

# Chapter 29

## The Freedom of the Person



Grace A. de Laguna  
Edited by Joel Katzav, and Dorothy Rogers

1 **Abstract** In this article, Grace Andrus de Laguna develops a view of human  
2 freedom, one according to which it is made possible by the uniqueness of human  
3 individuals and the cultural worlds in which they live.

4 In becoming a person, a human being at once undergoes and achieves a transformation  
5 of himself. With this transformation, we shall now try to show, he acquires freedom  
6 both of choice and of creativity. But he could neither attain nor exercise such freedom  
7 if he did not live in a world which not only makes freedom possible, but demands it of  
8 him as a person. This is not the universal “world of nature” in which all individuals  
9 exist and act as individuals, but the human *Lebenswelt*, the cultural world. It is  
10 because this world differs in distinctive ways from the universal order of nature  
11 that it makes freedom possible. Yet as man has his source in the same nature in  
12 which all individuals exist, so the cultural world has itself arisen from nature. If the  
13 world of culture is in a peculiar sense the “work” of man, man is dependent on the  
14 evolutionary generation of this world for his own humanity. If there is a sense in  
15 which man transcends nature, there is a deeper sense in which the potentiality of  
16 such transcendence belongs to what nature *is*.

17 That nature exhibits an order in which differences of “higher” and “lower,” “better”  
18 and “worse” have no place is, in an obvious sense, undeniable. This is an order of  
19 regular repetitions of coexistences and sequences. It is indeed because there are such  
20 repetitive regularities that nature contains kinds and classes of things and events

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G. A. de Laguna · J. Katzav (✉)  
School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, QLD,  
Australia  
e-mail: [j.katzav@uq.edu.au](mailto:j.katzav@uq.edu.au)

G. A. de Laguna · D. Rogers  
Department of Educational Foundations, Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ, USA  
e-mail: [rogersd@montclair.edu](mailto:rogersd@montclair.edu)

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21 related to one another in ways that are describable in terms of universal law and are  
 22 indefinitely formulable mathematically. It was the dream of finding such an order that  
 23 inspired the beginnings of modern science in the seventeenth century and spurred  
 24 the rejection of final causes as having any place in the processes of nature. If this  
 25 dream has not been fully realized, the mounting successes of science in formulating  
 26 and applying such laws is testimony that nature is amenable to such ordering.

27 We have already argued that if the order of nature is all that nature is—if the being  
 28 of nature is exhausted in the order it manifests—then the existence of individuals is  
 29 incomprehensible. For individuals and their acts can belong to the order of nature only  
 30 so far as they are particulars, instances of the general, and existentially repeatable. But  
 31 each individual is an unrepeatable and unduplicatable entity, and since individuals  
 32 do exist, the being of nature is not wholly resolvable into the order it manifests.  
 33 As an unrepeatable entity, a human being, like all individuals, escapes the net of  
 34 universal laws. But there is a further ground for the claim that man as a person and  
 35 the human world in which he lives as a person, “transcend” nature. For human life  
 36 can only be understood in terms of a seeking of goals which are not only biological  
 37 but cultural and ideal. To act as a person is to act with reference to ends approved  
 38 as valuable. The human world in which alone he can live and act as a person is not  
 39 merely an order of repetitive regularities—although it exhibits such regularities—it  
 40 is an organization, and as such is structured with reference to ends. It is only within  
 41 the world of human culture that a person can live and act, because it is only this  
 42 world that provides the ends for which men seek and the means of their possible  
 43 attainment. Human freedom would be meaningless unless there were ends for which  
 44 to act; choice would be impossible if there were not a plurality of possible ends and  
 45 means, differing not only in the possibility of attainment but in their desirability as  
 46 ends. The human world is no mere order in which distinctions of higher and lower,  
 47 better and worse have no place. On the contrary, as the anthropologists point out, it  
 48 is structured in terms of value. It is for this reason that as scientists they insist that  
 49 values belong to nature. To justify this claim and to solve the problem which they  
 50 are forced to acknowledge, they have need of a metaphysical conception of nature  
 51 compatible with their science.

52 The claim that man and his world belong within nature finds its strongest support  
 53 in the evidence that these—both man and his human world—came into being in the  
 54 evolutionary course of nature. If we admit, as surely we must, that man is the latest  
 55 stage in a continuous process from inanimate matter to the simplest living organism  
 56 and then through the biological evolution of species to man and his cultural world,  
 57 we are faced with a philosophical problem which is insoluble in terms of a natural  
 58 order of repetitive regularities. The alternative, as we have argued, is not, however,  
 59 between a deterministic “mechanism” and a “teleology” which conceives evolu-  
 60 tion as a process directed to a predetermined end. What distinguishes the living  
 61 organism from its nonliving predecessor is its ability to replicate its own structure in  
 62 another individual. The genetic processes of replication may indeed be analyzable  
 63 as physico-chemical processes taking place in accordance with nature as an order  
 64 or repetitive regularity, but the reproductive organism is also an organization having  
 65 a teleonomic structure describable with reference to the end of reproduction. This

66 fact has a scientific importance for the theory of the evolution of species: it is orga-  
 67 nization for reproduction that is “selected” by nature. But it is not only the theory  
 68 of biological evolution that is dependent on the recognition of the essential role of  
 69 teleonomy. The evolution of the primitive organism from nonreproductive molecules  
 70 is itself theoretically unintelligible unless teleonomic structure is recognized as an  
 71 irreducible and universal factor in the being of nature. No individual, we maintain,  
 72 endures through sheer passive inertia, but only as it so acts as to maintain itself in its  
 73 potentiality for acting in reciprocity with the acts of other individuals. The so-called  
 74 “chemical selection” that presumably led to the appearance of the first living beings  
 75 is to be conceived not as the selection of the more complex kinds of individuals,  
 76 but of those organized to the end of self-maintenance under changing conditions.  
 77 What marks the biological evolution of species as a distinctive stage, or phase, of  
 78 the evolutionary course of nature is not the emergence of teleonomic structure from  
 79 mere “order,” but the transition from one type of teleonomic structure to another.  
 80 But while reproduction as the supreme end has been the critical factor in the evolu-  
 81 tion of living species, it has not replaced the self-maintenance of the individual as  
 82 a necessary means. The advent of man (*genus homo*) marks the third stage in the  
 83 continuous course of evolution. As a living organism, man is structured for the end  
 84 of reproduction, but this end is no longer primary or dominant. The end for which  
 85 man is uniquely organized lies outside himself as an individual and also beyond  
 86 the reproduction of his structure in other individuals, although it must include these  
 87 ends as subsidiary. Man’s unique goal is the maintenance of the culturally patterned  
 88 human community and its “way of life.” It is not to be supposed that man with his  
 89 distinctive teleonomic structure arose first, as the result of natural selection, and then  
 90 as a result of his genetically determined organization, produced, or generated, the  
 91 cultural world in order to attain the ends to which his biological organization was  
 92 directed. Man did not come first, and then his culture. Rather we may suppose that  
 93 the world of human culture has had an evolutionary continuity with the “behav-  
 94 ioral environment,” the proto-cultural world, of man’s anthropoid ancestors, and that  
 95 the evolution of this world and of man as a distinctive biological species occurred  
 96 together in mutual dependence. The organization uniquely distinctive of the human  
 97 individual, the organization he must achieve for himself, is that of the *person*. As the  
 98 evolution of man from his hominid predecessors and the evolution of culture took  
 99 place in mutual dependence, so the transformation of each human individual into a  
 100 person can only be achieved within a cultural world he shares with other persons,  
 101 and which he re-creates as his in becoming a self. The person, too, must maintain  
 102 his own existence. But since he can exist as a person only as a self within a world he  
 103 shares with other selves, so he can maintain his self-existence only by so acting as to  
 104 maintain this common world. By making it his, he re-creates it both for himself and  
 105 for others. The end to which man’s teleonomic structure is directed thus transcends  
 106 the maintenance of his existence as an individual and the maintenance of his organic  
 107 structure in the reproduction of offspring. Yet in this very transcendence of the ends  
 108 for which all living beings are organized, continuity of the evolutionary course of  
 109 nature is manifest.

110 The cultural world could not make freedom possible unless it were a realm not  
 111 only of ends and means, but of *order*, of repetitive regularities. Nature could not, as it  
 112 does, manifest itself in organizations unless it also exhibited existential order. But the  
 113 order essential to the organized structure of the cultural world is not merely that of  
 114 nature: it is the order of *custom*, and not that of natural law. The regularities of custom  
 115 differ in important respects from those expressible in terms of natural law. Customs  
 116 are not universal, but vary from one culture to another. They are also subject to change  
 117 from one period to another in the same culture. Moreover the regularities of custom  
 118 are, for the most part, looser and less clearly and exactly definable than those of the  
 119 order of nature. If natural laws are stated in terms of conditions never exactly realized  
 120 in actual existence, they are not conceived to be subject to exceptions or deviations.  
 121 It may be claimed that while customs change, these changes themselves take place in  
 122 accordance with natural law and subject to universal conditions, and that conformity  
 123 and nonconformity to custom also occur in accordance with underlying laws of  
 124 nature. But conformity to custom is not conformity to law, nor are the regularities of  
 125 custom regularities of law.

126 Conformity to a custom does not consist merely in acting in a general way that  
 127 is the same from occasion to occasion and from individual to individual, under the  
 128 same conditions, although a custom would not continue to exist without such repeated  
 129 regularity of action. Conformity to custom involves conformity to a standard, a norm  
 130 of conduct. The order represented by custom is not merely an existential order; it  
 131 is a normative order, an established order, a traditional order. It can continue as an  
 132 existential order only as long as it continues to be approved. To be sure, the practices  
 133 actually followed by the members of a society do not always coincide with the  
 134 standard they profess. It is also true that customs differ widely in the degree to which  
 135 acknowledgment of a standard is involved in conformity to them. Customs have been  
 136 established by tradition and must be learned by each generation of individuals during  
 137 childhood and youth. They are not acquired merely as habitual but are inculcated  
 138 through the approval and disapproval of others. Conformity to some customs is also  
 139 supported by more or less specific sanctions. The child who deviates too far from the  
 140 customary way of speaking his mother tongue not only is likely to be ridiculed but  
 141 will not make himself understood, and the youth who fails to conform to the standards  
 142 of polite behavior may suffer ostracism from certain circles. And as some customary  
 143 ways of acting become differentiated and established as “law,” the sanctions become  
 144 specific and standardized and enforced by established authority.

145 The customary ways of acting which are essential constituents of the human  
 146 world of culture, represent, on the one hand, an order like that of nature—an order  
 147 of repetitive regularity. Customs exist only so far as they are actually followed. But  
 148 conformity to custom, on the other hand, differs from conformity to natural law  
 149 in that it involves conformity to a standard. While the continued existence of the  
 150 customs depends on the acceptance of this standard, the distinction between custom  
 151 as an order of existence and customs as a normative order—an order of what “ought  
 152 to be”—remains.

