

**LIST OF MEMBERS**  
**OF THE**  
**METAPHYSICAL SOCIETY,**

FROM ITS FOUNDATION IN 1869 TO ITS DISSOLUTION IN 1890.

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1869.—

The Very Rev. The DEAN of WESTMINSTER.

Professor J. R. SEELEY.

The Hon. RODEN NOEL.

Rev. JAMES MARTINEAU.

Dr. W. B. CARPENTER, F.R.S., F.G.S.

† Mr. JAMES HINTON.

Professor T. H. HUXLEY, F.R.S.

Mr. C. PRITCHARD.

Mr. R. H. HUTTON.

Mr. W. G. WARD.

† Mr. WALTER BAGEHOT.

Mr. J. A. FROUDE.

Mr. ALFRED TENNYSON.

Professor J. TYNDALL, D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S.

Rev. ALFRED BARRY, D.D.

Mr. ARTHUR RUSSELL, M.P.

The Right Hon. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P., D.C.L.

Rev. Dr. MANNING, Archbishop of Westminster.

Mr. JAMES T. KNOWLES, Jun.

Sir JOHN LUBBOCK, Bart. M.P.

† The Very Rev. the DEAN of CANTERBURY.

Sir ALEXANDER GRANT, Bart.

† The Right Rev. the BISHOP of ST. DAVID'S.

Mr. FREDERIC HARRISON.

† Father J. B. DALGAIRNS.

Mr. GEORGE GROVE.

Mr. SHADWORTH H. HODGSON.

Mr. HENRY SIDGWICK.

Mr. EDWARD LUSHINGTON.

The Right Rev. the BISHOP of GLOUCESTER and BRISTOL.

The Rev. MARK PATTISON, Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford.

1870.—

The DUKE of ARGYLL.

Mr. RUSKIN.

The Right Hon. ROBERT LOWE, M.P.

Mr. M. E. GRANT DUFF, M.P.

1871.—

Mr. W. R. GREG.  
 Professor A. C. FRASER.  
 Dr. HENRY AGLAND, F.R.S.

† Professor F. D. MAURICE.  
 The ARCHBISHOP of YORK.

† Dr. J. B. MOZLEY.

1872.—

The Very Rev. the DEAN of ST. PAUL'S.  
 The Right Rev. the BISHOP of PETERBOROUGH.  
 Professor G. CROOM ROBERTSON.

1873.—

Mr. J. FITZJAMES STEPHEN.  
 Professor J. J. SYLVESTER.  
 Dr. J. C. BUCKNILL, F.R.S.

1874.—

Dr. ANDREW CLARK.  
 † Professor W. K. CLIFFORD.  
 Professor ST. GEORGE MIVART, F.R.S.  
 Mr. MATTHEW BOULTON.

1876.—

The Right Hon. LORD SELBORNE.  
 Mr. JOHN MORLEY.

1877.—

Mr. LESLIE STEPHEN.

1879.—

Mr. FREDERICK POLLOCK.  
 Dr. GASQUET.  
 Professor C. B. UPTON.  
 Sir WILLIAM GULL, M.D., F.R.S.  
 Rev. Professor ROBERT CLARKE.

1880.—

Mr. A. J. BALFOUR, M.P.  
 Mr. JAMES SULLY.  
 Mr. A. BARRATT.

*The descriptions of Members are in every case given as they stood at the date of election. Those marked (†) are deceased.*

Laura Russell

1895 —

14 February 1940

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Assistant

Miss Diana Russell.



*Papers read at the Meetings of the Metaphysical Society  
(Resolution II. of November 16th, 1880).*

1869.—

- June 2. Mr. HUTTON: "On Mr. Herbert Spencer's Theory of the Gradual Transformation of Utilitarian into Intuitive Morality by Hereditary Descent."
- July 14. Dr. CARPENTER: "The Common-sense Philosophy of Causation."
- Nov. 17. Professor HUXLEY: "The Views of Hume, Kant, and Whately upon the Logical Basis of the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul."
- Dec. 15. Mr. WARD: "On Memory as an Intuitive Faculty."

1870.—

- Jan. 12. Sir JOHN LUBBOCK: "The Moral Condition of Savages."
- Feb. 9. Hon. RODEN NOEL: "What is Matter?"
- Mar. 16. Father DALGAIRNS: "The Theory of a Soul."
- April 27. Mr. SIDGWICK: "The Verification of Beliefs."
- May. (No Meeting.)
- June 15. Mr. MARTINEAU: "Is there any Axiom of Causality?"
- July 13. Mr. F. HARRISON: "The Relativity of Knowledge."
- Nov. 8. Professor HUXLEY: "Has the Frog a Soul?"
- Dec. 13. Mr. BAGEHOT: "The Emotion of Conviction."

1871.—

- Jan. 11. Archbishop MANNING: "What is the Relation of the Will to Thought?"
- Feb. 8. Sir A. GRANT: "On the Nature and Origin of the Moral Ideas."
- Mar. 14. Mr. A. RUSSELL: "On the Absolute."
- April 25. Mr. RUSKIN: "The Range of Intellectual Conception is proportioned to the Rank in animated Life."
- May 16. Mr. FROUDE: "Evidence."
- June 13. Mr. HUTTON: "Mr. Herbert Spencer on Moral Intuitions and Moral Sentiments."
- July 11. The BISHOP of GLOUCESTER and BRISTOL: "What is Death?"
- Nov. 21. Professor MAURICE: "On the Words 'Nature,' 'Natural,' and 'Supernatural.'"
- Dec. 19. The DEAN of WESTMINSTER: "Do we form our Opinions on External Authority?"

## 1872.—

- Jan. 17. Dr. CARPENTER : " What is Common Sense ? "  
 Feb. 13. Mr. W. R. GREG : " Wherein Consists the Special Beauty of Imperfection and Decay."  
 — Mar. 12. Mr. FROUDE : " Are Numbers and Geometrical Figures real Things ? "  
 April 9. The RECTOR of LINCOLN COLLEGE : " The Arguments for a Future Life."  
 May 14. Archbishop MANNING : " That legitimate Authority is an Evidence of Truth."  
 June 11. Father DALGAIRNS : " Is God unknowable ? "  
 July 9. Mr. HARRISON : " On the Supposed Necessity of certain Metaphysical Problems."  
 — Nov. 12. Mr. SHADWORTH HODGSON : " Five Idols of the Theatre."  
 Dec. 10. Mr. WARD : " Can Experience prove the Uniformity of Nature ? "

## 1873.—

- Jan. 14. Lord ARTHUR RUSSELL : " Darwinians and Idealists."  
 Feb. 11. Mr. RUSKIN : " The Nature and Authority of Miracle."  
 Mar. 11. Dr. ACLAND : " Faith and Knowledge."  
 April 8. Mr. RCDEN NOEL : " On Will."  
 May 13. Professor CROOM ROBERTSON : " The Action of so-called Motives."  
 June 10. Archbishop MANNING : " A Diagnosis and Prescription."  
 July 8. The BISHOP of GLOUCESTER and BRISTOL : Oral communication on Euthanasia ; Mr. HUTTON read a paper on Euthanasia.  
 Nov. 18. Mr. HINTON : " On the Relation of the Organic and Inorganic Worlds."  
 Dec. 16. Mr. SIDGWICK : " Utilitarianism."

## 1874.—

- Jan. 13. Lord ARTHUR RUSSELL : " The Speculative Method."  
 Feb. 10. Mr. BAGEHOT : " The Metaphysical Basis of Toleration."  
 Mar. 10. Mr. J. FITZJAMES STEPHEN : " Some Thoughts on Necessary Truth."  
 April 14. Mr. HUTTON : " Latent Thoughts."  
 May 12. Father DALGAIRNS : " The Personality of God."  
 June 9. Professor CLIFFORD : " On the Nature of Things in themselves."  
 July 14. Mr. WARD : " A Reply on Necessary Truth."  
 — Nov. 17. Dr. CARPENTER : " On the Doctrine of Human Automatism."  
 — Dec. 8. Mr. W. R. GREG : " Can Truths be apprehended which could not have been discovered ? "

## 1875.—

- Jan. 12. Mr. J. FITZJAMES STEPHEN : "On a Theory of Dr. Newman's as to Believing in Mysteries."  
 Feb. 9. The Archbishop of YORK : "Will and Responsibility."  
 Mar. 9. Professor CLIFFORD : "The Scientific Basis of Morals."  
 April 13. Bishop of PETERBOROUGH : "Hospitals for Incurables considered from a Moral Point of View."  
 May 11. Mr. RUSKIN : "Social Policy must be based on the Scientific Principle of Natural Selection."  
 June 8. Lord ARTHUR RUSSELL : "The Right of Man over the Lower Animals."  
 July 13. Mr. SIDGWICK : "The Theory of Evolution in its Application to Practice."  
 Nov. 9. Mr. J. FITZJAMES STEPHEN : "Remarks on the Proof of Miracles."  
 Dec. 14. Dr. CARPENTER : "On the Fallacies of Testimony in Relation to the Supernatural."

## 1876.—

- Jan. 11. Professor HUXLEY : "The Evidence of the Miracle of the Resurrection."  
 Feb. 15. No Paper ; Discussion of Professor HUXLEY's Paper continued.  
 Mar. 14. Mr. SHADWORTH HODGSON : "The Presupposition of Miracles."  
 April 11. Professor CLIFFORD : "The Ethics of Belief."  
 May 9. Lord ARTHUR RUSSELL : "The Persistence of the Religious Feeling."  
 June 13. Professor ST. GEORGE MIVART : "What is the Good of Truth?"  
 July 11. Mr. J. FITZJAMES STEPHEN : "What is a Lie?"  
 Nov. 14. Professor CROOM ROBERTSON : "How do we come by our Knowledge?"  
 Dec. 12. Mr. J. FITZJAMES STEPHEN : "The Effect of a Decline of Religious Belief on Morality."

## 1877.—

- Jan. 9. Mr. HARRISON : "The Soul before and after Death."  
 Feb. 13. Cardinal MANNING : "The Soul before and after Death."  
 Mar. 13. Sir JAMES F. STEPHEN : "Authority in Matters of Opinion."  
 April 17. Dr. MARTINEAU : "The supposed conflict between Efficient and Final Causation."  
 May 8. Professor MIVART : "Matter and Force."  
 June 12. Mr. LESLIE STEPHEN : "Belief and Evidence."  
 July 10. Lord ARTHUR RUSSELL : "On Ideas as a Force."

1877.—

Nov. 13. Mr. HUTTON: "On the Relation of Evidence to Conviction."

Dec. 11. Mr. JOHN MORLEY: "Various Definitions of Materialism."

1878.—

Jan. 15. Mr. SIDGWICK: "The Relation of Psychology to Metaphysics and Ethics."

Feb. 12. The RECTOR of LINCOLN COLLEGE: "Double Truth."

Mar. 12. "Report of the Committee of Definitions." (Not printed.)

April 9. Mr. MATTHEW BOULTON: "Has a Metaphysical Society any Raison d'Etre?"

May. (No meeting.)

June 11. The BISHOP of PETERBOROUGH: "The Ethics of Persecution."

July 9. Dr. BUCKNILL: "The Limits of Philanthropy."

Nov. 12. Mr. SHADWORTH HODGSON: "Is Monism tenable?"

Dec. 17. Mr. HUTTON: "Is 'Lapsed Intelligence' a probable Origin for Complex Animal Instincts?"

1879.—

Jan. 14. Mr. SIDGWICK: "The Incoherence of Empirical Philosophy."

Feb. 11. Mr. Justice STEPHEN: "The Utility of Truth."

Mar. 11. Mr. LESLIE STEPHEN: "The Uniformity of Nature."

April 8. Professor MIVART: "The Religion of Emotion."

May 27. Cardinal MANNING: "The objective certainty of the Immaterial World."

June 10. Mr. HARRISON: "The Social factor in Psychology."

July 15. (No paper recorded.)

Nov. 25. Cardinal MANNING: "What is Philosophy?"

Dec. 9. Mr. HUTTON: "Is Causation or Power in nature a Reality, or a mere anthropomorphic Fancy?"

1880.—

Jan. 13. Sir WILLIAM GULL: "What are the elements of a Sensation?"

Feb. 10. Mr. SIDGWICK: "The scope of Metaphysics."

March 9. Mr. F. POLLOCK: "Generic and Symbolic Images."

April 13. Dr. GASQUET: "The Relation of Metaphysics to the rest of Philosophy."

May 11. Professor UPTON: "The recent phase of the Free-will Controversy."

*The 10 papers marked are missing*

## METAPHYSICAL SOCIETY.

The NEXT MEETING of the METAPHYSICAL SOCIETY is appointed for **TUESDAY, the 9th of DECEMBER**, at the GROSVENOR HOTEL, at 8 o'clock, when a Paper will be read by R. H. HUTTON, Esq., entitled "IS CAUSATION OR POWER IN NATURE A REALITY, OR A MERE ANTHROPOMORPHIC FANCY?"

Members intending to join the dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write, by return of post, to that effect to "Dr. MARTINEAU, 5 Gordon Street, Gordon Square."

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Feb. 1880



*17. Nov. 1869*

THE VIEWS OF HUME, KANT, AND WHATELY UPON THE  
LOGICAL BASIS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE IMMOR-  
TALITY OF THE SOUL.

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THREE writers of eminent reasoning power, but of widely different training and mental prepossessions, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Archbishop Whately, have maintained that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not capable of being demonstrated, or logically deduced, from known facts.

Hume, sarcastically, and Whately, honestly, endeavour to prove that men's belief in immortality can only be justified by revelation; Kant postulates immortality as a necessity of practical reason; but all three agree in denying, that a belief in the immortality of the soul can be legitimately arrived at by those processes which lead to certainty in science.

Hume's views are stated in his "Essay on the Immortality of the Soul," the first paragraph of which contains the following sentence:—"But in reality it is the Gospel, and the Gospel alone, that has brought life and immortality to light." And the first of Whately's essays "On Some Peculiarities of the Christian Religion" concludes with a warning against "unduly exalting Natural Religion at the expense of Revelation," and "underrating the value of the Gospel, and dishonouring Him who, through it, brought life and immortality to light." The fourth section of the second "Hauptstück" of the second book of the first part of Kant's "Kritik d. praktischen Vernunft" is headed, "The Immortality of the Soul as a Postulate of Pure Practical Reason." Kant argues thus:—"The perfect harmony of the affections with the moral law is the primary condition of the production of the highest good. This perfect harmony must, therefore, be possible. "But such perfect harmony of the will with the moral law is Holiness, a perfection of which no reasonable being of the world of sense is capable, at any moment of its existence. Since, however, holiness is practically necessary, it can only be looked for in an infinite progress towards

that perfect harmony; and, therefore, according to the principles of practical reason, it is necessary to assume such a real progress as the real object of our volition. This infinite progress, however, is only possible on the assumption of the infinitely continued existence and personality of the same reasonable being, (which is called the immortality of the soul.) Therefore, the highest Good, practically, is only possible on the assumption of the immortality of the soul; consequently this, as being inseparably bound up with the moral law, is a POSTULATE of pure practical reason (by which I understand a *theoretical* proposition, as such, however, not demonstrable, so far as it is inseparably connected with an unconditionally obligatory practical law)."

Thus, for Hume and Whately the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is a revelation; for Kant, it is an assumption.

Hume's arguments against the validity of the reasonings by which the immortality of the soul is attempted to be proved may be briefly summed up thus:—

- (a) It is said that the soul is immaterial, and that it is impossible for thought to belong to a material substance. But matter and spirit are at bottom equally unknown, and for anything we know to the contrary, matter may be the cause of thought.
- (b) If an immaterial soul exists, the analogy of nature suggests that the immaterial substance of which it consists is constantly assuming new forms.
- (c) If an incorruptible soul exists, it must also be ingenerable. We have as much reason to believe that it existed before our birth, as we have to believe that it will exist after our death. But as we know nothing of the prenatal state of the soul, we have no reason to believe that our consciousness will be continued into its post-mortal state. And this is, practically, ceasing to exist.
- (d) The same arguments which prove the existence of souls in men prove their existence in animals. Are animals immortal?
- (e) It is said that the justice of God requires a future state of rewards and punishments. But our knowledge of the justice of God is limited by our experience of this world; and if His justice leads Him to inflict no other punishment

and bestow no other reward than that which we observe in the present state, there can be no proof that His justice requires anything more in accordance with our notions of justice, in a future state, supposing that future state to exist.

- (f) The faculties of men are said to be too great to find their full scope in this life. But not even a pair of shoes was ever as well made as it might be ; and there is room for a practically infinite development of all men's powers here.
- (g) No argument from mere reason, or our ideas of justice, can prove that human offences deserve infinite and purposeless punishment. "Were one to go round the world with an intention of giving a good supper to the righteous and a sound drubbing to the wicked, he would frequently be embarrassed in his choice, and would find the merits and demerits of most men and women scarcely amount to the value of either."
- (h) In the absence of proof to the contrary, the absolute dependence of the mental faculties upon the bodily organization is presumptive evidence that the former do not outlast the latter.

Whately's main points are :—

- (a) That before the introduction of Christianity the ancients had but a dim and confused idea of a future state.
- (b) That their reasons for the amount of belief they entertained were insufficient.
- (c) That the problem whether the soul is material or not is insoluble, inasmuch as we know nothing about the fundamental nature of mind or of matter. In fact, Whately adopts almost verbally Hume's positions *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d* ; and more generally he seems to agree with *e* and *f*.
- (d) Whately further argues that, even admitting there may be grounds for assuming a future existence, there are none for supposing it to be endless. That it is "extravagant" to suppose that even unmerited suffering in this world will be rewarded by an immortality of happiness ; since a limited amount, say 1,000 years, of such happiness would, as a matter of justice, be ample compensation for any

quantity of such suffering. This is plainly the obverse of Hume's argument *g*.

- (e) The Archbishop fully adopts Warburton's conclusion, that the Pentateuch does not teach the immortality of the soul.

What Kant thinks of the power of the pure reasoning faculty of man to deal with such a problem as the immortality of the soul may be judged by the following passage from the "Prolegomena," taken in conjunction with that already cited :—

"The position of all genuine idealists, from the Eleatic school down to Bishop Berkeley, is comprised in this formula : ' All knowledge through the senses and experience is nothing but empty figment, and truth lies only in the Ideas of the pure Understanding and Reason.'

"The fundamental proposition which rules and guides my Idealism throughout is, on the other hand, ' All knowledge of things by the mere pure understanding, or pure reason, is nothing but empty figment (*lauter Schein*), and truth lies only in experience.' "

It follows, therefore, that Kant regarded the immortality of the soul as an hypothesis of immense moral value; to be assumed on account of that value, but in its very nature incapable of proof or of scientific evidence. Like Hume, he treats both Spiritualism and Materialism as errors.

I follow Hume, Kant, and Whately in defending the thesis that :—

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL CANNOT BE DEDUCED BY SCIENTIFIC METHODS OF REASONING FROM THE FACTS OF PHYSICAL OR PSYCHICAL NATURE.

[PRIVATE.]

Mr. Ward

15 Dec 1869

## ON MEMORY AS AN INTUITIVE FACULTY.

IT may be said, with sufficient approach to accuracy, that some philosophical differences are of detail; others of principle; others again of *fundamental* principle: while the most fundamental of *all* philosophical issues is undoubtedly that which is raised so vigorously at the present day, by those whom we may call empirists or phenomenists, against those whom we may call intuitionists. The former teach, that man can attain no real knowledge, except that derived exclusively from experience. And the issue thus raised is certainly fundamental enough: for we intuitionists maintain, that phenomenism lays its axe at the root, not only of all philosophy, but of all religion and morality; that it issues legitimately in depriving life of every highest blessing for which life should be valued. One cannot be surprised—however one may regret—that a certain asperity of tone is not unfrequently found in this controversy; and I venture to think that phenomenists sometimes do not sufficiently remember, when they are wounded by this asperity, how appalling is the calamity with which we consider them to threaten us. This, however, by the way.

Now suppose some philosopher, who has hitherto been a phenomenist, were to arrive at the conclusion, that there is at all events some *one* solitary truth, cognizable by the human mind, which is in no sense deducible from experience alone. By this very fact there would arise a fundamental difference between himself and those who have hitherto been his fellow-thinkers. On the other hand—as regards this particular question, the origin of human knowledge—it could no longer be affirmed that he differs from any intuitionist on a matter of *fundamental* principle. All

observers would say, that he has passed from the camp of the phenomenists to the camp of the intuitionists. My reason for making this remark will appear in the sequel.

Now, as regards the point at issue between these two schools, I will here proceed to express it in that shape, which may make it most easy for me to explain the argument on which I shall insist this evening. And I must begin by reminding you of the obvious fact, that the immense majority, of those truths which we hold, are held as conclusions resulting from a process of reasoning. Here indeed, at starting, we are brought across one fundamental difference which exists between the phenomenists and the intuitionists; for the former maintain, while the latter deny, that the validity of reasoning is a truth deducible from experience alone. However, I merely state all this to show that I have not forgotten it. The particular argument, which I wish to urge, concerns, not *conclusions*, but *primary premisses*. And I will throughout use indifferently the phrase "primary premisses," or "primary truths," to express those truths, which man acquires *immediately*, and not by way of *inference* from other truths.

Phenomenists then hold, that man knows no primary premisses, except those which he derives immediately from experience. In other words, they hold that man has no faculties for knowing primary truths, except what I may call "experiential" faculties. Intuitionists admit, of course, the existence and vast importance of these experiential faculties: but they earnestly maintain, that man possesses "intuitive" faculties also, which furnish him with primary premisses of their own. Let us consider successively these two classes of faculties.

Our experiential faculties are such as sensation on one hand, and on the other our interior consciousness. And I wish to fix your attention particularly on the following evident and undeniable fact, which has been repeatedly pointed out by philosophers. To suppose that these experiential faculties can be *untrustworthy*, is simply to suppose a direct contradiction. I am conscious, e.g., of that sensation which I call smelling a certain odour, or hearing a certain sound: to say that my sense of smelling or of hearing can *deceive* me in this, is to say that I can experience a certain sensation, and yet at the same moment *not* experience it at all, or in other words is simply *unmeaning* supposition. Or I am

conscious of that mental phenomenon, which I call being out of spirits: to say that my interior consciousness can *deceive* me in this, is to say that I can experience a certain mental phenomenon, and yet at the same moment not experience it at all. There is no need of illustrating further this undeniable fact. *Phenomenists* at all events, who are my present opponents, will be the very last to deny the peculiar trustworthiness of man's experiential faculties.

So far then intuitionists and phenomenists proceed in common. The former however maintain, that man possesses, not only experiential faculties, but "intuitive" faculties also: faculties which enable him to cognise immediately, as altogether certain, various truths in no way derived from experience. I will select on purpose two instances of such truths, which differ widely from each other, both in character and importance: and they shall be the two following:—(1) "If two straight lines have intersected, it necessarily results that their mutual distance constantly increases." (2) "Those (if any) who have been created by an All-wise and All-Holy Being, owe Him unreserved faith and obedience." Phenomenists will be forward in agreeing with intuitionists, that neither of these propositions can be deduced from experience: for as to the former, the very idea "necessary"—as they most truly urge—is entirely external to the sphere of *phenomena*. An intuitionist nevertheless asserts, while a phenomenist denies, that they are primary truths, and that there are many other primary truths of the same kind: that there are many truths, not testified by experience, which man nevertheless immediately cognizes as altogether certain.

The various intellectual acts, *whereby* man cognizes these, are called intuitions. These intuitions may, with great scientific propriety, be referred to various intuitive faculties: as e.g. man's various moral intuitions are referred to what is called "the Moral Faculty," or (less appropriately) "the Moral Sense."

Now we saw just now, that it involves a simple contradiction in terms to doubt the trustworthiness of our *experiential* faculties. But it is at once evident that this cannot be at all said concerning those faculties which we call *intuitive*. It is no *contradiction in terms*—however otherwise unreasonable—to admit the possibility, that two straight lines may again approach each other after their intersection; or to hold that an Infinitely Holy and Wise Creator

may be inculpably disobeyed. Intuitionists therefore are obliged to ascribe to man a certain gift or endowment—whether called “the light of reason” or by some other name—in virtue of which he knows with certainty, that his various subjective intuitions correspond with objective reality.

We are now then at the very turning point of our discussion. We have spoken (1) of experiential and (2) of intuitive faculties; and we proceed to ask in which of these two classes *memory* should be ranked. A moment's consideration will show, that it is intuitive and not experiential. Let us take the simplest possible instance. I am now comfortably warm; but distinctly remember that a very short time ago I felt miserably cold. How do I now know that I then felt cold? My present *experience* only tells me, (1) that I am now warm; and (2) that I have the present *impression* of having recently been cold. But how do I know—how can I even guess—that my present *impression* corresponds with a past *reality*? It is simply unmeaning to say that *experience* tells me I was recently cold: for the very question is, how I know that I ever *had* any such experience; how I know that my present impression of a (supposed) past is more than an illusion. Memory then is, beyond possible question, not an experiential, but an intuitive faculty.

Take the same thing in a different shape. We have seen that to doubt the trustworthiness of any *experiential* faculty, involves nothing less than a contradiction in terms. Does it involve then a contradiction in terms, to suppose that man's *memory* may deceive him? If not, then memory is no experiential faculty.

On these considerations I found my argument: which may thus be briefly stated. Phenomenists, if they would be consistent, must be entirely sceptical on the trustworthiness of memory; and this is a *reductio ad absurdum* of their doctrine.

It need hardly be said concerning experimental science, how absolutely it depends, throughout its length and breadth, on the trustworthiness of memory. It is based, in the case of every inquirer, not on his present experience, but on his own and on other men's memory of the past. Unless he assumes that his own and other men's memory of the past can be trusted, he has no more means of even guessing that the earth moves round the sun, or

that wheat helps to make bread, or that bread helps to support man, than he has of guessing that whist is being unintermittently played in the planet Jupiter.\*

1. Phenomenists then, if they would be faithful to their principles, must prove by present experience that man's memory of past experience can be trusted. But no such proof, as Mr. Stuart Mill himself confesses ("Against Hamilton," third edition, p. 203 note), can possibly be given. It is no solitary fact then, but all those facts without exception for which men trust to memory, of which the phenomenist himself admits that they cannot be proved by experience. Yet he is obliged to hold that they are cognizable with certainty, and are absolutely indispensable (some of them at least) as the foundations of science. In making this admission, the phenomenists (I would earnestly submit) turn their backs on their fundamental principle, and desert en masse to the intuitionist camp. See what was said on this matter at the beginning of the present paper.

2. When an intuitionist alleges *the light of reason* as rendering various truths immediately evident, the phenomenist is rather fond of deriding this notion. "The light of reason," he says, "is a purely gratuitous invention, devised by cowardly thinkers who wish to assume without proof their fundamental principles." I would entreat him to explain, on what ground he can himself defend his trust in his own memory, except by alleging his possession of that same intellectual gift, or of some other entirely analogous.

3. Nor is it easy to see how he can draw a line between memory and other intuitive faculties. He claims to know with immediate certainty the unexperienced † fact, that he once witnessed a certain

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\* In a published work I have put the case more strongly :—

"Unless you assume that memory is to be trusted, you cannot understand the very meaning of a single sentence which is uttered; nay, you cannot so much as apprehend its external bodily sound. You are hearing at this moment the *last* word of the sentence; but how do you know the *other* words of which it is composed? Simply by *remembering* them. And as to the *meaning* of any sentence, it is still more manifest that various exercises of memory are requisite, in order that you may ever so distantly guess it."

† By "unexperienced" is here meant, of course, "not testified by present experience."

physical experiment. How is the intuitionist putting forward any more arbitrary or gratuitous pretension, when he claims to know with immediate certainty various *other* unexperienced truths—moral e. g. and religious—which need not here be specified, but which press themselves quite as irresistibly on his convictions?

I venture to think that a discussion of the points, here so imperfectly presented, may lead to results of some interest and importance.



For John Lubbock

[PRIVATE.]

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*The Moral Condition of Savages.*

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12 Jan. 1870

## THE MORAL CONDITION OF SAVAGES.

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IN the concluding chapter of his interesting work on the Malay Archipelago, Mr. Wallace has expressed the opinion that while civilized communities "have progressed vastly beyond the savage state in intellectual achievements, we have not advanced equally in morals."<sup>1</sup> Nay, he even goes further; in a perfect social state, he says, "every man would have a sufficiently well-balanced intellectual organization to understand the moral law in all its details, and would require no other motive but the free impulses of his own nature to obey that law. Now, it is very remarkable that among people in a very low stage of civilization, we find some approach to such a perfect social state;" and he adds, "it is not too much to say that the mass of our populations have not at all advanced beyond the savage code of morals, and have in many cases sunk below it."

Far from thinking this true, I should rather be disposed to say that Man has, perhaps, made more progress in moral than in either material or intellectual advancement; for while even the lowest savages have some material and intellectual attainments, they are, I think, entirely wanting in moral feeling, though I am aware that the contrary opinion has been expressed by many eminent authorities.

It seems to me almost demonstrable that the moral sense, if it existed at all, must have been far feeblér in ancient times than it is now; or, in other words, that if our ancestors had, thousands of years ago, felt as we do now, *our* moral feelings would be much stronger than they are. Let us, however, endeavour to ascertain what is really the moral condition of existing savages.

Mr. Wallace draws a charming picture of some small savage communities which he has visited. Each man, he says, "scrupulously respects the right of his fellow, and any infraction of

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace's Malay Archipelago, Vol. II., p. 460.

those rights rarely or never takes place. In such a community all are nearly equal. There are none of those wide distinctions of education, and ignorance, wealth and poverty, master and servant, which are the product of our civilization; there is none of that widespread division of labour, which while it increases wealth, produces also conflicting interests; there is not that severe competition and struggle for existence, or for wealth, which the dense population of civilized countries inevitably creates."

But does this prove that they are in a high moral condition? does it prove even that they have any moral sense at all? Surely not. For if it does, we must equally credit rooks and bees, and most other gregarious animals, with a moral state higher than that of man. I would not indeed deny that the ant or the bee is possessed of moral feelings, but we are surely not in a position to affirm it. In the very passage quoted Mr. Wallace has pointed out that the inducements to crime are in such communities much less than in populous countries. Virtue, however, must be active, and, in the absence of temptation, mere innocence has no merit.

Moreover, in small communities almost all the members are related to one another, and family affection puts on the appearance of virtue. But though parental and filial affection possess a very moral aspect, they have a totally different origin and a distinct character. Unfortunately, indeed, family and moral feelings have been very generally confused, yet not so universally but that I shall be able to bring forward some direct testimony in support of my views.

Thus, Mr. Dove, speaking of the Tasmanians, asserts that they were entirely without any "moral views and impressions."

Governor Eyre says of the Australians that "having no moral sense of what is just or equitable in the abstract, their only test of propriety must in such cases be, whether they are numerically or physically strong enough to brave the vengeance of those whom they may have provoked, or injured."<sup>2</sup>

"Conscience," says Burton, does not exist in Eastern Africa, and "repentance" expresses regret for missed opportunities of mortal crime. Robbery constitutes an honourable man; murder—the more atrocious the midnight crime the better—makes the hero.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Discoveries in Central Australia, Vol. II., p. 384.

<sup>3</sup> Burton's First Footsteps in East Africa, p. 176.

The Yoruba negroes, on the West Coast, according to the same authority, are "covetous, cruel, and wholly deficient in what the civilized man calls conscience." Indeed, I do not remember a single instance in which a savage is recorded as having shown any symptoms of remorse, and almost the only case I can at this moment call to mind, in which a man belonging to one of the lower races has accounted for an act, by saying explicitly that it was right, was when Mr. Hunt asked a young Fijian why he had killed his mother.<sup>4</sup>

It is very clear that religion, excepting in very advanced races, has no moral aspect or influence. The Deities are almost invariably evil.

In Fiji<sup>5</sup> "the names of the Gods indicate their characters. Thus, Tunambanga is the adulterer. Ndauthina steals women of rank and beauty by night or torch-light. Kumbunavanua is the rioter; Mbatimona, the brain-eater; Ravuravu, the murderer; Mainatavasara, fresh from the cutting-up or slaughter; and a host besides of the same sort."

The character of the Greek Gods is familiar to us, and was anything but moral. Such Beings would certainly not reward the good, or punish the bad. Hence we cannot be surprised to find that, even when a belief in a future state has dawned on the uncivilized mind, it is not at first associated with reward or punishment.

In fact, I believe that the lower races of men may be said to be generally deficient in any idea of right, though quite familiar with that of law. This leads to some curious, though not illogical results. Thus at Jenna,<sup>6</sup> and in the surrounding districts, "whenever a town is deprived of its chief, the inhabitants acknowledge no law, —anarchy, troubles, and confusion immediately prevail, and till a successor is appointed all labour is at an end. The stronger oppress the weak, and consummate every species of crime, without being amenable to any tribunal for their actions. Private property is no longer respected; and thus before a person arrives to curb its licentiousness, a town is not unfrequently reduced from a flourishing state of prosperity and of happiness, to all the horrors of desolation."

Many cases which have been quoted as illustrating the contrast between the ideas of virtue entertained by different races seem to prove the absence, rather than the perversity, of sentiment on the subject. I cannot believe, for instance, that theft and murder have

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<sup>4</sup> Wilkes' Voyage, p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> Fiji and the Fijians, Vol. I., p. 218.

<sup>6</sup> R. and J. Lander's Niger Expedition, Vol. I., p. 96.

ever been really regarded as virtues. In a barbarous state they were, no doubt, means of distinction, and in the absence of moral feelings were regarded with no reprobation. I cannot, however, suppose that they could be considered as "right," though they might give rise to a feeling of respect, and even of admiration. So also the Greeks regarded the duplicity of Ulysses as an element in his greatness, but surely not as a virtue in itself.

What, then, is the origin of moral feeling? Some regard it as intuitive; others, in the words of the *Westminster Review*,<sup>7</sup> consider that "moral sentiments have their root in a general desire to promote human happiness. We do not in the least mean that a conscious regard for the general welfare is the motive whereon people act, or ever have acted; all we mean is that primary moral sentiments spring unconsciously from some such considerations, dimly and obscurely felt."

I cannot subscribe to either of these views. The moral feelings may now be intuitive, but if the lower races of savages have none they evidently cannot have been originally intuitive, or natural to man. Neither can I accept the opposite theory; savages have no "general desire to promote human happiness," such a desire being, indeed, the offspring, not the parent,<sup>8</sup> of moral feeling.

While, then, entirely agreeing with Mr. Spencer that "there have been, and still are, developing in the race, certain fundamental moral intuitions," I feel, with Mr. Hutton, much difficulty in conceiving that, in Mr. Spencer's words, "these moral intuitions are the results of accumulated experiences of Utility," that is to say, of Utility to the individual. It is evident, indeed, that feelings acting on generation after generation might produce a continually deepening conviction, but I fail to perceive how this explains the difference between "right" and "utility." Yet utility in one sense *has*, I think, been naturally and yet unconsciously selected as the basis of morals. Mr. Hutton, if I understand him correctly, doubts this.

Honesty, for instance, he says,<sup>8</sup> "must certainly have been associated by our ancestors with many unhappy as well as many happy consequences, and we know that in ancient Greece dishonesty was openly and actually associated with happy consequences, in the admiration for the guile and craft of Ulysses. Hence

<sup>7</sup> 1869, p. 506.

<sup>8</sup> *Lc.* p. 271.

the moral associations slowly formed, according to Mr. Spencer, in favour of honesty, must have been, in fact, a mere predominance of association with a balance on one side."

This seems to me a good crucial case. Honesty, on their own part, may, indeed, have been, and no doubt was, "associated by our ancestors with many unhappy, as well as many happy consequences;" but honesty on the part of others could surely have nothing but happy consequences to them. Thus, while the perception that "Honesty is the best policy" was, no doubt, as Mr. Hutton observes, "long subsequent to the most imperious enunciation of its sacredness as a duty," honesty would be recognized as a virtue so soon as men perceived the sacredness of any duty. As soon as contracts were entered into between individuals or states, it became manifestly the interest of each that the other should be honest. Any failure in this respect would naturally be condemned by the sufferer. It is just because honesty is sometimes associated with unhappy consequences, that it is regarded as a virtue. If it had always been directly advantageous to all parties, it would have been classed as useful, not as right; it would have lacked the essential element which renders it a virtue.

Or take respect for Age. We find, even in Australia, laws, if I may so term them, appropriating the best of everything to the old men. They naturally lose no opportunity of impressing these injunctions on the young; they praise those who conform, and condemn those who resist. Hence the custom is strictly adhered to. I do not say, nor do I believe, that to the Australian mind, this presents itself as a sacred duty; because they have not progressed so far as to recognize either sacredness or duty.

When, however, a race had made some progress in the analysis of feelings, a difference would certainly be made between those acts which a man was taught to do as conducive to his own immediate advantage, and those which were not so, and yet which were enjoined for any other reason. Hence would arise the idea of duty and right, as distinct from mere utility.

How much more our notions of right depend on the lessons we receive when young than on hereditary ideas, becomes evident if we consider the different moral codes existing in our own country. Nay, even in the very same individual two contradictory systems may often be seen side by side in incongruous association. Thus the Christian code and the military code seem, to me at least, opposed in

many important matters, yet the great majority of military men hold, or suppose that they hold, them both.

The sacred character, which forms an integral part in our conception of duty, could not arise until Religion became moral. Nor would this take place until the Deities were conceived to be beneficent beings.

As soon, however, as this was the case, they would naturally be supposed to regard with approbation all that tended to benefit their worshippers, and to condemn all actions of the opposite character. This step was an immense benefit to mankind, since that dread of the unseen powers which had previously produced only ceremonies and sacrifices, at once invested the moral feelings with a sacredness, and consequently with a force, which they had not until then possessed.

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#### NOTES.

Any member unavoidably absent from the meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks upon the foregoing paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery *vivâ voce*.

9 Feb. 1870

## WHAT IS MATTER?

DR. REID, whatever his omissions, did invaluable service in asserting the validity of our sense-intuition against the refinements of idealism. For to reject intuitions is to reject consciousness, and logically involves the suicide of all science, which is but the marshalling of these in their order. When astronomy declares the laws of planetary motion, she assumes, not proves, certain complex sense-impressions, of which *externality* is as much an integral element as colour, space, and motion. There can be no ground whatever for such arbitrary election and reprobation as is now usual among the testimonies of consciousness. Let us see what in this respect they are.

Everyone believes that yonder chair is a thing external to us who see it; by no means a part of us who see it, but just the opposite. Now come the philosophers, who repudiate this and other effete metaphysics, and tell us we are all wrong. This chair, on the contrary, is a group of sensations in us whose thinghood and unity are constituted by their inseparability in experience. The unity of it is a unity of consciousness. Thus Mr. Hodgson, who has in a very lucid manner reduced the Hume-Mill idealism to a dogmatic form, says,—“By reflection I distinguish the I, the feeling from the object, the particular mode of the feeling.” “The feeling is the subject, the mode of it the object.” Now, is this, as I suppose it claims to be, *par excellence*, really an *experience-philosophy*? An ordinary man will not admit that the chair is in him, not out of him.

In fact, when I reflect about my sensations, thoughts, feelings, I recognize them as *mine*, as different phases of me. Moreover, they have “form,” as well as “matter;” they are *special* sensations, thoughts, feelings, and their special character I recognize as mine, as belonging to my state of consciousness. The idealist affirms that I impart, that my consciousness imparts, unity to the chair

—(as Mr. Hodgson puts it, “my feelings existing in a continuous time and space”)—while the special character of the feeling makes it the special thing it is,—the chair. Now, in that case, I ask, since you recognize the special mode of the feeling as part of yourself, why, when you perceive the chair, are you conscious, on reflection, that it is not yourself, but distinct from yourself, and not observe, distinct from yourself at all in the same sense that *your idea or sensation when you reflect upon that is distinct from yourself as a whole ; but distinct from yourself in this sense, as not yourself, and no part of yourself ?*

By analyzing the result of a reflection upon our perceptions, we get a very distinct testimony of consciousness which cannot be explained away. You recognize a given perception as yours, but what you recognize as yours is just this,—a *perception of something which is not you, nor part of you ;* in philosophical language, a non-ego.

It is not sensation, but perception, we have to allow for or explain ; they are quite distinct ; Idealism always confounds them.

It is probably in the first experience of resistance to the accomplishment of a desire that we acquire the first consciousness of ourselves as distinguished from existence external to ourselves. And I would ask whether anyone is able to conceive of our acquiring *the idea of ourselves at all except as an idea correlative to the opposite idea of something which is not ourselves ?* The very notion of oneself distinctly implies and involves the notion of a not-self, of existence *external* to oneself. This negative or (to use metaphysical language) objective element enters into that positive or subjective idea, is absolutely necessary to constitute it. It appears to me that when we affirm ourselves to be the only thing we can be really certain of, we do in fact implicitly affirm our certainty of other things—of some existence external to ourselves. Without perception of an external world, self-consciousness were, in truth, impossible. We do not see our way to grant, with Hamilton and Professor Ferrier, that in all consciousness the two factors Ego and Non-Ego are explicit. There is much consciousness, I believe, in which neither terms are explicit ; but, on the other hand, these two laws seem to me clear:—(1) In all consciousness the two factors are *implicit*, and may be discerned on reflection. It has not perhaps been distinctly acknowledged, yet it seems very evident, that into all thought, even the most abstract, external perception of some kind enters as integral element. You

may think of thoughts, but ultimately you come to a percept. (2) In every consciousness where one of the two elements is explicit, the other is explicit also. That you recognize a thing as external implies a distinct reference to yourself; that you distinguish a thing as belonging to you implies the distinction of yourself from it, and that of yourself from other selves and other things—external to and different from you.

It seems to me that before idealism succeeds in getting rid of an external world, it must get rid also of the consciousness of oneself, which, of course, is its very standing-ground, the one belief it recognizes as valid. But I should be glad to hear it argued how the one belief can stand when the other is annihilated. They seem to me correlative, mutually supporting. They must stand or fall together.

But it will be asked how I reconcile with this the certain fact that not only the secondary, but also what have been called the primary qualities of matter have been shown to be mental, subjective, in their character.

Certain impressions are produced on us, on our perceiving faculty, such as green, solid, round. If we analyze these impressions, it is evident that they are effects produced upon us—that they are relative to us; that they are not in anything outside us, as we at first take for granted that they are. Out of perception there is no blueness, solidity, roundness. It is plain that the crude, crass belief of the unphilosophical person needs correction; but this is true of all our first impressions. They are all vague, confused, incorrect, and only gradually become clear, distinct, accurate. One's natural impression is that the sun climbs up and descends the blue sky, but scientific men have taught us differently. However, the question is, whether there be not something radical and essential in men's perceptions, which remains, and which has a right to remain after the necessary corrections have been made.

After all deductions have been made, that which seems to remain as ultimate datum of consciousness in perception is this—that in the case of a blue, round, solid thing, we know that *something is influencing us in the way of blue, round, solid*. We still call a flower blue; we still believe that there is something external producing an impression on us, which we name blue. We now admit that, in accordance with the general law of reciprocal action and reaction, we are not passive in perception; that this impression is in part the

result of the reaction of our perceiving faculty upon the external agent ; but this does by no means enable us to dispense with the conviction that there is an external agent. It is not we who are coloured ; it is the thing, in this sense, that it is the occasion of such a sensation in us. Accurately speaking, it is evident that the actual colour and solidity are neither in us apart, nor in the external thing apart, but arise upon the meeting of certain internal with certain external elements.

It is said that the mind can only perceive its own ideas. But I cannot understand how in that case the mind could ever get any ideas to perceive. How is *resistance*, probably almost the earliest experience, and that in which perception seems to be born, possible on this hypothesis ? Once we have perceived something resisting us, *i.e.*, external to us, then we acquire the power of reflecting upon and analyzing such a perception, but consciousness would have no *start* without this. How, moreover, is the conception of Space, one of our most fundamental conceptions, to be accounted for ? Space surely involves the idea of Externality. It is curious how Mr. Hodgson, not admitting this essential element of thought, yet making Space and Time the foundation of all, speaks of feelings as themselves existing in space. Now, extension evidently belongs, not to the subject, but to the object, of consciousness. Yet, however opposed by great authority, I cannot understand that Space and Time can be made the sole essential forms or categories of sensible experience, for other sensation always accompanies perception ; almost always colour, always resistance ; these are general qualities in which many things agree, even as space is ; and the mode or kind of extension varies in each case, even as colour or solidity varies. Externality, however, does constitute the specific difference of all perception when it is reflected on ; that distinguishes it from thought, ideas of the mind. If we could suppose for a moment that a philosophy which repudiates all metaphysics could be hampered by the mistakes of a defunct metaphysic (which no more make against the science itself than the former mistakes of physical science make against that), we should be tempted to infer that the prevailing idealism still founds itself on curious axioms such as may be found shelved, preserved in spirits, and most learnedly labelled in Sir W. Hamilton's very interesting essay (though his own theory is far from satisfactory) ; axioms like these,—that the mind can only perceive what is present to it,—which, if it means anything, is at once to assume that the mind, conscious-

ness, occupies space. Mind and matter, it used to be said, are too diverse to communicate; which involved two pure assumptions—that mind and matter were *two substances radically different, with nothing in common*,—and that diverse things could not communicate; whereas it is this very diversity, such as it is, which makes the fact of perception possible and necessary. Hegel has established for ever the law that contraries are necessary to one another, and constitute one another. His error appears to me to be in trying to bring all things out of one thing, which was scarcely consistent with his other unquestionably valid law. Nothing can be conceived as existing isolated; the infinitude of monads in phenomena are necessary to one another, but no one of them can be brought out of another. Their common source is above phenomena; but their phenomenal existence is essentially successive in time and space.

When it is urged that, after all, material forces are nothing till they come into contact with consciousness, when they first acquire qualities, I urge in reply that precisely in the same sense spiritual personal functions are nothing till they are touched by material forces when they appear first to start into existence and acquire qualities. If matter be nowhere till it comes into contact with mind, in precisely the same way mind is nowhere (so far as experience goes) till it comes into contact with matter. And if the foregoing argument proves the non-existence of matter, it equally proves the non-existence of consciousness. Our complex consciousness certainly has its genesis in sensation and perception of a not-self, of an external, and would be impossible without it. All consciousness involves this element now, and would be non-existent without it. If the ideality of matter makes matter non-existent, then certainly the materiality of consciousness or personality makes that non-existent. The one has as good a claim to be acknowledged as the other; in fact, they mutually involve and hang upon one another. Each is the product of the interpenetration of both. Suppose thus that neither matter nor personality have any existence until they come into existence together. This, of course, is no sort of disproof of the actual existence of either under these circumstances. Whether matter *can* be supposed to exist independent of consciousness or not we will in a few minutes shortly discuss. Meanwhile, the Ego as result of this analysis would be ego + non-ego, stress being laid on the ego; while the non-ego would be non-ego + ego, stress being laid on the non-ego. Thus Hegel follows Plato in calling matter the

"other," the *το ἕτερον* of thought. Fichte, indeed, maintained that the Ego, in order to attain self-consciousness, by means of two opposing actions, limits itself in the creation of a non-ego, afterwards passing onward and making itself in perception the object of thought. Now, to me, it seems unphilosophical to speak of an agent acting before it exists,—before experience affords any evidence of its existence. An ego that has not attained self-consciousness is not an ego at all. It does not certainly go through such a process of self-limitation deliberately, of set purpose, but blindly, of necessity. Some already existing power might thus bring the phenonema of consciousness into existence, but the I, the person, cannot properly be said suddenly to rise up, and after this fashion bring itself and matter both into existence. Besides, this is a purely arbitrary assumption. Seeing that experience presents us in all perception with the two distinct but correlative elements ego + non-ego, I may quite fairly turn round upon German idealism with the contrary assertion that the non-ego, by limiting itself, creates the ego; which, indeed, seems far more consonant with the testimony of experience, that testimony the contempt of which it is which has brought upon metaphysics their present regrettable, yet on this account deserved neglect. But this theory would be that of materialism, and as, I believe, equally incompetent to account for the facts of experience. Personality cannot come out of Protoplasm, because unless we find it elsewhere, and by sleight-of-hand put it in, we shall never find it there; for to say it may be *potentially* there is, after all, only to say, in finer words, that it *can* come there by itself, which is just what we deny. Since the two elements appear in experience together as correlatives, philosophy has no right to repress either, or to assert that the one must be completely merged in the other.

Another fatal objection to this (as to other current idealism), is that it contradicts experience by leaving the multitude of personalities unaccounted for, and arguing as if there were only one in the world. Yet if anything be certain, the multitude of persons, of egos, is certain. One ego, according to Fichte's system, and, indeed, according to Mr. Mill's, creates all the others (I do not mean avowedly, but by necessary implication); other men and minds are but ideas in oneself, which consequence, one would think, would be a *reductio ad absurdum* in the mere statement of it. For whatever be true of matter, it is certainly true of another man's con-

sciousness that it abides, whether I think about it and know it or not, even although it certainly cannot affect me without being modified by my consciousness. And whatever a man may please to affirm in his philosophical system-mongering moods, he is quite equally sure of other men's existence as of his own. Indeed, either the present reader or his indulgent listeners must then be non-existent. And with the most unfeigned respect for the illustrious human ideas now present, not indeed in this room, but in the reader's mind, the reader, for one, hereby professes himself wholly unwilling to admit that *he* is the party who may be resolved into a mere idea in someone else's imagination. German idealism subsequently substituted the *pure or absolute ego* for the *empirical or particular ego*, and to that I have much less objection, only it seems a misnomer, "*pure absolute ego*" appearing to my mind a contradiction in terms.

Kant was perhaps disposed to admit *a something vague* and chaotic external to the mind, which underwent a *categorizing, forming*, process in consciousness. Yet the mere subjecting sensation to general forms of space and time does in no possible way account for experience,—for our perception of particular things with special characteristics. Surely Plato's doctrine of their participation in eternal ideas accounted for them much better; and yet Aristotle very completely showed that this doctrine even quite failed to account for them. There must be ascribed to the mind, not only a focalizing, unifying faculty, but also an infinitely specializing faculty. *Why* do sensations group themselves in the particular actual combinations which they display? *Why* are some continuous in space and time, and not others? Such functions must undoubtedly be ascribed to the mind. But consciousness, if it testifies to external existence at all, also testifies, in the same breath, I believe, to an *external thinghood*, an *external unity*. What we discover in the case of a particular perception is that certain powers or forces external to us are producing in us certain sensations. The coherence of certain sensations, the rounding-off of them into a definite group always united in space and time, reveals a definite coherence of external and internal forces or functions, both among themselves respectively, and together. Whether, except in connection with consciousness, there can be any such thinghood or unity is another question; but, at any rate, *in connection with it*, there is clearly revealed an external, correlative to an internal, unity. In a

percept there is a twofold unity; there is a unity as thing, and a unity as percept of one personality. The two cannot be confounded. That the second displays a higher degree of unity than the other, I freely grant, and that the mind imparts its own unity to constitute the percept, I also grant; but there is also implied a capacity for and tendency to such unity in the external element. That this thinghood must be conceived as fluctuating with the perceiving faculty seems, however, also evident. The perception of a lower animal, of an infant, of a grown man, of an ordinary man, of a man of science, of a poet, of mankind in different stages of their development varies immensely. Can we limit the actuality of things as they are to either of such perceptions? Hardly. It has been quite correctly said that the eye sees what it brings with itself the power of seeing. And when things have been classified according to their similarities, their contiguity in place and time, the order of their development, &c., they assume quite a new aspect and significance. This susceptibility of classification, this enlargement of their boundaries both in space and time, must also be founded in the nature of things, in a correspondence of the external with the internal sphere. It will be asked if, in this region, we are not clearly in a thought-region only—concerned with the order and classification of ideas only? I answer—Not only, because that which is thought and idea on one side is a material world on the reverse side, and *vice versâ*.

