths of a marble (going with little effort on the easy courses, or with more effort on the harder ones), but also more radically in terms of remodeling the landscape itself<sup>7</sup>.

To influence the course of events is to make them *tend* to go a certain way rather than any other. To clarify this, we might refer to effort, since effort is diminished or increased according as it goes with or against tendencies. But we should not confuse a heuristic formula with a description or an explanation. Our impression is that influences stimulate or stagnate our responses, i.e. increase or decrease our will. This aspect of influence can perhaps best be expressed with reference to the *likelihood* of a certain response.

It seems that the *more* effort an act of will requires, the *less* likely is the agent to provide it; the *less* effort it requires, the *more* likely will he do so. The agent is naturally lazy or economical: if things are made easy for him, he will probably go for it; if difficult, probably not. This is said 'all things considered', i.e. taking into account all the influences involved, and not just focusing on some and

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<sup>6</sup> Of course, regarding the woman's volition, it may be influenced by the man's appearance in her sight, whether such appearance is a mere condition or an influence relative to his volition.

<sup>7</sup> For example, in a physiological context, we might refer to the general health and tonus of one's body as the underlying landscape. Every action occurring within a favorable bodily context is easier, so in the long run it is best to keep fit without having to predict what one will eventually undertake. Similarly, with regard to the mind and soul.

ignoring others. It does not exclude that the agent may indeed invest more effort, and overcome some great resistance, especially if motivated accordingly by some other influence (for instance, a moral principle or a vain self-image).

A tendency may be viewed as a ‘force’, which goes in the same direction as the ‘force’ of one’s will, reducing the amount of effort needed and increasing the likelihood of such will, or in the opposite direction, making more effort necessary and the will less likely. The advantage of this concept of ‘force’ is to provide a common measure between tendencies and will, although they are very different in nature, making a calculus (additions and subtractions) possible.

Note that here, when we speak of probabilities (more or less likelihood), we mean something radically different from the statistics intended in causation, in that it does *not* signify that, under certain unknown or unspecified conditions, the likelihood becomes a necessity. We here just report that the greater the effort required the less likely it is to be provided; and the less effort required, the more likely provided. That effort and likelihood are thus inversely proportional may be viewed as a sort of *principle of inertia* observed in the spiritual realm. But such analogy is not meant to imply inevitable behavior patterns.

As we have pointed out, the assumption of freedom of the will is that irrespective of all influences, where volition occurs it is nevertheless ‘freewill’<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps an inner sense of freedom is involved, which allows us to think that, even if we have always behaved in a certain way in certain circumstances, we are still free to behave otherwise in similar circumstances. Nevertheless, we are inwardly aware that had the influential circumstance been different, we might well have behaved differently. In other words, the influential factor played a role in our decision, though not a determining one.

A person is said to have a (relatively) ‘strong will’, if over time his conduct is less readily influenced – especially by other people’s wills, but also more broadly by any circumstances. A person with ‘weak will’ is often (comparatively) driven or thwarted in his will, i.e. his effort is rarely equal to his intentions. Note that these two concepts are relative: they may compare different periods in the life of the same person, as well as the behavior patterns of different people.

The influence of something on one’s will is essentially subjective, since it depends on a cognitive act. Nevertheless, the influence as such is objective enough, in the sense that its increase or decrease of the effort requirement for a given volition in given circumstances may be considered as a ‘natural law’.

One’s cognitive assessment of a situation may be true or false, objectively justifiable or unjustifiable; the influence of something ‘perceived’, or assumed to be a fact, does not depend on its being a fact in fact. It suffices that one *believe* something to be a fact, or to be likely enough, for it to have considerable influence. Whether such belief is based on experience, reason, emotion, wisdom, intelligence, stupidity, faith, guesswork, confusion or self-delusion is irrelevant, so long as it is operative.

It follows that a molehill may seem like a mountain, and vice versa. Thus, one man may be brought to a standstill by the prospect of resistances that were in fact minimal, while another may heroically overcome enormous odds because the challenge seemed puny to him. Neurotic doubts may ignore

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<sup>8</sup> Influence may therefore be likened to natural spontaneity in that its results are only probabilistic, never determining. See chapter 1.3.

all evidence, and artificially inhibit volition, bringing on defeat. Shining faith may ignore all rational objections, and fire volition to triumph.