153 It is because persons live in a world structured in terms of value and act in ways  
 154 established by tradition and approved as representing a standard, that men are capable

155 of a freedom of choice no other animal enjoys, or suffers. Other animals live in an  
 156 environment which may also be said to be a “world” insofar as it has an organized  
 157 structure of potential ends and means correlative to the teleonomic structure of the  
 158 individuals of the species. But the choices open to animals of species even most  
 159 closely related to man are not only limited but fundamentally different in character.  
 160 It is true that some species of mammals, and even birds, act as a group and in  
 161 ways, such as bird migrations, established by former generations and learned by the  
 162 young through association with older members of the group. But if the migrating  
 163 birds follow a “customary” route, their behavior reflects neither approval nor tacit  
 164 acknowledgment of any standard involved. And while the “world” in which the  
 165 members of a socially organized group of animals live is in some degree shared by  
 166 all, it is not a “common world” in the sense in which the cultural world is common.  
 167 For the human world is common because it is a world in which communication in  
 168 terms of language and other symbolization is possible, and such communication is  
 169 conditioned by the sharing of *value*. But while it is only human beings who live in a  
 170 world structured in terms of values, research discloses a proto-type of this world in  
 171 the world of the anthropoids.

172 That distinctions of value are involved in structuring all human society is evident.  
 173 This is especially clear in the case of organization in terms of class and caste. Distinc-  
 174 tions between classes depend not only on differences of social function, but carry  
 175 with them differences in “prestige,” in rights, and privileges. In societies without  
 176 class, distinctions may yet be organized as a hierarchy, or set of hierarchies, of ranks,  
 177 to which different individuals belong and to which the same individual may belong  
 178 at different stages of his life as he passes up or down a ladder of hierarchical steps.  
 179 And a democracy in its maintenance of “equal” political status and “equal” rights of  
 180 its citizens, is also dependent on the recognition of value. We may, indeed, go further,  
 181 and say that all human cooperation and competition are based on the acceptance of  
 182 common values.

183 Values have their roots in the relations which objects in a common world bear to  
 184 one another, to the persons who are members of the community, as well as in the rela-  
 185 tions which connect persons to one another as holders of status and players of roles.  
 186 The set of values which characterizes a particular culture reflects its mode of organi-  
 187 zation. The passage from hunting to agriculture, the rise of a military organization,  
 188 and the development of urban civilization, of a money economy and industrializa-  
 189 tion with its growth of technology, have all brought with them and depended upon a  
 190 correlative shift in former values and the emergence of new ones. In every culture and  
 191 at every period of its development, the values essential to its organization themselves  
 192 form an interrelated set. If a cultural world were, or could be, an entirely unified  
 193 system, the values would also be completely organized as a single system. Even in  
 194 the relatively homogeneous and simple organization of the most “primitive” culture,  
 195 the values present in it belong to more than one class or kind; in the highly complex  
 196 civilizations, like our own, there is a corresponding multiplicity of the kinds and  
 197 classes of values.

198 The values of each kind fall into a more or less definite hierarchy; each has a place  
 199 in a scale of better or worse, higher or lower, than the value of others of its kind.

200 Moreover, one kind of value is also recognized as higher or lower than another. A  
201 complete system of values would exist if the different kinds of value were ordered  
202 in a single hierarchy of degrees culminating in the supreme value of the Absolute  
203 Good. But such a system could be realized only, as Plato taught, in an Ideal State.  
204 In any case no such single hierarchy of values is to be found in any actual human  
205 culture. The kinds of value belonging to a cultural world fall into no single hierarchy  
206 and can be rated according to no single scale. Some different kinds of value are  
207 incommensurable. We may, by way of illustration, think of the money economy of  
208 a complex industrial society as a means of standardizing and measuring different  
209 kinds of value in terms of exchange. So works of art have a market value and are  
210 thus measurable in comparison with potatoes and television sets. Yet while their  
211 market value is by no means independent of their aesthetic value, aesthetic values  
212 and economic values are fundamentally and irreducibly incommensurable. Nor do we  
213 suppose that the salary scale or the monetary returns received by government officials,  
214 research scientists, physicians, and corporation lawyers furnish a measure of the  
215 social value of their respective services. We may rate the services of one commanding  
216 general higher than those of another, but we cannot rate them as unquestionably higher  
217 or lower than the services of the governing head of the state.

218 If all values of a cultural world formed a single hierarchy, so that the value of every  
219 object and act were fixed relatively to that of every other, a world so organized would  
220 offer no alternatives between which to choose freely. Freedom of choice is possible  
221 only in a world whose values are not already fixed and completely organized; a world  
222 in which there are real potentialities of value which may or may not be actualized.  
223 Choices are free, not merely because men are ignorant of values and so must choose  
224 in the dark, but because it is through the choices that men make that the potential  
225 values of a cultural world can become realized.

226 But while the values of every cultural world belong to no single system, every  
227 culture possesses one set of values supreme above all others and incommensurable  
228 with them: the moral values. What distinguishes moral values and constitutes them  
229 as supreme is that the attainment of them, at least in some degree, is the neces-  
230 sary condition for the attainment of other values. We have already argued that the  
231 integration of the personality of the individual is dependent on the attainment of  
232 certain fundamental and universal personal virtues, and that it is with reference to  
233 his self-ideal that the individual must organize his life as a person. So it is the recog-  
234 nition of common ideals and conformity to common standards of moral conduct  
235 that is essential to the organized activities of men in their common world. Moral  
236 ideals and standards combine the intrinsic value of being ends in themselves with the  
237 instrumental values of necessary, if not sufficient, means to the attainment of other  
238 values.

239 While there are universal values implicitly acknowledged in every culture, the  
240 particular moral values recognized and their respective ratings will vary as the orga-  
241 nization of one culture differs from that of another. But despite such variation and  
242 relativity, moral values perform the same essential function in every culture. It is  
243 because the attainment and preservation of its moral values is a necessary condition

244 for the realization of other cultural values that the corruption of its moral order is  
 245 destructive of the organization of its common world.

246 The normative order which distinguishes the cultural world from that of nature  
 247 not only contains value standards in accordance with which things are ordered as  
 248 higher or lower; it also contains a standard of what *ought to be* as distinguished  
 249 from *what is*. This distinction is inherent in the nature of custom. The laws of nature  
 250 represent universal regularities of what is; the order of nature is wholly existential.  
 251 The regularities of custom, which constitute the order of the world of culture, are also  
 252 an order of what is, for if a custom is not followed, it ceases to exist. Yet customs are  
 253 also approved. That standards are essential to the maintenance of customary modes of  
 254 action follows from the fact that culture is transmitted from generation to generation;  
 255 it must be learned by the individuals of each new generation. Custom represents  
 256 and is made possible through the accumulated experience of past generations. If an  
 257 individual of one generation is to profit by such accumulated experience he must  
 258 learn *from* others, and, as we have seen, this involves not only responsiveness to their  
 259 approval and disapproval of himself, but the development of similar approval and  
 260 disapproval by one's self. Standards are essential because no common world could  
 261 come into being or be maintained without the sharing of approval. But while the  
 262 maintenance of the regularities of custom, which constitute the order of the world  
 263 of culture, depend upon their acceptance as norms, and while what has become  
 264 established as "customary" tends to be approved as "proper," the practices followed  
 265 and the standards approved do not entirely coincide. A cultural world could not exist  
 266 without standards of what ought to be, but if there were complete conformity to these  
 267 standards, so that "what is" and "what ought to be" were one and the same, the world  
 268 of culture would be indistinguishable from the natural world, and there would be no  
 269 scope for human freedom.

270 The same consequence follows if we consider the matter from the standpoint of the  
 271 person as a participant in culture. As we have seen, participation in culture involves  
 272 the internalization of culture—the acquisition of customary ways of acting and of  
 273 cultural standards as a "second nature." But if this process were to be completed the  
 274 human individual would not be a person but a robot—or an angel. It is not merely  
 275 the limitations of human nature that prevents conformity to standards becoming  
 276 identified with the inclinations of an acquired "second nature." Such a consummation  
 277 would be possible only if the culture to be internalized were itself completely  
 278 integrated. This would mean not only that the customary regularities coincided with  
 279 conformity to approved standards, but that the standards themselves formed a system.  
 280 But there are conflicting standards present in every culture. Recorded history and  
 281 literature of all ages and all peoples are full of such cases. Loyalty to wife and child  
 282 may conflict with loyalty to king and country, and both of these with conformity to  
 283 the standards of established religion. A culture may include many different standards  
 284 which are socially complementary. The standards of an aristocracy, for example, are  
 285 different from those of either peasants or tradesmen, and there are codes for different  
 286 professions. No conflict would, however, occur if the society were so organized that  
 287 the difference in standards corresponded to roles played by different persons or at  
 288 different times and occasions by the same person. In some cultures and at some

289 periods in the same culture, such correspondence is more nearly achieved than by  
 290 others, but it is never complete. Conflicts of standards occur just so far as individ-  
 291 uals are forced, or attempt, to play roles with differing standards. As we pointed out  
 292 earlier, the culture to some extent provides established ways of combining roles and  
 293 standards for the subordination of some roles to others.

294 It is, at least in part, because the individual participants in a culture are caught in  
 295 such conflicts that every culture has developed a more or less explicit set of moral  
 296 standards, rules or principles by the applications of which the claims of conflicting  
 297 standards may be adjusted. But the moral standards of duty, no more than the moral  
 298 value standards of virtue, form a unified system or can be codified as a set of moral  
 299 laws. Moreover they can be explicitly formulated only in very general terms. In  
 300 relatively simple and homogeneous cultures with fewer and less divergent standards,  
 301 conflicts occur less often, and in such cultures moral standards tend to remain implicit  
 302 or to be expressed and passed on in the form of myths, while there is little formu-  
 303 lation of moral principles in general terms. It is when conflicts between the more  
 304 specific standards become more frequent and serious, as happens in cases of culture  
 305 contact and acculturation, that the need for the explicit formulation of general moral  
 306 principles must be met. Such formulations may gain currency and become accepted  
 307 because they are made by those whose authority is already recognized, or it may be  
 308 that their acceptance as filling an inarticulate need, itself lends authority and respect  
 309 to the “wise man” or prophet who proclaimed them.

