



**Freedom of the Individual.**

Review Author[s]:

R. M. Hare

*The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (Apr., 1967), 230-233.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0031-8108%28196704%2976%3A2%3C230%3AFOTI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-9>

*The Philosophical Review* is currently published by Cornell University.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/sageschool.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## BOOK REVIEWS

*FREEDOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL.* By STUART HAMPSHIRE. New York, Harper and Row, 1965. Pp. 112. \$3.95.

The borderland between ethics and the philosophy of mind has become one of the great growth points of modern philosophy. Not all the growths are malignant; for it is possible, as Mr. Kenny and others have shown, to write in this field with terseness and lucidity of expression and tightness of structure, so that a reader knows what theses are being offered for his criticism. But the subject tends to attract writers in whom the sentence-cells proliferate without building up into any easily recognizable argument. Professor Hampshire had the disease very badly when he wrote *Thought and Action*; that he is on the mend may be indicated by the shortness of his new book, and by the fact that its style, though at the beginning it resembles that of the earlier book, improves markedly in lucidity in the later chapters—perhaps because he is there saying more familiar things. If anybody thinks that I am being unfair, I ask him to turn to page 35, where Hampshire refers to “the third feature of desire,” and see whether he can spot the first and second features.

I am not confident that I can identify, let alone summarize, Hampshire's main theses; but it looks as if they might be something like the following. In Chapter 1 he argues that when we say that a person can do something, we are using “can” differently from when we say that a thing can do something. The difference is connected with the fact that people, unlike things, can *want* to do something, and can *try* but fail to do it. Therefore a person, unlike a thing, can refrain from doing something, although he can do it, simply because he does not want to; and a person, unlike a thing, can establish that he cannot do something just by trying and failing. But even if all this be granted, as perhaps it should, Hampshire does not make it clear why it follows that there are two uses of “can.” He says (p. 12, s.f.) that the use of “can” applicable to things can be characterized as follows: “‘It cannot happen here’ . . . asserts that there are grounds for believing that it will not happen, which are strong enough to justify the assertion that it cannot happen.” But if I want to do something, and try but fail to do it, what entitles me to say that I cannot do it is that I have

grounds (the experiment just mentioned) for believing that I will not. What *exactly* does Hampshire think is the difference between trying to see whether the gas can escape and trying to see whether I can escape?

In Chapter 2 he distinguishes between two sorts of desires. Again, the basis of the distinction is not entirely clear. The more advanced kind of desires, which men can have but dumb animals cannot, is distinguished from the less advanced kind in a number of ways. Men can think about and characterize their wants (p. 37); they can reflect upon and report them (p. 38); such desires are called "fully articulated desires which emerge from reflection" (*ibid.*). They can also be criticized and evaluated (p. 39). Hampshire thinks that "self-consciousness, the awareness of the possibility of mistake, and the power to communicate go together, all three" (p. 38). Whatever he means by the typically elusive phrase "go together," it is not clear why he thinks this. How is he so certain that there are no self-conscious (or even reflective) animals which cannot, however, communicate? The thesis is not argued for. Suppose that Hampshire (or the other people who agree with him on this point) were told that Buridan's ass was reflecting on the attractions of the alternative bundles of hay; how could they be sure a priori that this was not so? He continually claims, without ever quoting chapter and verse, the support of Aristotle; and writers of this "Aristotelian" school are apt to be a great deal more confident than I am about what goes on in the minds of dumb animals. Even if we confine ourselves to humans, why cannot there be a man who can describe his desires but not criticize them? Still, it can hardly be doubted that there are distinctions of this general kind (probably a number of them) within the class of desires; what they need, and do not get from Hampshire, is sorting out.