In fact, all ordinary perception implies what has become the almost automatic and instinctive ranging of a thing under many heads or classes, and the labelling of it with a general name proper to a class.

As to the old Heraclitan and revised modern difficulty (which led Plato to his ideal theory), that all is in perpetual flux, I believe it will be found that this has been pushed unduly far. Constant change itself implies permanence, some definite fixed state, which may change more or less soon into another; but fixity and definiteness in consciousness is a fact of experience, and, indeed, is involved in that other fact of change to a different state.

It is one of the many merits of that mighty thinker, Spinoza, that he saw the necessity of ascribing to his eternal Substance the two fundamental co-equal attributes, thought and extension, the internal and external elements of being, although, indeed, he keeps them too much isolated from one another, whereas one cannot exist without impregnation, interpenetration with the other.

And now shortly to consider the question whether any existence can be predicated of matter apart from consciousness. What of the planet in its primeval nebulous condition?—and afterwards, long before some pushing anthropomorphous ape had made himself into man? Was the world really confined to the meditations of a Pterodactyl? What of the organs and functions of our complex bodies, in full work, without, alas! most of us knowing anything about it? What of the nooks and corners of this earth no human has foot trod?—of the inside of the Moon and Sirius, especially before the spectroscope—in fine, of this room, with neither waiters nor metaphysicians in it? Mr. Mill says, “All possible sensation.” Now, would not this be a more correct description of consciousness before perception, than of matter before perception? However, of course Mr. Mill does not recognize the distinctions sensation idealists assume to be matter. The question is, on any view of it, attended with very great difficulty. But it is almost impossible, even when we make the effort most strenuously, to believe that everything disappears from this room when we leave it. And we can hardly acquiesce in a system that forces us to assume this. The only conclusion that at all satisfies me is somewhat of the following kind:—In the first place, matter,—what we now mean by matter, *cannot* exist out of consciousness, strictly speaking; for (as we have seen) it is partly the product of consciousness. But it *must* be regarded as created, as starting into existence together with the perception of it. But the question is, whether *something*, some *existence*, may not be assumed to remain independently of such perception. It is clearly out of the question that we should be able to define that something, seeing it is *ex hypothesi* out of consciousness. But may we not believe, in order to satisfy this instinctive conviction of which I speak, that there is some existence external to ourselves possible, which, as it were, waits in darkness and slumber for the approach of a subjective element to start up into conscious order, beauty, actuality, rationality?—which bides its time to become matter? Just as molar motion might be said to bide its time to become molecular motion—heat or light—or any given force to be ready to become another force, so do I suppose that these dark forces may wait to take on the forms of intelligence. In these correlative and corresponding forces we should then have to assume correlative and corresponding associabilities, unions, and separations. But further than this it is obviously impossible to go in definition of them; and

even this must be taken as indication only of their possible nature. In such a conception we have to allow for the error which our positive inability to divest ourselves of the material conceptions proper to our own intelligence inevitably involves us in. But I think that we *are* able to imagine, and for the reason given to believe, that such an existence there may be, though by the very nature of the case removed from the conditions of our intelligence. Only let me not be misunderstood. Such an existence ought not (except loosely and in a popular sense) to be conceived as growing into and becoming the matter we have cognizance of. It may invariably precede or fill its place, but material things themselves are wholly other, and must be created in perception. The same thing may be said, however, in the case of all correlation of force. It is only loosely that one kind or manifestation of force can be said to become, to be changed into, another. Upon the cessation or loss of one kind of force another kind or other kinds invariably, in certain definite proportions, succeed. The truth is that the new effect is always the resultant of all the forces now for the first time concerned and brought into play together. These are constantly changing and apparently modifying one another. The modes of force, special manifestations of it, are lost, being apparently repressed and destroyed by others. When we say that one mode is changed into another mode, what we really know and mean is that one mode is substituted for another. Granted that force does not perish, special modes of it confessedly do, or there would be no change, no successive manifestation of force. And when one thing becomes another, strictly speaking it perishes, and is replaced by another. However, in this sense we may assume that external existence before consciousness upon coming into collision with it, takes on the totally new form of matter as we know it. And thus such unperceived external existence may be termed matter, or rather the *Matter* of which, in the Aristotelic sense, known matter is the *Form* — the negative element of which consciousness is the positive.

But I wish to point out that this is analysis,—there is no efficient causality concerned here, which yet I believe, by the constitution of our nature, we are forced to postulate somewhere. Such forces, mental and material, may be obtained by decomposing the concrete result. But their modification of one another at a particular time so as to produce the given result is not *causatively* explained. Why do they change, why do they at a given time so modify one another?

If the special cause had existed before, the effect would have existed also. That which existed antecedent to the effect cannot strictly be taken to be its cause; for here we have a wholly new effect. We may trace the genesis of it through the phenomena which preceded it, and which invariably precede similar effects. But these are not the cause. The Cause is that which makes the preceding forces then and now to come together and seem to modify one another. If these modes of force were permanent, no cause would be required except themselves; but they change, they come into existence, they assume special combinations which did not exist before,—therefore, we require a cause for these at every moment of their change. In any effect we, *judging from the results*, can describe the several forces (and their relative intensity) which appear to have combined to form and constitute the result. We observe the same or something similar in other cases. But except from experience in similar cases, we could not predict the special result from the antecedent phenomena. A new phase of being has come about. Why? The cause cannot, strictly speaking, be in preceding phases of being, nor in the present phenomenon itself, still less in the future. Therefore, it must be out of phenomena in a transcendental region. Here it is that we must recognize the special principle, origin, and efficient of all phenomenal combinations,—of every special thing, idea, person. Potential matter, the matter of matter, is therefore, strictly speaking, in the region above understanding, as also is potential mind or personality. Even this is an adaptation necessary to our understandings, and not to be taken literally. Had we time, we should prove that this transcendent Cause is essentially unknowable,—nothing except *that it is* can, by the very nature of the case, be predicated of it; for, as Spinoza says, “*Omnis determinatio est negatio.*” The Absolute Being manifests itself in Time in certain invariable modes of existence, external and internal, matter and spirit being the most fundamental of its distinctions. The self-development of the Absolute must be considered essential to It, even as It is essential to the self-development in time. When it is said that time is an illusion, only relative to us, very little is said, for *Time is, at any rate, true of the facts of our consciousness, and they are, if anything is, real existence.* In all the play of phenomena, the power, the cause, the efficient, the Substance, is above and over them. The modifications of Being we know are real, but we erroneously fancy that they are the causes of one another, whereas the cause of each is, in truth, unknown and unknowable.

But, in conclusion, it may be urged, and I have heard it ably argued, that what we really believe is that material things AS WE KNOW THEM exist out of human consciousness, and that this belief may be justified by ascribing to God the knowledge of material things which we ourselves possess. To this view there appear to me grave, indeed insuperable, objections. For *what* perceptions of material things are on this view to be ascribed to God? Those of infants, those of adults, those of uncultivated, or those of cultivated races? Perceptions, and things with them, grow and vary. Are nascent, incomplete perceptions to be ascribed to Him as well as others, and can we affirm that our present perceptions are complete, and not still nascent relative to a more cultured intelligence, perhaps to the development of new senses, which may yet lie in the future, even to the perfecting and supplementing of those we have? Even now what a difference do microscope and telescope make! If only some of these are to be ascribed to God,—which? Or if all, then do we not assimilate the Deity no longer only partially, but completely, to human creatures? A growth from sensation to ever-perfecting perception and conception must be ascribed to Him,—otherwise what *we* mean by the material world is *not* in this intelligence. And our notion is of a varying, growing, progressing, successive, germinating, and dying material world; that is what we know. Does He know just this? It has, indeed, been usual to hold a theory about the Divine ideas quite inconsistent with such a view as this,—to hold that God does not see things and persons in a successive manner, in time, but all at once, the whole of their existence all together. But consider whether this is tenable. Apart from theory, as a matter of fact and experience, the very essence of persons and things is successive existence. They *change*, while retaining some of their characteristics (and in the case of personal identity consciously claiming past phases of existence as belonging to one unity of consciousness); they *have lost some*, and have acquired others. What is the significance of this? That if they were viewed as having qualities together which are not together, but successive, such a knowledge of them would not be more correct, but incorrect. (This, of course, is to assume the reality of time, that is, the reality of consciousness, and this I do assume.) To know a successive thing correctly, knowledge of it must follow it from point to point of its existence, and itself be a successive knowledge. To *foreknow* future existence is, of course, another notion altogether,—that implies time. It may be said, perhaps, that this Divine way of

knowing cannot be gauged by human understanding. Now, I am quite open to appeals *ad verecundiam*. But it is *we* who hold and strenuously maintain with argument that God as Cause is utterly unknowable, not only by our intellect, but by any conceivable intellect. Whereas here a dogmatic assertion is made about God as Cause,—that as such He is Personal and knows ;—this assertion, therefore, we have a right to criticize. It will hardly do to assert Divine knowledge, which is a word bearing a definite meaning and meant to bear it, and then to assert that what is intended is something totally inconceivable. Wherefore, the only knowledge that can be predicated of the Divine Cause, if any can, seems to be what we mean by knowledge ; and this might explain material things out of human knowledge, if on other accounts such a view were tenable. Indeed, to speak of any thought at all whereinto the material element does not enter is surely to use words with little meaning. Thought, consciousness, without subject and object, without perception and conception of external existence, *which may enable the thinker to distinguish himself as Person from such external existence, which is not himself*, does seem quite inconceivable. But what is here implied is that such knowledge must necessarily be *successive*. Now, I would ask, in the case of the Divine Cause, how is such successive knowledge supposed to arise ? Either from processes without, or from processes within, the Divine intellect. Since theists maintain that all finite existence (except sin) owes its origin to the conception and purpose of the Divine Person, this knowledge cannot arise from any finite existence independent of Himself, as it may in our case. It must therefore originally come from processes *within* the Divine intellect. But how do these successive processes, which represent and are the origin of the actual course of things as it is, arise ? Here we have again change, indeed the growth from less to more, which is the actual course of things in the creation of every thing, as of every person ; and this, as we have seen, must be originally represented in the Divine intellect in order for it to be proposed and originated. But this change, this growth of more complex existence from simpler, requires as much accounting for, as much previous efficient causation here as it can possibly do in the actual world. This is tortoise and elephant, and only repeats the processes of time in a supposed ideal region *ad infinitum*. This is no real cause at all. The real efficient cause even now must be not in this process at all, but in the unknowable depths of the Divine Nature beneath intelligence. That is exactly where I believe it to be. But, then,

do you gain anything by interposing such a process of thought—a simple repetition of the human—between the Absolute Cause and the phenomena of which experience informs us? I think not, and therefore such a provision for matter out of human consciousness seems to me quite out of the question.

16. March 1870

## ON THE THEORY OF A SOUL.



No one can have watched the characteristics of the times, without seeing how strongly the tide has set in favour of the introduction of physics into metaphysics. Many reasons may be assigned for this. In the general breaking-up of ancient forms of thought, and consequent confusion, caused by the shock of old truths floating about hither and thither, men turn from what has become so uncertain and painful as mental science in a state of chaos, to a power rich in tangible results, triumphant and progressive, as natural philosophy has proved itself to be. Besides this, however, such a state of things is the necessary effect of the violent separation between mind and matter effected by Descartes. It is only the usual Nemesis of abandoned truth. An immense impulse was given to this tendency by the theory of Bishop Berkeley, which necessarily brought with it a deeper searching into the sensational side of the sources of human knowledge; and since then the current of thought has irresistibly hurried minds along in the same direction. At this moment, it seems to me as if there was a reaction, and I need hardly say that the tendency of my own mind, and I fear a perfectly disgraceful ignorance of physics, lead me to sympathize with what has been happily called the Intuitionist school. At the same time, it is impossible to look on this irruption of physics as simply a hostile invasion. No truth, whencesoever it comes, whatsoever it may be, can be rejected by a philosopher. It must be heartily welcomed, and a place must be found for it in the vast home of all knowledge which we call Philosophy. If it is not received as a friend, it is certain to break in, to usurp, and to treat as a town taken by storm what ought to have opened its gates as an ally. In this case, physiologists especially, for of them I speak, would have just cause of complaint, for we none of us deny that sense is one source of human knowledge. Mind and matter are so blended in the very act

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of cognition, that physiology and psychology are sisters, born of the same mother, and any war between them is unnatural. Intuitionists and Phenomenists ought to be able to find some bond of union. To discover such a basis is the object of the present paper. Though I hope it is conciliatory, yet it is by no means eclectic, and I fear that I may fare like the man in Molière who attempted to mediate between man and wife. I am, however, too much accustomed to the kind indulgence of the Society to dread any very terrible result.

My attempt, then, is to find reasons for thinking that "EACH INDIVIDUAL MAN IS A SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE, CALLED A SOUL, WHICH HAS THE DOUBLE OFFICE OF ANIMATING THE BODY, SO AS TO ENABLE IT TO PERFORM ITS VITAL FUNCTIONS, AND OF GENERATING THE VARIOUS FACULTIES WHICH, MANIFESTING THEMSELVES AS WILL, REASONING, OR INTUITION, MAY COLLECTIVELY BE CALLED MIND." In a subject so wide, it is necessary to select some special point, and I shall attempt to put together reasons for the view which I advocate, by showing that such a theory alone meets the requirements of the phenomena of human cognition. I shall beg leave to criticize two leading views on the subject, and to show that neither meets the great fact of the case, which I conceive to be the union of independence and of dependence exhibited by the intellect in its relations with sense. We one and all allow that there are two factors in cognition, sense and the mental faculty; the question is, what is the relation between them?

Here I am met at once face to face by what I call the theory of Nescience, that is, the view that we can know nothing whatsoever about the matter: If this view were what it looks like at first, a mere abandonment of the onward struggle of the human mind towards truth on the most momentous questions, I should pass it by. I prefer even possible defeat to an ignoble surrender. If I thought that the theory legitimately issued in treating all that mankind calls truth as a mere working hypothesis, which might turn out to be false, I should look upon such scepticism as a sort of Torres Vedras of doubt, to which beaten men resort when they can no longer hold the open field, only to come down from it and take up the same intellectual position from which they had been driven before. This is, however, very far from representing the real view of the eminent and sincere men from whose lips we have heard such language. The fact is, that the theory of nescience is really a very definite theory of knowledge, which I venture to call Bishop Berkeley minus God. It

is this view which I now consider. The effect of it is to convince me that the absolute dependence of the mental faculties on sense is utterly unthinkable, while the residue of truth which it contains proves to me positively that the mind is an independent agent, or, in other words, a spiritual substance.

The theory has two sides, one logical, the other physiological. I do not mean that they are always held together, yet it is certain that they assist each other. The logical theory is too abstract ever to be popular; and its physiological counterpart stands to it in the same relation as Buddhist legends to Buddhist metaphysics. It throws around the cold, angular symmetry of logic all the warmth and the gracefulness of nature's endless transformations, with the difference that in this case the legends are as true as they are beautiful. The physiological side may be stated thus: human thoughts are but the expression of molecular changes in the matter of life, which is the source of all vital phenomena. Mental processes are thus classed among vital phenomena; while, like all other vital phenomena, they stand in the same relation to matter as the properties of water do to the nature and disposition of its component molecules. In other words, they are simply the result of the molecular forces of matter. Logically, the theory takes another shape. It is thus stated by its author,—“Sensation and the mind's consciousness of its own acts are not only the exclusive sources, but the sole materials of our knowledge.” What, however, is mind? “A series of feelings aware of itself, as past and future.”<sup>1</sup> “We have no conception of Mind itself, as distinguished from its conscious manifestations. We neither have nor can imagine it, except as represented by the succession of manifold feelings which metaphysicians call states or modifications of Mind.” Mind, then, is not a substance, but a series of feelings with a notion of permanent possibility of feeling attached to it. This is absolutely all that it knows of itself. Now, what does it know of anything else? “What we know of objects is the sensations they give us, and the order of the occurrence of these sensations.” “Of the outward world we know and can know absolutely nothing, except the sensations we experience from it.”<sup>2</sup> Now, I am not aware that the author has anywhere stated that the mental faculties are the properties or functions of sense. It is, however, certain that he considers that the mind can

<sup>1</sup> Mill's *Examination of Hamilton*, 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Logic*, B. I., c. 3, 7.

know nothing but particulars, because it is hermetically sealed to anything but sensible phenomena, that its whole share in framing the concept is the ticketing of phenomena as marks to know them; lastly, that the notion of substance and of all other categories which are commonly considered as original products of the mind, are not even thoughts, but only names. It is plain that a mind, not a substance, but a bundle of feelings, with so little original work to do that it may be called a receptacle, a sort of cloak-room for labelled luggage brought in by sense; such a mind, I say, has no defence against being looked upon as one amongst the many functions of a matter discovered by physiology. The two theories play into each other's hands. What need of an original, autocratic, independent power to be the hewer of wood and the drawer of water, for sense? Why bring on the stage a godlike faculty, when a machine would suffice for the work? Why should not such a faculty be the mere function of matter? I answer, why, indeed?

This is, however, by no means the ultimatum of the logical theory in question. I am not using this conclusion as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole, nor simply appealing to consciousness as a witness for the impossibility of considering intellect to be a function of matter. I wish to show that Mr. Mill is compelled by these very premises to go on, and to assert for intellect a wild sort of independence greater than any which I claim. In the hands of a sincere thinker the theory cannot stop there, and what begins in materialism ends in idealism. The author is too acute not to see and too honest not to say that sense, being ourselves feeling, can never prove the reality of an outer world, unless the mind adds an act of perception which affirms it; and that act of perception is too original a pronouncement of the intellect to be legitimated by his theory. He attempts, not to prove the validity, but to account for the existence of perception, without having recourse to one of those original pronouncements of the mind which we call intuitions. He argues at length that the notion of a real outer world might arise from the feeling of difference in the position of the sensations felt in our own bodies. Out of this difference arises "*the supposition*" that the "permanent possibilities of sensation"<sup>3</sup> may be distinct from it. This, then, is the logical outcome of the theory, a confession that it is impossible to *prove* that there is any outer world at all, if the mind

<sup>3</sup> Mill's Examination p. 196.

has no original powers. The living movement of the dialectics of his theory has compelled its author to entertain the view that the idea of substantive realities out of ourselves, distinct from sensations, is conceivably a mistake.<sup>4</sup> Externality cannot possibly be proved, but only (as he thinks) accounted for on sense-data. Now, this assertion is simply the affirmation of the creation of an outer world by the mind, not only an outer world of sense, but a world of "other human and sentient beings" like ourselves. Even granting that all this outer world is an illusion, surely the mental faculty which can thus, taking sense as its fulcrum, make a spring into chaos, and return laden with nothing less than a world of its own creation, peopled with spirits and many-coloured objects of matter, is a god, and not a labeller of sense-materials. The upshot of the theory is that the independence of mind has returned upon us in a most unexpected shape. The most consistent and logical effort to prove that mind is absolutely dependent on sense has issued, first, in the confession that by this means it is impossible to prove that there is any outer world at all; secondly, in the distinct assertion of the admissibility of a theory which makes mind absolutely independent of sense, and claims for it an originality of which I never dreamed. I think I am authorized to infer that the theory that the mental faculty is a function of and is evolved out of sense is utterly unthinkable, since it lands us in such a contradiction as this. Besides which, I draw a positive argument for the independence of the soul from the fact that all efforts to cast it out only bring it back again.

I take act of three admissions. The outer world, including the existence of other minds, cannot be proved at all on the theory of mind being a function of matter. Idealism is distinctly contemplated as an admissible theory. In other words, the absolute independence of mind is tenable. This is the outcome of pure phenomenism.

It is plain that this is not the key to unlock the secrets of the universe, for it unlocks nothing. On this quagmire no human foot can rest, and therefore men take refuge in what I have called "nescience." We can know nothing whatsoever about it. Now, this very act of nescience is one of the acts of mind on which I intend to found its claim to independence.

It is not enough to criticize the opposite theory; the object is too important to be left there, and I proceed to give positive reasons for

<sup>4</sup> *Examination of Hamilton*, pp. 200, 201, 203.

the first branch of my thesis, the assertion that the human spirit is an independent agent. I will now call this spirit "mind," for according to the theory which I advocate, mind is only the soul under a particular aspect; and of this mind I affirm that there are reasons for being certain that it is a permanent, independent agent, that is, a substance. For this I appeal to its operations. I do not pretend adequately to know mind as it is in itself. I know it, as I know everything else, through its phenomena. I have no objection to call the mental faculties vital operations. The question is, of what are they the activities; and I answer that by the examination of their phenomena they are the very contradictory of sensations, that is, of the products of sense. I do not mean that they are simply unlike sensations; that would prove nothing, for the products of material substances are often or always totally unlike the components of which they are the result. In the case which we are considering, sense-phenomena and mind-phenomena are not unlike, but contradictory. They are the negation of each other. They are not only contrasted with each other, but they are incommensurable. There is no single quality of mental products which does not show that they proceed from an agent which is not sense.

The peculiarity of the human intellect is, that all its knowledge is acquired. The time is past when any one believed in innate ideas. If there be one thing more than another which is a characteristic of modern thought, it is the view that all knowledge is a hard-won conquest. We all believe in the *tabula rasa*. Every single idea of the human mind is the result of its own toil, the effect of its own activity. All its objects, except one, come to it from without, and it appropriates them by a series of acts called cognitions. The question is, are these thoughts mere photographed sensations? I answer, most certainly not. Every cognition comes in the shape of a judgment. We only know things by judging them, and we judge them by the most independent conceivable judgments. What can be more independent than the very declaration of nescience by which we pronounce that we do not know things as they are in reality? What is the meaning of this marvellous protest against our own knowledge? In the first place, plainly, we do know something of two things,—our thought and reality, or else we could not pronounce them to be unlike. I do not even want a noumenon here, but only the possibility of a noumenon. Suppose the reality to be only a sensation, still my thought is clearly not the sensation, for it is a judgment upon

the sensation. Again, that judgment is thus not only a denial of its identity with the sensation, but, furthermore, a most absolute declaration of its independence. "I know nothing adequately of what this sensation is in itself." If my thought were the sensation photographed, I should know it well enough. The fact is, that the mind, so far from being a photographic machine, is a living mirror. Nay, it is more than that, for the eye is as much as that. It is a living mirror, which knows itself first, then receives the image of the blue heaven into its clear depths, not by a passive but by a vital act. It modifies itself into an image of the sky, and then, knowing at once sky, image, and self, pronounces that its own knowledge is imperfect, since it is not the absolute, but the relative and ideal reproduction of the reality. There stand, then, over against each other two things, the sensation and the thought, and the thought is not the sensation modified, but a judgment upon it.

Take any form of possible judgment ; you will find yourself equally unable to conceive it to be evolved out of matter as a function out of an organ. Take, for instance, a hypothetical judgment, one which involves doubt. The function of an organ of sense is some one thing fatally determined, got between the organ and the object. What is there here like the grand independence of doubt ? The living agent sees that it creates its own objects, and that it may produce in itself either one or two modifications of itself. What is there in sense which in any way whatsoever can be set side by side with the knowledge of our thoughts ? Does the eye or the brain know itself ? If we did not by an independent act create our own thoughts, we should not know them, for it is in and through the operation by which we create them that we know them. In the act of producing in ourselves that modification of mind which we call a thought, we know it ; and when we have produced it, we think it over again to see if it be conformable to the laws of our own intellect. I say, then, that I have a right to conclude that the mind is a spiritual agent, for by a spiritual agent I mean one which, contrary to the wont of matter, is not confined to a particular sort of objects, but judges all being. The more highly organized is matter, the greater is the division of labour, the more specific and confined is its work. The eye sees, but does not hear ; sounds are non-existent to it by the very perfection of its organization. As for the mind, it has for its direct and primary object, if you will, the particular transmitted by sense ; but in the very act of apprehending the particular,

it puts an element of the universal into it. Through the idea of being, it makes it at once potentially a concept. Above all, it has a judgment about everything. It can think over to itself the great thought of the universe. Even granting the reality to be utterly beyond its ken, it can frame the idea of God ; it can exercise judgments upon the idea ; it can doubt, deny, affirm His existence. Lastly, all the operations of matter, organic or inorganic, are essentially turned outwards. It is composite, and each element of the compound acts only on its neighbours. The operations of the mind are immanent, utterly turned inwards. After all, this is the fundamental quality, which casts an abyss between spirit and matter. Spirit knows its own thoughts. Marvellous and magnificent power ! I said just now that we know nothing immediately, nothing but phenomena. We know things only by their activities upon us. We are like men in the dark, receiving impressions on all sides from things which we know not, as they are. In one case, however, we are behind the scenes. We know the noumenon, the act and the agent. We know that this is our act, and that we are the actors. I do not mean to assert that we know adequately the whole nature of that Self which acts. Still, thus much we do know ; it is something more than a vague Ego. It is not an obliged nominative case, a subject wanted for a predicate. It is not a transcendental unity of apperception. It is not empty ; it has contents and matter of its own. It is an independent, permanent, self-acting thing,—that is, a substance. Here, then, we stand on the edge of the abyss which separates matter and spirit. Matter is an entity which, if it act at all, must be composite. Spirit can act on and in itself, and is thus one and indivisible.

I might here say much of the connection between will and intellect, how the mind has a power of turning its attention to one idea rather than another, of seizing upon one side of a matter and neglecting the rest, how by an act of recollection it searches after some thought which it wills to call up out of its own depths. Above all, I might point to that strange vaticination, partaking of the infinite, by which the mind feels after some truth dimly seen, and, outstripping not only sense but its own reasoning, divines without a proof what will be the outcome of its own future logic. Not only does it rise up and say, "Things are not as I feel them," but "Things are not as I think them." This is an act which would of itself prove the intellect to be either a legitimate sovereign or a

rebel. In either case, it is independent of sense ; but I must hasten on, for I have only proved half my thesis.

I hope that these considerations have gone some way to show the first part of it, that spirit is a self-subsisting and self-acting entity, and in this sense perfectly independent of matter. It is plain, however, that this is by no means the whole account of the phenomena of cognition. I proceed to show the other side of the subject, that the act of human knowledge depends for its exercise on its intimate connection with a system of matter called body, and further, that that connection implies a soul.

Let us, in the first place, take an inventory of what we have already gained. We have as yet before us two substances, one simply gazing at the other. As yet we have discovered nothing but difference and incompatibility. One is the antithesis of the other, at the very opposite pole of being,—one composite, the other simple ; one infinitely divisible, capable of being endlessly split up into countless molecules ; the other absolutely indivisible. As yet they do not even impress each other, for sensation is matter impressed, while spirit gazes at it and takes its picture. Spirit apprehends what is not itself by a representative judgment. Here I fear I draw upon myself the anathemas of Sir W. Hamilton, who would call me by some such name as a Cosmothetic Idealist, which, it appears, is something very wicked. However, as I simply mean by “representation” a modification of the mind, I do not plead guilty to bringing in something between mind and body. On the contrary, my thesis is precisely that there is nothing whatever between them. However, they have evidently to be brought together. If one has an intuition of the other, that other must be there to be intued. If one is judged by the other, it must be brought to be the bar. Every representation requires a previous act of presentation.

Here, curiously enough, I am again met by a protest of nescience ; this time, however, from what I venture to call my own side, if any one will acknowledge me. It seems to be the tendency of some English writers of the Intuitionist school who have paid most attention to the theory of perception, to stop short at perception as an ultimate, inexplicable fact, without going on to show “how the preceding organic affection is connected with the mental perception.” The process is stated by Reid, Brown, and Hamilton to consist of three steps,—first, an affection of the organism ; secondly, what

they call a sensation in the mind;<sup>5</sup> thirdly, an intellectual pronouncement that the object of the sensation is external to the mind. This pronouncement, which is the act of perception, is variously stated; Reid considers that the sensation is simply a sign suggesting an external world by an irresistible law of the human mind; Brown looks upon the pronouncement as an inference from the intuition of cause; Hamilton argues that the sensation and suggestion of externality are simply one simultaneous act. All these, however, give no explanation whatsoever as to the fact that the affection of the body reaches and is perceived by the mind. Now, of course, if we have come to an ultimate fact, we must be content to stop. Even, however, granting that we have reached one of those walls of sheer darkness beyond which no human ken can reach, let us be sure that we have before us the whole fact, even if we renounce an inquiry into the how. There is a debateable border-land between knowledge and nescience, and if there be even twilight enough to allow us to peer into the night, let us by all means follow its lead. All light is valuable, even if it be that of the stars. Even supposing that we have reached an intuition, a logical ultimate, which admits of no premiss and is not a conclusion, yet we may find a psychological history of its genesis. It seems to me that the neglect of following the truth to the uttermost has resulted in leaving the act of perception baseless, suspended in mid-air. We shall find in these writers themselves a deep discrepancy between the laws of being and of thought, traceable, as I think, to the cleft which they leave between the affection of the organism and the mental act which they call the sensation. I must very rapidly mention the most prominent instances.

First, then, the theory of these writers is that the affirmation of outness called perception is simply externality, and nothing more. It is, "This is outside of me." Now surely the mind says a great deal more. If it says anything, it pronounces that each impression upon the sense represents a quality in the object. It affirms that the roundness, hardness, even colour, which are felt and thought, are somehow in the thing. The object is round, hard, coloured. It affirms not physical likeness nor exact likeness, but ideal conformity between the thought and the thing. In these writers the very contrary is asserted. In the case of Brown and Reid, as far as I can make out, this is true of primary as well as secondary qualities. Even the latter, of whom I speak more doubtfully, considers extension

<sup>5</sup> To avoid confusion, it may be necessary to state that this is what I have called a representation.

in the mind to be suggested by a feeling, which is a sign of nature's<sup>6</sup> own creation, but otherwise as arbitrary as the word "gold" used to signify a particular substance. Now, I submit that if perception is trustworthy, it pronounces not only on the objectiveness of that which impresses the organism, but also on the conformity, *mutatis mutandis*, of the object to the judgment pronounced upon it. I say *mutatis mutandis*, because the conformity between ideal and real things must be, at least, as we are at present constituted, inadequate; the truth apprehended is relative; nevertheless, it is truth.

Secondly, although it be true that Sir W. Hamilton holds extension to be a real attribute of body, yet he also agrees with Kant in affirming space to be<sup>7</sup> "only a law of thought, and not a law of things." How it is possible for him to do this I cannot understand, seeing that he calls extension empiric space, and this cannot be, unless space is also a law of things.<sup>8</sup> However, the point on which I insist is the terrible gulf thrown between existence and thought by the Kantian view of Space, and adopted by Hamilton.

Thirdly, according to all these three writers, substance is a thing utterly unknown, except as the Unknowable lying behind phenomena. This is, however, a perilous position, for what is absolutely unknown is very near to being non-existent.

Surely something is wanted to reconcile thought and being, something which, while it denies their identity, is warranted to affirm their correspondence; and is there any possible basis for a reconciliation of this long-standing quarrel, except the theory that there is a being called man in which their dualism culminates into oneness? Now, I do not see how this unity can be effected, unless there be a soul, which is the source both of the feelings of the body, and of the thoughts of the intellect.

Let us look first at the initial mistake of Berkeleyism. Is it not the assumption that there is but one thing, the idea? If he had only distinguished the sensation from the knowledge of the sensation, he could not have made a blunder so fatal. "I feel" is as primordial a fact as "I think."

Secondly, these two, feeling and thought, have got to act together. Feeling furnishes matter to thought, and out of this unknown shapeless matter thought forms the magnificent struc-

<sup>6</sup> Mill, Examination of Hamilton, 180. <sup>7</sup> Quoted by Spencer, "Psychology," 58.

<sup>8</sup> McCosh, 105.

ture of human knowledge. This, however, is but an inadequate way of stating the question. Thought irresistibly believes that its knowledge is a right representation of an outward thing called nature; and this nature makes itself known through a portion of itself called body. This body, then, has got first to get itself known. How is this to be done? Shall we say that body and thought have been primordially wound up by an Almighty hand, and thus correspond like two perfect clocks? Impossible! The same being thinks and feels; thinking and feeling are both actions of one being. Otherwise there would be precisely the same difficulty in obtaining a knowledge of our body as in knowing the outer world. How should the two clocks know each other, be they ever so artistically constructed? We know our bodies because we feel them, and we know our sensations because the same mind of which knowledge is a function is also the active principle in sense.

Let us now apply this theory to what seemed to be defects in the theories of perception criticized above. The act of perception was supposed to be no revelation of the real qualities of the outer world, because it had nothing representative in it, in the sense of a conformity between the affection of the organism and the perception. The mind was supposed simply to furnish the categories of substance and quality in which it placed the materials conveyed by sense. The reason was because no theory existed by which the mind could come into immediate union with sense. It was argued that the act of cognition could represent nothing, because true representation already involved previous knowledge. Sir W. Hamilton says, "We assert that one thing is representative of another, inasmuch as the thing represented is known independently of the representation."<sup>9</sup> I answer that we may know that two things are like if we have access to both, though in different ways. We know and we feel the same thing. The same identical being, the soul, is the actor in the two activities, sensation and knowledge, which have the same thing, viz., our body, for their object. The attributes of the body are thus immediately presented to the intellect, which represents them faithfully, though after its own fashion, that is, ideally; and when we pronounce in our conception of body that it has certain qualities, in and through the very act of knowledge we know that we are right. Thus it is quite true to say that in our very selves we possess what

<sup>9</sup> *Metaphysics*, Lec. 24.

is in one sense a *Non-Ego*, and after the type of that extra-mental thing, that is, our body, which we know immediately through sense, we fashion the whole of the great world beyond our organism.

The same principle applies to the views of space and substance which I ventured to criticize. Believing as I do that there are both an intuitive and an empirical element in space, that it is, in fact, a relative reality, I find already a basis for the idea in my own being. I hold the soul to be limited in its range to a certain space marked out by its body, though, being whole in each part, it is there in a very different sense from that in which spatial boundary is predicated of our corporeal frame. As, however, our mind has immediate knowledge both of itself and of different positions in its body, this is enough at once to rescue the conception of space from the pure subjectivity to which it was condemned by Kant. As for the idea of substance, it is much more than an unknown substratum, for we already know ourselves as self-acting agents, since we know ourselves through that marvellous power by which we recognize our thoughts to be our own activities and ourselves to be the agents. Our thoughts are not a mere series, but a series self-known, because self-produced; and this is the destruction of the notion of a series produced by something else, that is, by sense. Again, the fact that the same being produces the whole series of thought is proved by the power of memory, through which one identical being remembers the thinking operations produced by itself in past time. This substance, then, is not empty; it has attributes inseparably belonging to it; it is an active, independent force. Out of this I believe we may infer an external world. We have thus gained the idea of cause, and in the idea itself thus gained we see by intuition its universality and necessity. We are in possession of the truth that every act implies an agent, and every effect a cause, and this enables us to step beyond our organism, and to see that the sensations require a cause which, since we know ourselves, we can pronounce to be absolutely outside the Ego.

I hope that these considerations have shown reasons for thinking two things,—first, that the mental faculties are self-acting, and in that sense independent of matter, and not evolved from it; secondly, that the phenomena of perception imply the existence of one agent, on which feeling, that is, a bodily sensation, and judgment, that is, a mental act, depend. This being the case, I ought now to proceed to argue at length that this agent is a soul, that is, a substance

which stands to the body in the relation of life or vital force. So long, however, have I trespassed on the patient indulgence of the Society, that I must be very brief.

Now, I know that I shall be met at once by a denial of the existence of any vital force, and that on the part of men the most competent to judge the physiological part of the question. I am not so foolish as to enter into the lists with them on a science of which they are the most brilliant representatives, and of which I know nothing but the little which I have learned from them. Still, as far as I can see, their arguments only show that a vital force is not required, and consequently not proved, by their peculiar science. There is nothing in what they say, however, to make the existence of a vital force impossible; and even granting them to be physiologically right, their conclusion would only amount to an avowal that physiology cannot prove its existence. What, however, if there be another science dealing with mind and requiring for an act of perception the presence in the body of an entity, foreign, because self-subsisting, which at once empowers the inorganic elements of body to rise to such an act as sensation, and also evolves out of itself an act of judgment? If such be the case, it seems to me that it goes a great way to show that that entity called a soul stands in the relation to body of a vital force.

I turn, however, at once to a fact which seems to be a crucial phenomenon, I mean death. I look upon death as a sort of natural experiment which by eliminating life reveals what constituted it. The most remarkable fact about the process of death is that at one moment the whole of our faculties, mental, animal, and vegetable, disappear at once. Why should we cease to think when we cease to digest? Of course physiologists have a ready answer; because thought is a mere function of the material organism, and when the organism breaks up thought ceases. There is, however, another theory which suits that part of the case equally well, while it leaves untouched other facts of which this physiological theory is the negation. I mean the theory that both digestion and thought depend for their exercise on a third thing, viz., the soul, which, while it thinks, is also the life of the body. When the material elements which compose the body relapse into their primitive inorganic state, and become inapt to be the instruments of the soul, it is forced to desert the body, which was not its prison, but its domicile. With it, of course, disappear the intellectual powers which are its proper function. Then, and not

till then, the delicate organism which it had built up and made into a home for itself is utterly broken up and ceases to be organic. Something plainly is gone which was the life, and that is the thinking soul. This theory, I say, leaves intact all those facts which establish the substantial independence of thought, while it also accounts for the other set of facts which show that thought for its reflective exercise is conditioned on the organism. It leaves unhurt the immateriality of the soul, for life is just such a function which spirit can exercise in connection with matter, for it implies the presence of the indivisible whole in each several part. Spirit can possess matter for good and for bad, pervade it and use it for its own purposes. I hold it unthinkable to say that thought is a function of brain, but I believe brain to be the organ, that is, the instrument by which spirit externates to itself the dim thoughts formed in its depths. Brain furnishes symbols to the grand inner dialogue of thought, analogous to the words which we want to make known our conceptions. Here, again, the notion of Life helps us to understand how the intellect is dependent on our corporeal frame, for while its vital union with the body does not destroy the original substantial freedom of spirit, yet when our spirit has submitted to be a soul, and to animate a body, it must take the consequences. Matter becomes necessary to it, as the channel to the river which has worn it for itself. Spirit depends on matter not for its existence, but for the normal exercise of its operations.

I must here close a paper which has been already too long. To prevent misconception, I only add one thing. As it seems to me that all the facts of the case disprove the pre-existence of the soul, my reason forces me to look upon each soul as a special substance created by God, and in the moment of creation invested with the germ which becomes its body. Granting the independent substance of the soul, I know no proof in the whole range of thought which calls so loudly for God as this continual act of individual creation, involving at the same time the otherwise inexplicable fusing together of two such substances as spirit and matter. On the other hand, granting the existence of God and the independence of soul, the question of immortality is solved.

#### *NOTES.*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*

W. Sidgwick

27. April 1870

## THE VERIFICATION OF BELIEFS.

"Ο γὰρ πᾶσι δοκεῖ, τοῦτ' εἶναι φάμεν."—ARISTOTLE.

ORDINARY thinking, whether vulgar and unsystematic, or systematized in special sciences, frames judgments, affirms propositions, both general and individual, in great number and of various kinds. But in the progress of thought some of these are recognized as erroneous. The ordinary mind simply discards these and, retaining the rest, continues its natural processes of acquiring, evolving, systematizing beliefs with undiminished confidence. But to the reflective or philosophic mind the ascertained erroneousness of some beliefs suggests the possible erroneousness of all. It is overspread with a certain sweeping distrust of the processes of ordinary thinking, which can only be removed by the establishment of universal criteria of the Truth and Falsehood of Beliefs. It is the removal of this philosophic uncertainty, called Scepticism (easily distinguishable from the original, natural uncertainty with which many of our opinions are held), which I call the Verification of Beliefs.

The right method of verification seems to me this: to observe the different processes by which we are convinced of error, and to oppose to each, as far as possible, a counter-process of verification; so that in the case of any belief that we wish to verify, we may exclude all recognizable possibilities of error. The reassurance thus obtained may not be absolute, but seems the best attainable.

Beliefs may be distinguished as Certain and Probable: neglecting the latter, we may distinguish the certainty of apparently certain beliefs as Intuitive and Discursive. Discursive certainty is apprehended by contemplating the belief in connection with other certain beliefs. The errors arising from wrong Discursion have been carefully noted by logicians, and a machinery provided for excluding them, which is intuitively seen to be infallible, where it can be

applied. Whether it is possible to verify the discursive certainty of a belief not intuitively certain by any other method, I shall not now inquire; but I think not.

I pass on, then, to beliefs which we naturally regard as intuitively certain. How are we convinced of error in respect of these?

1. We may carelessly take for intuitively certain a belief which, when we concentrate our consciousness upon it, is not found to be so. This is especially the case when the notions connected in the belief are obscure and indefinite; for when we become aware of this indefiniteness, it is almost impossible that we should still regard the belief as intuitively certain.

The first rule may then be to ascertain (by contemplating them) that our notions are really clear, and the belief connecting them really certain. This may be called the Intuitive or Cartesian Verification.

I must here notice the important distinction of judgments as universal and individual. There are intuitively certain beliefs of both kinds. Of the former kind many after Leibnitz have laid down Universality and Necessity as two distinct characteristics. They seem to me the same characteristic viewed in different relations. As experience is of individual objects, universality describes the logical import of the judgment in relation to objects of experience. But as we cannot envisage the sum of these individual objects, the universal connection of the two notions in a judgment can only be intuitively certain, if apprehended as a necessary connection.

2. One of our intuitively certain beliefs may be found to conflict with another certain belief. One of the two may be newly obtained: or if not, the conflict may not have been observed because we have never contemplated the two beliefs together; or we may have contemplated them together, but may have believed it possible to harmonize them. But how is error recognized? Usually when the strength of two conflicting certainties is thus tried, one is found to be weaker, gives way, and is annihilated. If this does not happen, we are indeed in perplexity. For not only may either of the conflicting beliefs be erroneous, but the perception that they conflict may also be so. In the former case we conclude that a particular belief is erroneous. In the latter we only conclude that there is error somewhere: we may call the result, after Kant, the discovery of an antinomy.

In the former case, sometimes a supposed necessary intuition con-

licts with other necessary truth, as we find with some paradoxical results in the exact sciences. We were at first convinced of the opposite, but on deducing the result from still more certain intuitions the *prima facie* conviction gives way. Sometimes a particular objective intuition is convicted of error, as when we find that we have mistaken a picture for the reality, or one colour for another, or the part of our body that is touched, or where a pain is, or whence a sound comes : or a whole series of such beliefs may give way at once, as when we wake up from a dream. Sometimes, again, a universal may come in conflict with one of the particulars which it sums up. I may have believed that a thing cannot act where it is not, and becoming convinced that the sun acts directly on the earth, may discard this belief. The Socratic method of moral inquiry brought to light error of this kind. Polemarchus was convinced that it was just to give every man his own : but being convinced that it is not just to restore to a mad friend his own sword, he discards his universal.

Now, if this error is ever discovered after the Intuitive verification has been performed, it is clear that the intuitive verification is not entirely trustworthy, and needs to be supplemented by a second, which I will call the Discursive Verification. It consists in contemplating the belief that appears intuitively certain in connection with other beliefs that may possibly be found to conflict with it. Of course, we cannot be absolutely certain what these are ; and we may always obtain new beliefs which may conflict with the old ones ; therefore, this verification is inevitably fallible. Still we may reduce the chance of failure to a minimum by carefully grouping the intuitions, which we perceive to be related, and surveying them together. In the case of necessary beliefs, we may bring together those that belong to the same department of thought, and arrange them in convenient order. This has been done in some mathematical treatises very completely ; it is to be regretted that some of the most distinguished ethical and metaphysical writers are not more careful to state explicitly and with due prominence the fundamental propositions which they hold to be intuitively certain. Among those of our particular beliefs which we chiefly regard as certain, those that relate to the external world, there is a natural concatenation which enables us to dispense with an artificial one. We may trust our physical beliefs with regard to familiar objects, because if we made a mistake we should soon find it out. But the most important application of the Discursive verification is to the relation

between universal propositions and the particular ones which they sum up. This, which may be called the Inductive or Baconian verification, may either be applied to the intuitive beliefs directly, or to beliefs demonstratively inferred from them, as these (apart from the possibility of error in the process of inference) will stand or fall along with the former.

It is, however, so rare for a man to find in his own mind a universal [necessary] intuition conflicting with an individual [objective] intuition, that the very fact of such conflict has been denied, and it is difficult clearly to prove it. The instances that most readily occur are of conflict between general ethical precepts, and a conviction of the rightness in exceptional circumstances of particular actions opposed to these precepts. But such general judgments, though regarded by many persons as intuitively certain, are constructed of notions so indefinite that they could not pass the test of the Cartesian verification. When they are made precise, it is seen at once that they cannot be universal.

Of the clearer principles of Physics and Metaphysics, I could not quote one that has been explicitly asserted and afterwards abandoned on account of its conflict with the experience of the assertor. But the history of thought will afford many examples of conflict between the necessary intuitions of one set of persons and the particular, as well as universal, intuitions of another set. When this is apparent, there must be error on one side or on the other, or on both. An unphilosophic mind will frequently decide unhesitatingly that the error is on the other side; but a philosophic mind cannot do this unless it can prove independently that the conflicting intuitor has an inferior faculty of envisaging truth in general, or this kind of truth; if it cannot prove this, it must submit to a loss of confidence in its own conflicting intuitions. We have thus suggested a third verification, which I should have called common-sense, only that Hamilton has stamped a different meaning on the term; I will call it the Social or Œcumenical verification. This supplements the two former. If we find that an intuitive belief appears clear and certain to ourselves contemplating it, that it is in harmony with our other beliefs, and that it has been held "*semper, ubique, ab omnibus*" (omitting abnormal minds, or minds with obviously inferior or undeveloped faculties), we have the strongest philosophic ground for believing it that we can possibly obtain.

Besides these, however, there is a fourth method, which has found

so much favour with eminent thinkers since Locke, that I must briefly explain why I am unable to accept it. I will call it, after the title which Kant has given to the most elaborate application of it, the Critical verification. A critical philosopher is one who proposes to heal the disease of error not by treatment, but by amputation. 'Certain portions of human thought are tainted with error, festering with conflict; let us make excision of these, and we save the rest.'

This theory has thus a negative and a positive side. Negatively it asserts the incurable impotence of our intuitive faculty in certain departments of its natural exercise. Positively, it asserts that a line may be drawn between these departments and others within which we may trust our intuitions. Now, there are no doubt large regions of thought, such as ethics, politics, metaphysics, and theology, where the social verification is conspicuously wanting to most important intuitions; where thinkers are divided into schools and sects, and not agreeing in premisses, inevitably disagree in conclusions. And if the critical philosopher could draw a clear line between intuitions which were indisputable and those which were liable to conflict and error, providing us with certain marks by which to recognize either class, we might accept the positive part of his theory without accepting the negative. We need not totally discard the latter intuitions, but we might feel that we had an additional method of verifying the former. Unfortunately, the method by which each criticist draws this line is found on examination to involve assumptions from which the social verification, at any rate, is as conspicuously absent as it is from any of the intuitions which he discards.

*E.g.*, Locke thought that we might regard as intuitively certain a considerable number of universal judgments (which the progress of knowledge might importantly increase), the particular judgments that belong to what is now called empirical psychology and the cognition of our own existence. This last particular intuition Kant admitted, with qualifications unintelligible to common sense. Among Locke's universal intuitions he drew a line discarding a large number. The line is drawn very clearly and confidently, but the method of drawing it involves the assumption that we can distinguish in our cognitions the element contributed by the mind from that due to the non-ego. This assumption I am so far from being able to make that its contradictory seems to me irresistibly certain.

The criticism, however, with which we are in England most familiar is that of the school called Empirical, which denies intuiti-

tive certainty to any but particular judgments. In the most consistent form in which this theory is held, all universal propositions are regarded as only approximatively certain, the degree of certainty to be attached to each depending upon the number of "cases in which it has been verified,"—or, in my language, the number of particular intuitions to which it corresponds. It is true that our most distinguished expositor of Empiricism (Mr. Mill) shrinks from this statement; and in the earlier editions of his treatise he seemed to admit the axioms of syllogistic reasoning as intuitively certain. But he has now made it clear that, in his opinion, we have no right to assume that attributes which co-exist with the same attribute co-exist with one another until we have observed that this has frequently been the case; and though he still implies a distinction in *kind* between "Valid Induction" and "Induction by simple enumeration," it is a distinction which I am entirely unable to grasp. At the same time it appears to me that this graduated approximative certainty must depend ultimately on a universal intuition. We cannot make a particular observation of the fact that general propositions are approximatively certain in proportion to the number of particular observations which they sum up; and we cannot ascertain it by induction (with even approximative certainty) without first assuming what we are trying to prove. If Mill asserts that he can perform this logical feat, I can only reply that in this very assertion he seems to me to declare a logical intuition, directly conflicting with a similar intuition of mine.

Leaving this point, let us examine the characteristics of the particular beliefs, the validity of which the Empiricist is willing to maintain against the Sceptic. In the first place, all particular beliefs are not included; not, for example, the belief that this action is right, or this object beautiful. Such judgments are obviously fallible. Are we to say then (though this is not the ground expressly taken by the Empiricist) that they are those particular beliefs verified by my third, the Social, verification? Unhappily, at this point, the profoundest difference of opinion reveals itself among the empirical critics. They split into two schools, the materialists and the empirical psychologists. The former assert (with common-sense on their side) that the intuitive beliefs of which we may assume the legitimacy are the beliefs connected with our (external) perceptions, viz., that particular portions of matter exist in particular parts of space, independently of our cognition of them. The latter

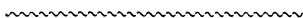
maintain that the only legitimate intuitive beliefs are that certain states of consciousness, mental phenomena, exist; the belief in the existence (in any sense) of any portion of matter is always inferential, and the belief in its extra-cognitional existence an illegitimate inference,—in fact, says Professor Bain, “a most anomalous fiction.” The materialists retort by attempting to show the total untrustworthiness of Introspection. “You are still following,” says Mr. Maudsley to Professor Bain and his followers, “the subjective method, that *ignis fatuus* of antiquity.” This irreconcilable quarrel, this mutual repudiation of methods, among such rigorous abstainers from unlawful assumptions, would in itself make me despair of a Critical verification of my beliefs: because in assuming any class of beliefs to be as a class infallible, I conflict with an important school of thinkers, and lose my Œcumenical verification. But besides, the assumption of either school seems to me confuted by experience. Every particular perception of matter is suggested by some sensation, and every sense is liable to erroneous suggestion. This is admitted at once of all senses but touch: it is no doubt rarer there: but the tongue continually exaggerates the size of things within the mouth, and if I cross my fingers and touch a marble, I have two marbles irresistibly suggested. Besides, every morning I wake up from a crowd of fallacious perceptions. That a similar waking from the long dream of life awaits us; that, therefore, the material world, in a very sweeping sense, ‘is not what it seems,’ is at least quite conceivable. If we turn to the beliefs of Empirical Psychology, it certainly seems at first sight that we must be more sure of the existence of states of consciousness than of anything else. That we should ever become convinced that we were not conscious at this present moment seems strictly inconceivable. But an ordinary introspective judgment affirms much more than that we are conscious; it affirms that we have this or that kind of feeling: which involves comparison and classification of our present feeling with other feelings: here error comes in. We cannot mistake that we are conscious; but we may very easily mistake when we try to give an account of our consciousness. Indeed, when we reflect how many metaphysical disputes have turned upon mere questions of introspectively cognizable fact, upon different accounts given by two thinkers of confessedly similar consciousnesses: *e.g.*, of the moral sentiments, the æsthetic sentiments, of volition, external perception, self-consciousness, &c.: one is almost amazed at the

audacity of claiming a special trustworthiness for the intuitions of empirical psychology. I am not arguing sceptically: I do not mean that I do not rely on my own or anyone's classification and description of consciousnesses to a certain extent: we can tell, *e.g.*, whether a state is pleasurable or painful (though a sentimental friend assures me that even this is difficult in respect of certain feelings); but the extent to which we can go without fluctuating and conflicting observations is very small. Nay, even the bare affirmation that I have a feeling, or 'there is a feeling,'—*cogitatio est, not cogito*—implies, if it is not strictly insignificant, the existence of other entities besides feelings: which is just what the empirical psychologist will not allow us to know intuitively.

I am, therefore, unable to add to my three verifications of Beliefs a fourth, Critical, verification; as the selection of any one class of intuitions as possessing special immunity from error seems to me arbitrary and chimerical.

To sum up, I hold that the most perfect possible philosophic certainty is secured for beliefs when it is ascertained (1), that they are clear and certain when contemplated by themselves; (2), that they do not conflict with other beliefs of our own; (3), nor of others with equal opportunities, as far as we know, of judging rightly. To weigh the claims of these different verifications when they conflict would require another paper as long as this. But any belief that wants any one seems to me less than certain.

This view is more or less opposed to the views of all the philosophers that I know, but especially to the view of Empiricism, whether materialistic or psychological. The support of my third (the Social) verification is conspicuously wanting to it. This chiefly induced me to offer it for discussion this evening.



#### NOTES.

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15 June 1870

## IS THERE ANY "AXIOM OF CAUSALITY"?

"Ἄλλο μὲν τί ἐστὶ τὸ αἴτιον τῷ ὄντι, ἄλλο δ' ἐκείνο, ἃνευ οὗ τὸ αἴτιον οὐκ ἂν ποτ' εἴη αἴτιον.—PLAT. *Phædo*, 99 B.

THE cultivation of the Natural Sciences has advantageously contracted the meaning of the word "*Cause*," which formerly was identified (as its derivative "*Because*" still is) with every answer to the question "*Why?*" and was said to lurk in the conditional clause of every hypothetical proposition. But now, we withdraw the word both from the *logical ground* of a belief (*causa cognoscendi*), and from the *interdependence* of mathematical magnitudes (*causa essendi*). We do not, with Aristotle, call the *premisses* of a syllogism the *causes* of the conclusion (An. Post. I. ii. 22), and, with Spinoza, the *essence* or *definition* of Substance, the *Cause* of its existence. And though we say, "*If two circles touch each other internally, their centres and point of contact will be in the same straight line,*" we do not speak of the internal contact as the *cause* of straightness in the uniting line. The order of consecutive *thought* is expressed by the word "*Reason.*" The relations with which mathematical truth is concerned have no origin or consecution *inter se*; but exist in *reciprocal* interdependence, which may be traversed in various orders. Were there only an unchanging universe, there would be, in the modern sense, no Cause and Effect. Between "*Things,*" as such, this relation cannot exist; it requires *Phenomena*. It is only with the *causa nascendi* that we have now to do. We speak, no doubt, of objects,—a glacier, a coal-bed, an asteroid,—being caused by this or that; but only as having assumed their present form in time.

Change alone, however, does not suffice to give entrance to causality. A body existing in a state of uniform rectilinear motion would be always under change, but the change would not be an effect; nor for the body's movement through one segment of its

course should we assign as cause its movement through the previous segment. Successive stages of continuous and unvaried change do not constitute the relation: the two terms must be *heterogeneous*. There are thus two marks of an *effect*: it must be a *phenomenon*, and not *homogeneous* with the Cause. Whatever carries these marks obliges us to look beyond itself; for what? for its origin in something different. This difference might be satisfied either by simply another *phenomenon*, or by what is *other than phenomenon*.

I. Suppose the Cause to be *another phenomenon*; in what does the relation between the two consist?

1. Is it in Time-succession? Is habitual antecedence tantamount to Causality? This hypothesis is already excluded by the rule of *heterogeneity* already given, for habitual antecedence, belonging equally to successions of the like and of the unlike, makes no provision for satisfying this rule. After using up the resources of habitual succession, we should therefore still have to set up a supplementary law of Thought, that every change must be referred to something other than its own prior stage.

2. Is it in *Sequence + Heterogeneity*; so that where two different phenomena are invariably successive in the same order, the prior is cause of the posterior? Not so, unless the blossoms of the almond are the cause of its leaves; and low water the cause of high; and the off fore leg of a horse moves his hind near one; and the fall of the leaf is the cause of winter; and (to recur to an old example not yet tortured to death) night the cause of day. Successions of this kind, constant yet independent of each other, we can conceive multiplied to any extent. Suppose them to be universal, so as to occupy the whole field of observation. There would still be laws of invariable order; definite rules of co-existence and succession, securing the means of prediction; but no causality. Premonitory signs are still something short of causes.

3. Is the shortcoming remedied by stipulating that the sequence shall be "*unconditional*"? By decorating his "*invariable antecedent*" with this new mark, Mr. Mill completes its promotion to the rank of Cause. First, let us see whether we have got here a *new* mark at all. When does an antecedent become invested with this "*unconditionality*" of relation? When upon its presence, whatever else may be or not be, the second phenomenon regularly happens. Whether it has this character or not can be learned only by letting all other conditions absent themselves by turns, and so reveal their

indifference to the result; and finding the residuary element to be the sole constant. What we discover thus, however, is nothing but our old acquaintance "invariableness," cleared by comparison with its inconstant companions. Or, in order to make "unconditionality" mean more than "invariableness," shall we insist that the antecedent is to be the sole condition "requisite," on the occurrence of which the second phenomenon is "*sure to happen*," and "*will follow in any case*"? How, then, am I to know such an antecedent when I see it? What test do you give me of this exclusive requisiteness, —this sureness to happen? If it be anything else than the old invariableness, it cannot be got out of your time-succession; but assumes a cognition of *necessity* other than that of habitual sequence, a certainty of the future other than lies in the juxtaposition of prior and posterior. In short, it is not from foreseeing its sequel in the future that we recognize anything as Cause; but from knowing it as Cause that we are sure of its sequel. Either, therefore, the mark "unconditional" is simply "invariable" over again; or else the rule given to us is, "Take an antecedent: see that it is invariable: mind that nothing else is requisite: and you have the Cause,"—a prescription more prudent than instructive.

It is a vain attempt, then, as Sir John Herschel remarks, "to reason away the connection of cause and effect, and fritter it down into the unsatisfactory relation of habitual sequence." (Treatise on Ast., ch. vii.)

Yet between phenomenon and phenomenon, as occurring in time, no other relation is observable. Three things only can we notice about them; their resemblance or difference; their order in space; their order in time; and scrutinize them as we may under this last aspect, we can never (as Hume and Brown have adequately shown) make out anything more about them than which comes first and which next. Higher magnifying powers, new refinements of discovery, may detect unsuspected intermediaries, and bisect and re-bisect the intervals, till a pair of seeming proximates is pulverized into a long series; as the light of Sirius, once regarded as a simple transaction between the star and the eye, cannot now be scientifically described without many a chapter on undulations, and refraction, and physiological optics, and the mental interpretation of the visual field. But the process only introduces more terms into the consecution, and reveals nothing other than consecution. Perceptive experience and observation, then, can never, it is plain, carry us

beyond premonitory signs, laws of co-existence and succession ; and if, as we have maintained, these fall short of Causality, Comte is so far right in expunging the quest of causes from the duties of Inductive Science, and confining it to the work of generalization, measurement, and deductive prediction. In this he seems to me to be more correct than Brown and the Mills, who continue to use the language of Causation, after it has been atrophied by reducing it to live on "habitual sequence."

And if premonitory signs are all that Science can *find*, so are they all that Science *wants*. It culminates in prevision and its counterpart, retrospection ; and in order to read truly the past and future of the world, it is needful and it is sufficient to know the groups of concomitant and the order of successive phenomena. Were they all loose from each other as sand-grains, or as soldiers filing out of a barrack-gate, still, so long as they were regularly disposed and regimented, we should know what to look for behind, before, and around, and this would satisfy our scientific curiosity. But that there is something else which it does not satisfy is plain, from our not being content with the language of succession and premonition, but trespassing into terms of causation. We compel the antecedents to profess more than antecedence. We look on the perceptible conditions as *standing for* an imperceptible Causality, hiding within them or behind them. That they only *represent* it to our mind, and are not identical with it, is evident from the way in which the word "Cause" may be shifted about amongst them, settling now on this condition, now on that, and again upon the aggregate of them all ; never absent, but always moveable. For instance, the clock strikes 12 : required the Cause. The answer may be,—the hands have reached that point ; or, there is a bell for the hammer to hit ; or, there is a hammer to hit the bell ; or, the beats of the pendulum keep the time ; or, the iron weight gives motion to the works ; or, the earth's attraction operates on pendulum and weight. The principle on which we select among the conditions that which we designate as Cause has been variously stated. It has been often said that we pitch upon the most *active* element, and single it out in disregard of the passive conditions ; but it would be a good account of a robbery to say that the safe was *not locked*. Mr. Mill thinks that we elect as cause "the proximate antecedent *event*," rather than any antecedent *state*. And it is, he says, in order to indulge this tendency, and escape the necessity of admitting permanent things, like the

earth, into the list of causes, that we have set up the "logical fictions" of "*Force*" and "*Attraction*," and stowed them away into the earth, to execute for us any jerks and pulls that we may require; for so I understand the statement, that we represent to ourselves the "*attraction*" of the earth "as exhausted by each effort, and therefore constituting at each successive instant a fresh fact, simultaneous with, or only immediately preceding, the effect." (Log., B. III., ch. v., s. 3.) This bold attempt to reclaim the province of dynamical language for the successional theory of causation seems to me to belong to the class of "heroic remedies," getting over a difficulty by adopting it, and formulating it as an advantage. Surely the earth's "*attraction*" is held to be no less "*permanent*" than the earth itself; and the spasmodic conception of it, as put forth *per saltum* wherever it has some new thing to do, is a peculiarity of Mr. Mill's imagination. To the idea of "*Force*" we resort, not to break down but to gain persistency, and fill the measure of power fully up to the durability of matter; so that, instead of being an escape into the phenomenal theory of Causality, it is precisely our method of deliverance from it.

To avoid the difficulty of singling out a cause from among the conditions, it is now usual to take them all in the aggregate, and to deny causality to anything short of the whole. This conception, in which Mr. Mill rests, is due to Hobbes, who says:—"When we seek after the Cause of any propounded effect, we must in the first place get into our mind an exact notion or idea of that which we call Cause, viz., that a cause is the sum or aggregate of all such accidents, both in the agent and the patient, as concur to the producing of the effect propounded; all which existing together, it cannot be understood but that the effect existed with them; or that it can possibly exist, if any one of them be absent." (Elem. Phil., P. I., ch. vi., s. 10.) However well this definition may work for the purposes of natural science, it does not satisfy the psychological condition of saying what *we mean* by "*Cause*," and why we habitually distinguish between *altría* and *ouvarría*, and refuse to put the members of the "*aggregate*" upon a level. Is it not thus? In asking for a Cause, we ask always an *alternative* question,—why *this* phenomenon rather than *that*,—why *some* phenomenon rather than *none*: and whatever it be that upsets the equilibrium of conditions and turns the scale of this alternative is selected by us as the Cause. As the two members are not explicitly stated, the positive phenomenon

inquired about may, in different hearers, undergo comparison with a different suppressed term ; and hence they will not all alight upon the same condition as the cause. Why does the clock strike 12 (rather than 11) ? because the hands have just reached that point : (rather than not strike) ? because of the hammer and bell : (rather than not go at all) ? because of the pendulum and weight. I believe that this principle gives an adequate account of the apparently random selection of a cause from among a host of indispensable conditions.

No phenomena, however, whether thus divided or left in the group, can pass beyond the rank of premonitory signs, or give us more than the *nidus* of Causality, inasmuch as they disclose nothing but their order ; and by causality we mean more than order.

II. The required heterogeneity, then, of Effect and Cause must be sought on the remaining side of the alternative ; the Cause, not being another phenomenon, must be *other than phenomenon*, i.e., "*Noumenon*," or entity given by the very make of the intellect itself. The axiom, "Every phenomenon has a cause," instead of meaning "Every phenomenon invariably succeeds another phenomenon," really means, "Every phenomenon springs from something other than phenomenon." That this is a true account of the law of thought appears :—

1. From its *a priori* character. This character it plainly has. For how can the causal law be inductively gathered by experience, when it is the *incunabula* of experience itself, the condition of the very scene in which we gain it ? The external world springs up for us simply in answer to our intellectual demand for a Cause of our sensations ; which, apart from that demand, could never present themselves to us as *effects*, with counterparts elsewhere in space. Why, but for this primary law, should we want any exit from our own immediate states ? Why not take them as they come, stop with them where they are, and let them weave their tissue upon the inner walls ? Moreover, as Helmholtz has observed, there is a clear indication of the logical character of the causal law in this,—that no experience is of the least avail to refute it. We often have occasion to discharge our long-established explanations of phenomena ; but however often baffled, we can never raise the question whether perhaps they are without cause. In this persistency of search, however, there are, I think, two distinct beliefs involved,—one, in the uniformity of nature ; the other, in the derivative origin of phenomena. These, I think, are not on the same footing. Of the

former, Mr. Mill's inductive explanation seems to be sufficient ; and it might perhaps be unlearned in such a world as he supposes, where all uniformity should be broken up. But the second belief would, I conceive, survive such experience ; nor is there any tendency in the apparent lawlessness of phenomena to make us think that they issue from no power. Of these two beliefs,—often confounded together,—it is the second alone which I designate as the principle of Causality and claim as an axiom *a priori*. It has nothing to do with the consecution of phenomena. Amid order or disorder, we equally regard them as the outcome of power. The other belief,—not in causation, but in premonitions,—can only be copied from the successions which it attests, and it would be absurd to suppose that if their uniformity were broken up, the mind would be driven by intuitive necessity to rely upon it when it was gone.

If the principle of Causality is an *a priori* intellectual law, the "Cause" which it obliges us to think will naturally be, not phenomenon, but noumenon.

2. From the indispensableness of *Dynamical* language for the proper expression of causal relations, and the confessed impossibility of translating the literature of science into terms of mere co-existence and succession among phenomena. The very writers who most rigorously limit us to laws of uniformity,—Comte and Mill,—are obliged, no less than others, to speak the dialect of "*Force* ;" and in a single page I find the latter recognizing "the action of forces," "the propagation of influences," "instantaneous" and "continuous forces," "centres of force" (Log., B. III., ch. v., s. 1) ; while the former, falling in with the phraseology of physical astronomy, tells how the equilibrium of the solar system is the "necessary consequence of gravitation ;" and, in his anthropological exposition, assures us that, in *force and intensity*, each lower principle has the advantage over the higher. What is this idea of "*Force*," still clinging to those who insist that "all we know is phenomena" ? Hume, admitting that we have it, treated it as a figment of customary association,—a subjective nexus of ideas turned into an illusory objective bond. The more recent representatives of his doctrine deny that such phrases are more than a shorthand compend for invariable succession, or carry any other meaning to the mind. This construction of the phrases is assisted by the fact that *Force* is inconceivable without gradations, while *Succession* is inconceivable with them : and the difference between the more and the less, the

difficult and the easy, the intense and the remiss, which intelligibly enters into dynamical facts, brings only nonsense to the relation of Prior and Posterior. Another device for recalling "Force" into the Time-field is to define it as "*Tendency to Motion*." Motion I know as a phenomenon; but what sort of phenomenon is the "*Tendency*"? If it is outwardly there at all, is it anything else than just the dynamical element which it tries to expel? The only way of construing it in harmony with the theory is to treat it as *not* outwardly there, but as intimating *our belief* that, under certain supposed conditions, there *would be* motion. This subjective interpretation puts into the language a meaning which will work; only it is not *our meaning*; for we intend to assert something, not about our hypothetical beliefs, but about the bodies outside us. And it is incumbent on one who accepts the construction to explain the objective character of the language, and why it is that, without mistake of phrase, we mean one thing and ought to mean another? On the whole, the language of *Agency*, with its measures of intensity, could never have sprung from an experience limited to successions. Laws of order are not yet causes; and if we know anything of causes, we know more than Laws.

The axiom, then, stands, that "Every phenomenon springs from something other than phenomenon;" and this *Noumenon* is *Power*.

III. It remains to find the form in which it is given to us.

1. The cognition of an external world is the most conspicuous primary application of the Causal law. In virtue of this law the understanding sets up in space before it the Cause of what is felt in the organs of Sense, and effects the transition from Sensation to Perception. In sensation itself there is nothing objective; and that we ever escape beyond our skin is due to the intellectual intuitions of Space, Time, and Causality. Physiologically, not less than psychologically, it seems, the distinction is marked between mere sense and perception. Flourens attests that the removal of a tubercle will destroy visual *sensation*; the retina becomes insensible, the iris immovable. The removal of a cerebral lobe leaves undisturbed the visual sensation, the sensibility of the retina, the contractibility of the iris; but it destroys *perception*. (*De la Vie et de l'Intelligence*; 2me Edit., p. 49.) *Objectivity*, then, is given to us by the Causal law; and is not itself a phenomenon, but the construction which the Understanding puts upon phenomena.

2. Mere objectivity, however, or external existence, would still

not appear in the form of Power, were it not introduced to us as the antithetic term (the non-Ego) to our own personality (the Ego). Two functions, fundamentally contrary, co-exist in our nature;—a sensitive receptivity, in virtue of which we are the theatre of feelings;—and a spontaneous activity, in virtue of which we expend energy and effect movements. These are contraries, as taking opposite lines of direction; to the centre and from the centre; the initiative abroad, and the initiative at home; sensation arriving without notice, and sensation earned by executive act signalled from within. In the crossing lines of these functions do we first find ourselves, and, as distinguished from ourselves, the objective world. Had we only the passive receptivity, we should not *have* sensations, but *be* sensations; we should feel, without knowing that we feel. But with the exercise of living force or will, the self-consciousness arises; balanced, in the encounter with limitation and impediment, by the recognition of something other than self. This pair of existences becomes known to us merely in relation and antithesis: in whatever capacity we apprehend the one, in the same must we oppose to it the other. Now, in putting forth our Will (using the word for the whole activity which may become voluntary), we certainly know the Self as *Force*; we get behind the phenomena which we produce, and are let into the secret of their origin in a way which we should miss if we only looked upon them. In other words, we know ourselves as *Cause* of them. In this same capacity, then, *i. e.*, dynamically, is the other than Self, known as our own opposite; and the universe falls into Causal polarity, in which the outer sphere is but the complement of our own Power. Concurrent with this dynamical antithesis is the geometrical or local antithesis by which the Ego is known as *here*, and the non-Ego as *there*, and whatever is *foreign* to ourselves is planted out as *external* to ourselves. In virtue of the inseparable union of these two antitheses, as factors of Perception, Objectivity and Causality necessarily blend in our outer world; and we cannot separate Matter from Force, or Force from Matter.

The use frequently made of the "Muscular Sense" to explain our introduction to the outer world is unsatisfactory, because the muscular feelings occur *during the delivery* of the act, and happen to us just like the passive feelings of any other sense: whilst the Causal *nisus* *issues* the act, and may perform it, though, through sensory paralysis, the muscles do not feel at all.

Mr. Mill denies our self-knowledge of Causality, on the ground that,

prior to experience, we have no foresight of what we can do. The question is not whether we can *foresee*, but whether we can *try*; and whether the putting forth of force, with or without success, is an experience *sui generis*. Frustration, from want of foresight, is indeed an important part of the lesson by which we learn the meaning of *Can* and *Cannot*.

It is, then, under the form of *Will* that we are introduced to Causality; and the axiom resolves itself into the proposition, "Every phenomenon springs from a Will." The universe, it is admitted, appears to men in simple times, to young eyes still, to poets in all times, as Living Objective Will. But it is supposed that, with the aids of Science we learn something better. And certainly we do learn to discharge the host of invisible powers once distributed through the world, and, as Law flings its arms more wide, to fuse the multiform life of nature into One. But no fresh way of access to the cognition of Power is opened to us. We have to reach it through the same representative type: and to this hour it has no meaning to us except what we take from Will. The scientific idea of Force is nothing but Will *cut down*, by dropping from it some characters which are irrelevant for the purposes of classification and prediction. The idea of Will is not arrived at by the addition of Force + Purpose; but that of Force is arrived at by the subtraction of Will — Purpose. Such artificial abstractions supply a notation highly serviceable for the prosecution of phenomenal knowledge, but they can gain no authority against the original intuition on which they work, and to which they owe their own validity. The necessity may be disguised, but can never be escaped, of interpreting the universe by man.

### NOTES.

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*



June 15<sup>th</sup> 1870

present

Mr. Martineau

Hutton

Bishop of Gloucester

Sidgwick

Proden Noel

Dean Alford

Huxley

Bagehot

Kneller

Tennison

F. Harrison

Dr. Carpenter

A. Russell



Mr. F. Harrison

[PRIVATE.]

13 July 1870

## THE RELATIVITY OF KNOWLEDGE.

❧

*Neither absolute Certainty nor objective Truth are attainable by man.  
And the condition of sound Philosophy is to relinquish the search  
after both, and to rest contented with practical certainty and  
relative truth.*

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It appears one of the best uses of a Society such as this, to bring together for comparison opinions from opposite poles of thought. In this spirit the foregoing proposition is offered for consideration, as the basis of thought of a particular school. No attempt will be made here to argue out this position, or even adequately to explain its full scope. All that will be attempted is to state, as distinctly and with as little dogmatism as possible, some of the consequences which the proposition seems to involve.

There are many persons to whom this proposition, not appearing a paradox, may appear to be a truism. One class of thinkers have restricted absolute truth to a limited set of conceptions, it may be to two or three alone. There is another class which would exclude from the field of knowledge any conceptions but observations about the sequences and simultaneity of phenomena, and of these they do not usually predicate the absolute in any form.

But the proposition with which we start seems to me to imply things beyond either of these two views. I must differ from the first class just mentioned, in refusing to admit any absolute truth in any single conception. All propositions which rest on a really scientific demonstration appropriate to the subject, I should regard as equal in the degree of their certainty. None other should I regard as certain at all. And the absolute certainties of this (the intuitional) school I should probably regard as bare hypotheses.

With regard to the second class, those who recognize certainty only in the domain of law, there seems to me a distinction to be drawn. They do not distinctly claim for these laws absolute cer-

tainty, but many amongst them appear to claim for them objective reality. To such it seems proveable that the Universe really exists externally and independently, and as such can be known to us by discovering its absolutely existing laws. What science has hitherto done is to have proved the reality of these laws, to have brought them, like telescopic stars, within the range of vision.

For my part, I hesitate to admit that man can attain to objective reality, any more than to absolute truth. As to the absolute, it is to my mind abhorrent to the constitution of the human mind to assert it of anything. It conveys an idea (like non-existent) which neither does nor can correspond with any fact; an idea which the mind cannot consistently with its own nature predicate of anything whatever.

But to my mind, laws of nature are not objective realities, any more than they are absolute truths. In looking on them as objective realities, there is indeed no such contradiction in terms; there is nothing abhorrent to the mind in the notion of a thing being objective, as there is in its being absolute. On the contrary, the mind is forced to deal with things which it conceives to be external as being truly objective. But to hold that there really are laws of nature existing apart from and prior to any conceiving human mind, such as the human mind can grasp in their real modes, appears to me only a variety of the absolute hypothesis.

All laws of nature are subjective generalizations, the threads on which the mind arranges a number of phenomena, the impressions received through the senses. The subjective generalizations may or may not correspond with (probably existing) objective facts. But whether or not they correspond, and how far, the mind by its nature can never absolutely know.

Hence I should decline to give the title of absolute truth, not only to many propositions respecting subjects on which innate knowledge is often supposed—such as the self-consciousness of existence, the soul, God, right and wrong, and the like—but also to scientific statements respecting physical laws of nature, and even as to mathematics. Mathematical demonstration is indeed to us the type of all demonstration. But mathematical laws are simply conclusions from experience more or less abstract. To the non-human mind I know not what two and two might make.

But all this, if offering to the absolute school of philosophy nothing which it can accept, may seem to be but the starting-point

of the relative schools. The point which it is intended here to insist upon, is that to search after an objective body of truth, to look for some real harmony of nature discoverable by man, is in fact only a form of the Absolute philosophy.

To the old ontological metaphysics there has succeeded a new materialist metaphysics, based on assumptions equally gratuitous. Metaphysicians at all times have insisted on some transcendental truth as the attribute of their hypotheses respecting man, matter, and God. There appears to be an order of physicists who substitute for this transcendental truth an objective reality, equally incapable of proof. I know that the Sun attracts the earth; and I know that man has benevolent instincts; and I know that I exist. And my knowledge of all these facts is a knowledge of equal degree of certainty; but no one of these propositions can be proved to be objective truth, resting on a basis that no evidence can destroy. The Sun might repel, and not attract the earth; man might conceivably have no purely benevolent instincts; and I might be the cell of an animal filling space. And no reasoning can make us *absolutely* certain of the contrary.

It is easy but hardly necessary to distinguish this from Scepticism. Philosophical scepticism is the Despair of Philosophy. It undertakes to prove that nothing can be known. Resorting, like the rest of the world, to good-sense in practical matters, theoretically Scepticism denies the existence of philosophical truth, of scientific certainty, of universal and constant laws. The view adopted in this paper does precisely the contrary. We insist as fully as any others on the discoverability of philosophical truth. Only we say that philosophical truth is relative, and that which is called absolute truth is no truth at all, but something incongruous to the mind. We base everything on scientific certainty; but then, we say, that scientific certainty means only the highest form of practical certainty; and that any certainty which pretends to be absolute, and incapable of being modified by experience, is not scientific at all, not knowledge, but an hallucination. We call all scientific knowledge the knowledge of constant laws; but then we say these must be recognized as being the conceptions of, and resting only on the relative certainty proper to, human minds. We have and can have no proof that the laws or the things exist outside of the human mind in that mode. In a word, we say that true philosophical knowledge is not concerned with the relations of things objectively to each other as they exist in space, but is con-

cerned only with the subjective relations of our impressions from what seem to us to be things. And we should say that any knowledge which professed to be something else than this, professes to be that which knowledge is not, and cannot be.

It seems to me that what is sometimes called the relative philosophy of the phenomenist involves a legitimate deduction from it, which it does not always receive from those who profess that doctrine generally. The philosophy of experience through the external senses rejects any notion of an absolute knowledge of things in themselves. It professes to know phenomena only through the senses, and truths only by processes of inference, and to know nothing of absolute being. But doing and professing this, we find it sometimes ready to invest its laws of nature with very much the same character of absolute truth or objective reality which was claimed for the intuitional truths. We hear language which presents physical laws as if they possessed, not, indeed, a Divine, but a kind of Material sanction, if not a superhuman, still a kind of Cosmical authority, not given to other truth. To some minds, for instance, the law of Gravitation seems to possess a sanctity formerly reserved to the idea of Creation. It is literally supposed to be a reality in itself; an objective Necessity, which the Universe has imposed on it; something which has a real existence or force of its own. Man, they would say, has simply found it out. It possesses, they seem to imply, a certainty and a reality, an objectivity as truth, totally different from that of the doctrines of Morality, for instance. Now all this, in my view, is simply to substitute one fictitious Cosmogony for another, the Revelation of the savans for the Revelation of the priests.

The law of Gravitation is, no doubt, a very general law, and rests on an unusual body of evidence, a vast mass of verifications, and a rare consensus of testimony. But, after all, it is only the best explanation which the human mind can give of a number of phenomena. You can never carry it beyond a theory, which appears to fit exactly a vast body of facts, and has been verified by every available form of test. But still it is only a theory, verified so far as the human mind can verify its theories. It is an hypothesis which has stood all tests, an accepted explanation. Man did not so much find it out, as he created or imagined it. Nor is it in the least more certain, nor has it more objective reality, than a number of moral truths, which most persons would hesitate to call absolute truths. It has just as much scientific demonstration to

rest on, for instance, as the law of social progress. It is no more worthy of belief. The latter law is just in the same sense a law, just as true, just as authoritative. The law of Gravitation is a law, no doubt, of very general application ; but it is not a law of any higher rank than the law that man possesses benevolent instincts.

As was before said, no attempt will be made here to reason out in full the doctrine of the relative character of all knowledge, with its various corollaries. It is too wide a subject to attempt to give the grounds for it, depending, as they do, on the entire mental attitude which has become the habit of each particular mind. It is obvious that it rests ultimately on the habit of regarding all that can properly be called knowledge as a process of inference from impressions of the senses. I am not careful to distinguish 'I feel hot' from 'I know that I feel hot.' These seem to me only varieties of expression for the same fact. And if any one, telling me that impressions of the senses are states of consciousness, insists on knowledge as I describe it being derived from consciousness, he is at liberty to use words in any sense he pleases to affix, but I must decline to follow him in what I venture to think a novel use of philosophical language. I quite agree that consciousness has to do with supplying data for our inferences. In the way of thinking habitual to me, I feel many things ; but I do not know anything outside of myself of direct consciousness, that is, by immediate intuition not drawn from any process of inference from my sensations. All knowledge, properly so called, I take to be derived by processes of reasoning from data supplied by the impressions of the senses.

This is no doubt a view which is the basis of almost all schools of thought which may be called those of the sensation, experience, or phenomenal philosophy. And the double element of doubt in all our knowledge, first, as to the correctness of the reasoning process, and secondly, as to the trustworthiness of the senses, introduces into every idea an inherently relative character ; relative as respects its answering to any objective reality, and relative as respects its logical accuracy. All knowledge in this view ultimately rests on the assumption that sensations which have frequently been found together will continue to be found together, an assumption which the mind is prone to make, but does not intuitively know to be true. All knowledge (sensations not being knowledge) is therefore only probable truth ; of a very high degree of probability, no

doubt, but always stopping short of abstract certainty. And all knowledge of the external rests on the assumption that sensations are really caused by something without us, and are not due to mere changes within. And this assumption cannot be proved either from without or from within. In a word, I take all knowledge (on grounds in which, no doubt, all the sensation schools of thought agree) to be the picture only which the mind fashions out of its impressions; and a picture which is only a highly probable adumbration of the (probably) external facts.

But if all schools of the Experience philosophy take this as their basis, it may be asked why should we insist on this here. No doubt, speaking in the abstract, this view is accepted without more words by all these schools, but it seems to me important to insist that they bear it in mind in practice. In dealing with an ontologist, almost every adherent of the phenomenal theory holds this language in its widest sense. But in the sphere of special science does he not often tend to forget that the law of gravitation, for instance, is a subjective creation,—a verified hypothesis,—and is not an objective law of nature, or an absolute certainty? Does he never in practice glide into the tone of mind that these physical laws are solid truth, of a kind more tangible to rest on than moral or social laws, which are at best but theories? Does he not imagine himself often really exorcizing the secrets of nature, instead of framing the simplest explanation which will satisfy his mind and meet the facts?

It seems to me that this conception of the relativity of all knowledge—entirely accepted as it is in abstract speculation by the whole of the Experience school—is not equally grasped in the practical work of investigation. The truly relative conception of knowledge, it seems to me, should make us habitually feel that our physical science, our laws, and discoveries in nature, are all imaginative creations—poems, in fact—which strictly correspond with the limited range of phenomena we have before us, therein differing from true poems; but which we never can know to be the real modes of any external being. We have really no ground whatever for believing that these our theories are the ultimate and real scheme on which an external world (if there be one) works, nor that the external world objectively possesses that organized order which we call science. For all that we know to the contrary, man is the creator of the order and harmony of the universe, for he has imagined it. The objective order of the real universe may be (probably is)

something infinitely more subtle and highly organized than our conceptions. The image of it we frame may be as little like the truth, as rough an emblem of it, as the picture-writing of a savage. Or again, the objective order of the universe may be something infinitely more simple, and our disparate conceptions may be due not to real differences, but to dullness of mind. Or (what is not very probable) there may be no sort of real order at all outside the mind, and our notion of order may be a dream, just as a musician standing beneath Niagara might hear some symphony in the Babel of waters; though the music would be in the musician, and not in the roar of the cataract. But whether the objective order of the universe be something infinitely more subtle than our conceptions, or infinitely more simple, or there be no order at all, and the idea of an order be a figment of our own, or even if there be no objective universe at all, it does not in the least concern us to know. In any of these cases, we are by nature incapable of getting at the objective truth; it is idle to speculate on it, and it is waste of time to investigate on the assumption that if we only work hard enough and long enough we shall come at the objective harmony at last.

What is the practical utility of the idea I am maintaining? It is that all independent efforts to wrest her secrets from Nature objectively, and ever more and more secrets, in the general hope that some day all those secrets will unfold and group themselves in their real order and harmony, as they exist in nature,—all such efforts are in vain. All efforts must start from the point of view of the human being who is inquiring, from the intellectual and, indeed, the moral wants of the man. The thing required, the only thing possible, is to bring the man's symphony of knowledge into more and more complete coincidence with his impressions. To catalogue, and re-double, and re-distinguish the impressions for ever will never lead to anything if the organizing idea be forgotten. Out of the multiplicity of impressions will come chaos, and not knowledge. If the impressions do correspond with realities, and if the external realities do contain their own order, and both may be doubted, still we cannot ever get to know that order. The dispersive, the analytic method of study can never give us *knowledge*,—for this is an organized order of ideas. If there be an organized order of things without, the mind cannot comprehend it; and if we neglect the conditions of an organized order of ideas within, we shall never get at any order at all. There are profound meanings in the

aphorism,—“The subtlety of nature far exceeds the subtlety of man’s mind.”

Illustrations of all things are dangerous in philosophy, but I am tempted to risk one as an explanation. An aphid, or an ant, on a rosebush in a garden, a housefly in a room, might conceivably be endowed with intellect equal or much superior to man’s. The aphid, ant, and fly would construct its theories, its laws of nature, its sciences, the gardener’s hose or spade would form its seasons, showers, earthquakes. Some theories fairly meeting the facts of the garden and the room the aphid and the fly might construct, but how ludicrously short of the vaster laws of the earth! Yet even there a sensible aphid or fly, wisely renouncing the search after an objective theory of its universe, might make its brief life more comfortable, by observations relatively within its powers, suggested by its wants.

To what does this tend? To sum up the argument it runs thus. The belief that our knowledge of the external world is derived from a process of inference from data supplied by the impressions of the senses, involves the relativity of knowledge in its full sense. That implies, to my mind, that our knowledge never can pass into absolute certainty, and never can grasp objective reality. From the sources of our knowledge, it always remained a system of mental pictures. And it is impossible for us to *find*; we must *create* our synthesis of nature. And as a painter to paint a picture must create his own composition, and however accurate, no photographic copying of parts can succeed in making a composition, so the thinker in his closest study of phenomena must hold on by the *subjective* synthesis which has been created by human philosophy. And this, the true method, condemns the breaking up of subjects into special studies, for myriads of photographers cannot make a picture, without a subjective conception to group the details around. It condemns all dispersive investigations, for if there be a real order of the external, this cannot be revealed as such to the human thought. It condemns all studies of inorganic matter not guided by studies of organic matter, and all studies of organic matter not guided by studies of moral nature, for nothing is true knowledge that is not relative to the human nature in its complex whole, that does not tend to perfect the synthesis within man, and this synthesis is not merely intellectual, but is moral also.

Such, as I understand it, is the logical deduction from relativity of knowledge, and the origin of knowledge in inferences from the

data presented by the senses. The continued and systematic specializing of study, the purely intellectual pursuit of truth as truth, and the seeking in the phenomena of nature for objective and real laws of nature, must ultimately rest for its justification on a conception of an objective order of things discoverable by man. But this, in my view, is only a form of ontology, an attempt to get at things as they are; and is consistent only with a belief in some form of the philosophy of the absolute. The reign of metaphysical problems must last whilst we admit the possibility of absolute certainty, and the attainment of objective truth. Hence, all such (of whom the pure specialist, be the specialism physical or moral, is the type) are radically unable to hold their ground against the ontologist, the intuitionist, and even the theologian. On the contrary, they are at bottom the real feeders of all the metaphysical schools of thought. And since they seek to know Nature as she is, they are not of the Relative Philosophy at all; but are in the truest sense Ontologists.

I am quite aware that this argument is purely addressed to those who deduce all knowledge from experience, and that it does not touch any opinion resting on an intuitional basis. What have I to say to these? I freely confess nothing, or rather nothing but one practical suggestion, which I do not venture to call a philosophical argument. It would be idle in the extreme to offer arguments about a question which rests on the whole consensus of logical method which each mind adopts for itself, on the set of a vast current of ideas. I offer the homage of respect for a system of thought which I cannot share, but the vitality, if not the potency, of which I profoundly recognize. And the only true respect for it which I can show, is to avoid the least appearance of narrow criticism, or partial skirmish. When men of high moral and intellectual power assure me that they find rest, unity, and fruit in intuitional truth, and in innate conceptions about themselves, their own natures, the external world, its origin, its construction, and maintenance, the future state of what they conceive to be some part of, or the essence of, themselves, their duty here, and a sense of right and wrong, far be it from me to dispute the value and reality of this knowledge. It would be quite contrary to my own principles to attempt to prove their conclusions mistaken. If I do not adopt them myself, it is not because I believe them to be false, but because they fail to interest me. I can get no practical good out of them; and to me they lie out of the sphere of connected thought. And now for the one

practical suggestion which is all that I have to submit to any disciple of any intuitional school. If this kind of knowledge or this kind of subject be really inborn in human nature, if these problems indeed *must* be asked by the human mind, why is not this knowledge found in all men; how can these problems be habitually absent from any one mind? Of course, I mean trained minds, men mentally and morally competent to test this question gravely. One instance of a mind, which on these questions is a real blank, one instance of a cultivated man who never did, and cannot, feel any interest in these problems, ought to be decisive on the point. One such case ought to establish that these abysmal questions of theology and metaphysics are not implanted in the fibres of human nature, but are artificial, just like the question of the mediæval schoolmen if angels could exist *in vacuo*. Now my practical objection to the intuitionist is simply this. Amongst those with whom I most share thought and life I can reckon none who can detect in themselves the sparks or germs of such knowledge, or who acknowledge any such problem as ever present to them, save as the vagary of an idle hour. To them (and some of them, I may make bold to call, well equipped both on intellectual and moral grounds for the task, men learned once in all the learning of the Egyptians), to them, I say, these problems, as to how this (apparently) external world came about, or in what kind of way other than that of this sentient life, the thinking thing may exist, are as the problem if angels can exist *in vacuo*, problems which they neither ask, nor solve, nor busy about, nor think of, except with a smile. For my own part (though I am slow to appeal to my own experience) the only whispering which ever makes itself heard within me, when these topics are suggested for notice, is that of the homely phrase,—Never mind. For my part, I should as lief think of speculating about my own soul, past, present, or future, as I should of speculating by what mode of death I may come to die, and in what grave, if it be in a grave, my body may come to lie. We shall all know in time.


There are two provisos with which I wish, before ending, to guard my meaning. It will be readily understood that in insisting on a really subjective synthesis,—that is, the regarding of systematic knowledge as a mental creation, the internal grouping of phenomena, and not as objective truth and real order of external things, I do not for an instant accept as knowledge unverified hypotheses or conceptions which have not been shown by scientific

demonstration strictly to correspond with the impressions of sense. No theory, however plausible, belongs to knowledge until it is shown to be capable of fitting all the accessible phenomena.

Secondly, it will be as readily understood that in insisting on the relativity of knowledge to the extent of denying any sufficient proof that there is any objective existence, or that there really are any objective laws, I do in the practical edifice of Philosophy accept both notions fully. We must reason and act *as if* there were an external world, and as if there were, and we could know general and constant laws. They offer a boundless and a fruitful field, capable of taxing and rewarding all our intelligence and all our energies. But everything depends on our recognizing as the substratum of our philosophy, that all knowledge is relative, relative in respect of its having no absolute certainty, and relative as respects its harmonizing with the mental and moral nature of man.

*NOTES.*

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8 Nov. 1870

HAS A FROG A SOUL; AND OF WHAT NATURE  
IS THAT SOUL, SUPPOSING IT TO EXIST?

—♦♦—

If the leg of a living frog be cut off, the skin of the foot may be pinched, cut, or touched with a red-hot wire, or with a strong acid, and it will remain motionless. But, if the other leg, which remains in connection with the body, be treated in the same way, it will be instantly retracted as far as possible from the irritating agent, while the animal will show signs of pain, and attempt to get away.

If, now, the great sciatic nerve which traverses the thigh of the attached leg be cut across, irritation of the skin of the foot will produce no effect. The sciatic nerve may be traced up to the spinal cord. Just before it reaches the end of the trunk, of which it forms a part, it divides into two portions, or roots, as they are termed. One root enters the back of the cord, the other the front, and, in the cord, both roots are connected with the grey central matter of the cord. These roots may be cut separately. If the hinder root is cut, the irritation of the skin of the foot produces no effect. If the front root is cut, the hinder being left entire, irritation of the foot gives rise to signs of great pain, but the limb does not move. If that part of the spinal cord into which both roots enter is destroyed; or if only the grey matter into which they enter be destroyed, the nerve and its roots may be entire; but irritation of the skin of the foot gives rise neither to movement, nor to any sign of pain in the rest of the body. Finally, if the cord be merely cut across, above the point at which the nerve roots enter, so that these roots remain in connection with the uninjured grey matter, irritation of the skin of the foot will produce instant retraction of the legs, just as if the animal were uninjured. But it will show no other signs that can be considered indicative of pain. The body in front of the cut will remain unaffected, however great the injury done to the foot. And, at the same time, the creature will be unable to use its legs. No amount

of irritation of the body in front of the cut will cause it to spring, the legs being completely paralyzed for all voluntary impulses.

If the legs, with their nerves and the appertaining segment of the spinal cord, are completely removed from the rest of the body, the legs are still drawn out of the way when the skin is irritated.

These experiments prove that when the skin of the foot is irritated, a certain influence is communicated by the posterior roots of the nerve to the segment of the spinal cord; and that the segment of the spinal cord is capable of transmuting this influence into another influence, which is transmitted by the anterior roots to the muscles of the frog's leg, and causes them to contract. The impulse transmitted to the cord is, as it were, reflected back from the cord, whence the metaphorical name of *reflex action* has been given to the operation.

But it is very important to remark that the analogy of mere reflection is incomplete.

The impression on the foot may be of the simplest possible character—such as the prick of a needle—but that which is reflected down the motor nerves is a complex set of impulses, all duly adjusted, in such a manner as to withdraw the foot out of the way of the irritating body. The segment of the spinal cord, therefore, does not so much reflect the impulse it receives, as give change for it. It is not like a bell, which simply resounds when it is struck, but it resembles a repeater, which, on a simple mechanical impulse, goes through the complicated operation of striking the hour. And as in the case of the repeater, the motions to which the cord gives rise are combined towards a definite end.

As all these operations are effected just as well by the segment of the cord as by the uninjured nervous system, it is clear that they are effected independently of any sensation or volition in the rest of the body. And this is confirmed by the analogy of what occurs in man. For if the middle of the spinal cord of a man be profoundly injured, his lower limbs will pass into exactly the same condition as those of the injured frog. If the skin of the foot be irritated, the leg will be drawn up with violence. Nevertheless, the man will feel nothing, nor will he be able to draw up the leg by any effort of his own will, still less to control its action when the skin of the foot is irritated. In other words, the segment of his spinal cord is void of any connection with his consciousness and his volition. And, in

the absence of evidence to the contrary, it may be safe to conclude that the segment of the frog's spinal cord is in the same position, in respect of any consciousness, or volition, which the frog may possess.

Suppose, now, that the head of another frog be cut off so as to leave the whole spinal cord in the body, in natural connection with its nerves, but to detach the whole brain, including that part in which the cord and the brain unite—the *medulla oblongata*.

If the frog be laid on its back, it will remain passively in that position. If one of the feet be touched with acid, the leg will be retracted, and then the two legs will be rubbed together to get rid of the irritating matter. Not only so, but if the irritated limb is placed in an unusual position, for example, drawn up at a right angle to the body, the other leg will be gradually raised up into a corresponding position, until it is so placed that it can rub away the irritating matter.

Here is evidence that the spinal cord is not only capable of giving rise to very complex combined movements, in answer to a perfectly simple irritation; but that it has a power of adjustment which enables it to meet an entirely new case—to solve a problem which could not have been presented to it under the ordinary conditions of the life of the frog.

Suppose, further, that the head has been cut off, in such a manner, that the section passes in front of the *medulla oblongata*, leaving this in connection with the cord, but separating it from the rest of the brain. Then the frog's body will not lie on its back, but if so placed will exert all those complicated and conadapted movements which are needed to enable it to turn over.

In all these experiments the separated head will show signs of retaining all its nervous energies. And human pathology tells us that a man's consciousness and volition may be completely retained until the damage to the spinal cord passes so high up as to injure the *medulla oblongata*, when they are lost, secondarily, through the effects of such injury on the medulla. We are therefore justified, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, in concluding that anything in the shape of consciousness and volition which the frog may possess remains intact in the separated brain, under the conditions of each of these experiments.

Suppose, however, the cutting away of the nervous centres begins at the other end. Let the two hemispheres of the cerebrum be cut

away. The condition of the frog becomes very singular. It preserves almost all the faculties of an uninjured frog. It can see, swallow, jump, and swim; but it exerts none of these powers spontaneously. It will not even feed, but has to be fed with meat put into its throat. It is like an animal in a trance, or asleep. Nevertheless it can adjust all its movements so as to balance its body under the most difficult circumstances.<sup>1</sup> In short, it adapts means to ends with wonderful accuracy and precision. But if more of the brain is removed, and the structures known as the optic lobes are cut away, this power is lost; and if the cerebellum is removed, the frog cannot even combine its actions so as to jump.

Facts of the general character of those detailed have long been known, and they have led to two opposite modes of conceiving of the nature of the animal frame.

By the one set of thinkers all the rationally condapted movements of the body have been referred to the operation of a soul, which they conceive to work the machinery of the body as a musician may play upon an organ or other instrument.

By the other set, it has been argued that no line can be drawn between those bodily operations of animals which are purely and obviously mechanical, and those which are purposive and apparently rational, and, therefore, that the latter may be merely the result of a mechanism too refined for us to understand at present.

It is to Descartes that we owe the most complete statement that has ever been given of the latter view. And those who have read the controversial works to which his philosophy gave rise, are aware that no doctrine of his was more frequently assailed than that of the automatism of brutes.

Ever since Descartes' time, Physiologists have been divided into two camps, the one taking the automatic, and the other the animist side.

The father of the animists among modern physiologists was Whytt, who, in opposition to the views of Haller, maintained that a soul exists in all parts of the living body.

"I think," says Whytt, "it is not only probable, but demonstrated, that the soul does not immediately leave the body upon a total

<sup>1</sup> See the curious essay by Goltz, "*Beiträge zu Lehre von den Functionen der Nervencentren des Frosches*," (1869), and especially the chapter "*Ueber den Sitz der Seele des Frosches*."

stoppage of the motion of the heart, and consequently, of the circulation of the blood, *i.e.*, upon what we usually call Death, but continues for some time present with it and ready to actuate it. . . . Upon the whole, then, it appears certain that after death, or an entire stop of all motion in the bodies of animals, the soul still remains present with them, and can be again brought to exert its influence by various kinds of *stimuli* applied to their different parts. May not the same principle continue present with the several muscles after they are separated from the body, and be the cause of their motions when irritated? ”<sup>2</sup>

And Whytt then goes on to refer to some very obvious objections as follows:—

“As the schoolmen supposed the Deity to exist in every *ubi*, but not in any place, so they imagined the soul of man not to occupy space, but to exist in an indivisible point. Yet whoever considers the structure and appearances of the animal frame, will soon be convinced that the soul is not confined to an indivisible point, but must be present at one and the same time, if not in all parts of the body, when the nerves are formed, yet, at least, at their origin, *i.e.*, it must be at least diffused along a great part of the brain and spinal marrow. Nay, while in man the brain is the principal seat of the soul, where it most eminently displays its powers, it seems to exist or act so equally through the whole bodies of insects, that its power or influence scarce appears more discernible in one part than another ; and hence it is that, in such creatures, the several parts of the body live longer after being separated from each other than they do in man and other animals more nearly resembling him, where the soul seems chiefly to act in the different parts by means of their connection with the brain and spinal marrow ; or at least when the cutting off such connection soon renders the parts unfit to be any more acted upon by it.

It is not, therefore, altogether without reason, that some of the greatest philosophers of the last and present age supposed the soul to be extended.<sup>3</sup>

But if the soul, without extension, be present at one and the same time at different places in the brain, and if in many animals it can

<sup>2</sup> Whytt, “Collected Works,” p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> *Vide* Gassendi, Dr. Henry More, Sir Isaac Newton, Dr. Samuel Clark. Also, Gassendi’s argument, “Obj. contra mod. Descartes,” p. 32-33.

act along the spinal marrow for a great while after the head is cut off, why may not it also actuate parts separated from the body without being extended? On the other hand, if we allow the soul to occupy space, I do not see why it may not continue to be present with the parts of the body after they are separated, as when they were united. And with respect to the divisibility of the soul, which is generally thought to follow from the supposition of its being extended, why may it not be a substance so perfectly and essentially one, as that a division or separation of its parts would necessarily infer a distinction of its essence? Further, if the soul can be present in all, or in any considerable part of the body, at one and the same time, without being discernible, its sphere of existence being so much increased as to act upon the parts when separated will not infer its divisibility. As the Deity is everywhere present, and, in the infinitely distant part of space, actuates at the same time a vast variety of different systems without any inconsistency with his unity or indivisibility; so may not the souls of animals be present everywhere in their bodies, actuating and enlivening at the same time all their different members? Nay, further, when the fibres and threads connecting some of these parts are divided, may not the soul still act in the separated parts, and yet be only one mind?"

A hundred years later, a vehement advocate of Whytt's views, Professor Pflüger, deals very boldly with the question which Whytt treats thus tenderly. He undertakes to show "that a kitten, the spinal cord of which is divided, has two souls. For the anterior moiety manifests spontaneous acts of volition,—cries, runs, bites, and scratches; the posterior feels, wills, and moves just as voluntarily. Although both parts exercise their nervous functions in a perfectly independent manner, the rational principles (*Vernunft principen*) are specially present in each, because these are nothing else than functions of the grey matter (*Mark function*), and the grey matter in each continues to exert its inherent powers."

I must confess that to my mind Pflüger's view is the only logical one, if the hypothesis that the frog has a soul be adopted. A frog's head is cut off so that the section passes between the medulla oblongata and the rest of the brain. The actions performed by the head and by the trunk will be equally purposive, and equally show that there is a something in each half which possesses the

power of adapting means to ends in a manner which is as deserving of the epithet 'rational' in the one case as in the other. The separated head and trunk may be sent a hundred miles in opposite directions, and at the end of the journey each will be as purposive in its actions as before. In this case, two alternatives present themselves,—either the soul exists in both cord and brain, or it exists in only one of them.

If we admit the latter hypothesis, it follows that purposive operations may be effected by matter without the help of a soul,—which is a practical acceptance of the automatic doctrine. On the other hand, if we admit the former, then either the soul is indivisible, or it is divisible. If indivisible, it must either be a centre of force, capable of operating on points two hundred miles apart, or it must extend over two hundred miles.

Whichever of these two alternatives be adopted I am unable to see in what respect the soul of the frog differs from matter.

If, lastly, the soul of the frog is divisible, it must needs have extension, and so falls again into the category of matter.

I have not attempted to discuss the question whether the soul of the frog possesses consciousness, because this appears to me to be a totally insoluble problem.

Every one will discover, if he considers his own actions, that he is constantly performing operations directed towards special ends of which he has no consciousness whatever. And therefore it must be granted that it is possible that all the far less complex actions of the frog *may* be equally devoid of consciousness. Whether they are so or not, is a point on which no positive evidence is attainable, or even conceivable.

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#### NOTES.

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13 Dec 1870

## ON THE EMOTION OF CONVICTION.

WHAT we commonly term Belief includes, I apprehend, both an Intellectual and an Emotional element; the first we more properly call 'assent,' and the second 'conviction.' The laws of the Intellectual element in belief are 'the laws of Evidence,' and have been elaborately discussed; but those of the Emotional part have hardly been discussed at all, indeed, its existence has been scarcely perceived.

In the mind of a rigorously trained inquirer, the process of believing is, I apprehend, this:—First comes the investigation, a set of facts are sifted, and a set of arguments weighed; then the intellect perceives the result of those arguments, and, as we say, assents to it. Then an emotion more or less strong sets in, which completes the whole. In calm and quiet minds the intellectual part of this process is so much the strongest that they are hardly conscious of anything else; and as these quiet, careful people have written out treatises, we do not find it explained in them how important the emotional part is.

But take the case of the Caliph Omar. He burnt the Alexandrine Library, saying, "All books which contain what is not in the Koran are dangerous; all those which contain what is in the Koran are useless." Probably no one ever had an intenser belief in anything than Omar had in this. Yet it is impossible to imagine it preceded by an argument. His belief in Mahomet, in the Koran, and the sufficiency of the Koran came to him probably in spontaneous rushes of emotion; there may have been little vestiges of argument floating here and there, but they did not justify the strength of the emotion, still less did they create it, and they hardly even excused it.

There is so commonly some considerable argument for our modern beliefs, that it is difficult now-a-days to isolate the emotional element, and therefore on the principle that in Metaphysics 'egotism is the truest modesty,' I may give myself as an example of utterly

irrational conviction. Some years ago I stood for a borough in the West of England, and after a keen contest was defeated by seven. Almost directly afterwards there was accidentally another election, and as I would not stand, another candidate of my own side was elected, and I of course ceased to have any hold upon the place, or chance of being elected there. But for years I had the deepest conviction that I should be Member for 'Bridgwater'; and no amount of reasoning would get it out of my head. The borough is now disfranchised; but even still, if I allow my mind to dwell on the contest,—if I think of the hours I was ahead in the morning, and the rush of votes at two o'clock by which I was defeated,—and even more, if I call up the image of the nomination-day, with all the people's hands outstretched, and all their excited faces looking the more different on account of their identity in posture, the old feeling almost comes back upon me, and for a moment I believe that I shall be Member for Bridgwater.

I should not mention such nonsense, except on an occasion when I may serve as an intellectual "specimen," but I know I wish that I could feel the same hearty, vivid faith in many conclusions of which my understanding says it is satisfied that I do see their absurdity. And if it should be replied that such folly could be no real belief, for it could not influence any man's action, I am afraid I must say that it did influence my actions. For a long time the ineradicable fatalistic feeling, that I should sometime have this constituency, of which I had no chance, hung about my mind, and diminished my interest in other constituencies, where my chances of election would have been rational, at any rate.

This case probably exhibits the maximum of conviction with the maximum of argument, but there are many approximations to it. Persons of untrained minds cannot long live without some belief in any topic which comes much before them. It has been said that if you can only get a middle-class Englishman to think whether there are 'snails in Sirius,' he will soon have an opinion on it. It will be difficult to make him think, but if he does think, he cannot rest in a negative, he will come to some decision. And on any ordinary topic, of course, it is so. A grocer has a full creed as to foreign policy, a young lady a complete theory of the sacraments, as to which neither has any doubt whatever. But in talking to such persons, I cannot but remember my Bridgwater experience, and

ask whether causes like those which begat my folly may not be at the bottom of their 'invincible knowledge.'

Most persons who observe their own thoughts must have been conscious of the exactly opposite state. There are cases where our intellect has gone through the arguments, and we give a clear assent to the conclusions. But our minds seem dry and unsatisfied. In that case we have the intellectual part of Belief, but want the emotional part.

That belief is not a purely intellectual matter is evident from dreams, where we are always believing, but scarcely ever arguing; and from certain forms of insanity, where fixed delusions seize upon the mind and generate a firmer belief than any sane person is capable of. These are, of course, "unorthodox" states of mind; but a good psychology must explain them, nevertheless, and perhaps it would have progressed faster if it had been more ready to compare them with the waking states of sane people.

Probably, when the subject is thoroughly examined, 'conviction' will be proved to be one of the intensest of human emotions, and one most closely connected with the bodily state. In cases like the Caliph Omar it governs all other desires, absorbs the whole nature, and rules the whole life. And in such cases it is accompanied or preceded by the sensation that Scott makes his seer describe as the prelude to a prophecy:—

"At length the fatal answer came,  
In characters of living flame,—  
Not spoke in word, nor blazed in smoke,  
But borne and branded on my soul."

A hot flash seems to burn across the brain. Men in these intense states of mind have altered all history, changed for better or worse the creeds of myriads, and desolated or redeemed provinces and ages. Nor is this intensity a sign of truth, for it is precisely strongest in those points in which men differ most from each other. John Knox felt it in his anti-Catholicism; Ignatius Loyola in his anti-Protestantism; and both, I suppose, felt it as much as it is possible to feel it.

Once acutely felt, I believe it is indelible, at least it does something to the mind which it is hard for anything else to undo. It has been often said that a man who has once really loved a woman never can be without feeling towards that woman again. He may go on loving her, or he may change and hate her. In the same way, I think, experience proves that no one who has had real passionate convic-

tion of a creed, the sort of emotion that burns hot upon the brain, can ever be indifferent to that creed again. He may continue to believe it, and to love it; or he may change to the opposite, vehemently argue against it, and persecute it. But he cannot forget it. Years afterwards, perhaps, when life changes, when external interests cease to excite, when the apathy to surroundings which belongs to the old begins, all at once, and to the wonder of later friends, who cannot imagine what is come to him, the grey-headed man returns to the creed of his youth.

The explanation of these facts in metaphysical books is very imperfect. Indeed, I only know one school which professes to explain the emotion, as distinguished from the intellectual element in belief. Mr. Mill (after Mr. Bain) speaks very instructively of the 'animal nature of belief,' but when he comes to trace its cause, his analysis seems, to me at least, utterly unsatisfactory. He says that 'the state of belief is identical with the activity or active disposition of the system at the moment with reference to the thing believed.' But in many cases there is firm belief where there is no possibility of action or tendency to it. A girl in a country parsonage will be sure 'that Paris never can be taken,' or that 'Bismarck is a wretch,' without being able to act on these ideas or wanting to act on them. Many beliefs, in Coleridge's happy phrase, slumber in the 'dormitory of the mind;' they are present to the consciousness, but they incite to no action. And perhaps Coleridge is an example of misformed mind in which not only may 'Faith' not produce 'works,' but in which it had a tendency to prevent works. Strong convictions gave him a kind of cramp in the will, and he could not act on them. And in very many persons much indulged conviction exhausts the mind with the attached ideas; teases it, and so, when the time of action comes makes it apt to turn to different, perhaps opposite, ideas, and to act on them in preference.

As far as I can perceive, the power of an idea to cause conviction independently of any intellectual process depends on three properties.

1st. *Clearness.* The more unmistakable an idea is to a particular mind, the more is that mind predisposed to believe it. In common life we may constantly see this. If you once make a thing quite clear to a person, the chances are that you will almost have persuaded him of it. Half the world only understand what they believe, and always believe what they understand.

2nd. *Intensity.* This is the main cause why the ideas that

flash on the minds of seers, as in Scott's description, are believed; they come mostly when the nerves are exhausted by fasting, watching, and longing; they have a peculiar brilliancy, and therefore they are believed. To this cause I trace too my fixed folly as to Bridgewater. The idea of being member for the town had been so intensely brought home to me by the excitement of a contest, that I could not eradicate it, and that as soon as I recalled any circumstances of the contest it always came back in all its vividness.

3rd. *Constancy*. As a rule, almost everyone does accept the creed of the place in which he lives, and everyone without exception has a tendency to do so. There are, it is true, some minds which a mathematician might describe as minds of 'contrary flexure,' whose particular bent it is to contradict what those around them say. And the reason is that in their minds the opposite aspect of every subject is always vividly presented. But even such minds usually accept the *axioms* of their district, the tenets which everybody always believes. They only object to the variable elements; to the inferences and deductions drawn by some, but not by all.

4thly, On the *Interestingness* of the idea, by which I mean the power of the idea to gratify some wish or want of the mind. The most obvious is curiosity about something which is important to me. Rumours that gratify this excite a sort of half-conviction without the least evidence, and with a very little evidence a full, eager, not to say a bigoted one. If a person go into a mixed company, and say authoritatively 'that the Cabinet is nearly divided on the Russian question, and that it was only decided by one vote to send Lord Granville's despatch,' most of the company will attach some weight more or less to the story without asking how the secret was known. And if the narrator casually add that he has just seen a subordinate member of the Government, most of the hearers will go away and repeat the anecdote with grave attention, though it does not in the least appear that the lesser functionary told the anecdote about the Cabinet, or that he knew what passed at it.

And the interest is greater when the news falls in with the bent of the hearer. A sanguine man will believe with scarcely any evidence that good luck is coming, and a dismal man that bad luck. As far as I can make out, the professional 'Bulls' and 'Bears' of the City *do* believe a great deal of what they say, though, of course,

there are exceptions, and though neither the most sanguine 'bull' nor the most dismal 'bear' can believe *all* he says.

Of course, I need not say that this 'quality' peculiarly attaches to the greatest problems of human life. The firmest convictions of the most inconsistent answers to the everlasting questions 'whence?' and 'whither?' have been generated by this 'interestingness' without evidence on which one would invest a penny.

In one case, these causes of irrational conviction seem contradictory. Clearness, as we have seen, is one of them; but obscurity, when obscure things are interesting, is a cause too. But there is no real difficulty here. Human nature at different times exhibits contrasted impulses. There is a passion for sensualism, that is, to eat and drink; and a passion for asceticism, that is, not to eat and drink; so it is quite likely that the clearness of an idea may sometimes cause a movement of conviction, and that the obscurity of another idea may at other times cause one too.

These laws, however, are complex,—can they be reduced to any simpler law of human nature? I confess I think that they can, but at the same time I do not presume to speak with the same confidence about it that I have upon other points. Hitherto I have been dealing with the common facts of the adult human mind, as we may see it in others and feel it in ourselves. But I am now going to deal with the 'prehistoric' period of the mind in early childhood, as to which there is necessarily much obscurity.

My theory is, that in the first instance a child believes everything. Some of its states of consciousness are perceptive or presentative,—that is, they tell it of some heat or cold, some resistance or non-resistance then and there present. Other states of consciousness are representative,—that is, they say that certain sensations could be felt, or certain facts perceived, in time past or in time to come, or at some place, no matter at what time, then and there out of the reach of perception and sensation. In mature life, too, we have these presentative and representative states in every sort of mixture, but we make a distinction between them. Without remark and without doubt, we believe the 'evidence of our senses,' that is, the facts of present sensation and perception; but we do not believe at once and instantaneously the representative states as to what is non-present, whether in time or space. But I apprehend that this is an acquired distinction, and that in early childhood every state of con-

sciousness is believed, whether it be presentative or representative.

Certainly at the beginning of the 'historic' period we catch the mind at a period of extreme credulity. When memory begins, and when speech and signs suffice to make a child intelligible, belief is almost omnipresent, and doubt almost never to be found. Childlike credulity is a phrase of the highest antiquity, and of the greatest present aptness.

So striking, indeed, on certain points, is this impulse to believe, that philosophers have invented various theories to explain in detail some of its marked instances. Thus it has been said that children have an intuitive disposition to believe in 'testimony,' that is, in the correctness of statements orally made to them. And that they do so is certain. Every child believes what the footman tells it, what its nurse tells it, and what its mother tells it, and probably every one's memory will carry him back to the horrid mass of miscellaneous confusion which he acquired by believing all he heard. But though it is certain that a child believes all assertions made to it, it is not certain that the child so believes in consequence of a special intuitive predisposition restricted to such assertions. It may be that this indiscriminate belief in all sayings is but a relic of an omnivorous acquiescence in all states of consciousness, which is only just extinct when childhood is plain enough to be understood, or old enough to be remembered.

Again, it has been said much more plausibly that we want an intuitive tendency to account for our belief in memory. But I question whether it can be shown that a little child *does* believe in its memories more confidently than in its imaginations. A child of my acquaintance corrected its mother, who said that 'they should never see' two of its dead brothers again, and maintained, 'Oh yes, mamma, we shall; we shall see them in heaven, and they will be so glad to see us.' And then the child cried with disappointment because its mother, though a most religious lady, did not seem exactly to feel that seeing her children in that manner was not as good as seeing them on earth. Now I doubt if that child did not believe this expectation quite as confidently as it believed any past fact or as it could believe anything at all, and though the conclusion may be true, plainly the child believed not from the efficacy of the external evidence, but from a strong rush of inward confidence.

Why, then, should we want a special intuition to make children believe fresh facts when, in truth, they go farther and believe with no kind of difficulty future facts as well as past ?

If on so abstruse a matter I might be allowed a graphic illustration, I should define doubt as 'a hesitation produced by collision.' A child possessed with the notion that all its fancies are true, finds that acting on one of them brings its head against the table. This gives it pain, and makes it hesitate as to the expediency of doing it again. Early childhood is an incessant education in scepticism, and early youth is so too. All boys are always knocking their heads against the physical world, and all young men are constantly knocking their heads against the social world. And both of them from the same cause, that they are subject to an eruption of emotion which engenders a strong belief, but which is as likely to cause a belief in falsehood as in truth. Gradually under the tuition of a painful experience we come to learn that our strongest convictions may be quite false, that many of our most cherished ones are and have been false ; and this causes us to seek a 'criterion' which beliefs are to be trusted and which are not ; and so we are beaten back to the laws of evidence for our guide, though, as Bishop Butler said, in a similar case, we object to be bound by anything so 'poor.'

That it is really this contention with the world which destroys conviction and which causes doubt is shown by examining the cases where the mind is secluded from the world. In 'dreams,' where we are out of collision with fact, we accept everything as it comes, believe everything and doubt nothing. And in violent cases of mania, where the mind is shut up within itself, and cannot, from impotence, perceive what is without, it is as sure of the most chance fancy, as in health it would be of the best-proved truths.

And upon this theory we perceive why the four tendencies to irrational conviction which I have set down survive, and remain in our adult hesitating state as vestiges of our primitive all-believing state. They are all from various causes 'adhesive' states,—states which it is very difficult to get rid of, and which, in consequence, have retained their power of creating belief in the mind, when other states which once possessed it too, have quite lost it. Clear ideas are certainly more difficult to get rid of than obscure ones. Indeed, some obscure ones we cannot recover, if we once lose them. Everybody, perhaps, has felt all manner of doubts and difficulties in

mastering a mathematical problem; at the time, the difficulties seemed as real as the problem, but a day or two after he has mastered it, he will be wholly unable to imagine or remember where the difficulties were. The demonstration will be perfectly clear to him, and he will be unable to comprehend how any one should fail to perceive it. For life he will recall the clear ideas, but the obscure ones he will never recall, though for some hours, perhaps, they were painful, confused, and oppressive obstructions. *Intense* ideas are, as everyone will admit, recalled more easily than slight and weak ideas. *Constantly* impressed ideas are brought back by the world around us, and if they are so often, get so tied to our other ideas that we can hardly wrench them away. *Interesting* ideas stick in the mind by the associations which give them interest. All the minor laws of conviction resolve themselves into this great one: 'That at first we believe all which occurs to us,—that afterwards we have a tendency to believe that which we cannot help often occurring to us, and that this tendency is stronger or weaker in some sort of proportion to our inability to prevent their recurrence.' When the inability to prevent the recurrence of the idea is very great, so that the reason be powerless on the mind, the consequent 'conviction' is an eager, irritable, and ungovernable passion.

If this analysis be true, it suggests some lessons which are not now accepted.

1. They prove that we should be very careful how we let ourselves believe that which may turn out to be error. Milton says that 'error is but opinion,' meaning true opinion, 'in the making.' But when the conviction of any error is a strong passion, it leaves, like all other passions, a permanent mark on the mind. We can never be as if we had never felt it. 'Once a heretic, always a heretic,' is thus far true, that a mind once given over to a passionate conviction is never as fit as it would otherwise have been to receive the truth on the same subject. Years after the passion may return upon him, and inevitably small recurrences of it will irritate his intelligence and disturb its calm. We cannot at once expel a familiar idea, and so long as the idea remains its effect will remain too.

2. That we must always keep an account in our minds of the degree of evidence on which we hold our convictions, and be most careful that we do not permanently permit ourselves to feel a stronger conviction than the evidence justifies. If we do, since

evidence is the only criterion of truth, we may easily get a taint of error that may be hard to clear away. This may seem obvious, yet if I do not mistake, Father Newman's "Grammar of Assent" is little else than a systematic treatise designed to deny and confute it.

3. That if we do, as in life we must sometimes, indulge a 'provisional enthusiasm,' as it may be called, for an idea,—for example, if an actor in the excitement of speaking does not keep his phrases to probability, and if in the hurry of emotion he quite believes all he says, his plain duty is on other occasions to watch himself carefully, and to be sure that he does not as a permanent creed believe what in a peculiar and temporary state he was led to say he felt and to feel.

Similarly, we are all in our various departments of life in the habit of assuming various probabilities as if they were certainties. In Lombard Street the dealers assume that 'Messrs. Baring's acceptance at three months' date is sure to be paid,' and that 'Peel's Act will always be suspended at a panic.' And the familiarity of such ideas makes it nearly impossible for any one who spends his day in Lombard Street to doubt of them. But, nevertheless, a person who takes care of his mind will keep up the perception that they are not certainties.

Lastly, we should utilize this intense emotion of conviction as far as we can. Dry minds, which give an intellectual 'assent' to conclusions which feel no strong glow of faith in them, often do not know what their opinions are. They have every day to go over the arguments again, or to refer to a note-book to know what they believe. But intense convictions make a memory for themselves, and if they can be kept to the truths of which there is good evidence, they give a readiness of intellect, a confidence in action, a consistency in character, which are to be not had without them. For a time, indeed, they give these benefits when the propositions believed are false, but then they spoil the mind for seeing the truth, and they are very dangerous, because the believer may discover his error, and a perplexity of intellect, a hesitation in action, and an inconsistency in character are the sure consequences of an entire collapse in pervading and passionate convictions.

**NOTES.**

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*



11 Jan. 1871

## WHAT IS THE RELATION OF THE WILL TO THOUGHT?

IN the Session before last we came out from the discussion of the question, "Has a frog a soul?" with one point conceded, that is to say, that men differ from frogs, in that they have a will and a moral consciousness.

But it may, perhaps, be said that this excellence of men over frogs only implies that the brain of man is more perfect or more highly developed than the brain of frogs, and that this consciousness may be, and so far as we can prove, is no more than a function of the brain, or a result of the sum-total of the brain and its functions; or in other words, that it does not prove or even imply the existence of a soul distinct from the organism of man, or again, that it proves only that matter can think and be conscious of itself.

1. Now, my purpose is to give reasons for believing that even if matter can think, there is still another faculty, and more than this, another agent, distinct from the thinking brain. With a view to this, we must ascertain what is thought, and what is the faculty we call the will: and then what the relation between them.

By thought I understand an intellectual act and the permanent intellectual state consequent upon it, whereby any given object is apprehended, and consequently so far known.

By will I understand a faculty whereby we are able to choose and to act either in accordance with or in opposition to our sensitive or our rational appetite.

But both thought and will are actions or faculties of an agent, that is, of a thinker and a willer.

When we talk of sensations and perceptions, we always tacitly understand and presuppose a sentient and a percipient, a seer and a

hearer of whom sense, perception, thought, and will are actions and attributes.

We call this subject "self" or "I;" and here we have reached the last analysis of our internal consciousness. We may try to go further; but in doing so we shall only destroy our perception of the ultimate certainties of all moral knowledge, just as we may gaze upon the noon-day sun until we go blind, destroying the eye against its light.

That we are conscious of thought and will is a fact of our internal experience. It is also a fact in the universal experience of all men; this is an immediate and intuitive truth of absolute certainty.

Dr. Carpenter, in an able discussion, "On the Unconscious Activity of the Brain," or "Unconscious Cerebration," lays down as an axiomatic truth "that the common-sense decision of mankind, in regard to the existence of the external world, is practically worth more than all the arguments of all the logicians who have discussed the basis of our belief in it." The reason of this is evident. The logical arguments are discursive, analytical, and subsequent upon the decision of common-sense, by which is formed the premiss 'that the external world exists;' anterior to any reflex action of discourse or argument upon it.

What is true in this case of a judgment formed upon the report of sense, by the interpretation of the intellect, is still more evidently true of the decisions of our consciousness on such interior facts as thought and will, and of the existence of an internal world which is our living personality, or of the agent who thinks and wills. I may therefore lay down as another axiom, side by side with that of Dr. Carpenter, "that the decision of mankind derived from consciousness of the existence of our living self or personality, whereby we think, will, or act, is practically worth more than all the arguments of all the logicians who have discussed the basis of our belief in it."

2. We may begin, then, with the fact that all men, except abnormal individuals, who as exceptions prove the law of their species, are conscious of the power of thinking, willing, and acting.

But the word "conscious" declares that we know something "with ourselves." It is a reflex action of the thinking agent upon himself, whereby he knows that he is thinking, or of the willing agent, that he is exerting the power of will.

Now, the consciousness of mankind of the distinction between this

living agent and the material organization through which, *in hoc stadio mortalitatis*, he energizes, is so articulate and emphatic that the soul and the body, which, though distinct, are one, have been, and popularly are still regarded, as two separate and independent entities.

3. It will perhaps be answered that this consciousness does not prove that itself is anything more than the sum of the brain, and of its functions, or in other words, that it is the brain that thinks, and the brain that is conscious.

We have, then, to show that this consciousness is the function not of the brain without a personal self or agent, but of a personal self or agent who in this state of mortality energizes through the brain as his instrument, but is independent of and anterior to its operations.

It has been shown by Dr. Carpenter that there is a large array of phenomena which prove that the brain in a state of unconsciousness can remember, create, and understand. It can also do two things at once, the one consciously, the other unconsciously, that is, while consciously engaged on one thing it can direct the body in walking, the hands in playing on musical instruments, or in manual works, and the like. It is not only that the mind "*velox sine corpore currit*," but the brain seems to govern the hands, feet, and whole body, while the mind is absent. These phenomena certainly suffice to show that there is a separation between our conscious selves and the habitual action of the brain; and that to many of our thoughts the will is not proximately related at all, so that between our non-volitional thoughts, as in dreams, and our conscious selves, there is not only a mental distinction, but a difference of nature, and therefore a separation as between two distinct things. The phenomena of the unconscious brain are not subjected to time, or space, or the actuality of our lot, or to the government of the moral conscience. There are no proper or normal acts either of the reason or of the will in the unconscious brain. The unconscious brain has an activity, but it is not a moral agent. All this abundantly proves that there is somewhat beyond the brain of which these phenomena render no adequate account. They presuppose an Agent, without revealing him; they show that there is a Thinker and a Willer on whom they depend, even when he is unconscious.

4. Let us now dismiss this unconscious cerebration, which is not our present subject, and take another field of observation, far wider and more explicit in its evidence, that is, the Conscious Activity of the Brain.

In our unconscious state the will has no proximate relation to thought ; in our conscious state, though there is an under-current both of thought and action to which the will does not direct itself, yet that which constitutes our normal consciousness or true self, is that which we do with knowledge, consent, and advertence. Our unconscious acts are acts of man, that is, acts of which only man is capable ; but only our conscious acts are human acts, that is, done under the normal conditions of rational action, or under the conditions of a moral and responsible agent.

We may make this clearer by a distinction of the Schools. According to the scholastic philosophy, the Divine Mind is a pure act (*Actus purus*), that is, its whole perfection is full and actual ; there is in it nothing latent, potential, or undeveloped. The powers of the human mind, on the contrary, are at first undeveloped, potential, and latent. It is by acts of the will that it is unfolded from the potential to the actual state. I do not stay to speak of the action of other intellects or other wills in calling out what is only potential in our minds, because the co-operation of our own will and its joint action on our own thought is essential to all processes of learning. It is certain, however, that the most valuable part or period of man's education is what is called his self-education, or what he does for himself upon himself ; and precisely for the same reason, because the will is exerted with greater energy upon the eliciting and cultivating of the power of thought.

1. This, then, is the first relation of the Will to the thought or the brain. It educates it. Now, the action of the will upon our intellectual habits and acts is threefold.

First, every act of *intention* is an act of the will. The will determines to what the intellect shall be directed as an archer aims at a mark. In the midst of the multiplicity of thoughts which are perpetually streaming through the mind, the selection of one as a fixed object of investigation or contemplation is an act of the will analogous to the distinction between seeing and looking. The waking eye is perpetually full of a multitude of objects, while it looks at one alone.

Secondly, the act of *attention* is a continuous act of the will, sustaining the first intention, and applying the mind fixedly to the object.

Lastly, the *intentness* or intensity of intellectual acts is eminently

an energy of the will. The languor of some minds and the ardour of others in study or discovery, and the languor or ardour of the same mind at different times in life, or even at different times of the same day, comes from a different degree of volition which governs the application of the mind.

The intellect, then, or the thinking brain, if any be pleased so to call it, is distinctly directed, sustained, and urged onward by the will. The acts and habits of intention, attention, and intensity are imposed upon the brain by a faculty distinct from it in kind and in energy. The Willer, whatever he be, is distinct from the thinking brain.

A confirmation of this may be found in the fact already touched in passing, namely, that during the earlier period of our lives the potentiality of our intellectual and moral nature is elicited and educed, and thereby brought into act by the will of others. Parents and teachers supply to us the force of will on which intention and attention depend. Our "*plagosus Orbilius*" did for our brain in boyhood what our developed will, when we could wield the ferule, did for it in after life.

I affirm, then, that so far from our brain being commensurate with ourselves, or ourselves only the sum of our brains, we are the educator of our brain, and all our life long our will is calling its potentiality (of which neither any man, nor the whole race of man, has yet ascertained the limit) into act. Our mind, or our brain-potentiality, can have but three relations to Truth. It may be wholly undeveloped, which is a state of ignorance; or only partially developed, which is a state of doubt, or of knowledge mixed with ignorance; or lastly, of full conformity with any given truth, which is the state of knowledge, or of subjective Truth, defined by the Schoolmen as "*adæquatio rei et intellectus*."

Through the whole process whereby the potentiality of the mind or brain is being unfolded into actual conformity with truth, the will impels, directs, and sustains it; so that it may be affirmed that the brain derives its activity originally from the will; and that the will is the educator of the brain. This, then, is one relation of the Will to thought.

2. A second relation is to be found in the fact that the will uses the brain as an instrument, as it uses the eye; both are organs of the will. I am not now discussing the acts of the intellect or reason

on certain primary and intuitive truths, which precede the acts of the will. The axiom "*nihil volitum quin sit præcognitum*" is self-evident. The will never energizes in vain, or in the dark. It acts always "*sub specie veri*" or "*sub specie boni*." Again, "*ratio præluceat voluntati*." Reason carries a light before the will. We must think before we will. If men could be said to worship an unknown God, it was because they knew Him *in confuso* ; but we cannot will what is unthinkable, or unthought. This, however, lies beside our present point.

When the mind or brain is developed in any degree, it becomes an instrument in the hand of the will.

The analogy of the eye is, if not in all things complete, at least for the most part true.

All the day long we use our eyes. And yet not all sight is volitional. The eye, as I have said, sees much which it does not look at. There is conscious sight and unconscious sight all the day long. But out of the field of objects before the sight we fix the eye on particulars. Looking is sight directed and intensified by the will.

So it is with the brain. All day long the mind runs on like a river, murmuring to itself. We hear it, but for the most part do not heed it. The perpetual weaving and unwinding of associations goes on with little or no attention, and therefore with hardly, if any, act of the will, except by way of permission, or non-resistance.

But out of this woof we take up a certain thread and hold it fast by an act of attention, and of intention ; and this gives the character to the man. The mind of a mathematician is filled with many things besides mathematics, but he gives little or no attention to them ; that is, his will does not fix upon them and detain them. He uses his brain as an instrument of mathematics. The same holds good of every man and every deliberate line of mental energy. I have never heard any adequate explanation of this determination of the mind or brain to one particular study or pursuit of truth from those who suppose the brain to determine itself, and therefore deny the action of a Will distinct from it, and exercising a command over it. The theory that the thinking brain determines itself ascribes to it the power of volition, which not only involves all the same difficulties, but many more, and leaves them all unsolved. It is, therefore, inadequate, and for that reason unphilosophical. If the power of self-development be ascribed to the brain, why not

ascribe the same to the hand? The functions of the hand appear inexhaustible in number, subtil beyond all conception in kind. It is the executive of all that intellect can compass, and the will attain. And yet we treat the hand, which for dignity among the members ranks with the eye and the ear, and can even in some degree supply the place of both, as an intelligent servant, a mere instrument, exquisite indeed in delicacy, skill, and versatility, but dependent altogether upon a higher agency. We are told that it is the instrument of the brain; but what better reason have we for saying that the hand is the instrument of the brain, than for saying that the brain is itself the instrument of an Agent higher in nature, independence, and authority? Why attribute design and will to the material brain, while we deny both to the material hand? A chest of carpenter's tools is inactive, and has neither invention nor product without the mind and will of the carpenter. What have the brain and the hand more than the lathe and the chisel, without the Agent from whom they derive guidance and activity?

3. A third relation then, of the will to the brain as an instrument of thought, is the constructive power by which the mind creates systems, whether of truth or fiction. For instance, I may put in the Intellectual System of the world as described by Cudworth, and both the History and the Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences as described by Whewell. In these creations of the constructive intellect we see the work of the will sustaining and applying continuous thought. The "Ethics" and "Physics" of Aristotle; his treatise "De Animâ," the whole realm of mental and moral philosophy are examples of what the intellect can achieve under the jurisdiction of the will. Each one of the exact sciences in its three periods of observation, induction, and deduction, exhibits a sustained act of thought under a sustained act of volition. Any one who has so much as even turned over a synopsis of the "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas will have traced the toil of profuse thought under the control of an architectonic will. The same may be said of the "Iliad," the "Divina Commedia," of treatises on the "Reign of Law," or on the "Evidence of Man's Place in Nature," and the like. These are usually regarded as simply creations of the intellect; they are also creations of the will, which from the first intention to the last stroke of the pen has pervaded the thought and guided the writer's hand.

4. A fourth relation is the action of the will upon the moral thought or conscience. Whatsoever controversy may exist upon the origin of our moral intuition or moral sense, this at least is held by all, that man is bound to do what he believes to be right, and to abstain from doing what he believes to be wrong; or, in other words, that our rule of conduct is our moral reason. It is evident, therefore, that the will is under the jurisdiction of a judge whose dictates prescribe the limits and the direction of our moral action. Thus far the intellect precedes the will, and is superior to it. The will is not a blind force, but a faculty having eyes and light from the intellect. A blind will is a Titan of destruction. "*Vis consili expers mole ruit suâ.*" But the will, informed by reason or the moral conscience, is thenceforward the supreme ruler in man. The difference between Aristotle's Temperate and Intemperate man resides in the will. The thoughts of the brain, we should say of the heart, may be in direct revolt against the will; but the will controls both the sensitive and the rational appetites. Self-denial, self-mortification, and self-sacrifice are acts of ascendancy, inflicted by the willer upon the thoughts and the appetites of which the brain is the instrument. For instance, thoughts of malice, appetites of revenge, or of luxury, which, as we say, possess the mind, or, as others say, the brain, are combatted and brought under by a power which thereby asserts a separate existence and a superior authority over the brain itself. We cannot move a stone so long as we rest upon it. It is our independence which gives us leverage and force. Now I have hitherto called this the *thinker* or the *willer*, but it is an agent who thinks and wills; for intellect and will are not the agent, but only functions of an agent, for whom as yet we have no name, who not only thinks and wills, but gives life to the brain itself.

We here touch upon a vast subject, too vast for this paper, which can only enumerate it amongst its other branches, and pass on.

The control of the will over thought runs through the whole moral culture and discipline of man. What is called character is distinct from the moral nature, as countenance is distinct from the features. We made neither our features nor our moral nature; but we have made both our countenance and our character. They are the sum and result of habits, as habits are the sum and result of acts, and in every several act the will had its original and constructive share by permission, or by action.

The moral character is therefore ultimately determined by the will. But, as I have said, the replenishment of the mind, or brain, if you please to say so, with thought and knowledge, which is permanent or immanent thought, is to a great extent all through life a voluntary act.

Now, out of the thoughts so stored up in the whole course of life arises a world of moral conflicts or temptations. For instance, the thoughts of vain-glory, jealousy, malice, deceitfulness, and the like, which spring up from the memories of the past, are the subject-matter of moral probation, choice, and character. As we deal with them, such we are. The memory of insults or great wrongs will arise in the mind, or brain, if you will, at the sight of the person who has outraged us; or by associations of time, place, or any one of endless circumstances; or, again, by the direct suggestion of others. So far the thoughts may be spontaneous or involuntary on our part. Their presence in the mind is neither good nor evil. Their first impression upon the mind, even though it become a fascination or an attraction to an immoral act, is not immoral, because, as yet, though the thought has conceived them, the will has not accepted them. These *primo-primi motus* of the thoughts, as they are called, are not as yet personal acts. The *secundo-primi motus* of inchoate assent are only partly moral; the deliberate acts of willing advertence, that is, of attention and intention, bring them fully within the order of moral action. The agent, through the deliberate will, makes the thought his own. He thereby becomes what his intention is. The example of revenge will suffice for all other kinds of moral evil. The same rule may be applied also to good thoughts when they become mental acts.

So far is obvious to all who admit the idea of a moral agent. But perhaps it may be said that here the relation of the will to thought ceases, and that it has no share in beliefs, or in opinions, or in intellectual errors; and that in the formation of these there is no moral agency.

It may, however, be affirmed that, excepting the exact and physical sciences, in which the processes of the intellect are necessitated by the evidence, in all other matters the will has an immediate relation to thought, and the formation of our beliefs and opinions enters into the order of morals. For instance (as I must be allowed to affirm)—1, the existence of God may be proved by reason; 2,

the evidence for the existence of God is such that the reason of man applied with due intention and attention will arrive at the proof.

Now, we have seen that these acts of intention and attention are acts of the will, and that, in the whole intellectual process there is a continuous act of volition. In all matters capable of proof, that is, where sufficient evidence is present or within reach, if the intellectual process be duly sustained the proof will be completed; if it be remitted, the proof may remain incomplete, and that incompleteness results not *ex parte intellectus* which, so far as it went, discharged its office; but *ex parte voluntatis*, which, by remissness or deviation, misdirected or baffled the intellect. The saying "None are so blind as those who will not see" is a moral axiom.

This truth has a large range, but time will not allow of more.

I must, however, add one example.

The treatment of the moral actions of other men, as in history, is in a high degree itself a moral act.

The justifying or condemning the actions of men is a continuous test of the moral state of the historian. He will see good and evil in the lives of other men as he sees them in his own. He will not see them also in the same measure in which his own moral consciousness is obscure, or perverted, or incomplete. A biographer is an unconscious autobiographer.

The dictum which perhaps awed or dazzled some of us in boyhood, "that a man is no more responsible for his opinions than he is for the height of his stature or for the colour of his skin," has long since gone to the limbo of superstitions. To a morbid eye things appear inverted or bisected, because the eye is morbid. To a great extent, opinions are imperfect or distorted because the action of the will affects the completeness of the thought. And the completeness of the thought is subjective truth. It may, therefore, be said that in the whole range of moral action the will, guided by the primary intuitions of the reason to desire the true and the good, is the condition and the pledge of their attainment.

I have not forgotten, but I have not space to touch upon, what Dr. Carpenter calls the "unconscious prejudices" springing from early influences for which we are not responsible. I have spoken only of what is the normal relation of the will to thought in moral agency, from which arises what is called the moral conscience. An erroneous conscience is the result of failure in this cultivation of the moral

thought. From the abnormal influence of the will over our intellectual habits come error, prejudices, superstitions, fanaticism, illusions, depraved judgments, and a whole mental pathology. But this is not our subject at present.

It is time now to sum up the answer to the question, "What is the relation of the will to thought?" From what has been said, it appears :—

1. That the unfolding of the potentiality of the intellect, or, as some say, of the brain into actual knowledge, is accomplished partly by the will of others acting upon us, partly by our own will acting upon ourselves. In the latter case, it is obvious that the will plays a leading part; in the former also, it co-operates with and gives effect to the will of others.

2. That the mind or brain once stored with knowledge retains it without acts of the will, and often refuses to give it up to the will when it is demanded. This is what we call forgetfulness. I say retains it, because it may be doubted whether anything once actually known be ever lost; or whether the mind or brain once unfolded into act, ever again relapses from its actual development into the mere potentiality from which it has issued. Our forgetting does not prove this. And the well-known facts of persons in states of unconsciousness speaking in languages which they knew in childhood, and had long been unable to speak in their conscious moments, goes far to prove it. A large part, therefore, of thought which was once voluntarily acquired, lies secreted in the form of knowledge, of which much passes from our consciousness, though we have no warrant to say that it passes from the mind. This latent thought, or, as I should say, knowledge, is the stuff that dreams are made of. It is certain that nothing arises in the mind in sleep which has not entered it while waking. It may be wrought up into new and abnormal combinations, but the elements all lie within the circle of past thought and knowledge. For instance, none but a mathematician would be tormented by the nightmare of travelling to London on an asymptote.

3. That in our waking-hours the mind is replenished by a multitude of thoughts which are so far voluntary that we do not try to expel them; even while we are actually occupied only with those which are brought under our intention and attention by acts of the will.

4. That hence it follows beyond doubt that even if the brain could think, it does so in these instances, under the jurisdiction of a force distinct from itself.

5. That this force is not a function of the brain, but of an agent acting on the brain. This agent by acts of will educates the brain, calls it from potentiality into act, uses it as an instrument of his intentions, creates by it intellectual systems and ideal worlds, according to his choice and discretion, and finally reduces the brain in matters of moral judgment and choice to subjection and obedience, thereby establishing a moral law and government over the whole body. To say that all this is done by the brain of itself to itself, is to ignore the countless phenomena which cover the whole field of our intellectual activity, and to leave without solution the development of the brain in self-educated man. I am afraid we should flog a boy who accused his brain of his false concords and false quantities. We punish the whole agent for idleness, which is flagrant injustice, if no agent but the brain exists. To say that the brain develops itself, is to deny what the consciousness of all mankind affirms, and on which the whole procedure of justice, from the school to the Penal Code, is founded.

If there be a fact of human consciousness, it is that we possess a will, and that the activity of that will follows indeed the first intuitive dictates of the intellect; but precedes the whole series and ramifications of intellectual acts, on which the processes of thought, the attainment of knowledge, and the morality of men depend. Further, thought and will are functions of an agent distinct from the material brain; and the existence of an agent which we call "self" or "I" is a fact of consciousness of the highest degree of certainty in human knowledge.

5. That this agent is neither intelligence nor will, but possesses both. It energizes in and through the brain in thought, and in union with thought by volition, as it also quickens the body with life. And yet life, intelligence, and will are all properties or faculties of a personal agent, who is in contact with matter, but is not material. And this personal agent the ancient world called " $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ," or "anima," and we call "soul."

Once more to repeat the axiom laid down in the beginning, "the decision of mankind derived from consciousness of the existence of our living self or personality, whereby we think, will, and act, is

practically worth more than all the arguments of all the logicians who have discussed the basis of our belief in it."

These facts of our consciousness are anterior to all logic. They form the premisses which are intuitively certain, and they acquire no intrinsic certainty from the syllogistic forms of reasoning which depend on them. To doubt the certainty of these internal facts is an irrational scepticism. It rejects the more certain upon the evidence of the less certain, and tries to rest the pyramid of human knowledge on its apex.

Such appears to be the old basis of metaphysical philosophy. It is founded on the intellectual system and tradition of mankind, and in its chief constructive principles, though often assailed, it has not been shaken. I know nothing in modern metaphysics nor in scientific reasoning to induce me to doubt the existence of the soul, or to attribute thought and volition to a material organism, except as a condition of its exercise in our present state.

I could as soon believe that the hand by automatic activity executed its almost inexhaustible variety of operations without the brain, as that the brain calculates the laws of comets or discusses metaphysics without an intellect distinct from matter. The cessation of thought and will with the cessation of life points away from matter to something beyond, that is, to something immaterial, or from the body to the soul. If it be said that the knife cannot detect it, it may be answered neither can the knife detect thought, or will, or life; and yet these exist by the acknowledgment of all; and are manifest by a threefold world of phenomena, vital, intellectual, volitional, altogether insoluble except on the old-world belief that in Man there is a Soul.

#### NOTES.

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*



Sir Alexander Grant  
[PRIVATE.]

*On the Nature and Origin of the Moral Ideas.*

1

8 Feb. 1871

## ON THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF THE MORAL IDEAS.

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THERE have been of late years three—what the Germans would call —“moments” towards the solution of the time-honoured question as to the Nature and Origin of the Moral Ideas in Man.

(1) Mr. Herbert Spencer's bold reduction of them to inherited but half-forgotten associations of utility.

(2) Mr. Hutton's protest on the negative side against the tenability of this theory.

(3) Sir J. Lubbock's contribution towards a more positive view, based on the tribal maxims of savages.

The following paper is an attempt to take up this question anew from the point where it now stands.

In the first place, however, while according full admiration to the interesting investigations of Sir John Lubbock, I must confess the great difficulty I feel in accepting the thesis that the savages of the present day are fair representatives of Primitive Man, and show us by living examples the condition of our ancestors and the starting-ground from which civilization has proceeded.

I think that to establish this thesis, a “prosyllogism” was needed, and that Sir J. Lubbock has assumed his thesis, instead of demonstrating it.

It is true that historical *data* for the question are wanting, and that the whole is a matter of speculation. Yet still, regarding the very unprogressive condition of savage society, and the apparently utter absence in it of all those elements of intellect and genius which must have been at work to produce even the beginnings of that complex system of Morals, Law, Art, and Literature, under which we live, I must submit that all our analogies would guide us to the

belief that the Savages of the present day are the back-waters and swamps of the stream of humanity, and not the representatives of its proper and onward current.

What may have been the causes that have made savages what they are, whether they are the stunted and arrested specimens of an originally noble stock, and if so, what has stunted and arrested them; or whether they sprang from an originally different and inferior stock, and if so, why that stock was originally inferior, it is not my present business to inquire. I have only to state a general belief that the evolution of what we call morals took place among bright and brilliant races of mankind, and that towards judging of even the earliest condition of those races the phenomena of savage life afford us no assistance whatever. Still, it may be urged, and probably must be conceded, that the savage is, at all events, a man, and therefore that if a moral principle be essential to humanity, it must be found in the savage. I would quite accept this, and I think that any account of our moral nature ought, in order to be adequate, to embrace even that *travestie* of morals which, as far as I can gather, does not appear to be absent even in the most grovelling of the savage tribes.

Returning, then, to what I would call the main stream of historical humanity, to the noble instances of the Aryan and Semitic races, the question is, what does the literature of the past and our own internal consciousness and external observation in the present lead us to believe, as to the nature of those moral feelings in us which Kant declared to appear to him as sublime and wonderful as the starry heavens?

Every one knows that the theories in answer to this question may be grouped generally under two leading classes, the Intuitionist and the Empirical. Of the Intuitionist schools of moral philosophy, Bishop Butler may be taken as a representative. He tells us that in addition to various passions and impulses, there is in every man an authoritative principle, called Conscience, which judges under every circumstance of the right and wrong of each impulse, and gives the sense of self-approval, or self-condemnation, according as the right or the wrong is followed. Thus, according to Butler, conscience would be a separate faculty, containing in itself both the 'standard' and the 'sanction' of morality. In the sermon on the character of Balaam, Butler tells us that every man who is true to himself knows at once what it is right or wrong to do.

The opposite or empirical view finds an exponent in Paley, who points out the diversity of moral ideas in different countries and times as incompatible with the theory of an innate *a priori* standard. He maintains that the right and the wrong can only be discriminated by a reflection on the general consequences of particular lines of action, right actions being such as have a tendency to produce good results, in the shape of the welfare of mankind.

Being further led to inquire How it comes to pass that we have a feeling of obligation to perform right actions rather than wrong ones? Paley can only account for this fact by saying that we are constrained by the fear of punishment in a future life, such having been declared to us by revelation to be the infallible result of wrong action. Paley's 'sanction,' therefore, is something wholly external to the mind, and in the way in which he states it, it is inapplicable to a large portion of the human race.

Kant is on this question more like Paley than is, perhaps, generally supposed. Kant's well-known maxim, "Act so that thy mode of acting may serve as a law universal," is really identical with Paley's theory that general consequences form the test of right and wrong. We find that in order to settle whether a mode of action is fit to be a law universal, Kant is driven to a consideration of consequences, *i.e.*, to utilitarian and empirical considerations.

As to the question of the 'sanction' of morality, Kant, of course, differs from Paley, since for the fear of eternal punishment he substitutes the "Categorical Imperative of the Will." Kant appears to attribute to the Will an *a priori* function analogous to the *a priori* asserting power of the Reason. As the Reason asserts *a priori* and necessarily "*A* is *A*," and even in some cases "*A* is *B*," so the Will says to itself *a priori*, "I must," though this is left as a blank formula. What "I must" do in each case? has to be filled up by the further consideration of "What is fit to be the Law universal?" *i.e.*, by empirical considerations.

The internal sanction of morality, the sense of moral obligation, is thus affirmed by Kant to be an *a priori* intuition of the Will or Practical Reason, and it is not analyzed further.

We may now go on to Mr. Herbert Spencer, whose bold and striking proposition is that "experiences of utility organized and consolidated during all past generations of the human race, have been producing nervous modifications, which by continued trans-

mission and accumulation have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition, certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility." Mr. H. Spencer is himself a moralist of a high type, and in the sentence quoted he evidently acknowledges the deep moral nature of man as an existing fact in the present; but, as a historical speculation, he conceives the "emotions responding to right and wrong conduct" to be inherited instincts derived from shadowy recollections of the utility attaching to good actions and the disadvantage attaching to bad actions,—only, as the Frenchman said when he heard that *jour* was derived from *dies*, "*C'est diablement changé en route!*" According to Mr. Spencer's theory, to be deterred by one's moral sense from telling a lie, would be analogous to the instinctive motion of a young pointer making a half-defined halt at the scent of the first partridge that he encountered. In addition to what has been so well urged against such a proposition, I would submit that with the young pointer it is the scent of game which is the essential cause of his mechanical motion, he does not "point" at stones and clods; he does not exhibit a general tendency to "point" irrespective of the presence of a particular smell. But with the young child the case is different. The young child exhibits at once a general tendency to feel the emotions of right and wrong, irrespective of the exact character of the actions which are to call forth these feelings. For instance, the children of honourable European parents, when left much to the society of Indian servants, often exhibit a callousness about lying which seems incompatible with Mr. Spencer's doctrine about inherited instincts, and yet the same children think some things wrong according to the ideas they have picked up. I remember hearing a child, under circumstances of the kind, express great horror at the notion of *burning bread* as if a heinous moral offence! This idea had doubtless been derived from some scolding he had received from a servant.

Thus it would seem that the blank formula of Conscience,—the idea that some things are right and some wrong,—the capacity (at all events) for feeling "I must" and "I must not," is more native to the mind, than a tendency to discriminate as right those actions which our forefathers have approved; and if this be the case, Mr. Spencer's doctrine of inherited associations connected with particular lines of action falls to the ground. If we examine our own in-

dividual history, we become, I think, conscious that the formula "I must" has been, at all events, comparatively a fixed element in our nature, while the contents of that formula have varied and been modified by the progress of time and the growth of our knowledge.

In the history of civilized mankind the same phenomenon appears. Look back for two thousand years, and the sense of "duty" (*τὸ δέον*) appears as strong in the minds of individuals as in the present day. This general formula remains unaltered, though the filling-up of it is in many respects changed. What could express more strongly and passionately the idea of an "immutable morality," than the words which Sophocles puts into the mouth of Antigone?—

Οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ῥόμην τὰ σὰ  
Κηρύγμαθ' ὥστ' ἀγραπτα κάσφαλῃ θεῶν  
Νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ' ὑπερδραμεῖν.  
Οὐ γάρ τι νῦν τε κἄχθες ἀλλ' αἰεί ποτε  
Ζῆ ταῦτα κοῦδεις οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου φάνη.

It is true that in this passage a religious sanction is connected with the obligations of morality, and the particular duty referred to, namely, that of not leaving a relation unburied, belongs rather to the ceremonial than to the moral law of the Greeks. But yet what could give a finer and deeper expression to the formula of moral duty than the words, "The unwritten and certain laws of God, which are not of to-day or yesterday, but have an eternal existence, and whose origin no man can tell"? Here, again, then, in the thoughts attributed to Antigone, the formula of morals is greater than the contents of the formula.

But must we really make no attempt to tell the origin whence these "sure, unwritten laws" have sprung? I think we may; and that to do so we must separate the matter from the form of duty. It is the form of duty,—being a form of the mind itself,—which gives rise to the feeling of the eternal immutability of the particular, concrete duty; just as first love, from its depth and passion, impels the man who feels it to declare that it must be eternal. Let us, then, try to analyze this form of duty in the mind, and see if we can give any account of its origin. The "law of parsimony" prevents us from assuming the existence of "conscience" as a separate faculty, if the phenomena which are attributed to it can be accounted for more simply.

I think that these phenomena will be found to be all involved in

and necessarily deducible from the simple notion of the human soul, when we consider what that notion is ; and here I wish to make no assumption and to build on no hypothesis, beyond what all would grant. Whether the soul be the result of material organization, and dependent for its duration on the duration of material organic conditions, or whether it be a principle transcending matter and capable of self-existence, need not for the present purpose be discussed. All that I mean by a human soul at present is, a human personality such as we must be perfectly certain of as existing in ourselves and others. Such a personality is a self-conscious agent, conscious also of the not-self ; knowing, thinking, and acting ; capable of pleasures and pains ; and invariably possessed with the idea, whether true or false, that it has a certain choice in action, this being the characteristic of a personal agent as distinguished from a machine. Every man that exists, every human personality, must have, or be, a soul possessed of these properties, though in sleep, madness, and the like, they may be held in suspension. And whether man was developed out of lower organisms, or originally created in full humanity,—at whatever point man became man, he must have possessed, or been, a soul as above described.

Now, all living monadic existences we find to be provided with an impulse or tendency towards self-preservation. The "struggle for existence" characterizes alike all the different types of organized nature. In the instinct of animals we see marvellous developments of this impulse, resulting in methods, faculties, arts, we might almost say sciences, and even in societies, politics, and governments. The impulse of self-preservation of course exists equally in the human soul. But the wonder of it is that in a self-conscious reasoning agent this impulse is metamorphosed into something far greater and higher. By the fact of its union with self-consciousness and reason this impulse no longer remains a mere struggle for existence, but comes out under the new and deeply important form of self-love, and in this all morality is implied.

Bishop Butler did well to distinguish self-love from selfishness, and in some parts of his writings (though he is inconsistent with himself) to speak of self-love as if synonymous with conscience. But, on the other hand, adhering too much to words, instead of thinking of things, Butler failed to recognize that, essentially, selfishness and self-love are merely different manifestations of the same principle.

The one principle of the impulse of self-preservation, when existing as modified in a self-conscious agent, becomes generally self-love, but at the same time is capable of Protean varieties, ranging from the lowest selfishness to the noblest conscientiousness and self-abnegation.

It may seem a paradox to speak of self-abnegation as a form of self-love. But Aristotle fully recognized it as being so, and in a beautiful passage of his *Ethics* (IX., viii., 9) he speaks of the good man being actuated by the dictates of self-love to die for his country or his friends. Aristotle explains his use of terms by saying that 'self' is of two kinds,—the lower self, consisting of appetites and passions, and the higher self, consisting of reason and the moral nature. Self-love in the highest and truest sense is, then, according to Aristotle, identical with a self-devotion to what is noble and great.

It may, however, appear too metaphorical to talk of two "selves" within a man. I think that the same idea might be more simply expressed by saying that the better forms of self-love differ from the inferior forms in being more thoroughly transfused with consciousness. The more fully a man can realize to himself his own personality as a whole, the less blind will be his instinct of self-preservation, the less animal in character will it become. Given such a being as man, with a self-consciousness of his own nature as a voluntary agent; constituted also, as man evidently invariably is, with a tendency to discriminate between things, and *admire* some in preference to others, and at the same time endowed with a great inherent regard for himself,—it could not but follow that that regard must come to take the form of self-respect, and a great desire to be able to respect himself. It could not but follow subsequently that the pleasure of self-respect, self-approval, self-admiration, would be found on experience to outweigh all other pleasures, and thus Aristotle says that the reason for a man being able to sacrifice his life for a noble cause is, that he prefers the intense pleasure of a moment to inferior pleasures for a longer period. We may add that not only is self-approval naturally desired by the self-conscious soul, but the want of it causes so great a discord and uneasiness as to be almost unbearable. Hence self-approval comes to be viewed as a paramount necessity by the mind, and this is perhaps the real explanation of Kant's "Categorical Imperative," of the formula "I must," of moral obligation; of the sense of duty; and all other synonymous terms. This, then, is the subjective, and at the same time the

permanent, element in morality. It is universal, and exists in every man, being the necessary result of the instinct of self-preservation in a reasoning and self-conscious agent. It gives rise to the distinction between right and wrong. "The right" may be defined as that which an agent fully conscious of his own personality would approve of himself as doing.

This is evidently a mere blank formula, as devoid of content as that of the "categorical imperative," or any other mode of expressing the individual's sense of obligation to do, or leave undone, certain things. It is submitted, as being perhaps a simpler account of the idea of duty than has yet been given. It is not a shallow account, for it is based on the "abysmal depths of personality," on the idea of the ego as necessarily implying in itself morality. And it is universally adaptable, as we find when we come to inquire how this formula has been variously filled up.

It explains the morality of the savage, who is pleased with himself for doing what his tribe approves, and therefore thinks that he "ought" to take bloody vengeance, and put a feather in his cap by the slaughter of some human being, and the like. Having no other standard, he approves himself for such deeds, and is morally happy in doing them.

It explains from the subjective side the overpowering force of the idea of religious duty. For when once the individual entertains, without doubt, the idea that a course of action is prescribed to him by a divine command, self-love, whether under the form of fear and hope, or of desire to see himself in harmony with that which he believes highest, must urge him to the pursuance of that course.

Again, this permanent element of self-love and desire for self-approbation in the individual soul must always have been a powerful auxiliary in the working out of those moral ideas, which independently of religion, we find to have gradually taken hold of the best races of mankind. Whatever the household maxims of families, or the edicts of the legislator, or the generalizations of the philosopher enunciated as good in action, *that*, if accepted by the reason of the individual, would be ratified by the self-love of the individual as "right" to do. The reason of the individual has, however, always a power of protest, and in the long run it is "the common sense of most," whether in a country or in a course of ages, that decides what is right. In all cases it has been the self-love of the individual

which has supplied the subjective side to moral ideas. This is the necessary spring of all action, but we need not conceive that it has invariably assumed its highest form. Self-love, of course, readily takes the form of prudence, and gives rise to prudential ethics; again, in all but the strongest minds, it tends to rest in the approbation of others, and thus produces a conventional and superficial morality, what the Germans call *Sittlichkeit*,—a sort of decent conformity with custom.

Moral philosophy has a threefold province, *firstly*, it has to inquire psychologically into the nature of that idea of duty which is universal in the human race, and into the relation of the individual to that idea; *secondly*, it has to trace historically the filling-up and development of the idea of duty through the various stages of society, so far as we have any record of them; *thirdly*, it has to supply criticism and corrections of the last fillings-up and developments of the idea, at which society may have arrived. The history of morals is extremely interesting, and also very important, as throwing light on the validity and worth of the moral tenets of the present day. But the materials for a full history of this kind do not exist. The first books of this narrative, so to speak, like the concluding books of Livy, are lost to the world, and we are reduced to speculation in the attempt to replace them. I would fain believe that the primeval fathers of the Greeks and the Hebrews, from whom we also are collaterally descended, did not pass through a period of the disgusting customs of Sir John Lubbock's savages. I conceive them placed on the earth, in whatever way, as gracious creatures, not civilized, indeed, for that would imply a later development, but endowed with such rich potentialities of mind, that to acquiesce or settle down into national institutions and moral ideas which we should now condemn as brutal, would have been to them impossible. It is all a speculation, and yet the earliest historical monuments seem to bear out this view. And at all events, we know for certain that if the Aryan races did pass through a period of communal marriages, and the like, they passed out of it so early and so completely as to leave not a trace behind.

I think that the conception of great capacities is absolutely necessary for primeval man, else I do not see where we are to get the starting-point for civilization; and it seems to me much more natural to conceive of the typical progenitor of the Aryan race as an unde-

veloped Pericles, than as a Feejee Islander of the present day, contentedly acquiescing in a degraded round of life, without the glimmer of an idea beyond it. But however this may be, wherever man was man, there must have been the human personality, with its deep instinct of self-love, taking the form of a desire for self-respect. And from this, morality of some kind or other is a necessary deduction. The Utilitarian theory is powerless to explain the deep and mysterious feelings of duty; to account for these we must look into the human soul itself. But the Utilitarian theory will explain a very large proportion of the maxims of duty gradually adopted by the human race, and it will form an important element in the speculative history of morals. The system of Kant, equally with that of Paley, admits the Utilitarian criterion of every so-called moral law as the test of its validity.

I doubt, however, if Morality came to primeval man under the guise of the useful. It has been well remarked that the saying, "Honesty is the best policy" is not the original form of the doctrine about honesty, but is a modern epigrammatic invasion of the original doctrine, which probably was to the effect that instead of being politic, one "must be" honest. Morality has no existence except in an individual mind, and it is contrary to, rather than identical with, the idea of the immediately useful, that is, the pleasant. The first realization of a moral idea was probably when a man became conscious of the existence, exterior to himself, of another personality,—when, by sympathetic imagination, he conceived a peculiar interest in that personality, perhaps a sort of awe for it, or a feeling of love for it. Sir John Lubbock tells us of savages who are devoid of the idea of family affection. But it is difficult to believe that the highest type of primeval man was in this condition, else we should have to believe in some Prometheus who invented affection, as well as the art of procuring fire, for the barbarous world. Anyhow, wherever the sense of another's personality first struck upon the mind, there the birth of morality took place, for morality is essentially, beyond anything else, the relation of soul to soul.

All that is implied in this relationship was by no means early or speedily unfolded even to the best races,—nay, it is not fully unfolded, or, at all events, not acted on even yet. But the idea of a person as opposed to a thing, of one possessed of rights by virtue of personality, of one that must be respected and considered, and not

merely used as a means to selfish ends,—this idea was probably got at a very early period, only limited first to persons within the family, and afterwards to persons within the tribe. When the idea of the world as a city of souls is fully realized and acted on by all, then the Christ may be said to have come again, and the golden age of the future to have been attained.

Another highly moral notion may be conjectured to have been not long hidden from primeval man,—that is, the subordination of the particular to the universal. This notion springs necessarily from the nature of things as recognized by the reason of man. The individual recognizing himself to be the particular, cannot long fail to see himself as surrounded and swallowed up by the members of the tribe or nation; he sees around him a society of which he is but a unit, which existed before him, and will exist after him. Hence arises the consciousness of something greater than himself, and more enduring; hence the idea, perhaps dimly felt, yet still apprehended, of a universal law to which the individual must give way. When once the idea of the universal was entertained, however indistinctly, self-love would prompt the individual to endeavour to be in harmony with it. For nothing can conduce to greater satisfaction and peace of mind than a sense of being in harmony with the universal. This is what later philosophers called "*Naturæ convenienter vivere.*" Morality consists, from one point of view entirely, in the acceptance of the truth of things as they exist; and the recognition by mankind at an early period of the greatness of the universe, must have had a great determining influence on the feelings of the individual about himself. The sense of the contrast between the illimitable greatness of the world and the comparative nothingness of the individual finds its expression in the Psalms of David,—“When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, and the moon and the stars which thou hast created, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou so regardest him?” From the impressions thus enforced upon the mind there would arise a whole train of moral ideas regarding the attitude of the individual soul, more especially the idea of humility, which in its healthy form is only a recognition of the greatness of the not-me.

My conception of the progress of Morals in pre-historic times, is that it might be described in the same terms in which Aristotle described the progress of metaphysics, *πρῶτον δ' οὕτως, αὐτὸ τὸ*

πρᾶγμα ὠδοποίησεν αὐτοῖς: "As men went on, the nature of things was their guide, and conducted them from one point to another." I think it unnecessary to enter into the question of the divine revelation of morals; in one sense all truth is of divine revelation, in another sense man seems to discover everything for himself under the guidance of nature. Man by his constitution was evidently predestined to life in society; he was predestined, as I have endeavoured to show, to realize the sense of his own personality, and then the personality of others; he was predestined to attain the idea of the universal in contrast with himself as the particular; his own natural instincts as a self-conscious agent necessarily gave rise to deep and mysterious feelings in his mind, undefined feelings of responsibility, generally, it is true, taking the form of religious hopes and fears, but also sooner or later existing independently of religion, and capable of application to all the different parts of life. The particular maxims, arrangements, customs, and laws relating to the different parts of life, such as property, the sexes, and the family, were perhaps only gradually arrived at, after many experiments, and under the guidance of a common consent as to their utility. But in order that conformity with these customs and laws should assume the form of duty, and in order that the idea of the virtues, courage, temperance, justice, and the rest, should arise, a subjective element was required, and that subjective element is to be found in the self-regard of the individual soul. The development of this principle is an instance of the elevation in the course of nature of a mean and beggarly element into one of the most dignified phenomena on earth. It begins with the mere instinct of self-preservation, and it rises into the feeling expressed by Plato, Οὐ γὰρ ἔχω ἔγωγε οὐδὲν οὕτω μοι ἔναργες ὅν, ὡς τοῦτο, τὸ εἶναι ὡς οἷόν τε μάλιστα καλὸν τε καὶ ἀγαθόν: "I have nothing in me more clear and certain than this, that I must be as noble and good as it is possible for me to be."

One word in conclusion. The universality of this principle, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the perfect naturalness of the development of morals, and the consequent general consensus with regard to them of all the highest races of mankind, seem conjointly to have given rise to the theory that moral ideas are intuitional in the mind. That theory appears to me to be at variance with facts, and I have endeavoured to show that the phenomena for which it would account can be explained differently.

**NOTES.**

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Mr. Arthur Russell

[PRIVATE.]

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On the Absolute.

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1.

14 March 1871

## ON THE ABSOLUTE.

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EVERY change we observe is the effect of a cause, and that cause, again, is the effect of a preceding cause, and ascending thus by a process of regressive reasoning from effect to cause, we must assume at last an ultimate cause which contains in itself the cause of all effects, because we cannot think that the chain of causes and effects is infinite, nor that the universe is a collection of disconnected effects without cause.

This ultimate cause, which must be, as the schoolmen say, *causa sui* and *causa causarum*, is what metaphysicians call the Absolute, or the Unconditioned, or the infinite substance, &c.

The Absolute is that which exists, and is what it is by its own nature, and not because of anything else. I am afraid that if I add Hegel's definition I shall not make my meaning any clearer. He says that the Absolute is nothing else but the identity of identity and non-identity.

The Absolute cannot be subject to the conditions of space and time, or it would not be the Unconditioned; it is infinite and eternal.

Aristotle has shown the necessity of postulating a *primum movens* in the Universe. Spinoza, with rigid logic, has given a demonstration of several of the attributes of the Absolute, and Hegel has proved that what Spinoza calls the infinite substance is spiritual, and not material of its nature; that is, that its necessary existence is only accessible to the intellect, and not perceptible to the senses. The ultimate cause of all phenomena is a Noumenon, as the Rev. Mr. Martineau has proved here, to my satisfaction.

Now, I am quite aware that in endeavouring to prove the existence of the Absolute and to define some of its attributes, I am entering upon the province of speculative theology, a branch of metaphysical inquiry which most modern thinkers treat with ridicule and con-

tempt, because it presumes to examine questions, they contend, in their essence incapable of being answered, of which we do know nothing and can know nothing, because we have no faculty of apprehending them, and are, therefore, as Professor Huxley says, "not worth the attention of men who have work to do in the world." "Modern critical philosophy," says Professor Huxley, "refuses to listen to the jargon of more recent days about the 'Absolute' and all the other hypostatized adjectives, the initial letters of the names of which are generally printed in capital letters, just as you give a Grenadier a bearskin cap to make him look more formidable than he is by nature" (Lay Sermons, 361).

And Mr. Frederic Harrison writes:—"We look on the Absolute as a notion which it is abhorrent to the human mind to assert of anything whatever. It conveys an idea which neither does nor can correspond to any fact; an idea which the mind cannot consistently with its own nature predicate of anything. To assert that any conception whatever possesses absolute truth, is like attempting to state a proposition without the medium of language" (*Fort. Rev.*, 1870, p. 185).

Metaphysicians who can find nothing but pure negation in the idea of the Absolute, are evidently misled by the form of the word. Infinite begins with a negative particle, but this is a mere accident in the history of language. Eternal, self-existing, necessary, express the idea of the Absolute, and contain no negative element. Immortal may be quoted as an example of a negative word which expresses a positive idea (Max Müller, II., 576).

According to Sir William Hamilton, the Unconditioned is unthinkable and unknowable: "It affords no real knowledge," he says, "because it contains nothing even conceivable; it is not a notion, either simple or positive, but only a fasciculus of negations." Far from being a purely negative idea, there is no idea more positive than the Absolute. The Absolute affirms itself, and at the same time everything else that is, or it would not be the Absolute.

I find an unexpected supporter of my opinion in Mr. J. S. Mill, who concludes in his essay on Sir William Hamilton that the Scotch metaphysician has not been successful in his attempts to prove that the Absolute is unthinkable. Mill, though he condemns the "futility of all speculations respecting meaningless abstractions," says, "A conception made up of negations is a conception of nothing; it is no

conception at all. The conception of the Infinite, as that which is greater than any given quantity, is a conception we all possess, sufficient for all human purposes, and as genuine and good a positive conception as one need wish to have. It is not adequate; our conception of a reality never is. But it is positive, and the assertion that there is nothing positive in the idea of infinity can only be maintained by leaving out, as Sir William Hamilton invariably does, the very element which constitutes the idea" (Mill on Hamilton, p. 46). "There is nothing contradictory in the notion of a Being infinite in some attributes and absolute in others, according to the different nature of the attributes" (Mill on Hamilton, p. 48). Sometimes the relativity of all human knowledge is appealed to, to prove that the Absolute is unknowable; if the relativity of all human knowledge means that to know a thing is to distinguish it from other things, then I cannot admit the force of the objection, because we derive our notion of the unconditioned and the infinite from our observation of the conditioned and the finite. If to prove that the Absolute is unthinkable it be said that we can only think anything in conformity with the laws of our thinking faculty, then I quite agree. Mill says, p. 55, "Even Schelling was not so gratuitously absurd as to deny that the Absolute must be known according to the capacity of that which knows it. (*Quidquid recipitur, recipitur ad modum recipientis*, in Scholastic language.)

Mr. Herbert Spencer devotes several pages of his "First Principles" to show that all attempts to define or comprehend the Absolute are futile and contradictory, but as he is a thoroughly honest and consistent thinker, he concludes by yielding to the insuperable necessities of thought, and he says:—"There remains to be stated a qualification. Every one of the arguments by which the relativity of our knowledge is demonstrated distinctly postulates the positive existence of something beyond the relative. To say that we cannot know the Absolute is, by implication, to affirm that there is an Absolute. In the very denial of our power to know *what* the Absolute is, there lies hidden the assumption *that* it is; and the making of the assumption proves that the Absolute has been present to the mind not as a nothing, but as a something. . . . The Noumenon everywhere named as the antithesis of the Phenomenon is throughout necessarily thought of as an actuality. It is rigorously impossible to conceive that our knowledge is a

knowledge of appearances only, without at the same time conceiving a Reality of which they are the appearances. . . . . Our conception of the Relative itself disappears if our conception of the Absolute is a pure negation. . . . . If the Absolute is present in thought only as a mere negation, then the relation between it and the Relative becomes unthinkable, because one of the terms of the relation is absent from consciousness. And if the relation is unthinkable, then is the Relative itself unthinkable for want of antithesis: whence results the disappearance of all thought whatever" (Herbert Spencer, "First Principles," chap. 4).

I might even invoke the support of Comte himself, who in a *résumé* of the general principles of the positive method at the end of his work claims in express terms an unlimited licence of adopting hypothetical conceptions of this sort, "in order to satisfy within proper limits our just mental inclinations, which always turn with instinctive predilection towards simplicity, continuity, and generality of conception." Among these just mental inclinations he includes our "*besoin d'idéalité*." Mill, after quoting this passage, remarks, "this notion of the study of natural laws is to our minds a complete dereliction of the essential principles which form the Positive conception of science" (Mill on Comte, p. 62).

The difficulty persons, deficient in sound logical training, feel in thinking the Absolute, arises from their endeavour to form to themselves some kind of representation or image of what the Absolute may be like, which naturally involves them in hopeless contradictions. It is a natural tendency of the human mind to attempt to facilitate the conception of abstract ideas by assimilating them to facts that experience has made familiar, and most persons when they leave the earth on which they stand and attempt to deal with the reciprocal interdependence of abstract ideas, which form the problem of metaphysics, are seized with giddiness, and lose the faculty of thinking altogether. They try to comprehend the Absolute, instead of thinking it as a pure logically necessary thought; it is incomprehensible to the understanding, which is only of the relative and different, but it must be presupposed by all who enter upon the study of metaphysics. If we surrender ourselves implicitly to the guidance of logic, then the Absolute is not only a permissible postulate, it is a necessary thought. All the Sciences pursue the problem of the Absolute with different methods. They seek for unity in

diversity and permanence in change, under the penalty of ceasing to be sciences, for a catalogue of disconnected observations is not a science. And all the warnings we have heard of late about the futility and imprudence of assuming new hypotheses will not make scientific men desist from seeking to explain the greatest number of phenomena by the fewest laws.

The natural sciences are now returning to an atomic conception of the physical Cosmos, but even if the atoms be proved to be the ultimate facts of the physical Cosmos, beyond which all knowledge is declared to be hopeless, there must be some reason why the Atoms enter into certain combinations and not into others, and dissolve these combinations again in order to enter into new ones, and this necessary reason is a noumenon, for it is not a phenomenon.

Our conception of the Absolute varies with the degree of our intellectual development. The objection which has been frequently raised, that the many inadequate and erroneous attributes which have been predicated of the Absolute, and which the progress of philosophical science has eliminated, prove the idea of the Absolute itself to be a mere illusion, is insufficient, inasmuch as some idea of the Absolute must have been realized in our minds, before we can proceed to disfigure it by those inadequate and superstitious conceptions, which are usually derived from human analogy.

I do not believe that a thinker whose mind is so constituted that he does not feel certain that  $2 + 2 = 4$  is true everywhere and under all conditions; who, for example, does not see why the inhabitants of some planets should not enclose their gardens between two parallel walls, though it be never done here, can ever clearly comprehend what is meant by the Absolute.

The Absolute is the ultimate result of the inductive method, and the starting-point of the deductive method in metaphysics. The Absolute can be known by reason and by consciousness. By reason, as I have shown above; by consciousness, because man is conscious of his own existence, and he is conscious with equal certainty that he is not himself the cause of his existence, that he depends for his existence on something different and distinct from himself.

Now he may make this vague apprehension the object of his thoughts, he may subject it to a rigid logical treatment, in order to convert it into a clear distinct concept, or dissolve it, if it be found to be a mere hallucination. He must be guided in pursuing his

task by a sound logical method, and must keep his imagination under severe control. The undoubted fact that most thinkers in this province have suffered their imagination to run away with their logic proves nothing against this metaphysical problem in itself.

The method I have just described of converting a vague apprehension into a precise concept has frequently been ridiculed by English writers, under the appellation of evolving an idea out of the depths of our inner consciousness.

Our knowledge of the Absolute is imperfect, limited, and progressive, and this is not exactly the same thing as total ignorance, as sceptical thinkers vainly contend. In the same way, our knowledge of the physical universe is very limited and imperfect, and yet it cannot correctly be described as equal to zero.

Spinoza says that the infinite substance is a *res cogitans*, and Hegel says the Absolute must be conceived as a subject, because the Absolute "thinks" the universal ideas which form the ultimate bond of coherence of the Universe. For these reasons, and because the Absolute must be independent (or it would not be the Absolute), and independence is the character by which we distinguish a person from a thing, it appears that the opinion of those thinkers who attribute personality to the Absolute is not inconsistent with sound logic; and, notwithstanding the enormous amount of hostile criticism that has been directed against this mode of conceiving the Absolute, it cannot be said that the opponents of this view have yet been successful in demonstrating that it is an untenable absurdity.

We disciples of Hegel who have passed through the severe discipline of his logic find no difficulty in thinking the Absolute, because to us it is a necessary thought. And this places us in a position of some difficulty in arguing with our opponents, because we are at last driven to say: you have no right to pronounce an idea unthinkable, simply because you are unable to think it, which gives us an appearance of intolerable arrogance, and is barely civil, while they reply that our minds have received a hopeless twist, which prevents us seeing the world as it is.

To conclude: The idea of the Absolute is a necessary logical idea, and not an hallucination, nor an empty negation.

Since several attributes can be predicated of the Absolute with logical necessity, I hold that speculative theology is a legitimate branch of metaphysical science, and is not necessarily a collection of mere gratuitous vagaries.

*NOTES.*

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*Mr. Ruskin*

## THEOREM.

THE RANGE OF INTELLECTUAL CONCEPTION IS PROPORTIONED  
 TO THE RANK IN ANIMATED LIFE.



I SUPPOSE this theorem to be a truism ; but I venture to state it for discussion, because it is surely desirable that it should be recognized as an axiom by metaphysicians, and practically does not seem to me yet to have been so. I say "animated life," because the word "life" by itself might have been taken to include that of vegetables ; and I say "animated," instead of "spiritual" life, because the Latin "anima," and pretty Italian corruption of it, "alma," involving the new idea of nourishment of the body as by the Aliment or Alms of God, seem to me to convey a better idea of the existence of conscious creatures than any derivative from "spiritus," "pneuma," or "psyche."

I attach, however, a somewhat lower sense to the word "conception" than is, I believe, usual with metaphysicians, for, as a painter, I belong to a lower rank of animated being than theirs, and can only mean by conception what I know of it. I felt this especially in hearing Mr. Russell's paper read at our last meeting, for a painter never conceives anything absolutely, and is, indeed, incapable of conceiving anything at all, except as a phenomenon or sensation, or as the mode or locus of a phenomenon or sensation. That which is not an appearance, or a feeling, or a mode of one or the other, is to him nothing.

For instance, he would deny the definition of the phenomenon which he is himself first concerned in producing,—a line,—as "length without breadth." He would say, "That which has no breadth is nothing, and nothing cannot be long." He would define a line as a narrow and long phenomenon : and a mathematician's idea of it, as an idea of the direction of such a phenomenon.

The act of conception, or imagination, with him, therefore, is merely the memory, simple or combined, of things that he has seen or felt. He has no ray, no incipience of faculty beyond this. No quantity of the sternest training in the school of Hegel would ever enable him to think the Absolute. He would persist in an obstinate refusal to use the word "think" at all in a transitive sense. He would never, for instance, say, "I think the table," but "I think the table is turning," or is not, as the case might be. And if he were to be taught in any school whatever to conceive a table, his first demand would be that he should be shown one, or referred to other things that had the qualities of one in an illustrative degree.

And even respecting the constant methods or laws of phenomena, he cannot raise the statement of them into an act of conception. The statement that two right lines can never enclose a space merely appears to him another form of verbal definition; or, at the grandest, a definition in prophetic extent, saying in other words that a line which encloses, or ever may enclose, a space, is not, and never will be, a right one. He would admit that what he now conceives as two things, doubled, would always be what he now conceives as four things. But assuming the existence of a world in which, whenever two things were actually set in juxtaposition with other two things, they became actually three things, or actually five, he supposes that the practice of arithmetic, and laws of it, would change in relation to this new condition in matter; and he accepts therefore the statement that twice two are four only as an accident of the existing phenomena of matter. A painter therefore may, I think, be looked upon as only representing a high order of sensational creatures, incapable of any but physical ideas and impressions; and I continue my paper therefore only in the name of the docile, and therefore improvable, part of the Brute Creation.

And in their name I would suggest that we should be much more docile than we are, if we were never occupied in efforts to conceive things above our natures. To take an instance, in a creature somewhat lower than myself. I came by surprise the other day on a cuttle-fish in a pool at low tide. On being touched with the point of my umbrella, he first filled the pool with ink, and then finding himself still touched in the darkness, lost his temper, and attacked the umbrella with much psyche or anima, hugging it tightly with all his eight arms, and making efforts, like an impetuous baby with

a coral, to get it into his mouth. On my offering him a finger instead, he sucked that with two or three of his arms with an apparently malignant satisfaction, and on being shaken off, retired with an air of frantic misanthropy into the cloud of his ink.

Now, it seems to me not a little instructive to reflect how entirely useless such a manifestation of a superior being was to his cuttle-fish mind; and how fortunate it was for his fellow octopods that he had no command of pens as well as ink, nor any disposition to write on the nature of umbrellas, or of men.

It may be observed, farther, that whatever ideas he was able to form, respecting either, were positively false,—so contrary to truth as to be worse than none; and simply dangerous to himself, so far as he might be induced to act upon them,—that, namely, an umbrella was an eatable thing, or a man a conquerable one,—that the individual man who looked at him was hostile to him, or that his purposes could be interfered with by ejection of ink. Every effort made by the fish under these convictions was harmful to himself; his only wisdom would have been to lie quietly and unreflectively in his pool.

And with us painters also, the only result of any efforts we make to acquaint ourselves with the subjects of metaphysical inquiry has been an increased sense of the prudence of lying placidly and unreflectingly in our pools, or at least limiting ourselves to such gentle efforts of imagination as may be consistent with the as yet imperfectly-developed powers, I do not say even of Cephalopodic, but of Ascidian nervous centres.

But it may be easily imagined how pleasantly, to persons thus subdued in self-estimation, the hope presents itself which is involved in the Darwinian theory, that their pools themselves may be capable of indefinite extension, and their natures of indefinite development,—the hope that our descendants may one day be ashamed of us, and debate the question of their parentage with astonishment and disgust.

And it seems to me that the aim of elementary metaphysical study might henceforth become more practical than that of any other science. For in hitherto taking little cognizance of the limitation of thought by the structure of the body, we have surely also lost sight of the power of certain modes of thought over the processes of that structure. Taking, for instance, the emotion of anger, of which the cephalopoda are indeed as capable as we are, but inferior to us in being unable to decide whether they do well to be angry or not, I do not think the

chemical effect of that emotion on the particles of the blood, in decomposing and otherwise paralyzing or debilitating them, has been sufficiently examined, nor the actual quantity of nervous energy which a fit of anger of given violence withdraws from the body and restores to space ; neither the correlative power of volition in restraining the passion, or in directing the choice of salutary thought, as of salutary herbs or streams. And even we painters, who dare not call ourselves capable of thought, are capable of choice in more or less salutary Vision. In the degree in which we lose such power of choice in vision, so that the spectral phenomena which are the materials of our industry present themselves under forms beyond our control, we become insane ; and although for all our best work a certain degree of this insanity is necessary, and the first occurring conceptions are uncommanded, as in dreams, we have, when in health, always instantaneous power of accepting some, refusing others, perfecting the outlines and colours of those we wish to keep, and arranging them in such relations as we choose.

And unquestionably the forms of the body which painters instinctively recognise as best, and call "beautiful," are so far under the command of the plastic force of voluntary thought, that the original and future authority of such a plastic force over the whole of creation cannot but seem to painters a direct, though not a certain, inference ; and they would at once give their adherence to the statement made many years since in his opening lectures in Oxford by the present Regius Professor of Medicine (as far as I can recollect approximately, in these terms),—that "it is quite as logical, and far more easy, to conceive of original anima as adapting to itself forms of substance, than of original substance as adapting to itself modes of mind."

It is surely therefore not too much to expect of future schools of metaphysicians that they will direct mankind into methods of thought which will be at once happy, unerring, and medicinal ; and therefore entirely wise ;—that they will mark the limits beyond which ingenuity must be dangerous, and speculation vain ; and that they will at no distant period terminate the acrimony of theologians, and the insolences, as well as the sorrows, of groundless faith, by showing that it is appointed for us, in common with the rest of the animal creation, to live in the midst of an universe the nature of which is as much better than we can believe, as it is greater than we can understand.

*NOTES.*

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Bishop of St David's  
" " Gloucester

Hutton

Huxley

Harrison

Archbishop of Westminster

Dr. Ward

Knowles.

Dr. Carpenter

Sely

Darwin.

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Dean Stanley

Hinton

Dr. Barry ?

April 25 18



Mr. Gouda

## EVIDENCE.

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By facts I mean things cognizable by the senses. There are facts of conscience not cognizable by the senses, but for the purposes of the present argument I limit the meaning of the word.

By probability or improbability I mean a sense of likelihood or unlikelihood gathered from the observation of facts. There may be other kinds of probability, derived from other sources, but only in a different subject-matter. We may if we please interpret external events by our internal convictions, but we can infer nothing from such convictions as to the likelihood or unlikelihood of the occurrence of this or that external event, or the truth of this or that fact. Plato argued that the motions of the heavenly bodies must be circular, because the circle was the most perfect figure. It was a good shot, but it was wrong.

A fact is likely when we have observed similar facts to occur under similar conditions. A fact is unlikely when we have seldom or never observed such facts to occur under such conditions; and the unlikelihood varies in degree between a faint improbability and absolute moral incredibility.

We believe on the simplest evidence, when there is no inherent unlikelihood in a fact alleged to have occurred, because it is more likely that an ordinary witness should speak truth than that he should lie without apparent motive. We disbelieve or we hesitate when a witness is notoriously inaccurate, or might have had a reason for deceiving us, or when the fact related is at variance with something else which we know or believe to be true.

If A tells me that he met B in the park, there being no reason why B should not have been in the park, and no presumption against A's credibility, I believe A.

B might have been equally well in a thousand other places, and if it had been merely my own conjecture that B was in the park, the odds would have been a thousand to one against my being right. A's simple assertion that he saw him there satisfies me, because there is a greater improbability that A would have invented the story gratuitously.

But if A tells me that he saw B drunk haranguing a mob in the park, B being a sober, cultivated, rational person, I suspend my belief. I conclude either that he mistook B for someone else, or that he had imperfectly observed what B was really doing.

Again, if A tells me that he saw B jump over the top of one of the tallest elm trees in the park, I then disbelieve absolutely. I become curious merely as to A's mental condition. I ask myself what could have induced him to tell me something which I know to be impossible. If he goes on to tell me that he has discovered that the reason why men do not habitually jump on elm trees is only a want of will, and alleges B's exploit as a proof of what a man can do who has confidence in himself, I no more believe the fact than I did before. The universality of experience, to the contrary, reduces the value of B's testimony to nothing, and I look on him merely as the victim of some theoretic or imaginative illusion.

To apply the illustration. I am told by a truthful person that a mesmeric patient has a power of perceiving objects which are beyond the reach of the ordinary senses. I listen with caution, because I have observed a tendency in myself and others to exaggerate the unusual features of anything which is presented to our notice,—to observe inaccurately, and to report more inaccurately.

Still, I do not wholly disbelieve. I have seen in animals an acuteness of sense which if not different in kind from our own is very much greater in degree. I admit the possibility that a material sensitiveness, possessed by creatures which are in so many ways like ourselves, may under certain conditions be developed in the human organs. But I examine closely into the details of the story. The less referable I find the details of it to classes of facts with which I am familiar elsewhere, the less credit I attach to the evidence. If the story as a whole contradicts universal experience, I set it down at once to ignorance or fraud.

I am informed, again, by a witness whose authority in an ordinary matter I should accept without scruple, that a table weighing a



quarter of a ton has raised itself deliberately on two legs, stood upright, walked about a room, and answered questions put to it by making mysterious noises, which it possessed some unknown means of uttering.

Had I been told this by persons of high scientific reputation—notoriously accomplished and notoriously careful in the examination of intricate phenomena—had they informed me that they had used every means to discover the cause of the movement, and were satisfied that it was due to some occult and unknown power, the authority of the evidence would have to be thrown into the scale against the unlikelihood of the fact. But I speak of the kind of testimony by which phenomena of this kind are in point of fact reported to us.

I have a right to regard all such stories with total indifference ; I feel perfectly certain either that no real action of the table took place at all, or that it was an optical illusion, or that it was effected by some concealed mechanical contrivance. I know how easily the senses can be deceived by conjuring. I learn from unvarying experience that the specific quantity of material bodies can be overcome only by a material force adequate to move them.

If I am told that the experience is not unvarying, that my own body, for instance, is moved by my mind, and that there may be some kind of mind or spirit in the table, I reply that the same experience tells me the power of self-movement is limited to creatures with a special organization and possessed of what we call life.

If I am told, again, that the innumerable instances of these abnormal phenomena reported by credible witnesses prove that experience has varied, I reply that a single instance would be sufficient, if reported by *competent* witnesses ; but that witnesses credible in common things are not credible in uncommon things ; and that the multiplication of their number adds nothing to the weight of their testimony. If the table would go through its performances in broad daylight before a jury of men of science and conjurers with the same success as in a drawing-room of amateurs, a case might be established for investigation. Till that has been done, the impressions of a million spectators are of no more consequence than the impression of one.

To take another instance. A person of remarkable ability informed

me that a dead girl had been restored to life by mesmerism. On this occasion the unusual character of my informant led me to inquire into the case. It appeared that the girl in question had fallen into a state of unconsciousness, from which the mesmerist believed that she would not have rallied without his assistance.

To prove a restoration to life by mesmerism, you must establish first beyond possibility of error the fact of death; secondly, that the person said to have been dead was really and truly again alive; thirdly, that mesmerism was the means by which the restoration was brought about; and this can only be done by repeated experiments. What is true of mesmerism is true of all other means by which these or similar effects are alleged to have been brought about in past times. I read in the "Life of St. Patrick" that the Irish apostle brought thirteen persons back to life at various times. I interpret the past by the present,—we cannot certainly know that what we call the laws of Nature have been the same in all ages, but we know enough to assure ourselves that the reality of a difference is extremely improbable. In history, as in science, the safer method is to explain what we read by causes at present in operation; and at present it is more likely that witnesses should be deceived or should deceive, than that dead men should come back to life. I infer, therefore, that either the whole story of these thirteen persons was a myth, or that the circumstances were imperfectly inquired into. It is more probable that there was a mistake of some kind, than that an experience should have varied, to which no exception has ever been proved.

The question is not of the truth of the fact, but of our attitude towards it with such lights as we possess. The Indian Prince who had never left the Tropics, was morally right in refusing to believe that water could become hard and allow him to walk upon it, so long as he had no reason to suppose that the visitor who had told him about ice knew more about the matter than himself. Had he been shown that although the temperature could not be lowered sufficiently in that latitude to freeze water, it could be raised to boiling-point and converted into steam; had he been thus enabled to see that the fluid state was not the only one which water was capable of receiving, part of his difficulty would have been removed, and he would have been justified in believing in the possibility of its assuming other conditions.

I do not say that it is impossible for dead people to be restored to life. We do not know what is possible and what is impossible. I maintain only, that so long as it is not an experiment capable of being repeated, a reasonable person will decline to believe in any alleged instance of such a thing. In every instance of a reported fact, we detract from the weight of the evidence the internal unlikelihood of the thing in itself. Where it is at variance with an experience which is otherwise uniform, the unlikelihood is at its highest and where an historical event of such a kind is alleged to have taken place long ago, where the witnesses cannot be cross-questioned or the circumstances otherwise examined into, I maintain that an implicit acquiescence in the truth of such a story is illegitimate, and so far as it is allowed to influence our conduct, is immoral.

#### NOTES.

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Mr. Hutton

MR. HERBERT SPENCER ON MORAL INTUITIONS AND MORAL SENTIMENTS.

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In the April number of the *Fortnightly Review* Mr. Spencer has taken some notice of the first paper read before this Society just two years ago, and has spoken of it in a manner which strikes me as a little harsh, that is, in relation to its fairness of intention. I refer especially to the sentence, "If, in his anxiety to suppress what he doubtless regards as a pernicious doctrine, Mr. Hutton could not wait until I had explained myself, it might have been expected that he would use whatever information was to be had for rightly construing it." Now, with regard to my supposed desire to suppress Mr. Spencer's doctrine as pernicious, it is but just to myself to say that it never occurred to me to think any theory 'pernicious,' except so far as it is false and misleading,—though I am far from holding that we have no clue to what is false, except purely intellectual tests,—and that still less did it ever occur to me to conceive that, in the present day, the theory of a great and deservedly famous thinker can be 'suppressed' by any other means than a really complete and convincing reply; least of all should I have dreamt that it could be suppressed through the misrepresentations of a very much obscurer and feebler thinker. As evidence of my innocent intentions, let me add that although Mr. Spencer had already declined to join our Society, I sent him notice through another member of it of the subject of my paper, asked him to reconsider his determination, and offered to put my essay into his hands two or three days before the meeting of the Society, that he might consider his criticisms at leisure, and let us have the benefit of them. The answer I received was,—though I cannot recall through whom the message went and returned,—that the special subject was one in which

Mr. Spencer felt the most eager possible interest, that such an oral discussion of it as was proposed would excite him very deeply, and that he should perhaps suffer for two or three days afterwards from the results; and finally, that he must decline once for all to join the Society on the grounds of health alleged. As I know that I have committed, though not as a member of this Society, sins (mainly of omission) partly towards one of Mr. Spencer's great works, which may have justified his somewhat harsh opinion of me, I feel less surprised at it than I otherwise might have done. But with whatever intellectual misapprehension of his view the essay on his letter to Mr. Mill concerning the origin of our moral sentiments, may be charged, I am sure that not a single word of ridicule or disrespect is to be found in it, as one expression of Mr. Spencer's would seem to imply;—and I am quite as sure that no effort of mine was wanting to get Mr. Spencer's own criticism upon the essay. I must apologize for taking up the Society's time with a personal explanation, but if one thing is more important than another, it is that the members of our Society should be, and should be known to be, incapable of using any unfair means to impair the weight of an opponent's view. For my own part, I hold that a life like Mr. Spencer's, devoted to the intense, disinterested, and, in a worldly sense, unprofitable, study of subjects in which the mass of mankind take little or no interest, and the immediate fruits of which do not even strike the imagination, as do the fruits of a like devotion to physical science, is too noble and too rare, to merit anything but sincere admiration even from those who accept comparatively few of his intellectual results.

And now, with regard to Mr. Spencer's doctrine of the origin of moral sentiments, I must admit that if his letter to Mr. Mill meant nothing more than his latest explanations seem to me to reduce it to, I quite misapprehended his view, in common, I imagine, with a good many other readers of that letter. I certainly understood that letter to indicate a view taken by Mr. Spencer in many respects in advance, and even in modification, of the views he had held before, and regarded it as a pregnant hint thrown out to reconcile Mr. Mill's utilitarianism with Mr. Spencer's own doctrine of gradual mental development on the one side, and with the intuitional theory of morals on the other. My attention was first drawn to the letter by a mention of it made in the *Fortnightly Review* by Mr. John Morley, who evidently looked upon it in a very similar light, as a great *aperçu* tending to reconcile

the intuitional and the experience schools of Ethics. But of this character Mr. Spencer's own latest explanations seem to me entirely to deprive it. Let me recall to the society what the problem was of which Mr. Spencer's letter shadowed forth a solution. Moralists have always been divided into two schools, the school which has regarded moral distinctions as mysterious and immutable, bearing their own authority upon their face, an authority which cannot be disregarded without enduring the special and unique suffering of remorse,—and the school which has regarded the distinction between morality and immorality as identical with the distinction between the balance of happiness or unhappiness to be ultimately produced by any given action, this last school being itself divided as to whether the happiness of other persons than the agent is to count as of equal weight with his own, or not to count at all except as it affects his own. I understood that Mr. Spencer, agreeing completely with neither of these schools, had caught a glimpse of a theory by which their psychology might be partly reconciled, and that he was stating this theory in the remarkable letter on which my essay was based. This must be my apology for not having considered it in close relation with Mr. Spencer's previous writings on Ethics, from the main ideas of which it seems to me to present remarkable divergencies. I must again quote the material passage of Mr. Spencer's letter to Mr. Mill, italicizing one or two phrases in it which are, I think, inconsistent with his last explanations:—"To make my position fully understood, it seems needful to add that corresponding to the fundamental propositions of a developed moral science, there have been and still are developing in the race certain *fundamental moral intuitions*: and that though these moral intuitions are the result of accumulated experiences of utility, gradually organized and inherited, *they have come to be* quite independent of conscious experience" (which surely implies that Mr. Spencer conceived that they had at one time *not* been "independent of conscious experience," which implication, however, I understand him now to repudiate.) "Just in the same way," proceeded Mr. Spencer, "that I believe the intuition of space possessed by any living individual to have arisen from organized and consolidated experiences of all antecedent individuals who bequeathed to him their slowly developed nervous organizations; just as I believe that this intuition, requiring only to be made definite and complete by personal experiences, has

practically become a form of thought quite independent of experience,—so do I believe that the experiences of utility, organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which by continued transmissions and accumulation have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition,—active emotions responding to right and wrong conduct which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility. I also hold that just as the space intuition responds to the exact demonstrations of geometry, and has its rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them, *so will moral intuitions respond to the demonstrations of moral science, and will have their rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them.*” I certainly understood, and think that other readers of this letter understood, this hint of Mr. Spencer’s to be directed to explain the mysterious sense of *obligation* appertaining to rules the ultimate origin of which was to be found in individual experiences of happiness and unhappiness,—that Mr. Spencer meant to say that we now recoil from conduct which our ancestors long ago had discovered to be productive of a great balance of unhappiness, with a force measurable rather by their educated experience (gradually elicited and accumulated through many generations) of its miserable results,—measurable, that is, by a long tradition of intelligent abhorrence,—than by any experience which one short childhood, or youth, or even maturity could provide; and that this inherited disposition to recoil from it with far more force than any individual experience of its evil results would warrant, is what we now express by speaking of the mysterious sense of moral obligation to abstain from it. Taking Mr. Spencer’s own illustration from geometry as my guide, I understood that just as our ancestors’ habitual experience of space has, in his opinion, prepared our nervous system for catching the first hints afforded by our own individual experience of space so easily that we really seem to dispense with the need of further experience, so our ancestors’ habitual experience of certain evil and good results of particular sorts of conduct, has prepared our nervous system for catching equally readily, and equally in a manner which seems to anticipate and dispense with the need of complete personal experience, the first hints afforded by our own individual experience of the happy and unhappy results of conduct. But Mr. Spencer tells me that this is not at all what he meant, that he was not speaking at all of the

organization of ancestral experiences of utility, that is, of happiness-producing, or unhappiness-producing, conduct, into a faculty which anticipates as if by inspiration the teaching of experience on these points; but solely of the growth of perfectly vague and flexible emotions, such as those which we experience in the presence of beautiful scenery, those which render "the cawing of rooks" agreeable to us, or those which disillusionize for us, in after life, the sweetness of any "jam" which may have been repeatedly administered to us as children after castor-oil. "Mr. Hutton has assumed," he says, "that in the genesis of moral feelings as due to inherited experiences of the pleasures and pains arising from certain modes of conduct, I am speaking of reasoned-out experiences,—experiences consciously accumulated and generalized." (This is, to some degree, a mistake; I *did* assume that the experiences, whether "reasoned-out" or otherwise, of which Mr. Spencer was speaking, were supposed by him to be sufficiently homogeneous in form to educate our apprehensions of happiness and unhappiness-producing conduct from generation to generation; but I did not at all assume that *all* these educating experiences were supposed to be consciously "reasoned-out." I followed the geometrical hint Mr. Spencer himself gave. Mr. Spencer not only admits, but maintains, that the faculty for judging of space is educated as much by implicit, that is, by unconscious and ungeneralized, as by generalized and conscious experience.) "He altogether overlooks the fact," proceeds Mr. Spencer, "that the genesis of emotions is distinguished from the genesis of ideas in this; that whereas the ideas are composed of elements that are simple, definitely related, and (in the case of general ideas) constantly related, emotions are composed of enormously complex aggregates of elements which are never twice alike, and that stand in relations which are never twice alike. The difference in the resulting modes of consciousness is this:—In the genesis of an idea, the successive experiences, be they sounds, colours, touches, tastes, or be they of the special objects that combine many of these into groups, have so much in common that each when it occurs can be definitely thought of as like those which preceded it. But in the genesis of an emotion, the successive experiences so far differ that each of them, when it occurs, suggests past experiences which are not specifically similar, but have only a general similarity; and at the same time, it suggests benefits or evils in past experience,

which likewise are various in their special natures, though they have a certain community of general nature."

This is subtle and true, but I can only say that Mr. Spencer's letter to Mr. Mill certainly seemed to contemplate in its description of the "organization and consolidation" of the "experiences of utility," the genesis of something much more like what he here describes as "an idea," than what he here describes as "an emotion," inasmuch as it expressly taught that the process results in "moral intuitions" which will "*respond to the demonstrations of moral science, and have their rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them.*" And I cannot help still thinking that Mr. Spencer himself was really contemplating experiences much more *like* intellectual experiences in their homogeneity, when he wrote this letter, than he now supposes. For he was confessedly explaining the apparently *a priori* character of moral impressions,—their "intuitional" character. Now he tells us emphatically in one of the passages in his "Principles of Psychology" to which he has referred me in this reply, that "in their more involved phases these compound forms of feeling differ from the compound forms of thought partly in this, that the assemblages of external attributes and actions and relations to which they answer, are immensely more extensive, far more concrete, and extremely miscellaneous and variable in their ultimate components. *One consequence of this is that they never lose their empirical character.*" ("Principles of Psychology," second edition, pp. 491-2.) Now I understood, and certainly Mr. Spencer understood, that in his letter to Mr. Mill he was explaining how our moral sentiments do come to "lose their empirical character," and to assume the form of "moral intuitions;" and if I had not understood this, I should not have been specially interested by the letter, and certainly the paper to which Mr. Spencer has now replied would never have been written. If, therefore, Mr. Spencer now abandons this ground altogether,—as to me he seems to do,—there is little, if anything, left to criticize; he has simply identified his theory of the moral sentiments with that of the old school of the associative utilitarianism, and his theory on this point at least is only distinguishable from theirs by the greater importance he attaches to the strengthening of certain emotional dispositions through the law of inheritance.

In the theory presented by Mr. Spencer in the April number of the *Fortnightly Review*, there is little explicit reference to this *a priori*

character of the moral feelings on which he had so much insisted in his letter to Mr. Mill, and indeed, as I understand it, his reply is not far short of a virtual retraction of the most striking point in that letter. According to his latest presentation of the history of the growth of our moral sentiments, there is indeed so much of change, so little of homogeneity or of constancy of moral experience of any kind, that it would be simply impossible for such a generic history to "organize and consolidate" our experience into such "moral intuitions" as the letter to Mr. Mill shadowed forth. I will very briefly condense an exposition which I hope that most of our Society have studied for themselves.

Mr. Spencer holds that very early in the history of gregarious animals,—animals forced into association and common action by the necessity of self-defence,—there begins to organize itself a vague experience both of the signs and of the causes of social approbation and disapprobation. Certain visible and audible signs, such as a mild eye and a soft voice, or a furious eye and a harsh voice, are regular antecedents of pleasure or pain to those creatures which excite them; and soon these signs are also very closely associated with the sort of actions which are most likely to excite them. This goes on till the nerves of a young creature, even without experience of its own, shrink back instinctively from those manifestations which have habitually scared its ancestors. Thus a puppy shrinks from a savage growl or from a threatening stick, before it has had definite experience of the pains likely to follow either the one or the other, and will in time learn to shrink far more than its own experience warrants, even from the actions which are likely to elicit the growl or the shaking of the stick. In like manner a class of vague deterrent emotions grow up which scare the young savage away from actions usually entailing pain on others, and therefore followed by the displeasure of others, and a class of vague attractive emotions grow up which attract him to actions usually causing pleasure to others, and therefore followed by their approbation. "He has no thought of the utility and inutility of the act itself; the deterrent is the mainly vague, but partially definite, fear of evil that may follow." Thus the young savage finds acts of courage constantly associated with signs of approbation and with reward, acts of cowardice with the reverse, and this accumulates through generations till acts of courage call up in his descendants a vague emotion of liking or

attraction, and acts of cowardice one of dread and dislike more than in proportion to their own experience. The same may happen with regard to actions now considered barbarous and bad; the public opinion of savage tribes often makes wife-stealing praiseworthy, and marrying within the tribe criminal, till the mind of a young savage may approve the former, and abhor the latter with what would be, if his individual experience alone had educated him, an unreasonable degree of force. Further, acts which elicit "an average of pleasurable results" are at length supposed to be seen and approved and rewarded by the ghost or spirit of some dead hero of the tribe, while acts that elicit "an average of painful results" are supposed to be disapproved and punished by the same sort of imaginary but invisible agency. Hence arises an enormous extension of the range of the 'deterrent' and 'attractive' emotions above described, since they will now include even secret acts not visible to the eyes of the tribe, and the grandeur of the traditions which prohibit or sanction them will raise them enormously in imaginative importance. The obligation of "subordination" or the sinfulness of "insubordination" to a divine ruler whose commands were originally representatives of the average feeling of society towards particular classes of acts, is, according to Mr. Spencer, the main substance of the moral sentiment in the mediæval period of human history. Finally, with the growth of a higher sympathy with the feelings of others, which requires, as Mr. Spencer justly observes, for its proper exercise a parallel growth in the intellectual power of interpreting the *signs* of other persons' feelings, the moral sentiment bursts the bounds of this sense of "subordination" and "insubordination" to an invisible punishing and rewarding power and the object of it becomes the increase of human welfare at large, desired for its own sake, and no longer for any vague dread or hope of the spiritual consequences to the individual of regarding or disregarding it.

Now in this exposition of Mr. Spencer's we have ground perfectly familiar to the historian of ethics, and it is obvious that the "mystic extension," to use Mr. Mill's phrase, of the moral sentiment which it describes, is much more due to the hypothesis of a supernatural being, representing the public opinion of the day, and vigilantly watching the agent, than to that of the accumulation of moral sentiments through inherited experience. And necessarily so. For it is

quite impossible that feelings so vague as Mr. Spencer describes, and, what is still more to the point, going through such shifting phases of character from generation to generation, according as the external conditions of society change and the greatest need of one generation becomes the greatest dread of another, could be so "consolidated" and "accumulated" as to gain from inheritance any *a priori* character at all. Instead of the constant and uniform re-enforcement of old experience, which, as Mr. Spencer maintains, gives rise to the perception of mathematical necessity, we have here constantly dispersive and discontinuity-causing forces at work, which cause, for instance, the public opinion of a pacific and commercial society to diverge most widely from the public opinion of a martial and feudal society. Mr. Spencer shows us only a diorama of dissolving moral views, beginning with the savage shrinking back inwardly from any appearance of shrinking outwardly from pain, and ending with the enlightened humanitarian shrinking back inwardly from any appearance of *not* shrinking outwardly from the disposition to inflict pain. How such a history is to produce an *a priori* intensity of moral sentiment, arising, or supposed to arise, from the inheritance of constantly repeated and always coherent states of feeling, it is impossible to conceive. Take the case of courage. Mr. Spencer thinks that a savage would soon have his imagination impressed by the contempt and hatred felt for every member of the tribe who was cowardly, and the admiration felt for every one who was forward in battle, and that the conception of an invisible Chief, entertaining the same sentiments, would strengthen this impression. Well, but is not courage as much held a virtue now as ever? And yet has not our history been broken by innumerable links in the social chain, in which courage was by no means favourable to the society as a whole,—to say nothing of the innumerable *women* in whom it has not been held a desirable characteristic of external conduct at all,—and has not the religion of the greater number of recent centuries laid extremely little stress on physical as distinguished from moral courage? Yet *moral* courage, from the nature of the case, has rarely been, and rarely could have been, favoured by any public opinion, as it means the courage requisite to defy that opinion. Or take the virtue of candour or sincerity. Among savages this is confessedly, from the point of view of the public interest, rather a weakness than a virtue. Even to the Greeks the power of complete

dissimulation was obviously one of those best appreciated by public opinion. And in which state of society up to the present time has absolute simplicity and frankness been considered to conduce to the public interest? Nothing seems to me more certain than that no one of our highest moral sentiments could quote anything like an unbroken catena of sanction from the public opinion and policy of successive generations even for a hundred years together. Is it not perfectly idle, then, to talk of the growth not only of a moral sentiment, but of a moral sentiment which should seem to be of a *a priori* validity, from the accumulations of past experience? It did seem to me—not a true, but a subtle and ingenious, and, as it is termed, *tenable* hypothesis, to assert that the capacity for perceiving (implicitly or explicitly, *i.e.*, for either *discerning* or, so to say, *scenting*) utility in human actions might grow indefinitely with the race; and that hypothesis I endeavoured to refute. But it does not seem to me to be even a tenable hypothesis that if this be not so, the *a priori* character of moral sentiments, for a moment at least admitted by Mr. Spencer, can be attributed to the inherited accumulation of emotions towards particular courses of conduct which have perpetually changed their phases (and therefore, as Mr. Spencer truly says, necessarily lost all chance of taking an *a priori* character) with almost every fresh link in the chain of hereditary transmission.

The general moral of this controversy seems to me to be, first, that the experience-philosophy, as represented by Mr. Spencer and its ablest modern advocates, is opening its eyes, more candidly than at any previous time, to the strong side of its opponents' case: but next, that it is (necessarily) failing to account for that strong side by any manipulation of its own materials, even though re-enforced by the very valuable and prolific principle of infinitesimal accretions by hereditary transmission, and represented by men as capable of great intellectual *tours de force* as Mr. Mill and Mr. Spencer. It fails even in its most hopeful effort,—to account for the 'necessary' character of geometric truths, though here all human experience has really been one and homogeneous,—for there remain plenty of the truths of absolutely universal experience which do not seem 'necessary' to our intelligence,—for example, we had no difficulty in believing that a man *might* see without using his eyes, when it was first asserted that clairvoyants had so seen, though it was a question of fact,—while

the truths of geometry and arithmetic do so seem. It fails still more completely in attempting to account for the development of a regulating moral principle out of the external conditions of gregariousness or association, at least without some *petitio principii* virtually assuming such a principle as the very basis of that association. The public opinion of what is expedient must, of course, change with the external condition of society, and the hypothesis of the spirit of a dead hero or other artificial representative of the public opinion of a previous generation, will only disturb and confuse, instead of re-enforcing, the public opinion of that society in its next phase. Unless there be a real authority establishing an internal order in man, the public opinion of society will never be more than a tyranny of the majority, mollified by habit. If it is more than this, and can generate in us that which "responds," to use Mr. Spencer's language, "to the demonstrations of moral science," it must be built on something much firmer than the pleasures and pains, even the "sympathetic" pleasures and pains, of our variable and inconstant race.

My thesis, then, is this, that Mr. Spencer's philosophy as expounded by himself, leaves no room at all for anything that can be called moral 'intuitions,' and that even the moral 'sentiments' whose growth he describes must be of the most variable kind, and subject to the most arbitrary changes of form.

*NOTES.*

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Bishop of Gloucester & Bristol

## WHAT IS DEATH?

Ἦρα μὴ ἄλλο τι ἢ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἀπαλλαγὴν; καὶ εἶναι τοῦτο τὸ τεθνάναι, χωρὶς μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπαλλαγὴν αὐτὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ τὸ σῶμα γεγόνειναι, χωρὶς δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἀπαλλαγείσαν αὐτὴν καθ' ἑαυτὴν εἶναι; ἄρα μὴ ἄλλο τι ὁ Θάνατος ἢ τοῦτο; Οὐκ, ἀλλὰ τοῦτο, ἔφη.—PLATO, *Phædo*, p. 64 c.

It has been observed by Büchner in a recent work on man's position in the world, that great philosophers have spoken of Death as the foundation of all philosophy. How far this is to be accepted as universally true may perhaps be open to question, but this aspect of the statement will probably be admitted by all,—that Death is one of the most dark and difficult subjects with which philosophy has to deal. However we may account for the difficulties in which we always find ourselves involved whenever we attempt to solve questions connected with Death and Life, the presence of such difficulties can never be denied. In all such questions we find ourselves continually confronted by an unresolved factor; there is always an element which we cannot account for or explain; we have always an equation involving an unknown quantity which defies our most subtle analysis.

It may be well to bear this in mind in attempting to answer the question which stands at the head of this paper. To give a full and satisfactory answer is probably completely beyond the power of metaphysics or philosophy, but to consider some of the answers that have been made, and to make such approximations as modern science or speculation may help us in making, lies fairly within our powers, and will be attempted in the following paper.

Let us not fail to observe at the outset, that there are clearly two

ways of attempting to answer the question "What is Death?" We may either deal with the question generally and abstractedly, or we may limit it to the case of personal beings such as ourselves. If we take the first of the two ways, we can hardly avoid dealing, first, with the question of Life; the most obvious answer to the question of the paper, and the most convenient position from which to start, clearly being the axiomatic assertion that Death is the cessation of Life. If we adopt this course, we must first obtain the best definition of Life with which science or philosophy can supply us, and then arrive at our conception of Death by considering how and where the definition must be altered, so as to be brought into conformity with the axiomatic statement from which we seem justified in taking our departure. For example, if we were to take Mr. Herbert Spencer's careful definition, and agree to consider Life as "a definite combination of heterogeneous changes both simultaneous and successive," we might certainly thus arrive at an answer to our question; and we should very probably concur in fixing the *differentia* of Death in the indefiniteness of the changes combined with some limitation of their heterogeneity. But here two things are plain; first, that we should have to make ourselves sure that our definition of Life was correct; secondly, that if it were proved to be so, and this conception of Death arrived at in the way indicated, we should only find ourselves left among abstractions, with the difficult question of Death, as considered with reference to a personal being, nearly as unanswered as before.

It would seem better at once to decide on limiting ourselves in this discussion to the second aspect of the subject, and to confine ourselves to an attempt to answer the question before us, so far as it bears upon individual and personal beings such as ourselves.

This may not be the most philosophical mode of dealing with the question; but in adopting it we are certainly confronting the question on its more difficult side, and we are also as certainly taking into more prominent consideration that which, by the nature of the case, never fails most to engage our interest and attention.

The plain truth is, this is one of those questions in which we have a very serious *personal* interest, and no general answers to such a query as that put forward at the head of this paper *really* satisfy, unless they are so framed as to take in some reference to ourselves and our own personal connection with the subject. Mere abstrac-

tions leave us still seeking and disappointed. Prove to a man by as flawless a demonstration as the mind can conceive that Death is "the final equilibration which precedes dissolution," and so "the bringing to a close of all those integrated motions in any body which arose during its evolution,"—prove this, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred you will have but feebly interested him. The personal question is always the question of real interest, and that question will ever force itself into the foreground. "Be it so," we say, "let Death be such a closing equilibration, but when the process so defined is completed, *what am I?* Am I existent in any sense of the word, or have I and integrated motions ceased together? Have I been reduced to *Nirvritti*, or, worse still for my egoism, to *Nirvāna*? Have I passed into mere passivity, or have I become fairly blown out? What is Death when thus considered relatively to that Ego which I call myself?"

This is the aspect under which I now purpose to consider the broad and general question.

But even when the question is thus narrowed, and we try to shape out our answers from the dim hints supplied either by scientific investigations or by personal consciousness, we are at once made to feel how little we have actually advanced in positive knowledge during the 2,250 years which have come and gone, since the time when Plato put into the mouth of Socrates the words which form the sort of motto to this paper.

Science no doubt has done something. The striking speculations of the last twenty years in connection with life and vital forces have certainly suggested some new conceptions. Physiology, as Professor Jowett well observes, though it has brought us no nearer to the great secret, has nevertheless tended to remove some erroneous notions respecting the relations of body and mind. This may be fairly admitted; but still when we return closely to grapple with the question, and especially under the aspects in which we are now considering it, we find, after all, that our answers are only a little better classified than formerly; a little more distinct in form, but in substance pretty much what they have ever been.

Three answers, at any rate, seem to deserve special consideration. We may say, for instance, that Death is to the Ego simple Dissolution; or, again, we may show cause why it should be regarded rather as Resolution. Or thirdly, we may view it under the idea of Out-

going and Migration, and regard it as a process by which the immaterial is sundered from the material, what the younger Fichte calls *Entsinnlichung*.

Let us shortly analyze these three answers, and subject them to a few tests of reason and common-sense.

The first answer is one which, however cheerless it may be, is probably engaging the present attention of purely scientific men more than either of the others. The mysterious alliance that seems to exist between the phenomena of what is called vitality and those of the more subtle imponderable forces; the plausibility of the reference of all vital energy to a definite and material source, viz., the sun; the consequent possibility that this energy may thus, after all, be, as Professor Tyndall has suggested, of a proximately mechanical origin; the apparent identity which some experiments (as, for instance, those with the nerve-centres of certain electric fishes) have been thought to establish between nerve-force and electricity,—all such considerations certainly do prepare the way for the unpalatable conception that the Ego is only the product of certain structural forces; and that life is, so to say, only the running down of a weight which natural forces had raised, and that when the downward-bearing forces cease to work and the weight has reached its lowest point, then that it is all over with the Ego. The various structural and cohesive forces which kept the molecules of the human body together in all their manifold changes and successions, and so co-ordinated them as to have presumably preserved within the Ego the sense of personal identity, at last fail, and the Ego which was the theatre as well as the result of their operations becomes broken up, dissipated, and dissolved. Death, thus considered, is the final disintegration, however caused, of that which, when in its state of integration and when under the action of the structural forces, was and constituted the Ego. Under these aspects Death may be shortly defined to be the material breaking-up of the Ego, whether from internal wear and tear or external causes, or from both combined; and the consequent dissipation of the personality.

Such is the first answer to the question, which, as is obvious, is the answer of pure Materialism. It has this claim on our consideration that it makes but few assumptions, tacit or otherwise. It professes to rest, and for the most part does rest, on observed phenomena; it is further, as it would seem, not out of harmony with

more recent scientific investigations. Its weak point clearly is, that it neither includes nor suggests a satisfactory explanation of such processes as those of willing and thinking, and certainly fails adequately to explain the emergence of, and subsequent maturation of, the consciousness of personality. In this respect it could hardly be deemed satisfactory in reference to an animal even of the lower genera, as it would seem, at any rate at present, distinctly unable to give any account of the genesis of many of those actions or processes which we popularly associate with the confessedly vague term, instinct. In the case of an individual and personal being like ourselves, this unsatisfactoriness is greatly enhanced; as it must fairly be admitted that all the difficulties connected with the subject are greatly increased as we pass from the mere members of a genus to the case of individuals like ourselves. The remark of the Danish thinker Martensen seems perfectly just, and to admit of general application, viz., that if we concede Death to be natural for existence generally, it by no means follows that it is natural for an individual and personal being. Of course, the replication to all such objections is, that the answer is not really concerned with these further questions, but with the facts of the case as it finds them; if it gives a consistent account of the facts, we are bound so far to be satisfied. Yes, certainly, we *are* bound; but still if any other answer be found which equally gives a consistent account of the phenomena, and does also cover more ground in the very direction in which it seems to want covering, why, there is nothing very illogical in preferring it.

These considerations will have now prepared us for more fully appreciating and more fairly estimating the second answer to the question of the paper, which, for want of a better term, I have associated with the word Resolution.

In this answer a distinction between vital, and natural or chemical, forces is both asserted and maintained. Both classes of forces are regarded as operative in the living organism; both are deemed to preserve a due co-ordination to each other when in actual working; but the origination of the action of the so-called natural and chemical forces is always referred to the antecedent action of some so-called vital force, however feeble or obscurely initial that action may really or supposably have been. There is some *divinæ particula auræ*, whencesoever it may have come, that gave the first start. In the stored-up reservoir of the water of individual existence (to use

the remarkable illustration of Descartes and Professor Tyndall) it is the something that pushes away the plug, and sets the water running. More, this something, it is alleged, continues to act, modifies, and itself is modified by, the downward flow. Physiology is confidently claimed as substantiating the general truth of such a concession. Facts and phenomena are often specified which seem positively to be inexplicable except on the assumption of some plastic power other than that due even to the highest conceivable action of merely natural or chemical forces. Such terms, vague as they really are, as *vis medicatrix naturæ* and the like, are all indications at least of the widely spread persuasion that forces are at work within us which are essentially and qualitatively different to any of those with which experimental philosophy has yet come in contact. If we accept this view, the Ego, as before, may be regarded as both the sphere and the product of the interaction of the above-named forces, and Death as the termination of the interaction,—the termination being due on the one hand, to the cessation of the action of the natural and chemical forces, whether by waste of substrata or by special external agency; and, on the other hand, to the return of the co-operative vital forces into the general life of nature. The forces which had been united previously with varying degrees of closeness, are at last resolved into their component parts, and the personality which was felt and recognized during their union and interaction, ceases to be either felt or recognized on their completed resolution. The Ego is not, strictly speaking, broken up or dissipated, but it simply ceases to be.

Such is the second answer to the question, the current answer of Pantheism. It has obviously some advantages over that which has been previously given. In the first place, we can give in some degree a better account of the intellectual side of our nature, and can, perhaps also, to a certain extent, give an account of the emergence and subsequent consciousness of personality. It may even further be said, that though the personality ceases when the resolution takes place, yet that the receding vital forces carry with them into the common life of nature some tokens of the uses to which they had been put, and so, that a feeble auroral light of our former selves still lingers on the horizon of being. In such a sense we have a kind of dispersed immortality,—not merely such an immortality as the poet had in his conception when he said that a great part of him

would escape Libitina,—as an immortality to which probably Büchner alludes, when he says that we live “in nature, in our race, in our children, in our neighbours,” as well as in our works and in our thoughts.

Perhaps the *real* view of Aristotle in his remarkable, but often enigmatical treatise, *De Anima* was substantially the same as this. When he seems to regard the soul as a quickening essence, of which the very existence retreats into nothingness when it has nothing left that it can act upon, he cannot be regarded as very far from the substance of the answer that has just been given. Whether, however, this acute thinker can be claimed as on this side or no, it is certain that, from the very dawn of Philosophy down to the present time, there never have been wanting a succession of close and consistent thinkers, who, if such a question had been propounded as that now before us, would have substantially adopted this second form of answer.

But still it is impossible to be satisfied with such an answer. Even if we set aside all other difficulties connected with the acceptance of such a view of Death,—if we consent to regard the longings for immortality only as disguised forms of self-love,—if we put out of sight all the various difficulties and counter-arguments which rest on the apparent endurance of the consciousness of personality, and on the whole theory of ideas,—if we are prepared to regard the prevailing consent of the more enlightened portions of mankind as only due to tradition and to prejudice,—if we thus set aside all other difficulties connected with such an answer, the ethical difficulty remains, and that difficulty will be judged by many as simply insuperable. The wicked, as Plato observed, would get too well off, if either the first or the second answer were the true one. The sense of justice, the persuasion that good in the long run must be rewarded and evil punished, could never be the strong feeling it is within us if the true conception of Death was either one or other of those which we have already noticed. The more we consider the world, the more, as Rothe observes in his recently published lectures, do we feel that it has a moral purpose, which moral purpose is only to be sought for in man. If this be so, then surely any views in reference to man's existence that must often, by the nature of the case, completely negative any such conception of moral purpose, cannot possibly be regarded as free from the gravest doubt and suspicion.

There are many who think that the objection founded on our inward and, as it would seem, inextinguishable persuasion that our personal existence endures indefinitely, is a still stronger argument than the one already specified; but be this as it may, no fair reasoner can deny that the two combined present obstacles to an acceptance of the second answer which it does not seem too much to characterize as insuperable.

We may now, lastly, pass onward to a short consideration of the third answer, according to which Death is regarded as an outgoing, a departure of the immaterial Ego from its material environment. Under this conception, the real Ego is considered as an inmate of the body; closely indeed united with it, and in many respects even influenced and modified by it, but still ultimately separable from it, and capable of maintaining a personal existence without it. Death, thus considered, is the departure of the inmate, or perhaps, more exactly, its Outgoing;<sup>1</sup> which, it is maintained, takes place when from decay or unusual external action the natural and chemical forces within the organism fail in their adjustment (to use the language of Mr. Spencer) to the relations in the environment. This outgoing may be hasty or lingering, precipitated or gradual, but still, if we trust physiology in this dark domain of speculation, even in those cases where it would seem to be most sudden it is a process not actually completed at once. In the distinction which physiologists draw between general or somatic death and particular and molecular death, and the varying spaces of time that ensue between the former and the latter, we may see some hint at least that the complete withdrawal of the inmate may not really be so sudden and abrupt as

<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps interesting to notice that the very word "Death" has been considered by some philologists as involving the idea of expiration, or outgoing of breath. It is connected by both Curtius (*Grundzüge der Griech. Etymol.*, p. 497) and Grimm (*Gesch. der Deutsch. Sprache*, vol. 1, p. 404) with the Gothic verb *divan* (*dāw*), the ground-idea of which is stated to be 'expire.' It is not improbable that there is, in the background, the same idea in *θάνατος*. It is often connected with *θεν* and ideas of "striking" (Bötticher connects it with the Armenian *zen-*, the Zend *zan*, and the Sanscrit *han*, 'kill'), but it is not improbable that Curtius is right in his reference of the word to the Sanscrit *dham*, and to ideas of 'blowing' or 'breath.' The Latin word *mors*, and perhaps *μαραίνω* and *marcesco* (compare the Persian and Armenian *mard*, 'a man') are connected with the Sanscrit *mri*, which probably involves no further idea than that of 'perire.'

it often seems to be. The strange phenomena of trances and of suspended animation seem to point in the same direction. Such, at any rate, is the third answer to the question,—the old and popular answer, but not necessarily, for that reason, not the true one. Indeed, the general agreement of the more enlightened portion of mankind in the general outlines of the answer, is rightly specified by Professor Jowett as one of the more trustworthy foundations on which a belief in its truth may be disposed to rest.

But it must not be disguised that such an answer involves great, though, as it would seem, by no means insuperable difficulties. We will specify two. In the first place, we have a clear difficulty as to the true Ego. The Ego would at first sight seem to be the Ego which our senses recognize,—the phenomenal body *with* its assumed inmate; but if we accept the answer now under consideration, we must regard this seeming Ego not as the real and essential Ego, but as the Ego under external manifestations. Now, this is really difficult. Body and this assumed inmate seem really to be inseparable not only in fact, but perhaps, as Professor Jowett seems to think, even in our conceptions. This is the first and chief difficulty. The second is a deduction from it, viz., the great difficulty of forming any exact idea of this inmate, this essential Ego—call it soul, if you will—when separated from the body. The moment we begin to form any conception of it, we seem either to share the old fear, to which Socrates playfully alludes, that when set free it would be blown away, and that thus *Nirvāna*, after all, would be more than a possibility; or, to speak a little more philosophically, to conceive it at least as possible that this viewless Ego might really, from pure inability to maintain an independent existence, be drawn back into the spiritual and universal, and at last lose personal existence and individuality. We should then have drifted back to the second answer, and to all the difficulties which such an answer appeared to involve.

There are difficulties, then, connected with this third answer which cannot lightly be dismissed; but as we have already said, they do not seem to be insuperable. There are two considerations, both suggested by science, that seem in a great degree to relieve us. In the first place, the more we prosecute physical discoveries, the more we seem forced to recognize in all things around active principles and ultimate essences, which, so to speak, are the souls and *partes optimæ*; entelechies, to borrow a term from old philosophy, of the

objects and substances around us. Such a recognition, at any rate, prepares the way for the idea of a real Ego, wearing awhile the garments of the body, co-ordinating the forces that build up its structure, looking out of the windows of its eyes, hearing through its ears, feeling by its nerves,—its active principle, its true and probably not wholly immaterial essence.

In the second place, we are reminded by physiology that the phenomenal Ego is never the same phenomenal Ego for any consecutive minute. Independent observations seem to prove that the animal body, on an average, wastes daily one twenty-fourth part of its entire weight. And yet personal identity remains unchanged. The real Ego is unaffected by all this ceaseless coming and going of atoms and molecules. Those that come take the places of those that go, and perform all the atomic duties with the same regularity. The changing sentinels, as Professor Tyndall very beautifully expresses it, communicate their pass-words, and all goes on as systematically and regularly as before. Surely such facts render the conception possible of a formative entity within, an essential Ego that not only survives the successive waves of change, but orders the disposition of the molecules of which they are composed, and by the agency of natural forces acting through a living and organized body, maintains that body as long as the forces within it will work.

Such considerations, to say the very least, mitigate the difficulties connected with the third answer, and even prepare us to expect that further physical researches, though bringing us no nearer to the great mystery of Life, may nevertheless add plausibility to the assumptions on which the third answer rests, and may silently remove some of its present attendant difficulties. We owe much to physiological science, and particularly to one of its most able exponents, Dr. Carpenter, for making it now perfectly clear that though there may be a certain amount of correlation between vital and physical forces, yet that the *differentia* between them is distinct and well defined, and that it is to be sought for in the nature of the material substratum through which they work, whether that be inorganic matter or an organized structure. Such generalizations are helpful and suggestive; we owe much to them, and in the future we may owe still more.

I will conclude this paper with four reflections, which though perhaps not directly flowing from the subject, are still in close alliance with it, and may not be considered as wholly superfluous.

First, that there does not seem anything very unreasonable in the opinion of many modern psychologists that the indwelling Ego or soul may have form, and even some kind of subtle corporeity, so that when it leaves the body and becomes unclothed, it may still preserve some distinct objective existence.

Secondly, that there is also nothing unreasonable in the supposition, that it may hereafter occupy another body, the elements of which it may aggregate from the surrounding environment, and may dispose and distribute in some kind of accordance with the agencies by which it has been supposed to work in reference to its present body.

Thirdly, the whole consideration of the subject seems to leave behind a feeling, if not actually a conviction, that to personal beings like ourselves there is something *alien* in Death, something that seems to indicate disturbance and dislocation, and stands in sharp contrast with the ideas of orderly progress and beneficent changes. This is, to some extent, confirmed by the prevalence of the fear of death, which, though as Sir Benjamin Brodie has noticed, rare when Death has actually arrived, is still undoubtedly one of the common feelings of our race, and in some countries, as I believe to this day in Madagascar, often shows itself in a very startling manner.

Lastly, that if there is any truth whatever in the last observation, the opinion of many early thinkers and the judgment of a provincial council, is not utterly absurd, viz., that Death originally might not have been an absolute necessity for a personal being, but that anything we may conceive as possible for ourselves hereafter might have been arrived at by gradual change, rather than by the apparently abrupt and discontinuous processes of physical Death.

But here we must stop. We have arrived at what would seem, as far as the present subject is concerned, to the furthest bound to which it is safe for mere speculation to advance, and may prudently forbear, with such lights as we now are using, from attempting to penetrate further into the gloom. We commenced with a motto from Plato, we may close with a sober sentiment from Pindar :—

. . . . ἔλῃ δὲ καὶ τέσσαρας  
ἀρετὰς ὁ μακρὸς αἰὼν, φρονεῖν  
δ' ἐνέπει τὸ παρκεῖμενον.

**NOTES.**

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*

Professor Maurice

## ON THE WORDS "NATURE," "NATURAL," AND "SUPERNATURAL."

Most readers of Lucretius must have asked themselves what he meant by the splendid invocation to Venus, the mother of the Romans, with which his poem opens. He could not hope to propitiate his countrymen by affecting a respect for the mythology which he was about to defy and attack. To suppose that he resorted to a vulgar personification would be equally to slander his character as a Poet and as a Philosopher. The obvious answer, which is derived from the context, that he saw a principle of love or desire quickening the breasts of all creatures, is true as far as it goes. But it does not account for his saying, "*Thou alone governest the Nature of Things.*"<sup>1</sup> The Nature of Things was to be the subject of his work. He desired to vindicate it from the associations by which it had been surrounded in popular opinion. Only a few lines further on, we read (I adopt Professor Munro's version) of those first beginnings of things "out of which *Nature* gives birth to all things and nourishment and increase."<sup>2</sup> Here Nature has risen to be the author of the whole Kosmos. A little after he attributes the dread which men feel of the future to their ignorance of the *Nature* of the soul, whether it be born or, on the contrary, is insinuated into men at their birth, whether it perishes together with us when severed from us by death or visits the shades of Orcus."<sup>3</sup>

The Nature of the Soul answers to the Nature of Things in the title of the Poem. It has lost its creative character. Then we hear

<sup>1</sup> Quæ quoniam rerum naturam sola gubernas.—1st book, line 21.

<sup>2</sup> Unde omnes Natura creet res auctetque alatque.—Line 56.

<sup>3</sup> Ignoratur enim quæ sit natura Animæ,  
Nata sit an contra nascentibus insinuetur,  
Et simul intereat nobis cum morto dirempta  
An tenebras Orci visat vastasque lacunas.—Lines 112-115.

of a darkness cast over the mind by superstition which must be dispelled not by the rays of the Sun and the glittering shafts of day, but by the aspect and Law of Nature.<sup>1</sup> There is a Law, or principle, or purpose, to be discovered in the phenomena of Nature which is not to be confounded with them. But presently Nature resumes her dignity as the Creatrix of Man. "Why," the poet asks, and is prepared with an answer. Could not *Nature* produce men of such size and strength as to be able to wade on foot across the sea and to rend great mountains with their hands?<sup>2</sup> Once more Nature appears in the opposite character, not indeed as an absolute destroyer of things, but as reducing them into their elements; the death-giving as before the life-giving power. Yet it is said "she suffers the destruction of nothing to be seen till a force has encountered it sufficient to dash things to pieces or to pierce through the void spaces within them and break them up."<sup>3</sup>

All these examples occur in the first two or three hundred lines of this great Poem on Nature. I have quoted them, because I believe Lucretius to have been a careful student of words, as well as of things. He watched, he says, the clear night through (line 142) that he might find equivalents in his own language, which he accused of poverty, for the phrases of his Greek teachers. Most readers would say that his diligence was rewarded; that he succeeded in compelling his speech to express whatever he wished it to express. No word could be so sacred or important to him as "*Nature*." For every reason, he would take the utmost pains that his friend Memmius and his readers generally should give it the most exact force of which it was susceptible. If he allowed it to assume many apparently inconsistent significations, we must not suspect that he claimed any licence for himself because he was writing in verse. I do not imagine a consummate artist such as he was would dream of asking for licences; at all events, he would reserve them for

<sup>1</sup> Hunc igitur terrorem animi tenebrasque necesse est,  
Non radii solis neque lucida tela diei  
Disentiant, sed Naturæ species ratioque.—Lines 146-149.

<sup>2</sup> Denique cur homines tantos Natura parare  
Non potuit, pedibus qui pontum per vada possent  
Transire et magnos manibus divellere montes.—Lines 199-202.

<sup>3</sup> Quod nunc æterno quia constant semine quæque,  
Donec vis ebiit quæ res diverberet ietu,  
Atque intus penetret per inania dissolvatque  
Nullius exitium patitur Natura videri,

cases which did not interfere with the very meaning of his discourse. I do not think there are many of the expressions which I have quoted that might not be justified by examples from modern writers; from writers in prose, from writers who dwell much on the danger of employing words carelessly and in different senses, from writers who are entirely opposed to the Epicurean theory. I believe we owe thanks to Lucretius for bringing our own modes of speaking and thinking to light, and that we may profit as much by considering those which we are least likely to imitate, as those into which we fall most easily.

As he devoted so much labour to the translation of Greek words, it may be well (especially in a Metaphysical Society) to speak for a moment of that word of which *Natura* was the best rendering that he could find. It will be admitted that the radical meaning of φύσις is best ascertained from its cognate verb. Out of the instances of its use which Liddell and Scott furnish us with, I will select two. The first is from the dialogue between Glaucus and Diomed, in the sixth book of the "Iliad":—"Son of Tydeus, why inquirest thou about race? As is the race of leaves, so also is the race of men. Some leaves the wind pours on the ground, but others again the tree, budding afresh, brings forth (φύει) when the spring-tide comes over it. So among men this race blooms (φύει) and that fades away" ("Iliad," book vi., lines 145-149). The other is from the last chapter in the ninth book of Herodotus:—"Cyrus said that from soft lands soft men were wont to come; for that it was not given to the same land to breed (φύειν) rare fruits and men that were good for fighting." I have taken these as fair specimens both of the transitive and intransitive uses of the word. They seem to leave us with a very distinct impression that birth and growth must be implied in any substantive which has this verb for its origin.

With these hints we may go on to consider such phrases as these.  
 1. Love of Nature. 2. Law of Nature. 3. State of Nature.  
 4. Moral Nature. 5. Human Nature. The adjective "Natural," and one of its derivatives, may also suggest some thoughts to us.

1. The phrase "Love of Nature" may admit almost any amount of degradation or elevation. It may be translated into that "taste for the picturesque" to which an auctioneer's advertisements of "a lawn, plus vistas of hills, plus a park-like inclosure," make their appeal. Or it may mean that which is expressed in Wordsworth's lines

written a few miles above Tintern Abbey, wherein he tries to recall the feelings of his early youth :—

"Nature then  
To me was all in all. I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion ; the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms were then to me  
An appetite, a feeling, and a love  
That had no need of a remoter charm  
By thought supplied, or any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye."

These recollections have every mark of fidelity, and are especially valuable as being so curiously unlike the later stages of Wordsworth's history ; for no one certainly had afterward *more* need of the "remoter charm by thought supplied," or was less satisfied with the mere interest which is borrowed from the eye. Nature must have been to this young man exactly what the word *Φύσις* indicates. He had a vision of things coming forth into birth, growing, developing an ever fresh life ; a shadow of death being, no doubt, over them, but a shadow which made the light look more glowing, the teeming life more various and wonderful. His delight helps us to interpret that of the elder poet brought up in an entirely different atmosphere, "when he beheld the earth manifold in works putting forth sweet-smelling flowers ; the levels of the sea laughing ; the wild herds bounding over the pastures and swimming the glad rivers." There, too, was the same joy in sense ; thought, if not suspended, yet cheerfully yielding to the charm borrowed from the eye.

But neither for the Roman nor the Englishman would this endless vicissitude, this ever new-becoming of things, however delightful for a while, have been long endurable, if it had had no human associations, nay, if they had been unable to subordinate it to that which was human. No school-boy notion that he was bound to personify because he was writing hexameters, but the strongest necessity of recognizing some personal centre for the manifold complications around him, for the incessant rush and whirl of living atoms, led Lucretius back to the traditions which he was casting indignantly aside. To get rid of the gods he must make Epicurus one. Nor was that enough. Venus, the author of his race, must be the patroness of his toil, must be hailed as the Mistress of Nature itself. Wordsworth confessed in a very memorable sonnet how powerfully these same traditions, in which he had not been edu-

cated, laid hold upon him when he perceived that Nature, with all its magnificence, could make no head against the world, with its gettings and spendings :—

"I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed out-worn ;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,  
And hear old Triton blow his wreathéd horn."

This mood, we know, passed away ; even while it lasted, it must have been checked by the thought that Proteus rising from the sea could not have brought him much news about the liberation of Spain, and that the horn of Triton would not have announced the defeat of Napoleon,—for these were, indeed, nearer his heart than the winds or the moon. But these documents remain a standing evidence that the most genuine and intense love of Nature demands something more than the variety of things to call it forth and to sustain it.

2. I approach with much greater alarm the second phrase of which I proposed to speak. I suspect that those who use the expression "Law of Nature" most frequently would be scandalized by being reminded that they mean the same Nature as that which awakens the poet's love. And yet surely it is the same. The ever-changing *Φύσις*, that which is ever becoming, ever passing into something else, is that of which they demand the Law. Lucretius, at all events, was busy in seeking for the *species ratioque* of that same Nature which he noted in its vicissitudes. I believe our physical students do themselves great injustice if they deny that their subject-matter is the same as his. Nor can I help advancing one step further, although quite aware how perilous a step it is, and how much contempt I may incur by taking it. I maintain that not only the word "Nature," but the word "Law" must bear its ordinary, and not an extraordinary sense. •The oracle was delivered many long years ago—some of us can remember it, for nearly half a century—that Law as applied to human transactions derives all its force from the sanction which is appended to it ; that Law, when it is applied to Nature, means the generalization of certain Phenomena. But often as one has heard this dogma repeated, and high as are the authorities by which it is enforced, I must confess to a stubborn incredulity respecting it. On any questions which I know the philosophers have investigated, I should make a great effort to overcome such incredulity, I do not perceive that questions about the use of language

are those on which their special knowledge gives them a right to claim infallibility. In them we are all interested, and about one of them I must venture to propound my doubts. I do not fancy that we can use such a word as "Law," which is mixed with all our thoughts and habits from our childhood upwards, in a certain sense, in reference to one class of subjects, and then invest it with an entirely different sense when we apply it to another. "But then the sanctions?" Well! whether there are or are not sanctions to what are called the Laws of Nature (I am told there are strong sanctions), I apprehend that by the hypothesis the sanction is *added* to the Law to give it effect. What is that to which it is added? We should ordinarily say that it is a Command, let the penalties which enforce it be what they may. And this feeling of a command does, I believe, mingle unconsciously with the thoughts of all who speak about a Law of Nature. A Government in Nature we saw Lucretius was obliged to admit, even at the hazard of fostering opinions which he most longed to be rid of. If the Goddess of Desire did not quite satisfy his conception of this Government, if she had too much of caprice and fluctuation, he longed to find something more answering to those Twelve Tables which determined the acts of rulers as well as subjects. He might much prefer his Greek teachers to the maxims of his uncouth ancestors. But they had a hold on him which no later wisdom could loosen, and he carried into his study, not indeed the wish to make nature subject to national or human decrees, but certainly the wish to prove that there are laws regulating its movements, as real as any which regulated the movements of the Romans. "Generalization" is a much longer word than "Law." It may have weight in proportion to the number of its syllables. But English men of science will have some difficulty in persuading me that they do not like the simpler word best, and do not secretly translate the other into it.

3. The phrase *State of Nature* leads us from Nature to Man, as the phrase Law of Nature led us from Man to Nature. The State of Nature is, according to our ordinary usage, the state in which man is left to Nature,—in which he grows up, as Hobbes would say, brutal, "nasty," without culture, at war with his fellows. It seems singularly at variance with the admiration of Nature which was implied in the phrases I considered before, and yet it receives illustration from them and gives back illustrations to them. Nature as a mere *caput*

*mortuum*, without the life which Lucretius and Wordsworth saw quickening every part of it ; Nature as a mere collection of active energies without a law to direct them ; one or the other of these is the State of Nature. We only feel how dreary it is when we connect it with our own race.

4. How the phrase *Moral Nature* gained currency it would be interesting to inquire. Most men would consider "Physical Nature" a startling pleonasm. And yet one must be intended as the counterpart to the other ; if the first is reasonable, it is difficult to exclude the second. By *Moral Nature*, I suppose we are to understand all those capacities in human creatures which may become manners, if some influence or energy calls them forth and cultivates them. If any different force is given to the phrase, if it is supposed to intimate an unweeded, unwatered garden, which yet bears sweet flowers and fruits, I know not what school would adopt it. Hobbes and Rousseau, who stand at the extremes of opinion about Nature, would both disclaim it, since each on his own grounds demanded education for children.

5. The ambiguity which attaches to this expression belongs also to one which has taken much stronger hold upon us, which Hobbes and his opponents use with equal readiness. When we speak of *Human Nature*, do we think first of the adjective, or first of the substantive ? Is Humanity a particular form of Nature, or do we mean that Humanity has a certain kind of Nature attached to it ? Hobbes answered this question for himself very distinctly. He contemplated all Natures, from the stone upwards, as subject to some moving force. Man was one of these Natures ; to determine what force moved him was the business of the moralist and politician. It does not seem to me that Butler, or any of those who opposed Hobbes, did present the question to themselves with equal clearness. Their business had been with men ; their interest was in men. Nature, as apart from men, they had considered very little. They had observed (it was strictly an observation, not a theory or a dogma), that men had social tendencies, that they were not merely the self-regarding animals that Hobbes affirmed them to be. But when they said, "These social qualities belong as much as the self-regarding qualities to their *Nature*," they fell, I conceive, into some perplexity, which became very obvious and startling indeed when they went on to affirm that there was *in* this

Nature a controlling or magisterial power over its own operations. That a Conscience is implied in the exercises of every human being, I think they showed very clearly; when they affirmed that it was part of the *Nature* of every human being, the facts and the logic of Hobbes, it seems to me, were irresistibly against them.

At this point we may pass to the adjective "Natural." The contrast between *Natural* and *Artificial* is, no doubt, strongly present to those who speak of a Moral Nature. Artificial Manners seem to them essentially bad manners; Artificial Morality is immoral. What is spontaneous, they say to themselves, must be better than what is forced. The same feeling is traceable in the old Greek discussion about *Φύσις* and *Νόμος*. That which was the result of decree or convention could not have the same worth as that which sprang from some inward root. The *Natural man* is used by Coleridge in his "Ode to Dejection" to denote that in Man which is in sympathy with Nature. He says that by abstruse research he had, for a time at least, destroyed this in himself; that he could see, not feel, how beautiful the earth was. He would, I suppose, being at that time probably a disciple of Hartley, have said that the wires of the human instrument had ceased to vibrate in harmony with those in the outer world. He deduces from his own experience the maxim that,—

"In our light alone doth Nature live,  
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud."

A peculiar sense is often given to that phrase by theologians, but as *ψυχικός* is the word in St. Paul on which it is grounded, I have no excuse for touching upon it. There are other applications of it which deserve examination. Natural Philosophy has a simple enough meaning; no one doubts that it means a philosophy about Nature, distinguished from a philosophy about Morals, or Metaphysics. *Natural Religion* has a much less definite signification, or rather has two or three quite distinct and scarcely compatible significations. It may mean a religion which is deduced from an observation of the external world or is found in the external world. It may mean a religion arrived at by certain faculties in man which are called Natural. It may mean that which a man finds in himself and is a law to himself. These meanings run strangely into each other; even earnest and thoughtful writers often make little effort to separate them.

Whilst there is so much vagueness in our use of the simple epithet, it is not wonderful that there should be frequent fighting about the compound. Some assume that the Supernatural is the irregular, the unusual, the disorderly. But we have seen that the poet of Nature found it impossible to express the coherency and harmony which he discerned in Nature, without referring it in some sense or other to a goddess who governed it. His desire for a Law of Nature was a desire to find something over Nature which was constant and unchangeable. Any one who says that the Nature of Man of necessity bows to certain motives confesses those motives to be supernatural powers. So far there is great agreement between Epicureans and Stoics, between the disciples of Hobbes and those who acknowledge a Conscience. The real questions between us are,—*What* is the Supernatural Power which we recognize? If Nature is associated with Humanity, in what way is it associated? If there is a Law over it, has that Law any connection with the Law which is over man? Is the Law which is over man a Motive which holds him in bondage, or does it proceed from a Will that seeks to set him free?

*NOTES.*

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*Dean of Westminster (Stanley)*

## DO WE FORM OUR OPINIONS ON EXTERNAL AUTHORITY?

It has been stated by an able writer, in examining the intellectual peculiarities of the age, that there is "a tendency to test the credibility of things by subjective<sup>1</sup> assumption, and not by objective authority." This is a statement very often made in substance, if not in words,—sometimes in attack, sometimes in defence,—and I propose to submit for discussion, how far it is true in fact; how far in receiving opinions we need to rest on external authority.

I.—I would premise that in any question of this sort we must put altogether on one side the duty of obedience to authority for purposes of action. Whether this has become disproportionately lax at the present time I do not here inquire. Probably it has. Anyhow, it will be granted by all reasonable persons, on the one hand, that there must be thousands of cases in which obedience to authority in matters of outward action and discipline must be the paramount duty of men and citizens; and on the other hand, that such obedience to authority involves no intellectual acceptance of any facts or opinions founded thereon. The single instance of military discipline is sufficient to prove the truth of this remark. Soldiers have nothing to do but to obey. "Theirs not to reason why; theirs but to do and die." To mix up this practical duty with the formation of opinions is only misleading.

I would also set aside the question of the authority of parents. Everyone acknowledges that young children receive opinions from their parents. Everyone acknowledges that full-grown men do not.

II.—I return, then, to the point. Is there or is there not any need

<sup>1</sup> NOTE.—I drop the words "objective" and "subjective," and take instead, "external" and "internal."

for receiving our opinions on external authority, and if so, what is that authority?

I venture to think that two kinds of authority which are sometimes adduced as necessitating the formation of opinions, not only have no right so to be considered, but, in point of fact, are not so considered by educated men.

1. One is an external authority resting solely on what are called supernatural,—what may more properly be called preternatural incidents. Such incidents, no doubt, arrest, cannot fail to arrest, the attention. But there is no educated man of the present time—it may be doubtful whether there have been educated men of any time—whose opinions have really been formed by such manifestations, taken by themselves.

None of the great changes of religious or intellectual belief in the world have been effected by the argument from preternatural displays. Christianity did not accomplish the conversion of the Roman Empire by appeal to its miracles. Mohammedanism had no miracles, at least in its first commencement, and certainly has not rested on them since. The Reformation had none of any importance. In the Roman Catholic Church no Jesuits were converted to Jansenism by the alleged Jansenist miracles, and no Jansenists have been converted to the opinions or practices of Ignatius Loyola by the alleged miracles of himself or of his successors. Amongst ourselves, no Episcopalians were converted to the Covenant by the miracles alleged to be wrought by the Covenanters, no Puritans to the Stuart cause by the miracles alleged to be wrought at the tomb of Mary Stuart. Nor, again, can it be said that the mere purely intellectual revolutions of belief have been effected by these means, neither the doctrines of Galileo, nor of Adam Smith, nor of Harvey. I am not now entering on the question of the credibility or incredibility of alleged preternatural events. I am speaking of what seems to me a far more important practical question, viz., what it is that depends on their credibility or incredibility. I submit that in point of fact, neither the religious nor the intellectual belief of any individual or of any nation rests on the mere external authority of extraordinary incidents. The arresting, exciting effect of such incidents, whether real or supposed, can hardly be overstated, but their paramount and necessary effect on human belief has not been and cannot be recognized by civilized men.

I would submit that if this be the case, the question of the evidence for extraordinary incidents connected either with religious or philosophical changes, shrinks from a question of primary into a question of secondary or tertiary importance ; and however interesting on other grounds, does not, of itself, draw after it, whether by way of acceptance or rejection, the large consequences sometimes ascribed to it. A collateral advantage of this conclusion is, that it enables us to discuss the evidence for such incidents more calmly and dispassionately.

2. Another kind of authority, which is sometimes supposed to have a great influence in forming belief, is what may be called *official* authority. This appears to be a confusion between the obedience due to all external law from those who are subject to it (of which I have already spoken), and that which cannot be given except from internal conviction. Here, again, I submit that the civilized world is really agreed on the matter. There are many high offices to which we look with respect,—Kings, Presidents, Generals, Judges, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Presbyters, Professors,—but from none of these does any one really take his opinions, except so far as they have other recommendations than their offices to enforce them. Take a single instance. If I were under the jurisdiction of the Emperor of China or the Patriarch of Antioch, I should of course be bound to render to them whatever external obedience was due by the law of the country or church to which I there belonged. But neither I nor any one else would think of accepting their opinion on any disputed question merely because they so held it. Men may be influenced by the opinion of high official persons, as they are influenced by the fashion of the day, but in no time or country of the civilized world has it been hitherto the practice to receive their maxims as on that ground alone binding on the conscience and the reason. The question, for example, of the authorship of a disputed book or the interpretation of a disputed word could not and would not be settled by the agreement of all the official authorities in the world, against the judgment of eminent scholars.

If it be admitted that there is no paramount force, moral or intellectual, in either of these two kinds of authority, *cadit quæstio* ; if it be controverted, then an interesting discussion may be raised as to what that force is. And with regard to the first, it may be considered as having a special connection with Mr. Froude's paper on "Evidence," read some months ago before this Society.

III.—I would here yet further ask whether, if these two kinds of authority are relegated to an inferior place, or to no place at all in the formation of belief, there is still any kind of external authority which does assist in forming our opinions, and which we all acknowledge. It seems to me that there are two sorts of authority, of which the force (in a greater or less degree) is not questioned by any one.

1. One is the authority of eminently gifted men, gifted either with genius, or with exalted virtues, or with knowledge of particular subjects. The sayings of Bacon, the words of Shakespeare, come to us with a force which carries its own conviction with it, and which needs no argument to secure its reception. The example of truly exalted characters produces an impression which makes us receive their moral judgments like oracles. The opinion of men skilled in their own departments justly claims to be received. *Cuique in sua arte credendum*. Galileo's doctrine was accepted because he had seen what none others had seen. Harvey's doctrine was accepted because he had studied what none others had studied.

2. This is one kind of authority. The other is less convincing, but still of considerable weight, and that is the general sense of mankind, especially of educated mankind. "There is some one," said Talleyrand, "more witty than Voltaire, more able than Napoleon, and that is *tout le monde*." No doubt this authority is of a dubious and fluctuating kind, yet probably everyone acknowledges its force more or less. And when, as it sometimes happens, it is combined with the other sort of authority, it becomes almost irresistible. The force of Shakespeare's poetry is doubled because of its having received the acceptance of the civilized world. The discoveries of Galileo, which won their way, in the first instance, against the combined action of official authority, as well as of the popular verdict, have now derived a double strength from having become part of the atmosphere of the educated world, as well as from their own intrinsic truth.

It may be presumed that the secret of the weight attached to both of these oracles is because they correspond to the inward reason and conscience in each man, and that it is therefore probable that the antithesis between "objective authority" and "subjective assumption" is not of any practical importance.

Whether these two kinds of external authority, in principle, exhaust

all the legitimate modes of external authority in matters of belief, and what amount of deference is due to either or both,—is the further question which I would propose for consideration.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since writing this paper, I have re-read Sir G. C. Lewis's essay on the subject. Perhaps it might be useful to refer to it.

**NOTES.**

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J. Carpenter

## WHAT IS COMMON SENSE?

"MEN rarely ask," says Dr. Reid, "what Common Sense is, because every man believes himself possessed of it, and would take it for an imputation upon his understanding to be thought unacquainted with it." Considering, however, that the study of the Mental operations which direct a very large part of our daily life, is quite as important to a Scientific Psychology as that of Logical formulæ, Ethical systems, or Absolute Existence, I venture to hope that an attempt at a scientific analysis of those operations may not be regarded as an imputation upon the understanding of any of those to whom it is now submitted.

The term "Common Sense" has been used in so great a variety of acceptations (of which a most learned collection will be found in Sir William Hamilton's Supplemental Note to Dr. Reid's Essay), that it is requisite to state *in limine* which of these I intend to make the basis of our discussion. No more concise or, at the same time, comprehensive account of its nature seems to me to have been given than that of Dr. Reid himself, when he says that the office of Common Sense, or the *first degree* of Reason, is to "judge of things self-evident," as contrasted with the office of Ratiocination,<sup>1</sup> or the *second degree* of Reason, which is "to draw conclusions that are not self-evident from those that are." For although exception may be taken to the use of the verb "judge" where the "self-evident" character of the "things" cognosced seems to exclude any other possibility, yet, as I shall presently endeavour to show, a justification may be found for it in the history of the process by which that "self-evidence" comes to be recognized and accepted.

The distinction between "Common Sense," and "Ratiocination" or the "Discursive power," is regarded by Sir William Hamilton as equivalent to that which the Greek philosophers meant to indicate

<sup>1</sup> The term "Ratiocination" is not used by Dr. Reid; but as he distinguishes the *first degree* of Reason by the term Common-Sense, it seems desirable to employ a distinctive designation for the *second*.

by the terms *vous* and *διανοια*; and our colloquial use of the former, as corresponding to that cultivated "common sense" which is often distinguished as "good sense," is thereby justified. There are, however, two principal forms of this capacity, which it is desirable clearly to distinguish.

The *first* is what the *philosopher* means by Common Sense, when he attributes to it the formation of those original convictions or ultimate beliefs, which cannot be resolved into simpler elements, and which are accepted by every normally-constituted Human being as *direct cognitions* of his own mental states. The existence of such "necessary truths," or "fundamental axioms," as a basis on which the whole fabric of our subsequently-acquired knowledge is built up, is recognized alike by those who regard them as Intuitional, and by those who maintain that they are generalizations of Experience. We may take as examples of such universal deliverances of "common sense" our conviction of our own existence, our conviction of our own continuous individuality or personal identity, and our conviction of the existence of a world external to ourselves.

It is the *second*, however, which constitutes what is *popularly* meant by "Common Sense," as in the following passage from a recent newspaper article on the "Dangers of the London Season:"—"Any builder for a few pounds may save us from the dangers of the sewers, but nothing short of unpurchasable common sense will preserve us from the deadly effects of our gaities." This form of "Common Sense," though the possession of Mankind in general, varies greatly as to both range and degree among different individuals; serving, however, to each as his guide in the ordinary affairs of life. That it is *acquired* in great part from experience, will probably be disputed by no one; but the capacity for acquiring it is by no means uniform. Inasmuch, moreover, as we no longer find its deliverances in constant accordance, but encounter continual divergencies of judgment as to what things are "self-evident," it cannot be trusted as an autocratic or infallible authority. And yet, as Dr. Reid truly says, "Disputes very often terminate in an appeal to common sense," this being especially the case when to doubt its judgment would be ridiculous.

It will be my object to show that these two forms of *ordinary* Common Sense have fundamentally the same basis; and, further, that this basis is the same as that of the *special* forms of Common Sense which are the attribute of men who have applied themselves in a

scientific spirit to any particular course of inquiry :—Science being, as has been well said by Professor Huxley, “nothing but trained and organized Common Sense ;” and things coming to be perfectly “self-evident” to men of such special culture, which ordinary men, or men whose special culture has lain in a different direction, do not apprehend as such.

What we call the judgment of Common Sense appears to me to be the immediate or instinctive response that is given, in psychological language, by the automatic action of the Mind, or, in physiological language, by the reflex action of the Brain,<sup>1</sup> to any question which can be answered by a direct appeal to “self-evident” truth. The nature and value of that reply will depend upon the condition of the Mind, or of the Brain, at the time it is given ; and that condition will be the product of two factors :—(1) The original constitution of the individual ; (2) the aggregate of the psychical operations of which he has been the subject. For I presume that no Psychologist doubts that the mental condition of every individual man, as he exists at any moment, is a *general resultant* of the agencies which have affected the development of his congenital constitution ; whether these agencies have been brought to bear upon him *ab externo*, or by his own power of self-direction. And as a Physiologist, I cannot doubt that the effects of these agencies have all been *embodied*, so to speak, in his Nervous Mechanism ; in accordance with that general law of Nutrition which so remarkably distinguishes any living organism from a mere machine, and which is particularly noticeable in Man ; namely, that it *grows to* the mode in which it is habitually exercised, so as to *form itself* into an apparatus specially adapted for the automatic performance of any kind of action it has been trained to execute.

Of this tendency we have a striking illustration in the mode in which *acquired movements* come in Man to be performed as *automatically* as the *instinctive* actions which his organization was *congenitally* fitted to execute. Of the latter class, the acts of breathing and sucking are illustrations ; of the former, the act

<sup>1</sup> The doctrine that “the Brain can remember, create, and understand” having been explicitly accepted by so eminent a Metaphysician as Archbishop Manning, the Physiologist may lay aside all fear of being misunderstood in the use of whatever language best expresses his view of the phenomena of Man’s compound nature. All that is here said of Organization or Mechanism may be stated equally well in terms of Mind.

of walking upright, involving the balancing of the body by the harmonious co-operation of nearly all its muscles. Now biped progression, and many others of the *secondarily* automatic actions of man, are performed among certain of the lower animals at their first entrance into the world, ranking in their case as *primarily* or *originally* automatic. And since no Physiologist can doubt that *their* nervous mechanism is so constructed in the first instance as to bring about the required co-operation, it may be fairly presumed that the acquirement of the higher co-ordinating power possessed by Man involves the developmental construction of a mechanism similarly fitted to execute the mandates it receives ; since it is often found to act not only without intelligent direction, but even without any consciousness of exertion. If this be true in any one case of those sequential acquired movements, which, at first volitional, become automatic by habitual repetition, it is doubtless true of all. And if such a mechanism *forms itself* in the lower centres to particular habitudes of *bodily* action, there seems strong analogical ground for the belief that the higher part of the nervous mechanism which is concerned in *mental* action will follow the same law ; forming itself to the mode in which it is habitually called into use, so as at last to be able to evolve, by a direct response, a result of which the attainment originally required the intervention of the conscious mind at several intermediate stages of the process.

No better example of this principle of action could be desired, than that which is afforded by the formation of Visual Perceptions involving the tactile notion of figure. For these, it can be distinctly proved, are in the first instance true *judgments based on experience* ; and yet they ultimately come to us as “self-evident” cognitions, possessing the directness and necessary truth of the sensations by which they are called up. It may now be regarded as certain that all which unaided Sight can do for us, is to inform us of what can be represented in a picture,—that is, to impress us with the sensations produced by light and shade, and by colour. Whether or not a blind adult, on the first acquirement of vision, could recognize by means of these sensations any *simple* form (such as a triangle or a square) of which he had previously formed a tactile perception, it is certain that an object of complex form—such as a pair of scissors—with which the subject might have been previously tactually familiar, cannot be recognized by the sight, until the

two sets of sensations shall have been co-ordinated by repeated experience, so as to furnish the basis of a resultant Perception, which may thenceforth be called up through either sense.

Still more remarkable is the acquirement of those Perceptions of *solid* form or relief, which we derive, as Sir C. Wheatstone's admirable investigations have shown, through the mental combination of the dissimilar perspectives that are projected by solid objects upon our two retinæ. When we bring to our right and left eyes respectively, by means of the Stereoscope, pictures corresponding to those which would be formed on their two retinæ by the actual object if placed before them at a moderate distance, the resulting perception of the solidity of the image seems as necessary and immediate as if it were the product of an original intuition; and this perception is strong enough to assert itself, in spite of our intellectual knowledge that we are looking at two plane surfaces. Now, although it may be inferred from the actions of many of the lower animals, that the perception of the relative distances of near objects or parts of an object (which constitutes the basis of the conception of solidity) is in their case *congenital*, it may be affirmed, as a conclusion beyond reasonable doubt, that this is *acquired* by the Human infant during the earliest months of its life, by a co-ordination of the muscular, tactile, and visual sensations; which enables the automatic mechanism to adopt the dissimilarity of position between corresponding points in the two pictures, as the measure of their relative distances. The self-education of this perceptive faculty which goes on during the first few months of infantile life, is the basis of all subsequent visual knowledge of the external world, as it seems to be also of the primary belief in its objective reality.

Now, in this Visual recognition of the solid form of an object by the mental combination of its two dissimilar perspectives, we seem to have a typical example of a "common-sense" judgment, which may be as implicitly trusted (at least under ordinary circumstances) as if it were authoritatively delivered by a congenital faculty, but which really rests on a basis of experience. It is scarcely conceivable that the infant consciously asks itself the question, "What do I see?" But there can be little doubt that in the earlier stages of its experience it is incapable (like the newly-seeing adult) of distinguishing between a picture and the solid object which it represents; and that the essential condition of a judgment—the possibility of the

opposite or of something else—therefore exists for it. But with every consentaneous exercise of the visual, tactile, and muscular sensations, during the infant's gaze at an object grasped in its hands and carried to different distances by the motion of its arms, there is a new co-ordination which helps to supply the deficiencies in the sum of all that preceded; and this process is repeated until the complement of the whole serves as the basis of the cognition which we thenceforth rightly characterize as "self-evident."

It is not a little remarkable that even that Visual perception of solidity, which is based on the Stereoscopic combination of dissimilar perspectives, may, under certain circumstances, be antagonized by a higher experience, so as to be for a time, or even permanently, excluded. The very ingenious Pseudoscope, contrived by Sir O. Wheatstone, effects a lateral reversal of the perspective projections of actual objects on the two retinae, corresponding to that which would be made by "crossing" the pictures in the stereoscope; and thus, in viewing through it any solid object, we ought *at once*, if the visual perception were a necessary product (as Sir David Brewster maintained) of the geometrical relations of the two images, to see all its projections and depressions reversed;—the exterior of a basin, for example, being changed into the concave interior, and the projecting rim on which it rests into a deep furrow. But this "conversion of relief" is generally resisted, for a time at least, by the preconception of the actual form which is based on habitual experience; and it only takes place immediately in cases in which the "converted" form is at least as familiar to the mind as the actual form. Thus, when we look with the Pseudoscope at the interior of a mask, or at a plaster mould of a face, the mental representation of the image in relief is at once called up. But when we look pseudoscopically at the face of a plaster bust, or at the outside of a mask, it is only after a lengthened gaze that such "conversion of relief" occurs; the mind being so much more familiar with the actual form, that the mental image of the interior of the mould or mask is not called up, until the visual representation has overcome, as if by continued pressure, the resistance of the preconception. In the case of *the living human face*, however, it seems that no protraction of the pseudoscopic gaze is sufficient to bring about a "conversion" of its relief; the Perceptive consciousness (probably under the domination of the Intellectual) refusing to entertain the notion of an actual visage having the form of the interior of a mask.

Every such Visual Perception, then, may be regarded as the generalized result of our whole previous experience relating to the object of it; such generalization, however, not being evolved by a process of conscious reasoning, but being the direct response given by the Ego, whose Nervous mechanism has *formed itself* in accordance with its habitual experience, so as to have acquired powers of reaction of a far higher kind than it originally possessed. The "self-evidence" of the truthfulness of the Perception *immediately* rests, therefore, on the same basis as that of the Sensation which has called it forth (our belief in which even Mr. J. S. Mill admits to be an ultimate fact of our nature),—viz., the immediate and necessary response of our organization to the impression made upon it. But whilst that response, in the case of the deliverances of our *Sensational* consciousness, is given by our *original* constitution, it is given in the case of our *Perceptual* consciousness by our *acquired* constitution, in which are embodied those results of primary experience which are common to every normally-constituted Human being. And thus it comes to pass that immediate and indubitable Visual perceptions <sup>may</sup> be formed on the basis of such acquired constitution, *which in themselves go beyond all actual experience*; as when, for example, I obtain from the Stereoscopic combination of two pictures a conception altogether new to me, which neither picture by itself is adequate to suggest.

If this be admitted as true in regard to our Perceptual consciousness, there seems no reason why the same doctrine should not be extended to the Ideational. Thus our Intellectual conviction of the existence of the world external to ourselves would, on this view, be *remotely* derived from the automatic generalization of a multitude of separate cognitions of individual objects of perception, as distinct from the percipient self; whilst it *directly* depends on the embodiment of the result of this generalization in the Nervous Mechanism,—such embodiment having probably been completed long before the Intelligence is sufficiently developed to cognosce the *idea* which mentally represents it. And the same may be shown to be probable of the Axioms of Geometry, and of those other first truths of a purely Intellectual character, of which the aggregate constitutes the "Common Sense" of the Philosopher.

In such a view, as it appears to me, we may find the fundamental reconciliation (as by a "ground-bass") of the two doctrines of Intuition and Experience, which otherwise seem discordant. For

so soon as the Intelligence has become sufficiently developed to entertain any one of these "necessary truths" as an object of cognition, the Organization, though *not originally* adapted to recognize it as *necessary*, has so shaped itself in the direction of its own habitual activity, that the entire Ego responds with an immediate and unhesitating assent, which goes far beyond what any *ratiocinative* generalization of experiences gained at that early stage of existence could possibly afford.

The same view may be extended to that acquired aptitude for "judging of things self-evident," which is *popularly* known as Common Sense; the deliverances of which may be regarded as resultants of past experiences, arranged in the unconscious depths of our Intellectual nature by a process of automatic co-ordination, and embodied in our Cerebral organization. We often find it strongly manifested by persons of very limited acquirements, who are said to have a "fund of native good sense." On the other hand, we often meet with a singular want of it in persons of great learning, whose judgments about things that are "self-evident" to men of very ordinary capacity are obviously untrustworthy. And if we examine into the nature of this difference, I think we shall find it in the range of the unconscious co-ordinating action, which in the former case brings the *whole experience* to bear upon the question, whilst the decisions of the latter are based upon a limited, and therefore *one-sided*, view of it.

Now, in so far as our conscious mental activity is under the direction of our Will, we can improve this form of Common Sense, both as to its range and the trustworthiness of its judgments, by appropriate training. Such training, as regards the purely Intellectual aspect of Common Sense, will consist in the determinate culture of the habit of honestly seeking for Truth,—dismissing prejudice, setting aside self-interest, searching out all that can be urged on each side of the question at issue, endeavouring to assign to every fact and argument its real value, and then weighing the two aggregates against each other with judicial impartiality. For in proportion to the steadiness with which this course is *volitionally* pursued, must be its effectiveness in shaping the Mechanism whose *automatic* action constitutes the "unconscious thinking," of which the results express themselves in our Common-Sense judgments.

But in the ordinary affairs of life, our Common-Sense judgments

are so largely influenced by the Emotional part of our nature—our individual likes and dislikes, the predominance of our selfish or of our benevolent affections, and so on—that their value will still more essentially depend upon the earnestness and persistency of our self-direction towards the Right. The more faithfully, strictly, and perseveringly we try to disentangle ourselves from all selfish aims, all *conscious* prejudices, the more shall we find ourselves progressively emancipated from those *unconscious* prejudices which cling around us as results of early misdirection and habits of thought, and which (having become embodied in our Organization) are more dangerous than those against which we knowingly put ourselves on our guard. And so in proportion to the degree in which we habituate ourselves to try every question by first principles, rather than by the dictates of a supposed temporary expediency, will the Mechanism of our “unconscious thinking” *form itself* in accordance with those principles, so as to evolve results which satisfy both ourselves and others with their “self-evident” truthfulness and rectitude.

Not only may this aptitude for “judging of things self-evident” be improved by culture in the individual; for of all parts of our higher nature it is probably that which is most capable of being transmitted hereditarily, like the “acquired instinct” of a Pointer or Retriever; so that the descendant of a well-educated ancestry constitutionally possesses it in much higher measure than the progeny of any savage race.

It seems to me to be in virtue of this Automatic co-ordination of the elements of judgment, rather than by any process of conscious Ratiocination—by the exercise of the *vouç* rather than of the *διανοία*—that the Race, like the Individual, emancipates itself from early prejudices, gets rid of worn-out beliefs, and learns to look at things as they are, rather than as they have been traditionally represented. This is what I understand to be meant by the “Progress of Rationalism.” For although that progress undoubtedly depends in great part on the more general diffusion of knowledge, and on the higher culture of the intellectual powers which are exercised in the acquirement of it, yet this alone would be of little avail, if the self-discipline thus exerted did not act *downwards* in improving the mechanism that evolves the “self-evident” material of our Reasoning processes, as well as *upwards* in more highly elaborating their products. If we examine, for instance, the history of the decline of the belief in Witchcraft,

we find that it was not killed by discussion, but perished of neglect. The Common Sense of the best part of mankind has come to be ashamed of ever having put any faith in things whose absurdity now appears "self-evident;" no discussion of evidence once regarded as convincing is any longer needed; and it is only among those of our hereditarily-uneducated population, whose general intelligence is about upon a par with that of a Hottentot or an Esquimaux, that we any longer find such faith entertained. Indeed, a retrospect of the progress of Public Opinion on subjects of the highest political and social importance during no more than the last ten years, gives evidence of a previous preparedness of the better part of the National mind, which, if the view I have taken be correct, consists mainly in the higher development and more general diffusion of that Automatic co-ordinating power, which constitutes the essence of Reason as distinct from Ratiocination, of the *νοῦς* as distinct from the *διανοία*.

Thus, then, every course of Intellectual and Moral self-discipline, steadily and honestly pursued, tends not merely to clear the mental vision of the Individual, but to ennoble the Race; by helping the development of that power of "judging of things self-evident" which may be termed *Immediate Insight*, and which, in Man's highest phase of existence, may be expected not only to supersede the laborious exertions of his Intellect, but to reveal to him truths which lie beyond its scope.

*NOTES.*

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W. R. Ferguson

## WHEREIN CONSISTS THE SPECIAL BEAUTY OF IMPERFECTION AND DECAY?

NONE of the Phenomena of Mind can be regarded as without or beyond the purview of this Society; and it may perhaps be felt as a relief from our severer discussions in the fields of Ethics, to consider a question appertaining, at first sight at least, rather to ~~Æ~~Esthetics,—a question which has always struck me as a singularly perplexing one, and one to which I have never been able to obtain a satisfactory reply. I have no proposition to maintain, only a problem to propound for solution.

I do not wish to draw the Society into a discussion of the several sources from which the idea of Beauty in visible objects has been supposed to be derived,—whether their beauty depends on their usefulness and their fitness for the purpose they were designed to serve, or on associations which they awaken in our minds, or whether certain sights and scenes are intrinsically pleasing to the eye, (just as certain sounds are sweet to the ear, and certain tastes delicious to the palate), and are called beautiful simply because they give agreeable sensations to the visual organ. My subject is narrower and more specific. I merely propose for consideration, “Why it is that so many imperfect and decayed objects are admittedly more beautiful—*felt* to be so—than the same objects when complete and sound? Why even this very imperfection and decay is indispensable to render them beautiful? Why objects that have ceased to subserve their purpose are so often more beautiful than they ever were in the days of their greatest utility and most perfect adaptation? Why, even, in order to be beautiful it is necessary that they should subserve their purpose inadequately? What, in a word, is the source, the meaning, the reason of that strange and exquisite picturesque charm and eye-delight so habitually clinging round decadence and ruin, and so intuitively recognized as beauty even by the sternest utilitarian?

Three or four illustrations will suffice to make clear the point to be explained. London Bridge is a structure skilfully designed, well built, admirably suited to its purposes; and St. Paul's is a monument of rare magnificence. But does either of them affect us with the same sense of *beauty*, of gratification to the eye, as the "broken arch" we are all familiar with, and "the ruins" of the cathedral supposed to be sketched from that decaying and unserviceable fragment? Look at a grove or a forest of the finest elms and beeches, with boles as straight as pillars, each absolutely perfect in its conformation and in fullest health and vigour, and of countless value in the eyes of the builder or the shipwright,—is it comparable in real 'beauty' to a dozen aged oaks, with bare arms, gnarled trunks, twisted roots, and broken branches, the heart decayed out of them, and with only a few winters of precarious life before them? The nearest road, whether by land or water, from one point of our journey to another, is clearly the fittest, the cheapest, and *primâ facie* the most desirable. Yet what can be more hideous than a structure like the Suez Canal, or a straight thoroughfare stretching along miles of endless, unbroken perspective, even when lined by interminable miles of poplar trees, such as may be seen everywhere in France? On the other hand, what can be more attractive or gratifying to the eye, or the faculty which perceives beauty, than a meandering stream or a winding road, of which we see only a small portion at once, which traverses twice the distance, wastes twice the land, and requires twice the time to take us to our destination? What object more unlovely than a straight strong wall of masonry, not to be climbed over or broken through, with not a stone fallen away or out of line? Yet what object more beautiful, more fascinating to the artist, more pleasing to the general eye, than the same wall old, shattered, full of breaches, covered with ivy that each year undermines and loosens it yet more, and so ruined that the cattle or the deer it was intended to confine creep through it or leap over it at pleasure? The old rotten *Téméraire*, dismasted, her bulwarks broken away, her port-holes worn, her ribs open, and ten feet of water in her hold, apart from historical associations, is a thing which artists love to paint, and which has a singular beauty even to the eye of common men;—and so (though to a less extent, *because less useless and less ruined*) have the superseded frigates and three-deckers that crowd the Hamoaze. But who can associate the

idea of beauty with our iron monitors and steam rams, though not a plate or fitting is faulty or out of place, and though not a criticism can be legitimately launched against their hideous perfection? Illustrations might be multiplied indefinitely, but I will content myself with one more,—to my mind the most crucial of all. Let us go to Ireland, and look first at the solid, sensible, excellent cottages built (say) on Lord Lansdowne's estates in Kerry, drained, slated, and windowed, warm, firm, impervious to weather—answering completely, in fact, every purpose which houses are made to serve. They are not only not beautiful, but the Mind has absolutely to rebuke the Eye, the social and moral has to silence the æsthetic sense, in order to prevent us from pronouncing them positively ugly. A few hundred yards away, in the very next valley, stands the normal Irish cabin; no windows, no chimney, holes in the roof and wall doing duty for both; the rotten thatch half off, the rain coming in at fifty chinks, the floor wet and filthy, the pestilential dung-heap steaming at the side, the family dirty and in rags, with the pig among their feet and the fowl upon their shoulders, and what scene can be more picturesque or, to an artist's eye, more beautiful? Nay, every one of the deplorable and condemnable features I have mentioned contributes to, heightens, and, in its scandalous congruity, helps to *constitute* the beauty of the object; if it were one whit less ruinous and nasty, it would be *pro tanto* less gratifying to the mere visual sense and fancy of the spectator; and we have to curb and do violence to ourselves, and to call up many thoughts “unborrowed from the eye” before we can express a sense of actual gratification in contemplating the picture, or refrain from incontinently sitting down to paint it. The cabin has no pleasurable associations to make it beautiful, nor ought it to be beautiful on the utilitarian theory, for it totally fails to subserve its intended purposes. Yet the natural Eye, tutored or untutored, lingers lovingly on the wretched hovel; it is the enforced Thought only which recurs with pleasure and with effort to the slated house.

Are not ruins [recognized and felt to be] more beautiful than perfect structures? Why are they so? Ought they to be so?

*NOTES.*

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*The Rector of Lincoln*  
*(Mark Pattison)*

## THE ARGUMENTS FOR A FUTURE LIFE.

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THE history of opinion offers not a few instances in which a given opinion remains widely diffused, and the belief in it unimpaired, though the grounds on which it is based, or the arguments which pass current as its guarantees, have been from time to time remodelled.

When this condition of public opinion is found to exist with respect to any tenet,—the condition, viz., of persistence of belief, accompanied by a continuous flux of the allegations put forward in its support, the case may admit of very various explanation.

1. It may be that the given belief is continued merely by the tradition of the religious communities, after it has been dropped as unprovable by reason.

2. Or the grounds for the belief may lie so deep that the advocates may not have yet succeeded in setting them out. This condition of public opinion is analogous to that well-understood case where an individual judge decides rightly, but assigns wrong reasons for his decision.

3. Or the belief may be itself a postulate of reason, or condition of thought, and as such incapable of deductive proof.

Without trying to determine which of these three possible explanations is the true explanation in the instance now in hand, I confine myself to showing that while the belief in a future life is as generally current now as it was two hundred years ago, the arguments employed has undergone an appreciable change.

When we seek to obtain the current arguments of any period, we should not look for them in the writings of the original thinkers; we must take them from the popular productions of the day,—pamphlets, essays, sermons. We must not look in Leibnitz or Berkeley, the heroes of metaphysics, but in the writings of the caterers for the general public. Hugh Blair in his 81st Sermon, entitled "On a

Future State," written about 1770 ; Mendelssohn, in his "Phædo," a free translation, or imitation, as they said then, of Plato, in which, besides employing Socrates' arguments, he incorporates the modern reasoning of the eighteenth century, may be mentioned as elegant summaries of the extant opinion. The first edition of Mendelssohn's "Phædo" was published in 1767.

On looking at the argument as it stood in the eighteenth century, we are struck at once by the absence of one topic which had been, in the seventeenth, one of the most acceptable and telling, viz., the argument from apparitions. The more cultivated advocates of the eighteenth century do not produce this class of facts.

1. But the eighteenth century retains from earlier times the argument from the universality of the belief among mankind, as the Greeks first stated it, and as it is eloquently expounded by Cicero, *Tusc. Quæst. i.*, 13, "omni in re, consensio omnium gentium lex naturæ putanda est."

No one addressing a well-informed audience now would employ this topic. The belief is now known to be by no means universal, and the investigation into the genesis of primitive beliefs has deprived them of their supposed character of intuitions of truth.

2. The same may be said of the so-called "instincts" of the individual, on which so much stress used to be laid. It was an axiom in the eighteenth century that "the consciences both of good and bad bear witness to a world to come." The genesis of the individual conscience, though not tracked throughout with the same clearness as that of primitive mythologies, is allowed to contain so much of an insidious element, as to preclude our assuming any of its dicta as *a priori* truths.

3. The moral proof. This is the argument from the prevalence of evil: the good are unhappy, and the wicked succeed in this world; therefore there must be a world of retribution in which this injustice is redressed. It cannot, perhaps, be said that this argument is gone out of use. I have met with it within the last year in a very respectable quarter. Mr. Elwin, in his remarks on Pope's "Essay on Man," pronounces the future life to be an obvious doctrine of natural religion, and is willing to rest it on this single proof, the moral ground. A theory was broached by the late Dr. Mansel that the moral attributes of the Deity are wholly different from those recognised as human virtues. I do not know how far this theory

met with acceptance. So far as it did, it erases this head of proof of immortality.

4. Development of the species. This is an argument from our tendencies and strivings towards virtue and perfection,—a perfection impossible here.

Of both these arguments, 3 and 4, and of all such as are drawn from moral anticipations or moral analogies, we may say that they depend on an assumption that the universe is a moral system, or moral government. This assumption that God created and governs the world with a view to the happiness of His creatures, was one habitual to the rational Theist of the last century. It was not a Greek idea, derived from the Classics, but an idea of modern growth. The Newtonian calculations had riveted men's imaginations upon the solar system and its wondrous machinery. This machine, with its exactly mathematical fittings, seemed constructed for the purpose of fitting our globe to be the residence of man, who thus came to be regarded as the central figure, and his happiness as the final cause of all existence. This anthropomorphic conception, founded upon the analogy of a human kingdom, was accepted by all the reasoners, and formed the common lists within which they contended upon other points on which they did not agree. The solar system, however vast, is at least a conceivable domain to be administered by an intelligence. There was disagreement and debate whether this or that final cause was correctly assigned. But the idea itself of final cause was not excepted to; it governed all the dissidents.

This whole mode of thought has not, perhaps, been directly contradicted by science. But it has been undermined by the enlargement of our conception of the magnitude of the universe. The rational Theist is now shy of affirming any given case of final cause, even if he still retains the conception "final cause" at all as a possibility of affirmation. The infinitely remote time into which the origin, even of our globe, has to be carried back; the immensity of space, practically, if not mathematically, infinite,—these conceptions may not be incompatible with the Theistic hypothesis of a governing mind, but this immensity of scale makes it impossible for us to represent to ourselves this superintendence in action. The eighteenth-century representation of the Deity as a moral governor, was based upon the importance of the individual. It implied a discernment of minute shades of moral character and appreciation of the finest gradations

of moral worth. Wollaston puts this in a strong light when he argues ("Religion of Nature Delineated,") that one single instance of unfortunate virtue or of prosperous wickedness in this world would be sufficient argument for a future state. His reason is, that the Deity cannot be unjust in a single instance. But if there is one conviction more than another forced upon the mind by contemplation of the reign of law, it is that the course of nature cares only for the species, wholly regardless of the individual. A hypothesis of evolution may not be widely accepted, but its mere existence in the world as a possible hypothesis, a conception of one unceasing and all-perfecting system advancing everywhere and in all, unproved as it is, already troubles the region of natural Theism, whose arrangements were made at a time when that conception had not risen above the horizon of metaphysics.

5. Turning from the Cosmological to the Psychological proof, we find that a change no less complete has come over the characters of the reasoning.

In the eighteenth century the rational Theist was entitled, by common consent, to assume the duality of man. Man was a compound of soul and body. Throwing out the eccentrics on either extreme—the Idealists, who were hardly known, and the Materialists, who were not admitted to the privileges of controversy—Animism passed unchallenged. Cartesianism had ceased, indeed, to be the official doctrine of the Schools, but Animism had not fallen with Cartesianism. Animism was older than Descartes, older than Aristotle. The soul was not thought of as an assumption; it counted as a fact. Hence the defender of natural religion in the eighteenth century had a very easy time. He had to prove the immortality of the soul. He had no need to prove it. He turned the tables on the opponent. The *onus probandi* lay on the other side. What was death? The destruction of the body, of one of the elements of which man is composed. What we see we know; and we see only decay and dissolution of a certain organic structure which the soul had hitherto employed for its purposes. Is there any evidence, is there the least presumption, that demolition of the material fabric is fatal to the indiscerptible substance which it has hitherto served? Analyse death; observe it closely. It is a mere event in the material world; a release from prison; a triumph; a promotion for *me*, not a disaster. For the reasoner went on, as he was entitled to do by the

current conception of his age, to assume that he, the personal being, was in, or was, the soul, and not the dual compound. Men thought they knew this as an experimental fact. Boerhaave, the celebrated physician, told Mr. Schultens that he had just before his death an experimental certainty of the distinction between corporeal and thinking substance, which mere philosophy cannot afford, and opportunities of contemplating the wonderful and inexplicable union of soul and body which nothing but long sickness can give. (Johnson's "Life of B.," p. 33.) Goethe stretched this popular conception as far as it could go. "Nature is under an obligation to provide *me* with another form of existence as soon as the existing form has ceased to be adapted for my spirit" (*Ap. Eckermann*, ii., 56.)

The prosperity of an argument lies not in its own cogency, but in the ear of him that hears it. As the cosmological argument of the last century has not been refuted, but retired into the background as our conception of the infinity of the universe, in space and time has grown up, so the psychological argument is no longer of that ready application which it once was. It now requires a voluminous preamble of explanation if you want to employ the word "soul" or "mind." And after all, perhaps, you might meet with difficulty in getting beyond some such definition as "that which persists and maintains the unity of the series of impressions and modes." It is as well to keep to the pronoun; you certainly would not be allowed to use the term "substance," which flowed so glibly from an eighteenth-century pen. With such a long subject for your proposition as "that which persists," &c., you cannot work a proof so neatly as with the simple term "soul."

The advent of Kant, and of the great systems of which Kant was the precursor, broke up the narrow psychology of the eighteenth century. With the psychology disappeared those proofs of immortality which had been based upon it. In the vast reconstructions of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, hardly a corner could be found for so insignificant a consideration as that of the duration, short or long, of an individual existence. An individual was only a phenomenon, not an object at all of philosophical cognition. Kant gives immortality a place in his system, though without enlarging upon it. It is postulated, according to him, both for the idea of Pure reason, and for the destinies of the Practical reason. The idea of the highest good requires the notion of eternal endurance. So much for the

idea. But when Kant comes down to ask the practical question ("Krit. d. reinen Vernunft," p. 604), If I conduct myself so as not to be unworthy of happiness, may I hope to obtain happiness? his answer is, that each man must necessarily hope it. So that a postulate of reason seems to merge in the necessity of hoping.

The question of immortality has almost disappeared from the English platform. This is certainly not from a failure of interest in natural theology generally. It is, perhaps, felt that evolution hypotheses involve even larger issues than that of a future state, and that we have first to make out how these hypotheses bear on Theism as a whole, on the being or nature of God. It is not so in Germany. There the question, "Is personal immortality capable of rational proof?" is one which has come into renewed prominence since Hegelianism has declined. In the last ten years nearly a dozen treatises on the subject, some of them considerable books, and reaching second editions, have appeared. Especially in the philosophy of the younger Fichte, which starts from the Individual as its basis, the question of our future destiny reassumes an importance which it had lost in the reign of the Idea. In Fichte's argument the last-century reasoning is entirely dropped. He draws his proofs of the immortality of man entirely from empirical psychology, from the psychical phenomena of dreams, somnambulism, clairvoyance, ecstasy, &c.

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By Rector of Lincoln

Archbishop Manning -

## THAT LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY IS AN EVIDENCE OF TRUTH.

I. TRUTH is defined to be "*Illud omne quod est, quatenus est.*" There is Metaphysical Truth, "that is, any object so far as it is known;" Physical Truth so far as an object exists; Logical Truth, so far as the intellect is conformed to it; and Moral Truth, so far as the mental knowledge is adequately expressed. By truth let us understand any object of the senses or of the reason, to the exclusion of illusions of the senses and chimæras of the intellect. Such illusions and chimæras have no objective existence, either as an *ens rationis*, or an *ens nature*; for instance, ocular spectra, or the philosopher's stone, or the race of Centaurs.

II. By evidence I understand the action of any such object upon the senses or the reason, calling them into activity, and manifesting itself either directly or by means of other agencies distinct from their own proper evidence.

The word "evidence" seems properly to belong to the object rather than the subject of perception. As "eminence" signifies a height which by surpassing the altitude of surrounding objects forces itself upon attention, and "effulgence" signifies a radiance or splendour flowing from a body which thereby manifests itself; so evidence signifies a visibleness or sensibleness by which any object manifests itself to the sense or to the reason. The common phrases, "*oculos ferit*," or "*saute aux yeux*," seem to be a description of evidence in its higher degrees of action upon our intelligence. The light of the sun does not more directly manifest itself to the eye, than the axiom that things equal to the same are equal to one another manifests itself to the reason. This evidence is objective and independent of any percipient, though the perception of the evidence requires a subject capable of perceiving it.

III. We may arrive at truth either through the exercise of our own senses and reason, or by that of others. In our own case we  
[xxiii.]

have three *criteria* for the ascertainment of truth:—(1) *Consciousness*, (2) *Sense*, and (3) *Reason*. To these we may add a fourth. When we receive truth on the testimony of others, we receive it on *authority*. When this authority is illegitimate, it comes to us with no evidence to convince or to persuade. When the authority is legitimate, it comes to us clothed in the evidence of the truth it has to deliver; and it generates in the mind a conviction of the reason founded on the proper evidence of the truth it declares. Consciousness, Sense, Reason, and Authority are therefore four criteria by which we may attain to truth. We will say a few words on the first three, and dismiss them. The proper subject of this argument is authority.

1. As to the *sensus intimus*, or consciousness of the mind, it is beyond all doubt absolute and infallible within its sphere. For instance, I am conscious of my existence, of pain or pleasure, and the like. These are simple apprehensions which are infallibly true. I am conscious also by a reflex act of my personal identity, of the causes of my pain or pleasure, of my motives, and my moral state. These are *judgments* of my consciousness, and also primary, intuitive, and infallible.

2. The *sensus externus*, or senses in the common acceptation of the term, are the points of contact between us and the external world. They are uniform in number, kind, and operation in the whole race of man. They may need to be elicited and educated, as was lately shown by Dr. Carpenter, in respect to sight and touch. Nevertheless, their development and their education proceed by uniform laws common to all mankind. Excepting abnormal and monstrous cases, they result in a perfect uniformity over the whole race. These differences in degree of perfection or acuteness introduce no element of variableness or uncertainty into their normal operations. The evidence of the eye and the ear is admitted by all men to be certain and beyond doubt. The reports of the Senses to the intelligence follow fixed laws of our nature which, within their own sphere, and when normally applied, exclude all uncertainty as to their reports. St. Augustine says:—"Sed ne ipsi quidem oculi fallunt, non enim renuciare possunt animo, nisi affectionem suam. . . . Si quis remum frangi in aqua opinatur, et cum inde aufertur integrari; non malum habet internuncium, sed malus est iudex. Nam ille (oculus) pro sua natura, non potuit aliter in aqua sentire, nec aliter debuit."—*De Vera Relig.*, cap. 33.

3. The third criterion of truth is the Reason, which interprets the reports of Sense, and corrects the intellectual perception of the reports of sense. The image in the retina is inverted, but the mind restores it to its true order. Within its sphere reason is infallible. If it go beyond its jurisdiction, or if it misuse its evidence, its judgments may go astray; but the fault is then, not in the reason, as a criterion of truth, but in the agent who misuses the criterion, which in itself is infallible.

For example, to give three classes of Truths :—

1. In metaphysical truth the reason cannot err. The laws of number, mensuration, and in general the mathematical and arithmetical truths exclude the possibility of their contradictory being true. It is infallibly certain that six and seven make thirteen, that two right lines can only intersect at one point, that the whole is greater than a part, that the sum of the parts is equal to the whole. The truth of these propositions is primary and intuitive. The reason is certain of them not because all men agree in them, but because they are self-evident, and the reason directly perceives them. Under this kind of metaphysical certainty may also be classed the existence of God as derived from the impossibility of an infinite series of finite causes, which involves an intrinsic contradiction.

2. In moral truth, which is partly necessary and partly contingent, that is, in matter which does not involve any necessary contradiction, as there would be in the supposition that the whole is less than or only equal to a part, there is attainable a certainty which, being in itself perfect, admits of no degrees and excludes all supposition of the truth of its contradictory.

As, for instance, by reason we may certainly know from moral evidences the existence of God. His power and divinity, the existence of the soul and its spirituality, the primary distinctions of right and wrong in our relations to God, to others, and to ourselves. These moral judgments are universal. The abnormal examples of individuals or races cited to the contrary cannot weigh against the whole historical tradition of mankind. The Semitic and Aryan families in all their branches manifest to us a theism and a morality which cannot be displaced or obscured by the alleged state of the modern Fijians and Papuans. And yet the ground of certainty in the mind as to these truths is not the consent of mankind, a test impossible, except perhaps to the leisurely and the learned, but the laws of the

reason itself and the rational impulse which constrains the reason to these truths.

3. Thirdly, there is what may be called the truth of experience. And this under two heads.

First, the whole of physical science rests upon the right use of sense and reason, and the certainty of its conclusions, and the uniformity of its processes, and the detection of its errors, and the verification of its discoveries, all depend upon the certainty of the senses and of the reason within their proper sphere.

Secondly, the other branch of experience relates to our own personal life. Our personal identity is a truth of consciousness, but adhering to our personal identity, and interwoven with it is a continuous growth of intellectual and moral truths and facts, which give form and colour to our whole being. They are the accretion of our life. They accumulate through its whole course. There may be mixed up with them many hasty and erroneous judgments of the reason and illusory reports of the senses. Nevertheless, the main stream of this living consciousness is made up of truths and facts of which we can no more doubt than of our stature or our countenance. We have been eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of words, and deeds, and events, and scenes which have moulded and changed and determined all our rational and moral powers. To affect to doubt the report of our senses or the judgment of our reason in such events would be hypocrisy or idiocy. A man cannot doubt whether he has been saved from shipwreck, or has been in Constantinople, or has been ruined on the Stock Exchange, or has stood by the death-bed of his father, or has received from him his last written or oral will and testament. That two and two make four is not more certain to us than such facts as these. And yet things ultimately depend upon the infallible certainty of our senses and our reason. St. Thomas says, "Truth resides both in the intellect and in the senses, though not in the same way. For in the intellect it resides in two ways: first, as consequent upon the act of the intellect; and secondly, as known by the intellect; first, truth follows the operation of the intellect, as the intellect judges of any particular thing in respect to the nature of that thing; and secondly, truth is known by the intellect as the intellect reflects upon its own act; and that not only as it knows its own act, but as it knows the proportion of its act to the thing itself, which, indeed, cannot be known except by the knowledge of the

nature of its act, which, again, cannot be known unless be known also the nature of the active principle which is the intellect itself, in whose nature it is to be conformed to the truth (or objects presented to it). Therefore, in this way, the intellect knows the truth, inasmuch as it reflects upon itself. But truth is in the Senses as it is consequent upon their act, so far, that is, as the judgment of Sense is formed of the thing in respect to its nature; but it is not *in the sense as known by the Sense*. For if the sense judges truly of things, it does not judge of *the truth by which it judges truly*. For although the Sense knows that it perceives, it does not know its own nature, and therefore by consequence it does not know the nature of its own act, nor the proportions of its act to the things it perceives, and therefore *neither the truth of its perceptions*. (S. Thom. Aq., *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 9). The sum of this is that the sense perceives, but cannot verify its own perceptions, because it cannot reflect upon itself. But the reason perceives, and can correct as well as interpret the reports of sense, and therefore can verify its own processes, and judge of the relation and the proportion of its own acts to the objects before it. But the definition of subjective truth is "the conformity of the intellect with the object,"—*Adæquatio rei et intellectus*. And this reflex verification of its own processes generates in all three classes of truth, metaphysical, moral, and experimental, a certainty proper to the several kinds,—in the first, a certainty which excludes the opposite as intrinsically contradictory and impossible; in the two last, a certainty which excludes all fear of the truth of the contradictory, a certainty which, being complete, excludes also probability, and admits of no degrees. Such is the certainty of the experience which testifies to the events and facts of our personal life; founded upon the cumulus of our experience, and clothed with every kind of evidence to render credible the testimony of our own experience to other men. If we be truthful, no man will deny our competence to relate the story of our own life. In this, at least, we are accepted as legitimate authority. If history be credible, an autobiography, which is living and contemporaneous history, ought to be of all the most credible; and they who reject it, are the least reasonable or respectable of sceptics. St. Augustine says:—"Si auferatur hæc fides de rebus humanis, quis non attendat quanta rerum perturbatio, quam horrenda confusio subsequeretur."—*De*

*Fide*, cap. 2, n. 4. And Grotius :—" Pro rerum diversitate, diversa quoque sunt probandi genera. Alia in mathematicis, alia de affectionibus corporum, alia circa deliberationes, alia ubi facti est quæstio ; in quo genere standum est nulla suspicione laborantibus testimoniis ; quod nisi admittitur non modo omnis historiæ usus perit, medicinæ quoque pars magna, sed et omnis quo inter parentes liberesque est pietas, ut quos haud aliter noscamus."—*De Verit. Relg. Christ.*, lib. ii., c. 29.

4. We may now come to the fourth criterion of truth, which is authority. I have said above legitimate authority. Let it be observed that I use authority here not in its official or jurisdictional sense, but in its etymological sense, for the motive of our belief or source of evidence. No witnesses have authority but those who are competent and veracious. All incompetent and unveracious witnesses are excluded as illegitimate, because wanting in the properties necessary for evidence. But the common sense and common lot of mankind compel us to believe much upon authority.

The whole formation of the human mind *ante usum rationis* is by necessity on authority, which is legitimate both by parental duty and by competence of reason.

The scientific knowledge of almost all men is received on authority.

The whole practice of medicine and surgery exacts submission to authority.

The whole historical knowledge of men rests upon two authorities which do not corroborate each other ; first, on the authority of historical monuments and documents, and next upon the authority of the historical critic.

This is no small tax on our submission, or credulity, and if we were not free to disbelieve every word of it, and if the value of a halfpenny, or the slightest civil privilege depended upon it, we should perhaps rise against it. And yet to reject the authority of human history would be an irrational act, unworthy of reasonable men.

But why ? Because its authority is measured by its evidence : because if the writers who give testimony to facts of the past be competent and veracious they have a claim to be believed : above all, if they were eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of the facts they relate. They had then the highest certainty of sense and reason for what they recorded.

To affect to doubt the credibility of human history is the work of reckless or senseless men ; it is to ruin the traditional basis of right,

and law, and contracts, and moral obligations, and loyalty, and authority in the commonwealth and in human life.

IV. I have here reached the frontier of the Metaphysical Society, and I must not remove the landmarks. I will therefore conclude with two propositions.

The first, that for the truths of the natural order, which are the proper objects of moral and metaphysical philosophy, we have the legitimate authority of the monuments and documents of the old world, which testify to us the belief of mankind in the existence and nature of God, of the human Soul, and of the primary distinctions of morality. This *communis consensus* is an authority sufficient to demand my attention. It is also a criterion whereby to distinguish these uniform and universal truths from the local, partial, idiosyncratic opinions of men or of ages. And yet though this be a rule, it is not this motive of my belief. I believe these truths on their own intrinsic evidence, which manifests them to my reason, and my reason, reflecting on itself, verifies the conformity of its own acts with these truths, and thereby generates in my reason a certainty which excludes the hesitations of probability and the entrance of doubt.

Secondly, the visible fact of the Christian world proposes to my reason the maximum of evidence for the events upon which it rests. That evidence is the evidence of eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses. It is a part of their autobiography, their testimony was an adequate motive of credibility to those who heard them, the expansion of that testimony throughout the world, and its continuity through all ages, if it has not added to the intrinsic certainty of the facts, has in no way lessened it. But it has proportionally increased the extrinsic evidence by way of corroboration and accumulation, reaching up to the moment of the facts alleged. I affirm, therefore, that this authority is both competent and veracious, and therefore legitimate; and that its action upon the human reason is not by way of imperious command, but of the proposition of evidence. It comes and speaks to us clothed with the evidence of its testimony.

Authority is, therefore, not an imperious act substituting command for reason, "*Sic volo sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas;*" but it is reason and evidence speaking by a legitimate voice. Authority and evidence are thereby identical and convertible. It is not authority that generates truth, but truth that generates authority. *Sed ultra progredi nefas.*

But if there be any persons to whom the custody and delivery of this testimony have been committed, their authority is legitimate, and it speaks by way of evidence, it is clothed with evidence; resting its claims upon evidence, and asking of men that assent which evidence alone generates in the human reason.

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**NOTES.**

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*

# Father Salpâtres

## IS GOD UNKNOWABLE?

WE have never heard in this Society any one assert, "There is no God." We have, however, very often heard that God is unknowable. The mouths of the advocates of Theism are thus stopped at once, and God is thrust out of court. This disability, however, God shares with many things. He is only a portion of the great Unknowable, of which, as I must be brief, I will say at once that to me it is very unintelligible. The curious thing is that the Unknowable, in the system to which I refer, takes precisely the place of the Infinite and the Absolute in other systems. Nay, it is the Absolute. The argument by which the impossibility of knowledge is asserted is the hopeless relativity of the human intellect. The Unknowable, then, is such, because it is the Absolute. It is printed in capital letters. It is mentioned with bated breath. Now, I cannot understand total blindness in such a case. Blind men are not afraid in the dark. It comes to this, then. Existence is predicated of that of which we know nothing whatsoever.

To come, however, more closely to the point, I find the ultimate reason why Unknowableness is asserted is the fact that we can know nothing but our own states of consciousness. Now, I ask whether it can possibly be said that we do not know something of the states of consciousness of our friends. If so, I shall be quite satisfied if I am allowed to say that I know God as I know my friend. Let Him be neither more nor less of a phantom than my next-door neighbour, and I am content. The object of this paper is to show that my knowledge of God is as real as my knowledge of man.

In the uncertainty of what is meant by knowledge in the school of thinkers whom I am criticizing, I am obliged to look elsewhere for an explanation, and there seems to be a great consensus as to the meaning of the term. If we first turn to Germany, where, as usual, the subject has been more scientifically treated than in England, we find there a special branch of mental science reserved for knowledge;

while logic contains the theory of thought, dialectic treats of the theory of cognition. To ascertain this, the act of cognition itself is examined, and in the case of Kant the result is as follows:—"Thought, according to him, is one thing; knowledge is another. Knowledge contains two elements, the category by which a thing is thought, and the intuition by which it is given. But all intuitions possible to man being sensible, it follows that the thought of an object, by means of a pure concept of the understanding, is only knowledge in as far as that concept is applied to objects of sense."<sup>1</sup> The illustration which he gives is remarkable. He even seems to deny the name of objective knowledge to mathematics. Being a pure product of the mind, mathematical concepts only deserve the name of such knowledge because they are capable of being applied to the real intuitions of sense. The point to which I would draw attention here is that, according to Kant's view, knowledge implies a variety of elements, some from within, others from without; all knowledge of reality involves a mixture of products of the mind and of experience. His very reason for denying that God is an object of knowledge is that He is not an object of experience. I now turn to the very apostle of the Unknowable, Mr. Herbert Spencer. Amidst all that is destructive in his philosophy, he is most anxious to vindicate real knowledge to the human mind. Now, what is the criterion by which, amidst all human illusions, he recognises truth? Amidst all our hollow thoughts, which have the ring which indicates that they are a reality? In a remarkable passage in which he asks how the human intellect can have a consciousness of the Unknowable, the real existence of which he vehemently affirms, he answers that this consciousness is the "product of many mental acts," and is "necessitated by the persistence of one element under successive changes." "The measure of relative validity among our beliefs is the degree of their persistence in opposition to the effort made to change them."<sup>2</sup> Again, his criterion of the reality of symbolic conceptions is that they are legitimate, "provided that by some cumulative or indirect processes of thought, or by the fulfilment of predictions based upon them, we can assure ourselves that they stand for actualities." Here we may remark this much agreement with Kant;

<sup>1</sup> Kritik der reinen Vernunft, p. 124, Hartenstein's ed.

<sup>2</sup> First Principles, 94, 96.

real knowledge is the result of multiplicity. That may be considered as real which comes to us from many sides, and which conveys under all changes a persistent unity of impression. I find the same principle stated in Professor Tyndall's answer to Mr. Mozely. He treats with scorn all doubts thrown upon the reality of Science, and he claims for it certainty on the ground that it is knowledge conveyed to us through a mixture of what he elsewhere, in a brilliant essay, calls imagination and experience. What is this but to say that when the same truth comes to us from various parts of our nature, and retains its identity under all, it may be considered as a real addition to our stock of knowledge. The principle here laid down is that the coincidence of diversity of origin with unity of result forces conviction upon us.

This demand for cumulative proof may be considered to be a characteristic of modern thought. We seem all of us to have a suspicion of any one proof which claims to be peremptory and necessary. This seems to be at once a result of our love of facts and of the feeling of the vastness of the universe, together with our inability to express it in adequate thoughts. This is, I suppose, what is meant by our dislike of what has been called paper logic. As long as the terms of our syllogism are A B C our argument goes on swimmingly, but as soon as we substitute concepts for symbols, then we begin to ask how far they can express the things which they represent. In fact, all truth seems to come to us something in the same way as the objects of sense. No one sense is adequate to convey the whole properties of an object. The notion of it comes in like a flood upon us from every sense, and each impression of sense is utterly different from every other. The melody of its voice is non-existent for the eye, while its brilliant colouring is not even chaos for the ear. Each impression is therefore manifestly inadequate, because of its utter unlikeness to the rest; yet this very diversity is a proof of the reality of the one force which thus impresses its truth upon us. This cumulativeness of knowledge is a result of the principle of its relativity, which to a great extent at least is certainly modern. What is meant by this principle is that things are known to me primarily by their power of impressing me; and as my being is made up of various faculties, things make themselves known through various channels; thus the truth is the cumulative result of that which rushes in upon me through all these different avenues. In this

way everything concrete is known to me. It must first make itself known before I can know it, and announce its presence in many ways before I recognise it. All this I am willing to accept, and my very proof that God is really known to us is that, while the thought of Him comes persistently before us through external proofs of every kind, He also announces Himself to us personally in our inmost being. What Kant denies is the very thing which I maintain: we experience God. Mr. Herbert Spencer maintains that God is unknowable, because He can come under no known genus; but what if He be a concrete fact? What I affirm is that our consciousness is made up from a threefold influence. In our thoughts, then, besides the two factors, sense and mind, we are conscious of a third, the contact of an infinite Will and Intellect.

It is quite plain, from the very nature of the argument, that it can only be most imperfectly exposed in a paper such as this. A mere fragment of the subject must be selected as a specimen of what is meant. I will therefore occupy myself with drawing out the knowledge of God which we gather from the Moral Law.

It is very often said that conscience is the voice of God. That this contains a great truth, I gladly admit. Yet I cannot accept the statement in that crude form. On the contrary, it forces itself upon us that conscience is the dictate of our own reason. Otherwise I cannot see how it could be a moral law at all. Even supposing it to be imposed upon us from without, I must make it thoroughly my own before it can bind me. I must see that it is right, else can it have no authority. Of course, a superior can command me, but not till I know that he has a moral power. Furthermore, I must be assured that he himself knows that he is in the right; else he becomes a tyrant, and I rebel, and have a right to do so. So thoroughly personal is law, so absolutely is it a product of an intellect, so certain is it that it must be contained in a mind and spring out of it. The same truth comes upon us in every possible shape. Of course, conscience is something more than reason. It is intellect exercised upon a definite subject-matter and in a definite way. It contemplates actions, but not external material actions, nor in as far as they are objects of thought, but as things to be done, and with a relation to will. Thus conscience is exercised upon a quality in actions which results out of a relation to a living will and intellect. Again, a moral law has not only freedom for its condition, but results from

it. I see that I am free, that I am exempted from the iron law of natural necessity, which binds me so inexorably on every side, at the very moment that, by virtue of that very freedom which tells me that I can choose one of two things, I feel myself bound to choose one. For all these reasons I cannot but think that conscience is a part of my own consciousness, nay, its inmost core. It is the voice of my intellect and free-will. Above all, it is my own reason, because it can make a mistake. In intricate cases I am conscious of a syllogism and a process. My conscience indeed is faithful to its inevitable intuition that the right must be done, irrespective of its consequences ; it falters in pronouncing what in this particular instance is right. It is on this very fallibility of conscience that I found my argument. We have arrived thus far, the moral law can only exist in a personality. It is rooted in an intellect and a will. That an intellect should see an action as wrong is a condition of wrongness, not only in the sense that it makes the doer wrong, but that the material action could not be wrong if there was in the universe no one to see that it is wrong. I am not arguing that a law implies an imposing will (though that may be true), but that whether it be a copy or an original, wherever it exists, a law implies a person in which it lives. This, then, is the question. That I am a law to myself is certain ; is my reason, however, the original or the shadow ; is it primary or derived ? I can conceive but one answer to the question. The very changes and variations, the falterings and hesitations in the dictates of conscience which are adduced to prove its empiric character, only show that the original impersonated law is not in us, but elsewhere.

Let me take but one peculiarity of the human Conscience, its strange combination of absoluteness and relativity. If one thing is certain about conscience, it is that it considers its own dictates to be universal. I do not think that any one would assert that falsehood, injustice, or cruelty would be right in heaven. I pass by the whole question as to the origin of conscience. We intuitionists indeed argue that a law so absolute as to be binding on all conceivable beings could never have issued from experience, for experience can never rise above its level. But I do not insist upon this ; however you may account for conscience, such is the avowed truth. Let but a child take in the fact that a thing is wrong, he will say to his little sister, "You must not do that, for it is wicked." Nor, I think,

can it be said that this is an argument drawn from the similarity of beings, for the very point is that we hold that the moral law is especially distinguished from physical, in that it binds all possible beings. We know that ginger would not be hot to an angel, but we know also that God, if He exists, is as much bound not to be cruel as man, for He is not a lawgiver in the sense that He makes any law according to arbitrary will. Now, what right has the conscience of man to bind the universe? What right have we to import our casuistry into paradise, and to seat our conscience on the throne of God? Plainly none whatever. Yet whenever we are certain that we are right, and in all the grand lines of morality we are absolutely certain, as certain as that two and two make four, we say at once without hesitation, this law is binding in Heaven. If it is not right for God, it is not right for me. What is the consequence? One of two things, either there exists a Being whose intellect and will are identical with absolute moral truth and impersonated law, or morality itself is a great mistake. While all law has its life in a personal being, absolute law can only live in a Personal Being who is identical with it, because His will is ever right, so that His nature is a law at once to Himself and to all beings. My reason tells me that there is an absolute obligation of which it cannot itself be the ground; if there be not an absolute reason, then that obligation itself is groundless.