310 But however moral principles become formulated and gain acceptance, they can  
 311 fulfill their function of settling conflicting claims and organizing human life only  
 312 through being applied to individual cases. That there are, in the last resort, no rules for  
 313 the application of rules is a commonplace. As the individual person must, in the last  
 314 analysis, himself combine the playing of different roles and achieve the integration  
 315 of his own personality, so it is the individual who must resolve his own conflicts of  
 316 standards and make his own moral decisions. He may avoid this in particular cases  
 317 by seeking advice and counsel of others whose authority to make moral decisions  
 318 he has accepted. But he must choose to accept such authority. If, indeed, a society  
 319 were so organized that the authority both to formulate moral laws and to decide how  
 320 they should be applied in individual cases were delegated to some single individual  
 321 or institution, such a culture would not be a moral order, nor would the individuals  
 322 in such a world be persons and moral beings.

323 It has generally been recognized that there can be no morality without freedom,  
 324 and it might be argued that even if the individual were relieved of all responsibility for  
 325 resolving moral conflicts and for deciding what his duty was on particular occasions,  
 326 he would still be free to obey or to disobey its dictates. But the freedom of the person,  
 327 we contend, is more than this: it is the freedom both to decide how to apply accepted  
 328 moral principles in the individual case and, in doing so, to act in some degree as a  
 329 legislator of moral laws. It will be recalled that Kant held that man was free in that as  
 330 a rational being he was himself the legislator of universal moral laws. But, as Kant  
 331 himself held, it was not man as an individual who could so legislate, but man as a  
 332 rational being, nor was there scope for any freedom of choice.



333 We have argued that human freedom is possible because the cultural world in  
 334 which men live differs in important respects from the world of nature. It differs,  
 335 first, because its structure is that of custom and historical tradition rather than that  
 336 of natural law. Its order has not only come into being, but it remains incomplete  
 337 and subject to modification and change. Secondly, it differs from nature in that its  
 338 order is normative and not merely existential. The cultural world contains values as  
 339 essential to it; it is organized with reference to value distinctions and relationships.  
 340 Its order is also normative in that the customary regularities constitutive of it involve  
 341 conformity to *standards*. The existential order of what is and the normative order of  
 342 what ought to be are mutually dependent; each is distinct from, yet essential to the  
 343 maintenance of the other. Because the values and standards of the cultural world form  
 344 no single system, but result in conflicts when internalized by the individual persons  
 345 in whose existence and by whose acts the culture is actualized, the maintenance  
 346 of the cultural world depends on the presence of moral standards as the necessary,  
 347 although insufficient, condition for the resolution of conflicts, and for the integration  
 348 of the personality of the individual. The structure of the cultural world, thus, not only  
 349 makes freedom possible and demands it of the individual, but is itself maintained  
 350 and reorganized by the free activity of individual persons.

351 An act of true choice is possible only to an individual who is both rational and  
 352 free. The mere selection of one thing or one action rather than another does not  
 353 constitute an act of choice. We do not think of the chick who has learned to avoid the  
 354 fuzzy caterpillar and peck at the smooth worm as choosing the worm. All animals  
 355 are selective in their actions: the bat flies at twilight and not at noonday; the salmon  
 356 returns to spawn in the stream where it was hatched; the bear hibernates in a cave  
 357 but not in the open; one species of bird nest in a tree and another on the ground.  
 358 While such actions show selectivity we do not think of them as acts of choice by the  
 359 individual concerned. The case is less clear, perhaps, with regard to the individual  
 360 bear or robin. Does the bear “choose” the particular cave in which he hibernates,  
 361 or does the robin “choose” this site to build her nest rather than some other she has  
 362 apparently looked over before settling down? We would ordinarily say so. Yet we  
 363 should hesitate to ascribe freedom of choice to either the bear or the bird. It has long  
 364 been generally agreed that it is only man who has freedom of choice and that it is as  
 365 a rational and moral being that he is free. It is clear from the preceding discussion  
 366 that this is our own position. But it is important to consider further how the choice  
 367 possible to man as a rational being differs from the bear’s “choice” of a cave or a  
 368 bird’s “choice” of a nesting site; and how and in what sense a rational choice is free.

369 A choice is rational insofar as it rests upon an *analysis* of its object and of the  
 370 situation. The bird before building its nest does indeed “look over” several inviting  
 371 places, but it is not to be supposed that it has made its selection on the basis of  
 372 comparing it point for point with others and after weighing the relative advantages,  
 373 say, of protection from weather, inaccessibility to marauders, distance from feeding  
 374 grounds, etc. Rather it is to be assumed that the selection of the site follows what  
 375 Kohler has called a moment of “insight” in which the site is perceived as a total  
 376 configuration more inviting on the whole than the configuration of other sites. The  
 377 man who chooses a site for a house, however, acts in a radically different way. He

378 too will look over a number of possible sites, but his choice is reached by an analysis  
 379 in conceptual terms of what he perceives, and by the relating of what he perceives  
 380 to what is beyond the reach of perception. He considers not only the view, but the  
 381 price, the neighborhood, educational opportunities for his children, distance from his  
 382 place of business, etc. A more cautious and thoughtful man may carry this analytic  
 383 discrimination farther than another, but no man, however impulsive he may be, makes  
 384 a choice without some analysis and conceptualization of the object. Nor is choice a  
 385 mere matter of preference, as one may be said to “choose” a peach rather than a pear,  
 386 or an olive rather than lemon peel in his cocktail. Choice involves a consideration of  
 387 values, a weighing of the advantages and disadvantages that attach to general features  
 388 discriminated in analysis. To choose one house site as on the whole more desirable  
 389 than the others is to have made a *synthesis* of the values analytically discriminated.  
 390 What is important for us to note is, first, that the analytic discrimination must be made  
 391 in terms of general concepts and in terms of equally general and common values. One  
 392 man may attach a higher value to a “good” neighborhood or educational advantages  
 393 than another, and rate higher the probable increase or decrease in the market value of  
 394 the land, but no man can make a choice without a recognition of some common values  
 395 and a rating of them for himself and with reference to his own situation. Secondly,  
 396 it is important for us to note that while the synthesis essential to an act of choice  
 397 involves a rating of the values discriminated, it is no mere calculation of an algebraic  
 398 sum. If the synthesis were reached by calculation, as prizes are awarded at a dog  
 399 show, for example, when fixed numerical values are assigned to a definite number  
 400 of points, such a calculated result would not constitute a choice. Only an individual  
 401 who is a person can make either the analysis or the synthesis essential to an act of  
 402 choice. Choice is rational in that both the analysis and the synthesis are made in  
 403 general, and hence common, terms and with reference to common standards; choice  
 404 is free in that the individual is not subject to rule in making either his analysis or his  
 405 synthesis.