In passing, we may question the view (perhaps held by Hampshire) that if a kind of creature cannot express intentions in words, it logically cannot have any. How, for example, do we know that birds, when they sing, are so different from men? If I intend to sing a certain note (say a difficult lead in partsinging) I shall be well advised to fix my mind on that note, not on any description of it in words or musical notation. *Saying* to myself that I intend to sing E-flat, or a fourth above the last note in the bass part, will not help in the least. Unless I empty my mind of such descriptions, and concentrate on the note I intend to sing, I shall be unlikely to hit it. How can philosophers be so sure a priori that what I do in such a case could not be done by someone who had never learned how to describe notes in language, or even

## BOOK REVIEWS

by a man or a bird who had never learned any language at all and was singing by ear, or improvising? Or that this could not be called "intending to sing a certain note"? Hampshire mentions on page 67, in another connection, the case in which one *listener* describes to another how a performer will render a certain passage. Would that he had considered the case from the point of view of the performer!

In Chapter 3 he says that there are two kinds of knowledge. He is using here the distinction, which has become familiar without ever becoming clear, between knowledge which can be had "without observation" and knowledge which cannot. Criticisms already made of earlier versions of the doctrine have shown that I cannot know without observation (that is, without ever having made any observations) what I am doing or will do—even the movement of my own limbs; for that I am still, or shall be, in control of my own limbs, let alone of anything else, cannot be known without observation. If writers of this school were to pay more attention to learning theorists, they would realize that learning to use my hand, or a pencil, involves the perception of what happens when I make certain trials. Since the examples usually quoted of "knowledge without observation" are impossible without past learning, past observations must always be involved.

Nor can I know without prediction based on past observation that I shall not change my mind about what I now intend to do, nor that I shall not find myself in circumstances in which I know that what I intended is impossible, and in which, therefore, I can no longer intend it. Most of this Hampshire admits. What is left of "knowledge without observation" after these qualifications have been made? Something so different from knowledge in most ordinary senses that, although we certainly can use the verb "know" of it (though not, normally, the noun "knowledge") we have to be very careful, in so doing, not to be misled.

When I have been wondering what to do, I sometimes say, "Now I know what to do." This means that I have arrived at a decision (have answered the question "What to do?"). To "know what to do" in this sense is just to be resolved or to intend firmly. It does not necessarily carry with it knowledge *that I shall actually* do or try to do, or that I am actually doing, the thing decided on; for all I know, I may change my mind, whether owing to changed circumstances, or just through inconstancy. And if I know that I am not the sort of man to be inconstant, this can only be the result of past observations. Moreover, for all I know I may try but fail to do it (even when I

## BOOK REVIEWS

think I am succeeding). I may know what *to* say in the next sentence; but do I know *that* I *shall* actually say it—or even that I am now saying what I think I am saying? Does the hymn-singer know without observation that he is not singing “From death’s dead string thy servants free”?

The explanatory value of the notion of “knowing what to do” is simply that, if clearly understood, and distinguished from “knowing what I shall in fact do,” it directs our attention away from all the various kinds of factual or descriptive or predictive knowledge *that*, and brings out the close analogy between what we are doing when we decide or intend *to* do something (when we know what *to* do), and what we are doing when we tell somebody else what *to* do. It brings intentions and decisions into the prescriptive region of thought and language, and invites us to illuminate them by examining some other things in this region. It is the burden of Hampshire’s last chapter that this kind of thought and language cannot be replaced by any kind of descriptive or predictive language. We need to say things that can only be said by using a certain first-person use of “I want to” or “I intend to” (or, I should like to add, “I tell you to” or the corresponding plain imperative). This is true and worth saying again. But it will not be clear what we need these expressions for, or what is their use, until we turn from the study of mental concepts to the study of prescriptive language itself. It is therefore more likely that ethics will illuminate the philosophy of mind than vice versa.

R. M. HARE

*Corpus Christi College, Oxford*

*POLITICAL AUTHORITY AND MORAL JUDGMENT.* By GLENN NEGLEY. Durham, Duke University Press, 1965. Pp. x, 163. \$5.00.

The primary purpose of this book is to answer one question: what accounts for the imperative power (or authority) of law? Its secondary purpose is to elucidate the answer to that question with a general theory of human institutions and their management. These are most difficult matters; no single work is to be expected to resolve them definitively. Still, this is a particularly unsatisfying effort to make progress in this sphere.

In his quest for the foundations of political authority, Professor Negley presents, in essence, one constructive and four critical theses. The latter are: