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FREEDOM AND NECESSITY.

A LECTURE.*

I PURPOSE, in this Lecture, to inquire whether, and in what sense, men are free agents; and whether, and in what sense, their actions are necessary.

In discussing these questions, we shall be groping in the dark, unless we have perfectly clear conceptions of what action is. I observe, therefore, that by voluntary action I mean an exertion of energy by an intelligent being, a subjective putting forth of effort, in the direction of an end which is in the mind's view. In this definition, which I give, not with the idea that any definition can explain the nature of action, but simply to assist you to the exercise of that reflection through which alone the thing defined can be understood, the two essential points involved are, that voluntary action is a subjective determination, and that it is directed towards an end. Let us look at these a little more particularly.

In the first place, voluntary action is a subjective energy, issuing, no doubt, in certain objective results but by no means to be confounded with these. For instance, I lift a glass of water and

*This lecture was delivered in Knox College on April 6th, 1870. Dr. Young was at that time Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy in Knox College.