406 Choice is possible only between more or less fixed and mutually exclusive alterna-  
 407 tives. And, as we have seen, it involves a comparative evaluation of these alternatives.  
 408 But if such evaluation showed the value of one alternative to be, on the whole, much  
 409 greater than that of the others, there would in that case be no room for choice. Again,  
 410 if no difference in value could be detected, an individual would be equally debarred  
 411 from making a choice—he could only, so to speak, “flip a coin.” One cannot, as  
 412 we would maintain, make a real choice without taking a risk. This risk is not suscep-  
 413 tible to exact calculation, but it must be considered and accepted. The choice one  
 414 makes may turn out to have been a “bad choice,” since the outcome was unfortunate,  
 415 and yet have been the “best choice” one could have made at the time and under the  
 416 circumstances. The choices a man makes he must make “in the dark” since he is  
 417 incurably ignorant. But to make a choice he must do it “with his eyes open,” and  
 418 see the darkness made visible by the light. As men we are indeed “condemned to  
 419 freedom,” but the choices we are condemned to make each individual must accept  
 420 as his in his freedom; else he makes no choice.

421 But human freedom is not limited to the freedom of choice between alternatives.  
 422 If we are “condemned” to this freedom, there is another freedom, that of creativity,

423 open to us. If our cultural world were completely organized, the only freedom open  
 424 to us would be a choice between fixed and mutually exclusive alternatives; but while  
 425 we are sometimes faced with the necessity of such choice, this is by no means always  
 426 the case. We must on occasion decide whether to speak or be silent, whether to wait  
 427 or move on; but if we choose to speak rather than to remain silent, we are not limited  
 428 to fixed alternatives of what to say. And examination of alternatives may reveal a  
 429 possible compromise, a *via media* between them. Better still, and just as often, we  
 430 ask ourselves how we can have, or do, both. We find or invent new ways of gaining  
 431 our ends by varying or combining old ways; and the following of new ways and using  
 432 new means may reveal ends and values hitherto unrecognized and unappreciated.

433 Yet we must recognize that making a choice is not to be identified with making a  
 434 value judgment. Making a choice involves committing oneself to overt action. A man  
 435 might judge one house site to be more desirable than another, but unless he takes steps  
 436 to gain possession of it he has not actually chosen it. That choice must be actualized  
 437 in overt action is more evident when the choice to be made involves a consideration  
 438 of moral values. There is a sense in which the familiar dictum, “one may see the  
 439 better but choose the worse,” holds true. A man may, for example, acknowledge that  
 440 “honesty is the best policy,” and yet act dishonestly on a given occasion. He may,  
 441 indeed, justify his action on a number of different grounds; and, so far as he does so,  
 442 he has not chosen what he “sees” to be the worse. He may also, as a matter of fact,  
 443 feel uncomfortable in acting as he does (and for that very reason feel the need of  
 444 self-justification). But we are, all of us, often uncertain about the choices we make.  
 445 To feel uncertain and dissatisfied with a choice is not to “choose the worse.” Indeed,  
 446 as we have urged, if one alternative is clearly and unquestionably more desirable  
 447 than others, there is no room for choice.

448 It has been claimed, however, that when we act, as we often do, from passion or  
 449 from strong desire or fear, and in disregard of consequences, we are choosing the  
 450 worse. But such a contention surely rests upon a confusion. In being overcome by  
 451 passion we become incapable of choice, and to act merely from desire or fear is  
 452 not to act from choice. Only the individual who as self-conscious retains control of  
 453 himself and his actions is free to choose. To yield to passion is to lose self-control  
 454 and with it the ability to choose. Only so far as what is desired is also appreciated  
 455 as desirable can it be an object of choice. If only man as a rational and moral being  
 456 can make choices, it is because he can, and does, desire what he finds desirable and  
 457 also acknowledges what he does desire as more or less desirable. Few philosophers  
 458 have held that objects of even “carnal” desires are as such undesirable, or that the  
 459 pleasures of sense have no value, although many have debated how they are to be  
 460 evaluated and what place they have in the “Good.” It has often been pointed out that  
 461 an object of sensuous desire appears more desirable because of its immediacy. But  
 462 whether in choosing it rather than an alternative acknowledged to be intrinsically  
 463 more desirable but less immediate, one is, or is not, choosing the worse has long  
 464 been debated. Our point, however, is that no choice is possible between an object  
 465 of desire as such and one recognized as desirable. It is only so far as an object of  
 466 desire (or aversion) is recognized as desirable, and conversely, so far as an alternative  
 467 recognized as desirable is also an object of desire, that any choice is possible. That

468 men do on occasion act from passion or on impulse regardless of consequences is  
 469 undeniable, but such action is not the result of choice.