It should be made clear that influences on our actions are rarely singular and simple. Just as a mass of ordinary conditions underlie them, so influences are multiple and complicated.

To give an example: suppose I lift a heavy load. The lifting is objectively difficult because of the great weight of the load and the inadequacy of my muscles, or the wetness of my hands, or my having insufficiently eaten lately, or my feeling drowsy. But there are also mental factors, like my self-confidence, or my fear of dropping the load and making a noise, or my being in a hurry, which affect things more subtly and obliquely, in the way of influence. My considering myself strong encourages me, my fear of falling upsets my concentration, my feeling rushed spurs me. All these factors play a role in shaping my physical movements.

At any given moment, with regard to any pending act of will, there may be a multitude of influences. We may view them collectively as making one resultant influence. But it is more accurate to view them severally and analytically. Some point in one direction, others in the opposite direction; the resultant is the net influence, which may be positive, negative or balanced. Moreover, while volition is still undecided, there may be a range of options; each of these has its own resultant influences, so that the options may be ranked, ordered according to the degree and polarity of influence concerning them.

Furthermore, influences should not be considered as isolated forces, because they often mutually affect each other in some way. Causal chains and structures may interrelate them. This may mean 'mutual reinforcement', such that one gives rise to or increases another, and then the latter generating some more of the former, till both reach a certain stable level. Or it may mean 'mutual counteraction', such that one decreases or eliminates another or vice versa.

Thus, a detailed calculus of influences is theoretically possible, and needed to fully clarify each situation of will. In practice, such calculations are very tentative and approximate, since we do not have sure and precise data. We should also note the difference between identifying and estimating influences before the fact, i.e. as an aid to choice and decision, and doing so after the fact, i.e. as an aid to judgment about a completed volition. In the latter case, we are taking stock, to reward or punish ourselves by rating, or to learn lessons for the future.

## **2. Processes of influence**

Natural objects or events influence an agent when appearing before him, as objects of consciousness (through his perceptual faculties, outer or inner, or, more broadly, through his conceptual faculties). Such cognitions may generate emotions, imaginations and deliberations in him, as well as consequent actions: these all involve or are influenced acts of will. Emotion involves evaluation, an act of will; imagination is largely willed projection of mental images; deliberation is thought, also largely willed; and of course, action means will.

Also, subjects normally influence other subjects via such natural objects or events. Thus, for instance, a woman may attract a man by walking or dancing in front of him (light), by speaking or singing (sound), by her odors or perfume (smell), by physical contact (touch), by her cooking (taste), or more abstractly by her beliefs and values made evident through the preceding sense data. These external items may generate emotions, imaginations and deliberations in the man, which eventually influence him into appropriate action.

Various subdivisions of influence need to be considered. One may be influenced by *information*, which may be perceptual givens or conceptual insights, whether in the material world or in the mental matrix, arising naturally or through research or by the suggestion of other people (through oral, written or visual means). The information need not be true; it suffices that it is believed. Our individual beliefs evidently influence our individual actions; moreover, our belief systems give rise to behavior patterns<sup>9</sup>.

One may also or alternately be influenced by *emotions*: felt in the body or in the head, concretely or abstractly. Emotions, of course, often arise in the face of information (be it true or false). Though information may influence via emotions, it may also influence without intervening emotions. Some emotions are apparently ‘spontaneous’, arising without clear relation to any new information; we experience an emotional charge in us, but cannot offhand interpret its origin. This is quite normal; but if it happens too often without rational explanation, it may become a source of anxiety and pathology.

Some people believe, rightly or wrongly, in the possibility of direct ‘spiritual’ influence. In this view, one may transmit ideas to another by mysterious pathways, or even will one’s will on another’s will. In such cases, if influence need not happen through natural objects or events (i.e. mainly via matter), are the mechanics of influence more complicated than normally conceived? In the case of telepathy, this possibility changes nothing essentially; the label ‘influence’ remains accurate<sup>10</sup>. In the case of takeover of will or domination, we may simply refer to an effective annulment of the power of will of one subject by another: such overpowering is not ‘influence’ in a strict sense, but more precisely a far-reaching volition<sup>11</sup>, effectively a ‘conditioning’.

As earlier stated, information may influence actions in a roundabout way, as well as directly. The following is a more detailed analysis of such oblique influence in the case of emotions, for instance (similar analysis is possible for all information).