470 The question will be asked, however, whether one may not choose to yield himself  
 471 up to pleasure even though the consequence of his choice may be the loss of freedom  
 472 to make further choices. It is, let us admit, possible to choose a life of pleasure,  
 473 accepting the risk or even the certainty of paying ultimately a ruinous price. One  
 474 may also choose to commit suicide rather than live under some conditions. So also  
 475 one may—as many men have done—attempt to escape the burden (the “anguish”)  
 476 of the responsibility involved in all choice by seeking the peace of the monastic life  
 477 or of the solitary recluse. But there are admittedly cases of a very different sort.  
 478 Granting that one may be “overcome with pleasure,” “yield to temptation” or to fear  
 479 or threat choosing to do so, is there in such cases no freedom to resist? Freedom,  
 480 as we conceive it, is not freedom of a “Will,” distinguishable as a separate and  
 481 independent determinant of action. It is the person as an individual whole who is  
 482 free, and his freedom is a function of the organized structure of his personality. As  
 483 we have maintained, this organization is never completely integrated or completely  
 484 fixed. It is subject to change as the individual passes from youth to maturity and  
 485 into senescence. A man remains a natural individual as well as a person, and so  
 486 subject to the natural vicissitudes of his state. Senility thus brings not only a change  
 487 in personality but a disintegration of its structure and a corresponding loss in the  
 488 scope and degree of his freedom. Disease, accident, and the use of drugs may bring  
 489 a similar consequence; a man in high fever is no longer free to choose. And, as  
 490 we have learned of late, there are ways of combining physical and psychological  
 491 torture which degrade him as a man and destroy him as a person—they wreck the  
 492 structure of his personality. Some men do, indeed, die without succumbing to such  
 493 tortures, but it would be extravagant to claim that a man has the ability to withstand  
 494 all forms of torture or to remain free under its influence. Human freedom is limited  
 495 and conditional. Men differ from one another in the degree of freedom that belongs to  
 496 them as individual persons, and the same person varies, under changing conditions,  
 497 in both the scope and degree of his freedom.

498 While there is a distinction to be recognized between freedom of choice and  
 499 freedom of initiative, or creativity, the line between them is not always clear, and they  
 500 may merge into each other. An act of choice depends on the presence of alternatives.  
 501 Every culture offers to its participants alternative ends to be attained and alterna-  
 502 tive means for their attainment. To live and act in his cultural world the individual  
 503 person must constantly choose between these alternatives. For a genuine choice to  
 504 be possible, the individual must recognize the alternatives as desirable, as having  
 505 value; and to make a choice the individual must make some analysis of the alterna-  
 506 tives in conceptual terms and make his own individual synthesis of the relative  
 507 values attaching to them. It is partly because a free choice involves some uncertainty  
 508 and an individual commitment that a free choice is akin to an act of initiative in  
 509 which something new is produced or undertaken. The clearest case of choice occurs  
 510 when the person finds himself faced with alternatives which are clear-cut and mutu-  
 511 ally exclusive, when he sees no possible compromise and no way of securing the  
 512 advantages of both. But while every person is obliged on occasion to make such

513 a clear-cut choice, he often finds himself in a situation offering him a number of  
 514 possible alternative ends, or in which a combination of these ends is possible by  
 515 a judicious choice of means. Moreover, customary and approved modes of acting,  
 516 since they are general, may be conformed to in a variety of ways, and since the limits  
 517 within which conformity is recognized are not always clearly defined, the acts of an  
 518 individual may serve to modify the custom or to set a model for a differing custom.  
 519 Furthermore, as we have already emphasized, not only does every person play a  
 520 number of roles, each in his own idiosyncratic way, but he must combine the playing  
 521 of several by the exercise of his own initiative.

522 While every culture offers some alternative to individual choice and some scope  
 523 for individual initiative, cultures differ widely both in the fields in which choice  
 524 is possible or in which there is scope for individual initiative, and in the range of  
 525 freedom they offer and demand of their participants. Moreover, every cultural world  
 526 not only exhibits its own characteristic form of structure and its established order of  
 527 custom, but each has its own distinctive potentialities for the further development or  
 528 modification of its specific forms of organization and customary modes of action. A  
 529 form of social organization, a kinship system for example, may be capable of great  
 530 elaboration, such as is found in Australia; the potlatch, to cite another example from  
 531 a "primitive culture," has received differing elaborations among different groups  
 532 in the Pacific Northwest. And an industrialized money economy provides for an  
 533 expansion of exchange and a range of possible individual choice and the exercise  
 534 of individual initiative far greater than that potentiality present in a barter economy.  
 535 What we have to emphasize here is not, however, the difference between cultures in  
 536 the range and degree of freedom they offer to their participants, but the fact that every  
 537 culture contains potentialities inherent in and characteristic of its own organization.  
 538 If the cultural world in which the child grows to maturity is a world already ordered,  
 539 with well-trodden paths he learns to follow to well-charted destinations, it is also  
 540 a world of unexplored regions, through which he may make new paths and reach  
 541 new destinations; it is a world containing resources to be discovered and exploited  
 542 in new ways and by new forms of human association and cooperation. If every  
 543 culture, however rigidly structured, offers alternatives and demands a choice, it also  
 544 provides some scope for individual initiative and in some respects invites and rewards  
 545 individual inventiveness.