We can, by the way, distinguish three types of ‘emotions’ – visceral ‘feelings’ in the body, some of which are products of physical sensation (e.g. a pleasure during massage or a pain upon burning) and some of which seem of psychosomatic origin (e.g. a person wakes up in the morning with a

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<sup>9</sup> One might add that, conversely, our behavior patterns sometimes affect our belief systems.

<sup>10</sup> If telepathy exists, it would mean that the thoughts of one person could receive information originating in the thoughts of another. The latter might be an already influential person (a guru, a parent, a teacher, a lover, a friend), but possibly even an unknown person. This could occur in waking hours, or equally well in the course of dreams. It is difficult to account for all dreams with reference only to subconscious volition of scenarios, coupled with ‘spontaneous’ eruptions of content from the brain. Dreams occasionally contain totally unexpected scenes, seeming beyond one’s usual creative abilities and too complex for chance. Is the explanation for them perhaps that they occurred by intermingling of two or more minds? Do all minds meet in some ‘collective unconscious’, maybe?

<sup>11</sup> A sort of telekinesis of among spiritual entities. This would be another hard to prove thesis of ‘parapsychology’.

cloud of anxiety in the stomach area or bubbles of joy in the upper chest<sup>12</sup> or throat), and purely mental emotions whose phenomenal qualities are very subtle if at all discernable.

It should be stressed that an emotion may be present and felt – but *unadmitted*. In such case, it is said to be ‘subconsciously’ cognized, because one is aware of it with a low or minimal degree of consciousness. This is in contrast to ‘conscious’ emotion, which is more explicitly recognized, which means that *one identifies with it* to some extent, at least enough to consider and deal with it. We may also distinguish between awareness *of* an emotion, and awareness *that it is* emotion; the latter classifies the former, implying an additional cognitive act.

When an emotion occurs, our usual response is to try to explain it, so as to (a) quash it, or at least diminish it, if it is negative, or (b) continue it, if not intensify it, if it is positive. We naturally prefer the positive to the negative (unless we are masochistic, but then the desired positive emotion is further down the line, more tortuous), and cling to what we desire and escape from our objects of aversion.

This response of ‘trying to explain’, is a search for the cause(s) of the emotion or for its exact meaning (besides its being pleasant or unpleasant) – and the important thing to understand is that the interpretations we (or others) suggest are merely hypotheses, which may be right or wrong. In fact, they are very often mere conjectures, i.e. probably wrong, in that the more complex particular emotions usually have multiple causes, and it is hard to establish which of these are the dominant ones even when we manage to list them all.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, emotions influence actions in two ways: simple/direct or complex/roundabout. First, the emotion itself may affect conduct, by easing or obstructing certain actions (e.g. a light-hearted child skips around; whereas a person with a headache avoids movement). Second, the emotion supplies the data around which we construct hypotheses about its causes, and these explanations in turn affect our actions (e.g. thinking I feel good or bad because someone said something to me, I pursue or avoid that person).

Psychologists study *specific* influences, which group together various combinations of the above-mentioned genera of influences. For example, the various categories of influence on one’s life might be listed, including one’s parents and other family members, one’s school teachers, other friends and acquaintances, certain books read (novels, religious documents, histories, philosophies, scientific treatises), the other media (movies, TV and radio programs, etc.), and so forth. Then for each category, the nature of the influence would be ascertained – e.g. *what* did one’s father or mother influence? Perhaps one’s moral inclinations, one’s manners, one’s choice of spouse, or one’s political beliefs. And *how* did such transmission occur? Perhaps by example, by preaching, or through some shared experience. A nexus of information and emotions is involved.

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<sup>12</sup> I suppose that until modern times people believed the seat of the soul to be in the heart due to the experience of certain feelings in that region.

<sup>13</sup> Whether emotions are necessarily ‘intentional’, i.e. aim in the direction of some object, is an issue. I think some do and some do not. The latter may just be bodily or mental phenomena without significance. In that case, no interpretation will be found for them. Another question we might then ask is whether all emotions are perceived at some level or they can exist without being ever felt. Again, I suspect the latter may be true.

### 3. Instincts in relation to freewill

With regard to the statement made that all volition is freewill, we have to answer a question concerning *instincts*, i.e. seemingly inherited (or at least individually innate) environmental information and behavioral responses that are not mere reflexes. How are certain surprising observed behaviors to be explained? How come all members of a species behave in the same way in the same circumstances? Can some cognitive data be genetically stored and passed on? Can some volitions be controlled by genetic factors?

For a start, we should avoid confusion between intentional acts and acts with certain incidental consequences. In both cases, there is will, indeed free will – but the former are consciously aimed at some goal, whereas the latter *only seem* to have a certain direction to an ex post facto observer. The *intention* of instinctive acts is obscure, vague and internal; it is not to be confused with the biological *utility* of such acts identified by scientists. The instinctive act responds to an inner urge, in a way that calms or gains relief from that urge. The soul's consciousness is focused on that urge, and the will's aim is to answer that pressing demand anyway it can (whether the 'how' is immediately evident, or has to be discovered or learned). The soul is not told 'why' it has to do it, i.e. need not know what the life-sustaining value of its instinctive response might be. The *urge* to so act, on the other hand, may well be viewed as 'programmed' by nature (i.e. a product of evolutionary selection).

Consider for example a baby sucking at its mother's bosom. The action as a set of mouth muscle movements is one we would consider volitional, yet we would not seriously suggest he has consciously directed his muscles for feeding purposes. The baby's volition is surely influenced by hunger and perhaps by the smell of its mother's milk. In such cognitive context, there may be a number of reactions the baby's volition may choose from, including sucking, crying, waving arms, say. In this sense, the baby *has choice*. But it just so happens that sucking movements are the primary choice, the most likely choice, i.e. *the easiest* option in the range of available options.

Thus, the event involved is equivalent to trial and error learning, except that *the first choice volition is influenced to take* is the 'right' one. The other options are therefore not tried.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, 'instinct' is a legitimate and definable concept: it may be fully assimilated to our concept of influence. The volition involved in instinctive acts is not exempt from freedom and responsibility. We can therefore side with the proposition that genes do not transmit foreknowledge of the environment or complex living skills. Technically, the influence of instinct functions exactly like any other influential item. ***Simply, an instinct is an innate influence, which may or may not be partly affected by environmental circumstances or their cognition; and this influence happens to be the most powerful of other innate or acquired influences.***

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<sup>14</sup> Similarly for animals. For instance, in the case of a baby turtle rushing to the sea before predators get it, after its egg hatches on the seashore. How did the poor beast know the danger and where and how to escape it? I have not studied the matter; but may suggest possibilities. It may well be born with a nervous urge to run immediately, a sort of angst it gains relief from by running; the issue is then what makes it run in the specific direction of the sea? Perhaps the smell of the sea, the breeze, the light or the temperature influence it. In any case, we need not assume some mysterious source of innate knowledge on its part. It suffices to say that the influences, whatever they be, are such as to favor that behavior rather than other possible alternatives.

Influences are not all equal: this is true in all contexts, as we have seen, and not just with reference to instinct. Influences are of varying effect on volition; some influences are strong, some are weak; they may be ranked. Influences are all operative simultaneously on the soul about to will; but the soul is most likely to will in the easiest direction, i.e. the one in favor of which the influence is strongest, loudest, most manifest. That this direction is consistently taken by a baby or a lower animal does not imply that other options are in fact absent; they are indeed present as potentials in the background of the volition, only being less influential they are less likely to be felt or acted upon.

For a more mature or more spiritually developed soul, the easiest option is not always the one taken; the soul has discovered its own volitional power; and can therefore choose less obvious directions. Note that even an animal may swerve (or be influenced to swerve) from its instinctive path; for example, a dog trainer can get a dog to resist its hunting instinct and obey the injunction to walk on when it comes across some prey.

In formal terms, we may refer to a disjunctive proposition, where “P or Q or R...” are the alternatives open to volition in given circumstances and influences. However, P may be more likely than Q, and Q more likely than R, etc. In such case, the agent will ‘instinctively’ opt for P, the most obvious and influential choice, although he may eventually discover his capacity to opt for Q or even R, notwithstanding their being less manifest and influential.<sup>15</sup>

#### **4. Liberation from unwanted influences**

When we meditate on our internal workings, we can easily see the force of inertia existing in us. It is very evident that though we may to some extent have freewill, it is not always and everywhere immediately operative. Thoughts, imaginings, memories, emotions, faces, musical tunes, words – may go on and on for hours, without our being able to stop them or channel them for more than a few seconds, if that. It may however be possible to control such dull mental activity in the long run, thanks to disciplined spiritual exercises like meditation. Thus, freewill seems to exist, not in all things ‘at will’, but often only by ‘working on oneself’ over time, i.e. going through a time-consuming process.