546 Range of choice open to a person and the opportunities for the exercise of his own  
 547 initiative will vary with the cultural conditions under which he acts. But freedom  
 548 of choice and of initiative also vary with differences in the natural endowment of  
 549 individuals. We have already argued that the making of any choice is dependent on  
 550 rationality, since it involves some conceptual analysis of alternatives and some appre-  
 551 ciation of values. However clear-cut and well established the alternatives offered by  
 552 his culture may be, they must be recognized by him as alternatives for himself.  
 553 A stupid person has fewer opportunities for choice simply because he is oblivious  
 554 to alternatives a more intelligent person would discern as present in the situation  
 555 confronting him. The cultural world in which a person lives is indeed a world of  
 556 social institutions and established technology, a world in which works of art, litera-  
 557 ture, and even science are unquestionably *there* and independent of him. Yet it is also

558 true that a cultural world exists and can be maintained only as it is internalized in the  
 559 individual persons who are its participants. While no individual internalizes a culture  
 560 completely, some individuals participate in it more deeply than others. How deeply a  
 561 given individual participates will depend not only on the circumstances of his nurture  
 562 and education, but upon his native intelligence and sensitivity. The more deeply he  
 563 participates and the deeper his insight into the latent potentialities of his culture, the  
 564 greater are the alternatives open to his choice and the greater the opportunities for  
 565 the free exercise of his own initiative. To discern what possible alternatives there  
 566 are other than those already established, the possible variations from, or extensions  
 567 of, the customary and familiar; to discern new ways of attaining old ends, or new  
 568 uses to which old procedures may be put, requires intelligence of a high order—and  
 569 a deeper and more penetrating insight. The innovator, the ingenious inventor, the  
 570 scientific discoverer and the moral reformer, are those who participate most deeply  
 571 in their culture. No one can create what is impossible; he can only elicit and bring  
 572 into actual existence what was present as potential in the already existent.

573 Yet although creative activity in any field would be impossible without a deep  
 574 understanding, it must be admitted that understanding is not enough; a man may be  
 575 highly intelligent and have a wide understanding of a subject and yet lack originality  
 576 and inventiveness. It is also essential, we would hold, that the creative person be  
 577 highly *active* as an individual. To act creatively is to act with intensity. Every indi-  
 578 vidual is essentially active. He maintains his existence through the acts by which he  
 579 actualizes potentialities belonging to him. But while all human beings are endowed  
 580 with the same generic potentialities, they differ from one another in their particular  
 581 potentialities. They also differ, we would suggest, in the degree of activity needed to  
 582 actualize their potentialities. No potentiality is actualized except by the acts of indi-  
 583 viduals, and while these acts are subject to conditions, they spring from the activity  
 584 inherent in the individual. It is doubtless true that creativity in one field depends upon  
 585 the particular potentialities with which the creative individual is endowed by nature.  
 586 A Newton has natural abilities different from those of a Martin Luther, and each has  
 587 distinctive abilities which differ from those of a Shakespeare or a Michaelangelo.  
 588 But each of these as a “creative genius” differs from the men of mere “talent” in his  
 589 field by what we may call the intensity of his activity as an individual. We may admit  
 590 this and yet hold, in opposition to Kant, that the “genius” is not separated from the  
 591 “man of talent” by any sharply drawn line, or that it is only the artist who is a creative  
 592 genius. It is undeniable, of course, that the creative artist differs in important and  
 593 significant respects from the scientific genius or the religious or moral reformer. The  
 594 creative thinker uses concepts, and from them he discovers or creates new conceptual  
 595 structures; the artist uses, not concepts, but imaged forms from which he creates an  
 596 individual structure of unique value and universal significance; the prophet discerns  
 597 and gives symbolic expression to values hitherto unrecognized but implicit in his  
 598 culture—or perhaps in every culture.

599 Every human being in becoming a person has some freedom of choice and some  
 600 freedom of initiative. The personality he develops is made possible to him both by  
 601 his individual endowment and by the pattern of his culture, but he has achieved it  
 602 through the free choices he has made and the initiatives he has ventured. And while

603 the range of personality open to him is limited by his individual endowment and  
604 conditioned by the culture in which he is reared, the personality he acquires is his  
605 individual personality, and its uniqueness his own individual achievement.

606 But if every person is free, his freedom is limited and conditional. Human freedom  
607 is at once made possible by culture and conditioned by it. As the range and kinds  
608 of choices provided by one culture differ from those provided by another, so do  
609 the opportunities for individual initiative. Not only do persons living in one culture  
610 enjoy—and are condemned to—greater freedom than persons living in a world of  
611 different culture, but individuals living in the same world differ from one another  
612 both in their freedom to choose and to initiate. Human freedom is neither to be  
613 conceived, as it was by Descartes and others, as the freedom of a Will independent  
614 of Reason and absolutely unconditioned in its activity; nor, on the other hand, as  
615 the self-determination of a rational being. Rather we should conceive freedom as  
616 limited and conditional, varying in scope and in degree from person to person, and  
617 with the same person in the course of his life. For every person may both gain and  
618 lose freedom as he passes through life. The choices he makes at one period may  
619 open a wider range of choice later on or preclude the possibility of choices once  
620 open to him. Moreover, if, as we have urged, his freedom depends on the intensity  
621 of his activity, he will suffer a loss of freedom with the senility of old age, or the  
622 impairment of his vital energy through illness or emotional exhaustion. If, as a person  
623 a man can significantly be said to transcend nature, he still remains an individual  
624 within nature and subject to its conditions.