This is how the yearning for inner *liberation* may first arise. Once we have witnessed our own incapacity to concentrate our will over a period of time, we are appalled and become anxious to remedy this weakness of the will. Some philosophers think the solution to be asceticism, considering that most of the force that drags us down into such endless chatter of the mind is the body’s innate desire for food and drink, physical comfort, sex, and so forth. Others argue that more pondered methods must be used to overcome mental scattering and sluggishness.

Many people are not even at the level where they are concerned with the ongoing obsession and anarchy inside their minds; but are rather frightened by some of their compulsive external behavior patterns, such as anti-social anger and violence, or self-destructive and socially dangerous lust, for examples. Such actions may be viewed in religious terms as sins; and fought by prayer and other pious deeds; or they may be confronted in a more secular perspective. But what concerns us here is their relationship to freedom of the will.

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<sup>15</sup> Note that I use a similar schema of ordered disjuncts in my work *Future Logic*, with regard to ‘factorial induction’ (see part VI).

Every punctual or sustained attempt to gain ascendancy over such subtle or coarse tendencies is an expression and affirmation of freewill. Self-mastery is possible, if we do not ‘identify with’ the influences on our will, i.e. if we do not say or think of them ‘this is me’ or ‘this is part of me’.

But in addition to the influences already within us, in the way of thoughts and feelings, we may need to look further out and consider the way nature and other people condition and influence our mental and physical actions. I will have different life-support issues to face if I live in a hot country or in a cold country. If someone imprisons me, or creates a totalitarian society around me, it affects the things I need to think about and what I may do or not do. The contents of my thoughts are affected by my environment.

Anything that affects our subjective world, or objectively broadens or narrows the choices open to us in our life, anything to be taken into consideration in the exercise of volition, is an influence. If it is considered good, it facilitates our pursuits; if bad, it makes things more difficult for us. We logically prefer the former, and so far as possible oppose the latter.

Volition is capable of being influenced; but is also capable of overcoming influences or diminishing their impact. This is made possible through a policy of awareness, or mindfulness – ‘working on oneself’.

## 5. Propositions about the future

Volition is expressed through propositions of the form “A wills W”, which may be called ‘volitional propositions’. Although the simple present tense is needed to discuss volition as it occurs (whether in categorical or conditional propositions), mostly we use such form in the past or future tenses. Usually, except for introspective reports, we only know after the fact that “A wills W” was true: i.e. such a proposition is derived from the past form “A **willed** W”. The future form “A **will will** W”<sup>16</sup> has always been of especial interest to logicians and philosophers, because it seems to claim as a fact something that depends on free will and therefore cannot strictly be predicted with absolute certainty.

Many propositions less explicitly involve prediction of free will, yet depend for their truth on the will of someone or those of many people. For example: “the sea battle will take place tomorrow”. It should be noted that *such propositions about future will(s) are not only about volition, but also about the amount of influence on volition*. In our example (it is actually Aristotle’s), the likelihood that the prediction come true is very high (though not absolute), because all the people involved are so entangled in their war that it would be very difficult (though not inconceivable) for them to make peace overnight. Thus, propositions about influences involved are tacitly implied.

All forms concerning the relation of influence may be called ‘influential propositions’. This includes positive forms, like “X influences A to will W”, and their negations, like “X does not influence A to will W”. Also, as we have seen, the extreme terms may be replaced by their negations – X by notX and W by notW. As for the middle term, A, there is no point considering its replacement by its negation, notA, since that would not refer to an agent; we can only substitute another agent, say B or C. A subspecies of influential forms are the forms of incitement, such as “X incites A to will W” and its derivatives.

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<sup>16</sup> It is no accident that the same word “will” is used both for volition and for the future tense. It has the same etymology in either sense [O.E. *willa*].



Detailed formal study of these and other such forms is beyond the scope of this book, but the job needs eventually to be done by someone.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> But see **Appendix 1** for some additional comments on this topic.