To all this a well-known objection has been made. After all, it is said, this conclusion rests upon an hypothesis. If morals are to have a foundation in a real obligation, then there is a God. But what if they are groundless? For all practical purposes, it is enough that men should inevitably conceive themselves bound. Furthermore, the idea God is a necessity emerging from the want of an hypothesis, and for that very reason has no objective force other than a hypothetical one. As for myself, I must own even such a hypothetical necessity would be enough to prove the existence of God. In the case before us, the obligation is so inseparable a part of morality, that whatever is necessary to the reality of the obligation has to me an objective force. God is not necessary only to my conception of morality; His existence is necessary to the existence of an obligation. Thus far, however, I feel the power of the objection. The argument is too roundabout, too indirect to be an account of the mode in which anything so immediate as the relation between God and morals comes with such overwhelming might on the mind of man.

I allow it to be hypothetical; to me it is an indispensable hypothesis; to many here probably it is a supposition, and nothing more. But the wonder is that this same hypothesis, to you so thin and intangible as to be unreal, suddenly transfers itself from the region of *a priori* intuition to that of pleasure and pain. This abstract God proves His concreteness by a sharp pang felt in the depths of the emotional part of my being. I know it to be He by the cumulative process, of which we have heard so much. On the one hand, my analysis of moral law throws me upon a Personal Being in whom it lives, on the other, I experience a sensible pain, which is a direct consequence of the same moral law. Here is a combination of intuition and experience which is Kant's condition of knowledge. If there be a God, our imagination would present Him to us as inflicting pain on the violator of His law, and lo! the imagination turns out to be an experimental fact. The Unknowable suddenly stabs me to the heart.

I do not think that it can be said that this argument is a mere trick of subtle logic. The strangeness of the connection between duty and feeling had already struck Kant. He says that "this energy of a naked intellectual idea upon the sensory is quite uninvestigable by reason." "Man," he adds, "must content himself with comprehending *a priori* thus much, that such a feeling attaches inseparably to the representation of the law by every finite intelligent." I must confess that I do not comprehend this *a priori*. I doubt whether we should know wrong to be hateful, unless we felt the emotion of hate. Kant's account seems to me a wonderful instance of the great defects in his psychology which have so often been pointed out. He does not take into account that part of the phenomena to which I am now referring; I mean the pain of conscience on account of a broken law. He only contemplates the sentiment of reverence which is intuitively felt towards the moral law, and refers it to the humbling of self which necessarily accompanies the idea of duty. In the same place, however, he quite allows that this sentiment will not account for the "pathologic, internal sense of pleasure" which accompanies it. It affords, then, no reason for the pain which follows a violated law. Humility is not always a pleasant feeling, and, on the other hand, emancipation from law would be just as likely to naturally produce pleasure as pain. Again, it is quite conceivable that there should be a cold, passionless, moral being, in

whom goodness would produce no feeling. For pleasure and pain it requires a separate apparatus from intuition. This is precisely what we find in man ; though conscience is the dictate of reason, yet the term "moral sense" is by no means a misnomer. With all the sharpness and instantaneousness of a sense, anguish unutterable, of a kind distinguishable from any other, follows at once on wrong-doing, and that feeling gives us notice of the presence of evil, as sense reveals to us poison. What I have already said is sufficient to point out God as the immediate author of this wholesome misery. Among the many ways in which this may be effected, I will now dwell on one, rather as an answer to objectors than for the sake of the theory itself, which I only propound with hesitation.

The obvious objection to what I have said is the observation that the phenomenon is simply accounted for by the very hypothetical connection between the idea of God and of obligation on which I have insisted. Man having conceived the idea of God as the author of the moral law, out of that idea itself would naturally arise the emotion of fear. I cannot, however, think this is tenable, for a simple reason. This anguish of a bad conscience exists in the case of those who do not believe in God. An Atheist who committed murder would feel it to the full. We all know that those to whom God is unknowable may be conscientious men. The phenomenon of conscience, then, is quite separable from the notion of God. Again, it may be argued with more plausibility that the feeling of self-degradation will account for the pain of conscience. That this enters into it, I do not doubt, yet I cannot think that it accounts for it. It is plain that the pain of conscience arises specifically from the representation, "I have done wrong." Now the degradation of self is not the essence of wrong-doing, any more than self-respect is virtue. He who did what is materially right out of a notion of self-love would not be virtuous at all. Besides which degradation only accompanies certain classes of sins with which shame is more immediately connected. Lady Macbeth feels remorse, but does not feel degraded by the crimes which were the steps to her throne. If this be so, no way of accounting for this peculiar anguish appears but to refer it to the direct action of God. It has its source not in the idea of God, but in God Himself. It is easy to point out the mode of this action in accordance with what has been said.

The implicit end of all right moral action is the absolute good or

Summum Bonum, not as an idea, but as actually existing. We have seen that this absolute good is identical with a Personal Being who is the highest moral good; at the same time, I need fear no contradiction from a Utilitarian when I affirm that the highest moral good is also the highest happiness. No wonder, then, that a man who has separated himself by wrong from the Absolute Good simultaneously feels unhappiness. He has suffered an actual loss. Of course a man who imagines a loss which he has not actually sustained may suffer actually; but here the reality is too certain; he has done wrong. In other words, the Being who is the highest good, and contact with whom is the highest happiness, has withdrawn Himself from him. He has suffered, then, a real loss; if he knows God, he understands it; but whether he knows Him or not, he is profoundly sad. There is anarchy in the whole realm of ends, since that which is a desirable end in itself is away. As his whole intellectual being would be in a state of preternatural agony if, through some malevolent influence, falsehood all at once become its aim instead of truth, so his will is all confused if the absolutely desirable, which is its root and its foundation, is taken away, and a moral falsehood held up before it.

Finally, I hold it to be not a piece of mysticism, but of excellent metaphysic, that God is knowable and known to me by a mixture of intuition and experience. It is the only key to what otherwise is inexplicable, the mixture of the emotional and the intuitional in morals. He is virtuous who loves the right, and the right is loveable because it is identical with a personal being. We have heard much of the inability of the human mind to embrace the Infinite. What if the Infinite embraces me? No analysis of concepts will persuade me that I cannot know Him. Let us be consistent in holding the doctrine of the relativity of the human intellect. If for this reason I do not know God, then I know nothing whatsoever, for my knowledge of the Finite is also relative. I know Him as I know everything else, through the effects of His immediate action, experienced in my spirit. I do not know Him adequately; but then I am not deceived, for I am conscious of the inadequacy of my thoughts. I do not know Him by one concept, but by a number of concepts mutually correcting one another. They are all relative, but none are untrue, and at the bottom of all lies the consciousness of which we cannot rid ourselves,

that the Absolute Good exists. I fear not the reproach of holding an anthromorphous view of God. According to this theory, God is not drawn after the likeness of man, but man is Deiform, for God is the archetype of all that is good. You will never persuade mankind that God cannot be known as Infinite Love.

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#### NOTES.

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Mr. G. Harrison

## ON THE SUPPOSED NECESSITY OF CERTAIN METAPHYSICAL PROBLEMS.

*The questions which the mind sets itself to solve are determined from time to time by the mental habit, as a whole; and there are no special questions which the mind is naturally forced to consider, or which it is unable to ignore.*

IN the awful portal of Metaphysics—*vestibulum ante ipsum*—it is said there sits and will ever sit an immovable Sphinx, eternally propounding to all who would enter a problem, to which they return ever-varying answers. Those who, weary of a monotonous ænigma, would pass on without attempting a solution, are warned that it is one which, if never found, is bound to be for ever sought. They say there is a special question—perhaps three or four questions—which the mind, of its own nature, is compelled to ask, however little expectation it may have of obtaining an answer. There are, it is said, certain ultimate problems in metaphysics, such as those about the origin of things, the personal government of the universe, the incorporeal personality of the human animal, its prolongation after death; in other words, the creation, God, the soul, and a future state—these and some similar problems, though ever shifting their solutions, are eternally destined to be asked. They have been discussed, it is true, by various portions of the human race during long epochs of history, not only without anything like agreement, but with the most amazing discord. A portion of the population of Europe is still discussing them in this year 1872; and yet perhaps there has never been a period in which the chaos of thought on this subject has been more profound. To those who apply the tests which suffice for daily life there is not one fixed point, not a scrap of common ground amongst the disputants. The followers of various sects, and they can scarcely be counted, all differ amongst themselves; and even the authorities in each sect differ amongst each

[NO. XXV.]

other. Within the Church of England, for instance, conceptions of God as different as those of Dean Mansel and Mr. Maurice carry on internecine war. The sects of metaphysical philosophers are as little agreed in their answers. And Hegelians and Hamiltonians reproduce the same metaphysico-theological phantasmagoria. There is this great difference between this branch of mental activity and that immediately concerned with material, social, or logical progress. The discussion never advances. Nothing is ever established as a fixed foundation, on which all can proceed to build. Every thinker starts *de novo*. He does not even accept another man's bricks, wherewith to make his walls: nor does he raise them on another's ground-plan. He must make his own bricks, with or without straw, precisely as he chooses; design his edifice according to his personal fancy; and for a site he has the wide world to choose from, and even the air. It seems in truth to be the note of a really superior metaphysician in this field that he should begin with a *tabula rasa*, and then evolve his definitions, his postulates, his axioms, his method, his language, for himself; and perhaps after many centuries, there never was a moment when conscientious theologians and metaphysicians were so little inclined as they are now to accept these essential instruments of their work from one another, or from anybody.

Nothing can be in more direct contrast with the course taken by Science. The knowledge slowly won by man over nature and her laws is progressive. The torch is really carried on from age to age, lighting as it passes. In astronomy, physics, physiology, inquiries lead to solutions which are universally accepted; masses of subjects pass from the sphere of problems and enter into that of laws; and in turn they form the basis from which fresh problems are sought and solved. Problems which yield no fruit are abandoned. The trained mind acquires a sense of tact which directs it to the subjects which are most likely to yield fruit, and of which its successors are most likely to be in need. There is no single instance of this filiation of truth in this department of metaphysics. There is here no torch handed on. We see only rockets which whizz into the sky, crackle, and go out, and all is as dark as it was before, till a fresh rocket lights the gloom, dazzles us, and drops.

The direct study of man's moral, social, and intellectual nature can show far less of solid and common ground, and far less transmission of results, than does physical science. But that is, un-

fortunately, only because it is less scientific in its method. Still at the worst, there are large groups of discoveries in mental, moral, and social science, which are for every practical purpose common axioms, data for fresh inquiry. For an example, let us take Mr. Mill's two works on Logic and Political Economy. A good many of his doctrines, both in mental and social science, may fairly be said to be *adhuc sub judice*, but a very large proportion of them are collected from previous thinkers, and are in ordinary use as common ground. There are, again, groups of notions as to the general course of human development and historical progress which are also the common material of social science in every school. The progress here is far less accentuated than it is in physical science; but there is real progress. There is a transmission of results, and large common data. No one, for instance, would be listened to who said that the human race as a whole was standing still, or was going back; whereas, as to Creation, for instance, any conceivable proposition would find hearers; and none would surprise any one. There is not a single axiom on the topic which can guide, or need trammel any one. The assertor is as free as air; and so of course is his successor.

Whence this striking difference between metaphysical and scientific labours? In science, if a problem, after centuries of study, yields no solid ground, it is silently abandoned as an unprofitable mine. No scientific inquirer dreams of starting *de novo*, and where he gets no answers, he ceases to put questions. There are, however, certain metaphysical problems where the inquirer contentedly accepts the part of Sisyphus. He toils with his stone up the hill, heaving it over every obstacle, and perfectly conscious that it is destined to roll down when it reaches the top. His greatness appears to consist in the philosophy with which he accepts the inevitable result of his labours. He works alone, accepting no help, transmitting no result. He has fellow-toilers, but no fellow-workmen. Those around him are Tantali and Danaids, grasping the impalpable, shaping the formless. *Quisque suos patimur manes*. But we do not work in concert. This is not what we call thought and action in the living world, where labour is really associated, and appears to be attended with results.

There is, however, a thought which excludes despair, even in those inquirers who are most conscious of failure of permanent success. We are continually assured that these ultimate mysteries

differ in kind from the problems of science. In science, it seems that we are under no necessity to pursue any inquiry in which we reach no hard bottom. If we see no reasonable prospect of an answer, we are not forced to put the question. We are not in science set to certain problems as to a Rhadamanthine task. Whereas, they say the human mind is so constituted that, whether it finds a solution or not, it is still impelled to busy itself with these particular problems. We often hear that it is a part of our mental system; that we are not free agents in the matter. We seem to have implanted in us an everlasting query, or a half-dozen of everlasting queries; we experience a sublime curiosity on two or three topics—an incurable longing to solve a group of riddles. This hope springs immortal in the human breast, insatiable, if unsatisfied. These questions alone of all others, they say, cry aloud in every human being that has not a diseased mind or a depraved nature. It may be that no particular answer brings satisfaction, but can you exclude the craving to ask? Thus failure teaches no lesson, and breeds no despair. For if each solution is destroyed, the problem is indestructible.

I venture here to suggest that these particular questions are not indigenous in the human mind. I make bold to say that the natural mind is as well able to ignore them as it is to ignore other questions. I certainly deny that any particular answer is innate, and I doubt if the questions are more innate than the answers. I incline to think that the human mind was not sent into the world with an irrepressible mania for putting half-a-dozen particular riddles, of asking a set of questions which never get answered. I believe the mind to have an immense curiosity after an infinite number of problems. What these problems may be from time to time depends, I think, upon the natural and acquired bent of the mind. I can perceive no radical difference in kind between the problems mentioned in the outset and many other problems which could be suggested. The particular questions which the mind puts for solution are not instinctive, but artificial. That is to say, they depend on the general diathesis of each mind, which depends partly on its special quality and cultivation, and partly on the social influences around it. The paramount importance of any given problem is determined for each mind by the mental habit as a whole. Where we see a particular problem occupying this paramount importance in any given age or race, it only proves the prevalence

of some particular habit of mind. What I deny is that the history of the human race shows any particular problem uniformly holding the dominant place. And certainly, I would say this of the particular problems now under discussion. I can draw no solid distinction between them and many other objects of mental curiosity. For instance, the origin of the Universe or the creation of this Planet are still prominent subjects of speculation. I should say this is a consequence of the prevalence of certain forms of thought, the development of which it is easy to trace. I cannot see that either problem is (philosophically) a more pressing one than the problem as to the nature of Protoplasm, or if there be any Protoplasm. If meditation could supply us *a priori* with a sufficient knowledge of the nature and laws of protoplasm, it would be impossible to over-estimate the importance of such knowledge. It would certainly be associated with every thought, act, and feeling of our natures. If the problem is not to all persons one of absorbing interest, it is, I think, because the few who expect any sort of solution do not look for it to meditation *a priori*. But I can easily conceive a world—nor need we travel for it as far as Laputa—in which the one primary problem, the one question that never could be shut out, was the existence of a protoplasm.

Let me a little protect my position by a few disclaimers. I would not say one word in disparagement of the noble philosophical quality of Curiosity. I am rather defending it against the ideas which would narrow it to a few eternal problems, and stale its infinite variety by so monotonous a task. I do not say Curiosity is not a most excellent thing; I say its forms are not four or five, but myriads. Then, again, there are many who on philosophical, or on religious grounds, are satisfied that the problems are solved. With those who find these solutions complete, final, and permanent, I have, of course, not a word to say. I have not a word to say as to any supposed solution; nor do I say that the problems are insoluble. Nor do I say one word against the unsuspected benefits which may ensue in the mere course of seeking. Those who feel they have found, those who desire to seek, are all my good friends. All that I desire is to claim for myself, and any who may go with me, the liberty not to ask questions of which we have hitherto heard no solution; and to be able to do this without the reproach of violating our inmost natures, or committing any other of the darker metaphysical sins.

I venture to say that history does not show the human race to be eternally occupied with these particular problems, or indeed any particular problem or group of problems. There have been vast ages and mighty races, which they have troubled as little as they trouble horses or dogs. It is usual entirely to put aside the testimony of all the uncivilized or semi-civilized races. And thus countless myriads of intelligent human beings, as completely our ancestors, as entirely links in the chain of progress, as our own parents, are abstracted from the inquiry into the innate qualities of the human mind. Certain half-barbarous tribes have certainly had ideas which may fairly stand as the germs of those now in review. But very large groups of these tribes cannot be said, without violent straining, to have had on such subjects as the creation of the Universe, or the soul of man, a spark either of opinion or of curiosity. They are as innocent of any answer to the problem as of the problem itself. They often show a very high intelligence, and are in practical things progressive enough. But in things spiritual, the problems which profoundly impress them, are how to cheat some kind of Devil, or how to avoid some form of taboo. Taboo, in fact, weighs upon their souls precisely as the Judgment weighs upon some Christians. It is the one question which never can be shut out. All this, and at the lowest computation it is the experience of about nine-tenths of the human beings who have probably lived on this planet, it is usual to exclude from the discussion. But why so? They are complete, intelligent human beings, who undoubtedly progress under favourable conditions. In an inquiry what are the eternal characteristics of the human mind, we ought not to exclude them as being uncivilised. The most barbarous tribes exhibit powers of reasoning, of contrivance, of abstraction, in a word, all the powers really instinctive in the mind, though it may be in a low form. If you say that these ultimate mysteries only assume their importance with mental cultivation, that is precisely what I am urging. I say they only come into prominence with mental training of a certain kind. If they are instinctive tendencies of the mind, how can we explain their absence in great groups of uncultivated minds?

But to leave the ruder tribes, it is certain that over enormous periods of time, and in races of remarkable intelligence, the four subjects under immediate discussion have excited no kind of atten-

tion. The Chinese, from their numbers, their antiquity as a race, and the persistence of their civilization, form one of the most striking branches of the human family. They show a high intelligence, a profound interest in moral questions, and they have one of the noblest and most ancient of religions. Yet it is certain that the Creation of the Universe, Divine Government of the World, God or Gods, future life, are ideas unknown to them. They have no opinion on these subjects, and they never inquire into them. They worship the sky, the visible vault of Heaven; but they never assume that it made the Earth. They are deeply interested in the Earth, and all that is therein. But they never seek to know, nor do they pretend to know, how it came about. As to the future life of the soul, they have as little curiosity. They have never answered the question, and they never propose it. They are, however, intensely interested in the dead as dead men. They know nothing about incorporeal personality, though they cherish a religious veneration for the corporeal personalities of their own ancestors.

Let us turn to Hindoos, at various times. These have an intense, speculative activity, and in many things are curiously assimilated with the European mind. At times they have undoubtedly thrown up problems bearing some remote resemblance to those in question. But Buddhism is the characteristic product of the Hindoo intellect. During many centuries it held absolute sway over myriads of different races, and after twenty-four centuries it still retains much of its mighty empire. It can boast of great speculative intellects, a sublime morality, and a devotional spirit of a unique kind. Yet it is certain that to the Buddhist, Creation, if intelligible at all, was at most a disorder or a muddle; future life was a horrible dread; the continuance of the world the principle of evil, and the soul the ever-present curse. The pure Buddhist, one of the noblest of all the religious natures, not only did not dread the extinction of his personality, but he thirsted after it and prayed for it with ecstasy. Annihilation is his heaven; God, as the creator and the sustainer of things, is his fiend and his adversary. His Sphinx puts a very different problem from that of Christian philosophers,—not how was it all made, but how shall it all end? He, in his pilgrim's progress, borne down by his burden, might be heard crying out, in tones as pathetic as Christian's, "Who shall deliver me from the Wrath that is? how can I enter into the world which is not?"

I venture to think that this instance is crucial. Here we have one of the high religious types, with a mind of singular subtlety, and a conscience of strange tenderness, to whom the great problem was not Creation, but Destruction, who never asks for the origin of things, but meditates only on their end; to whom every power which has to do with matter is the principle of evil, whose one hope is eternal Death. After this, how can we continue to argue that the soul cannot contemplate annihilation, nor the mind conceive it; that the conscience never rests till it feels in contact with its Maker?

The same thing might be said of the Greek and Roman world. They are of course our close cousins in race, and our immediate ancestors in thought. Much of our philosophy is in cast of thought, as in language, simply Greek. And hence the germs of our metaphysical problems may easily be traced back to Greek sources. But with all these deductions, how little can we say that the practical intelligent Greek and Roman, the heroes of Plutarch, for instance, and the men of their time, were seriously occupied with the questions now before us, in any sense indeed in which we understand them. At times both Greek and Roman thought about Gods; but these were simply the personifications and emanations of various things themselves; certainly not the beings who created them. Some Greek philosophers busied themselves early about the principle of things; but by that they meant the primitive form of things, not the Creator of that primitive form. They had also a kind of worship of ghosts, distinctly different from the Chinese worship of the dead. But except when under the influence of those special philosophical or religious systems which we are now discussing, the practical Greek or Roman never showed the smallest vital interest either in the problem of the origin of things, or of his own living personality after death.

It would be very easy, but it is quite unnecessary, to follow out this argument into numerous illustrations. It would soon appear not only that large portions of the human race have been permanently indifferent to questions which we are now told ever present themselves to every human mind, but that the races and the ages in which these questions have held a foremost place form a very decided minority of the whole. Races and epochs under different philosophical influences have been occupied with a totally different set of problems. The questions which to us seem instinctive could

not even be rendered intelligible to them. Those which to them seemed the eternal interests of the human soul are to us puerile or horrible. And we need both study and imagination to conceive the logical processes which suggested to them hypotheses so strange, and problems so grotesque.

Let us now turn to the converse. We often hear it said that such questions as those under discussion have for every human being an importance so overwhelming that they must always remain apart, whilst human nature is unchanged. Now, there is no evidence whatever that these problems at all differ in importance from a vast number which have been silently abandoned. Nor is there any reason to think that the mind has any difficulty in abandoning the search of what it is deeply concerned to know, so soon as it has abandoned the hope of attaining that knowledge. It is a really gratuitous supposition that these particular questions at all surpass in importance many which have been asked with profound earnestness in many ages. The problem of the freedom or necessity of the will was once one of the cardinal questions of thought. If that question could have been solved, if the doctrine of Necessity could have secured its logical victories, it is impossible to overrate the enormous importance that its solution must have had on human life. If Kismet were a fact, and not merely a logical fallacy, human nature would take a different turn. It seems difficult to say that any problem as to the origin of the Universe, or the superhuman government of it apart from its laws, is to a man a problem more important than whether or not he has a free moral nature. The problem of Free Will or Necessity is still unsolved. Neither alternative has gained a permanent hold. Here, then, is a problem of transcendent interest to the conscience still unsolved, which is now abandoned by tacit consent, and has passed into the limbo of so many departed questions, where the ghosts of Nominalism and Realism gibber at each other, and the air is heavy with the sighs of those who search into the origin of Evil.

Here, indeed, is another problem to a moral conscience of transcendent interest—from whence moral evil? It is quite as important to the human soul as the origin of the world, or the other questions at issue. Indeed, in a moral sense, it includes and must determine all the rest. There was an epoch in philosophy when this tremendous question was earnestly attacked. Manichæism in all its forms was

a real answer. But Manichæism is out of credit; and yet no other answer has taken its place. No one in philosophy now discusses the origin of evil, yet no one pretends that the problem is solved. It is but another instance of a transcendent moral problem, about which we have accepted no solution, but into which we are weary of inquiring.

The mere fact that a certain knowledge, if we could get it, would be to us of infinite value, is not sufficient reason for our continuing to seek after we have lost all hope of finding it. How many kinds of inquiry of vital moment to man have been silently abandoned in despair? In various ages and epochs the hope of forming an individual horoscope has held the minds of generations spell-bound. It has been thought at times that some means might be hit on of foretelling the events of life, at least, the great turning-moments of it, or its final term. Powerful minds and ingenious generations have clung to this hope. Now the knowledge, if it could be obtained, would be of vital importance. There is nothing actually impossible, in the hope of some approximative forecast of the duration of life. It concerns each of us wonderfully, as they once said, to get such knowledge, if we can. Yet the inquiry has utterly died out, not by being formally proved impossible, so much as because nothing ever came of it. And all its transcendent importance has not, in an altered philosophy, sufficed to give it any longer a hold on our thoughts.

So, too, with the direct influence on human life of the Stars and other objects, and all those strange necromantic inquiries which have absorbed so much intellectual force. Now, it has never been proved, and it never can be proved, that the stars or the dead have no influence on human life, or that the flight of birds or the croaking of a raven is absolutely unconnected with our destinies. The contrary has never been proved; but ages have debated in vain what the influence is, and by what signs we may know it. If we ever could get to know it, it would be a matter to us of transcendent interest. In other ages it was the ever-present problem of generations. After every failure, they hoped against hope. They would be stopped not even by the melting away of all their results. The question, they said, was one of such overpowering interest, the knowledge, if it could be had, was so precious, that fail as it might to find, the mind must ever seek. And generations of learned pedants lived and died in seeking.

Again, it is said there is an innate consciousness in man that his soul is eternal. Man can never cease, they say, to feel interest in his destiny after death, and cannot conceive his personality to end with death. As we have just seen, this is quite untrue to fact. An interest in the life after death is peculiar to certain races and ages. But why is not life before birth just as interesting? How do we manage to dwell on our post-mundane destiny, and never give a thought to our pre-mundane? Yet if soul is conscious of being this immortal entity, it is, or it should be, as hard for it to realize beginning as end,—birth as death. The ante-natal condition of the soul ought to be a question as interesting as its post-mortuary. It has never been proved that it has no ante-natal existence. How can we shut out this momentous inquiry? An ingenious fabulist lately described a race whose whole spiritual anxieties were centred on the life before, not the life after, that on earth. And there is nothing in the theory inconsistent with human nature. As a matter of fact, vast races have paid at least as much attention to the one life as the other. Transmigration indeed is at least a consistent handling of the problem of incorporeal personality, for past life is at least as important to an indestructible entity as its future life.

The illustrations might be extended indefinitely. At one time the paramount problem of spiritual thought is the past life of the Soul, at another its future life, at another its annihilation. The spiritual problems vary indefinitely with each philosophy, each habit of mind, each cast of character. The primæval element, the harmony of the spheres, the providence of the sky, the bounty of the sun, absolute extinction, eternal life, the freedom of the will, witchcraft, devilcraft, necromancy, and astrology, with fifty other problems, have in turn enthralled particular ages. The same process holds good for all. Perpetual failure and ever-varied answers in time discredit the problems; they meet with no conclusive answers, and at length they cease to be asked. Nor does the plea of their transcendent importance, if we knew them, preserve any one of them as objects of interest long after the conviction has set in that we are not on the road to know them.

Those, therefore, to whom this conviction has arrived, and I again repeat that I have been speaking of no others, may put aside these problems with the same sense of relief with which they have rejected the answers. The mind has an infinite curiosity to solve a vast

variety of problems ; but there is no spell which binds it to one more than another. Nor, fortunately, is it condemned to the Tartarean fate of pursuing any task, where it is not conscious of fruits, or of asking any question where it has definitely despaired of arriving at a permanent answer.

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Mr. Ward

## CAN EXPERIENCE PROVE THE UNIFORMITY OF NATURE?

By the proposition that "Nature is uniform," or "acts uniformly," I mean to express the allegation, that the same phenomenal antecedents are invariably succeeded by the same phenomenal consequents. Mr. Mill calls this alleged fact "the law of Universal Causation;" but I follow those philosophers who think that the word "causation" applies properly to a totally different idea. And I may add, that in my view of the case, the argument for a First Cause would hold no less conclusively even on the supposition that phenomena succeeded each other without any fixed order whatever. This, however, by the way.

Several contemporary writers, if I understand them rightly, maintain these two theses:—(1) That Reason establishes with certainty the unexceptional uniformity of Nature; and (2) that this uniformity is an hypothesis absolutely required by inductive science, as its necessary basis. I cannot accept either of these two theses; and the reason of my special interest in the matter is their bearing on the existence of *Miracles*.

All persons who in any sense accept Christianity as a revealed religion, admit that certain miracles—as particularly the Resurrection of its Founder—have taken place at some past period. But it is far the more common opinion among Catholics, as it is certainly my own, that very numerous miracles have taken place in every century throughout the Catholic world, among those who cleave with undoubting adhesion to the Catholic faith: as, *e.g.*, just now at Lourdes, Father Newman expresses his "firm belief," "that the relics of the Saints are doing *innumerable* miracles and *graces daily*." But every miracle in its very notion *pro tanto* violates the uniformity of Nature. For instance, suppose some preacher of Christianity—in accordance with the promise of its Founder—were enabled on some given occasion to drink deadly poison without receiving injury. On such

a supposition, certain phenomenal antecedents would *fail* of being succeeded by their ordinary consequents, through the intervention of a *non-phenomenal* Agency. If it were true, then, that Reason establishes the unexceptional uniformity of Nature, it would be involved in that statement that Reason disproves the divine authority of Christianity.

In my present paper I confine my criticism to the case of *Phenomenistic* philosophers; or in other words, of those who profess to build their doctrines exclusively on the ground of *Experience*. For I do not inquire in my heading whether *Reason* in general, but whether "*Experience*" in particular "can prove the uniformity of Nature." I so limit myself, not at all because I think that intuitionists can succeed any better than phenomenists in vindicating the thesis which I am denying; but only because the two questions are entirely distinct, and must be treated one at a time. And what I complain of in the course adopted by several phenomenists is this:—they begin by assuming the unexceptional uniformity of Nature as an indisputable, I had almost said a sacred truth; and then, on the strength of that assumption, they decline to examine with real care and diligence the evidence adduced for this or that miracle. Their position is this,—they profess to found their philosophy exclusively on experience, and they cannot therefore take refuge in any supposed *a priori* intuition. This being so, they cannot establish the thesis that Nature acts with unexceptional uniformity, unless first they show that universal experience *testifies* this uniformity. I do not, indeed, admit that this universal experience, if it existed, would *warrant* their assumption, but at least it is *indispensable* for the establishment of that assumption. Their thesis, I say, has no basis whatever, unless they can show that it harmonises with the universal experience of mankind; whereas the Catholic maintains, that it is directly contradicted by the experience of every successive century. It is, I must really say, monstrous that they shall assume their thesis as being certainly true, unless they have examined with diligence and impartiality those alleged miracles, at least, which appear best authenticated.

They are bound, I maintain, in reason and consistency, to examine the evidence for any such alleged miracle with the very same candour and impartiality, with which they would examine the evidence for any non-miraculous historical fact. There is a certain amount and kind of testimony which would suffice to show that some given

disease in some given case, for which other treatment had been tried without success, has been effectually cured by some given newly-discovered natural remedy. The very same amount and kind of testimony, I maintain, ought in reason to convince these philosophers, that some given disease in some given case, for which other treatment had been tried in vain, has been cured by the application of a relic. They have no right whatever to discredit the allegation, by an appeal to the alleged uniformity of Nature; because the unexceptional uniformity of Nature is precisely what every Christian in the world denies, and for which—*until* they have disproved miracles—they have adduced no proof, nor even probability, whatever.

Moreover, the burden of proof rests entirely with them. They cannot allege, as a truth made known by universal experience, that Nature acts with unexceptional uniformity, until they have shown that never and nowhere has there been experience of miracles. It is not necessary at all (though it is very easy) for their opponents to establish that there *have* been miracles; it is necessary for *them* to establish that there have *not* been such. Till they have established this, they must admit in reason that the unexceptional uniformity of Nature is a purely arbitrary and ungrounded assumption. Their one avowed basis of truth is experience,—let them on this matter appeal to experience.

I think that the reason which really weighs with many thinkers, in leading them to hold so very confidently the unexceptional uniformity of Nature, is different from that which they theoretically allege. I think it is the following:—On the one hand, they are much better acquainted than most men with the extraordinary discoveries which have in modern times been made by inductive science, and thence infer that the science which has led to these discoveries must have proceeded generally on a legitimate basis; while, on the other hand, they think that such science would *not* have proceeded on a legitimate basis, unless it were true that Nature acts with unexceptional uniformity. Now, it would be an intolerable paradox—I grant this readily—to allege that inductive science has not proceeded (speaking generally) on a legitimate basis; but it will be remembered that there was a *second* thesis, which I denied at the outset. I deny entirely that Catholics throw any doubt on the thorough legitimacy of inductive science, however numerous, frequent, and striking they may believe miracles to be in every successive century.

Those who think otherwise, may probably throw their argument into some such shape as this:—"To deny the unexceptional uniformity of Nature, is to deny the possibility of inferring general truths from individual experiments. I compose a substance to-day of certain materials, and find it, by experiment, to be combustible: I compose another to-morrow, of the very same materials, united in the very same way and the very same proportions, and I find the composition *incombustible*. If such a case were possible, the whole foundation of science would be taken from under my feet." This allegation may be considered incontrovertible; but then this is *not* the case of a *miracle*. Let us, then, vary our supposition. On the second occasion, when I enter my laboratory to make the desired experiment, I find a venerable man seated. He announces himself as commissioned by God to deliver me some authoritative message. "And now," he adds, "I will give you a proof that He sent me. You know, by experiment, that the substance in your hand is naturally combustible; but now place it in the same fire, or in one a thousand times fiercer, and it shall remain unscathed." If I find the fact to be so, I shall indeed have extremely strong ground for believing my visitor divinely commissioned; but I shall have no ground whatever for doubting that the substance is naturally combustible. Nay, my conviction of this fact will be strengthened. For my visitor assumed that it was *naturally* combustible, by the very fact of treating its non-combustion as a *miracle*. And the same answer may be made, however numerous may be the miracles wrought. Gibbon, when speaking of "the innumerable prodigies which were performed in Africa by the relics of St. Stephen," has this remark:—"A miracle," he says, 'in that age of superstition and credulity, lost its name and its merits, since it would scarcely be considered as a deviation from the ordinary and established laws of Nature.' Now let us even make the very extreme supposition, that some given law of Nature, in some given time and place, were far more frequently suspended by miracle than allowed to take its natural course. Let us imagine, *e.g.*, that England were again Catholic; and that every Englishman, by invoking St. Thomas of Canterbury, could put his hand into the fire without injury. Why the very fact that in order to avoid injury he must invoke the Saint's name, would ever keep fresh and firm in his mind the conviction that fire does naturally burn. He would,

therefore, as unquestioningly, in all his physical researches, assume this to *be* the natural property of fire, as though God had never wrought a miracle at all. In fact, from the very circumstances of the case, it is always one of the most indubitable laws of Nature which a miracle overrules; and those who most wish to magnify the miracle, are led by that very fact to dwell with special urgency on the otherwise universal prevalence of the law.

I have argued, then, (1) that those who build their philosophy exclusively on Experience, cannot prove the unexceptional uniformity of Nature, unless they first disprove, one by one, the existence of alleged miracles. And I have argued (2) that the unexceptional uniformity of Nature is by no means required as a basis for inductive science. I do not for a moment forget that there are other relevant questions of vital importance: as, *e.g.*, whether intuitionists can establish on *a priori* grounds the unexceptional uniformity of Nature; and again, what is the argumentative force of miracles, supposing their existence proved? But these questions, it is plain, could not be satisfactorily discussed, except separately from those which I have been treating.

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#### NOTES.

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Lord Arthur Russell

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## DARWINIANS AND IDEALISTS.

MR. DARWIN has endeavoured to account for the origin of what are called species in animal and vegetable life by a hypothesis which has received the assent of nearly all the leading physiologists of the day. Among other forces which have been at work in the formation of species, Mr. Darwin assumes the preference of the female animals for beauty.

The Beautiful is a noumenon, an idea, in the sense of Plato and Hegel. Here we have, therefore, a purely ideal force, a spiritual power modifying and transforming the material world. The preference of beauty to ugliness, by sentient beings, is a mystery, Mr. Darwin says, which he cannot explain. (*Descent of Man*, I., 64). To me, the acknowledgment of the power of an Idea in transforming matter seems an important concession to the metaphysicians of the Idealist school. By idealism I mean the opinion expressed in popular language by Professor Tyndall, as follows :—"Besides the phenomena which address the senses, there are laws and principles and processes which do not address the senses at all, and which must be, *and can be*, spiritually discerned." (*Fragments of Science*, p. 74.)

Professor Huxley says (*Lay Sermons*, p. 160) :—"In itself it is of little moment whether we express the phenomena of matter in terms of spirit or the phenomena of spirit in terms of matter. . . . But with a view to the progress of Science, the materialistic terminology is in every way to be preferred."

I am convinced that it would not be possible to adopt the advice here given to us, or to carry it out with a view to the progress of science.

I will give an example. In a very striking passage on "the proposition of Evolution," Professor Huxley says (*Academy*, No. I., October, 1869) :—"That proposition is that the whole World, living and not living, is the result of the mutual interaction, according to

[NO. XXVIII.]

definite laws, of the forces possessed by the molecules of which the primitive nebulosity of the universe was composed. If this be true, it is no less certain that the existing world lay, *potentially*, in the cosmic vapour."

The potential existence of the world is a pure idea, but a perfectly clear and distinct idea, which it would be impossible to express in "terms of matter."

I will quote Professor Huxley again :—

"The reconciliation of physics and metaphysics lies in the acknowledgment of faults upon both sides : in the confession by Physics that all the phenomena of Nature are, in their ultimate analysis, known to us only as facts of consciousness ; in the admission by Metaphysics that the facts of consciousness are practically interpretable only by the methods and formulæ of physics." (*Lay Sermons*, p. 374.)

Can metaphysics grasp the hand of friendship here held out ? I am afraid not.

I conclude that the phenomena of physics are practically interpretable only by the methods and formulæ of mind.



TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, FEB. 11, 1873.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

W<sup>r</sup>. Ruskin

## THE NATURE AND AUTHORITY OF MIRACLE.

As far as I was able to follow the course of debate at our December meeting, it seemed to me strange, in the consistently resolute efforts of the speakers on both sides to prove that Miracles were not miraculous, though the one party evidently held a reserved opinion, all the time, that from miracles, though admittedly unmiraculous, the most important moral results were to follow; and the other, that miracles, though admittedly unmiraculous, could not be proved by human evidence.

And it also seemed to me that we failed, throughout the evening, to define the quality in any event which, whether it be called miraculous or not, would have made it impressive to the one class of thinkers and incredible to the other.

This definition I intended to attempt in the present paper; but find it, after many efforts, for the present, to me, impossible. I am haunted by doubt of the security of our best knowledge, and by discontent in the range of it: so that it seems to me contrary to modesty, whether in a religious or scientific point of view, to regard anything as miraculous. I know so little, and this little I know is so inexplicable, that I dare not say anything is wonderful because it is strange to me, or not wonderful, because it is familiar. I have not the slightest idea how I compel my hand to write these words, or my lips to read them: and the question which was the thesis of Mr. Ward's paper, "Can Experience prove the Uniformity of Nature?" is, in my mind, so assuredly answerable with the negative which the writer appeared to desire, that, precisely on that ground, the performance of any so-called miracle whatever would be morally unimpressive to me. If a second Joshua to-morrow commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed him, and he therefore claimed deference as a miracle-worker, I am afraid I should answer, "What! a miracle that the sun stands still?—not at all. I was always expecting it would. The only wonder to me was its going on."

[NO. XXIX.]

But even assuming the demonstrable uniformity of the laws or customs of Nature which are known to us, it remains to me a difficult question what manner of interference with such law or custom we might logically hold miraculous, and what, on the contrary, we should treat only as proof of the existence of some other law hitherto undiscovered.

For instance, there is a case authenticated by the signatures of several leading physicists in Paris, in which a peasant girl, under certain conditions of morbid excitement, was able to move objects at some distance from her without touching them. Taking the evidence for what it may be worth, the discovery of such a faculty would only, I suppose, justify us in concluding that some new vital energy was developing itself under the conditions of modern life, and not that any interference with the laws of Nature had taken place. Yet the generally obstinate refusal of men of science to receive any verbal witness of such facts is a proof that they believe them contrary to a code of law which is more or less complete in their experience, and altogether complete in their conception; and I think it is therefore the province of some one of our scientific members to lay down for us the true principle by which we may distinguish the miraculous violation of a known law from the natural discovery of an unknown one.

In the meantime, supposing ourselves ever so incapable of defining law, or discerning its interruption, we need not therefore lose our conception of the one, nor our faith in the other. Some of us may no more be able to know a genuine miracle when we see it than others to know a genuine picture; but the ordinary impulse to regard, therefore, all claim to miraculous power as imposture, or self-deception, reminds me always of the speech of a French lady to me, whose husband's collection of old pictures had brought unexpectedly low prices in the auction-room,—“How can you be so senseless,” she said, “as to attach yourself to the study of an art in which you see that all excellence is a mere matter of opinion?” Without in the least, therefore, claiming the faculty of recognition of Miracle, we may securely define its essence. The phenomena of the universe with which we are acquainted are assumed to be, under general conditions, constant, but to be maintained in that constancy by a supreme personal Mind; and it is farther supposed that, under particular conditions, this ruling Person interrupts the constancy of

these phenomena, in order to establish a particular relation with inferior creatures.

And mainly, the relations to be established are twofold. Miracles are either to convince, or to assist. We are apt to think of them as meant only to establish faith, but many are for mere convenience of life. Elisha's making the axe-head swim, and the poisoned soup wholesome, were not to convince anybody, but merely to give help in the quickest way. Conviction is indeed, in many of the most interesting miracles, quite a secondary end, and often an unattained one. The hungry multitude are fed, the ship in danger relieved by sudden calm. The disciples disregard the multiplying of the loaves, yet are strongly affected by the change in the weather.

But whether for conviction or aid (or aid in the terrific form of punishment), the essence of miracle is as the manifestation of a Power which can direct or modify the otherwise constant phenomena of Nature ; and it is, I think, by attaching too great importance to what may be termed the missionary work of miracle, instead of what may in distinction be also called its pastoral work, that many pious persons, no less than infidels, are apt to despise, and therefore to deny, miraculous power altogether.

'We do not need to be convinced,' they say, 'of the existence of God by the capricious exertion of His power. We are satisfied in the normal exertion of it ; and it is contrary to the idea of his Excellent Majesty that there should be any other.'

But all arguments and feelings must be distrusted which are founded on our own ideas of what it is proper for Deity to do. Nor can I, even according to our human modes of judgment, find any impropriety in the thought that an energy may be natural without being normal, and Divine without being constant. The wise missionary may indeed require no miracle to confirm his authority ; but the despised pastor may need miracle to enforce it, or the compassionate governor to make it beneficial. And it is quite possible to conceive of Pastoral Miracle as resulting from a power as natural as any other, though not as perpetual. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and some of the energies granted to men born of the Spirit may be manifested only on certain conditions and on rare occasions ; and therefore be always Wonderful or Miraculous, though neither disorderly, nor unnatural.

Thus St. Paul's argument to Agrippa, "Why should it be

thought with you a thing impossible that God should raise the dead?" would be suicidal, if he meant to appeal to the miracle as a proof of the authority of his mission. But, claiming no authority, he announces as a probable and acceptable fact the opening of a dispensation in which it was as natural for the dead to be raised as for the Gospel to be preached to the poor, though both the one and the other were miraculous signs that the Master of Nature had come down to be Emmanuel among men, and that no prophet was in future to look for another.

It is true that, in any abstract reflection on these things, one is instantly brought to pause by questions of the reasonableness, the necessity, or the expedient degree of miracle. Christ walks on the water, overcoming gravity to that extent. Why not have flown, and overcome it altogether? He feeds the multitude by breaking existent loaves; why not have commanded the stones into bread? Or, instead of miraculously feeding either an assembly or a nation, why not enable them, like himself, miraculously to fast, for the needful time? And in generally admitting the theories of pastoral miracle, the instant question submits itself,—Supposing a nation wisely obedient to divinely appointed ministers of a sensible Theocracy, how much would its government be miraculously assisted, and how many of its affairs brought to miraculous prosperity of issue? Would its enemies be destroyed by angels, and its food poured down upon it from the skies, or would the supernatural aid be limited to diminishing the numbers of its slain in battle, or to conducting its merchant ships safely, or instantaneously, to the land whither they would go?

But no progress can be made, and much may be prevented, in the examination of any really difficult human problem, by thus approaching it on the hypothetical side. Such approach is easy to the foolish, pleasant to the proud, and convenient to the malicious, but absolutely fruitless of practical result. Our modesty and wisdom consist alike in the simple registry of the facts cognisable by us, and our duty in making active use of them for the present, without concerning ourselves as to the possibilities of the future. And the two main facts we have to deal with are that the historical record of miracle is always of inconstant power, and that our own actual energies are inconstant almost in exact proportion to their worthiness.

First, I say, the history of miracle is of inconstant power. St. Paul raises Eutychus from death, and his garments effect miraculous cure, yet he leaves Trophimus sick at Miletum, recognises only the mercy of God in the recovery of Epaphroditus, and, like any uninspired physician, recommends Timothy wine for his infirmities. And in the second place, our own energies are inconstant almost in proportion to their nobleness. We breathe with regularity, and can calculate upon the strength necessary for common tasks. But the record of our best work and our happiest moments is always one of success which we did not expect, and of enthusiasm which we could not prolong.

And therefore we can only expect an imperfect and interrupted, but may surely insist on an occasional, manifestation of miraculous credentials by every minister of religion. Our own Faith, at all events, stands or falls by this test. "These signs shall follow them that believe," are words which admit neither of qualification nor misunderstanding; and it is far less arrogant in any man to look for such divine attestation of his authority as a teacher, than to claim without it any authority to teach. And assuredly it is no proof of any unfitness or unwisdom in such expectations that for the last thousand years miraculous powers seem to have been withdrawn from, or at least indemonstrably possessed by, a Church which, having been again and again warned by its Master that Riches were deadly to Religion, and Love essential to it, has nevertheless made wealth the reward of Theological learning, and controversy its occupation. There are states of moral death no less amazing than physical resurrection; and a church which permits its clergy to preach what they have ceased to believe, and its people to trust what they refuse to obey, is perhaps more truly miraculous in impotence than it would be miraculous in power, if it could move the fatal rocks of California to the Pole, and plant the sycamore and the vine between the ridges of the sea.

[See next page.]

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Dr. Acland

## FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE.

So much has been written of late on the grounds of conviction which should satisfy us that we possess Truth, that it seems worth while to ask the simple question, Can the same mind accept conclusions which rest on grounds so different as Faith and Positive Science, or must the mutual mistrust which exists between the men of science and the so-called religious world be perpetual in the nature of things? The question may be considered from many points of view. The men of Faith hold the men of Science to be sceptical, that is to say, the men of Science will not accept data which are sufficient for the men of Faith; secondly, the men of Science hold the men of Faith to be credulous, or superstitious, that is to say, the men of Faith act upon data which the men of Science consider to be inadequate, or to be inconsistent with what may be certainly proved, as certainly, at least, as anything can be proved.

It will hardly be doubted that the present tendency of many modern thinkers is to assume that physical demonstration, or mathematical proof, is the only reasonable ground of conviction. We therefore ask, for the purpose of harmonizing these conflicting opinions, What do we mean by Faith and what by Science? Are these antagonistic, incompatible, or reconcilable?

In one of his graphic essays Matthew Arnold says of a certain English bishop that "to the most sincere ardour and unction, he united that downright honesty and plain good sense which our English race has so powerfully applied to the divine impossibilities of religion." This ecclesiastic had much experience of mankind, and he used to say that had he to choose between a life of contemplation and a life of action for the formation of a religious character, he should choose the life of action; and this tallies with the Essayist's account of him. Now he left among his private prayers this petition, "*Give us Faith and Knowledge.*"

Could Bishop Wilson revisit his Church and Nation, he would find  
[NO. XXX.]

that Prayer is freely spoken of as a thing of doubtful wisdom, and more doubtful efficacy; so that he even might be led to put it to himself whether it is wise to ask for anything. Supposing, after due inquiry, he still decided to pray, he would find, perhaps, that the prayer for Knowledge would not expose him in this advanced age to rebuke, but that it was not so clear that Faith was an object worthy of attainment.

Now, omitting any question as to prayer, how would the most of us answer his desire for Faith and Knowledge? Should we tell him they are both attainable? both worthy of attainment? attainable by the same person? and in what sense?

It is certain we should tell him that Knowledge is desirable, partly for its material results, and partly for the charm of the pursuit of it: that though modern inquiries have immensely extended it, yet the groundwork of even Material Knowledge is still involved in mystery; and that as for Knowledge, other than Material, our senses are found so liable to error, that our conclusions, from their apparent manifestations, when thoroughly sifted, are more doubtful still. We should slyly, as well as gratefully, add, perhaps, that for much of this uncertainty we are largely indebted to one with "every virtue under heaven," who had been his own colleague and contemporary.

It might not astonish us, did he answer that, this being so, he was glad to fall back on that general trust in the order of things which he used to call Faith, with which, as an adequate guide ("a good working hypothesis," we should call it), he had been able to live in usefulness and honour, and to die in peace.

Upon this we might, for a better common understanding, offer to state to him what we mean by Knowledge—he in return undertaking to inform us what he means by Faith. We call nothing Knowledge, we should tell him, from which we have not sifted every error which can be detected and removed. Our senses oftentimes deceive us, and so do the instruments by which we aid them. But we are gradually discovering not only the intimate structure and *modus operandi* of our senses severally, but we subject them to severe tests, and assist them in ways, we should say, entirely unknown to him. We have so studied the operations of mind upon these sensations thus carefully examined, that we flatter ourselves that errors of ratiocination and argument on any subject of importance never now pass by us unchallenged and undetected.

In this manner we collect our data on every subject which is presented to our apprehension. We arrange such data in order; draw conclusions from them; deduce from these conclusions principles and laws which we believe to be in harmony with that order of the universe which we term Natural. We then call these data and facts, these principles, and laws, relative to any portion of our knowledge, the Science of that part of knowledge.

We therefore boast, and with justice, that unless some error has slipped unnoticed into our collection of facts, unless some error has crept into our reasoning thereon (and we believe both to be capable of detection and of rectification), every modern recognised Science is a body of absolute truth, as far as our own Natures are made capable of appreciating or stating Truth.

We refuse indeed to allow the term Science to any other kind of knowledge. Especially we test all received opinions, statements, laws, principles, which existed before our time, thinking that in former days the means of investigating material things were so imperfect that few ancient data, and therefore few conclusions from them, can be safely relied on by us as scientific facts. In some departments of human knowledge, eminently those of historical fact, the process with us is not quite the same. For in these we are met by the further difficulties of knowing what the historical documents, statements, and opinions, which we possess, were meant originally to signify. Also we often do not know when, where, or by whom they were written. So of all this class of data we have become more suspicious, if possible, than of the evidence derived from our senses, and of the data which we can subject to experiment. We do not doubt the truth of these ancient assertions, but we do not admit it without such analysis as we conceive to be requisite before receiving it into our so-called body of Science. And one result we find to be, that we are called "doubters" or "sceptics," when our conscience tells us we are only more earnestly seeking for the truth.

You will see, we might continue, addressing our Bishop, that our *modern Science* is, or professes to be, the whole mass of *Organised Knowledge*.

And this Organised Knowledge contains two distinct parts:—

1. Mathematical and Arithmetical Truths, which are called *necessary*, i.e., which could not, so far as we know, be, or have been, otherwise, (as two straight lines cannot enclose a space).

2. Physical Truth, or uniform Laws of Nature, which, so far as we know, never vary, but which, so far as we know, might have been otherwise, (as organic types and their modifications).

Outside these two departments we provisionally allow Hypothetical Laws, which seem, indeed, to bind phenomena together, but which are not yet proved to be the true account of the matter, or may not be true, (as the doctrines of Special Creations or of Natural Selection).

I could imagine that to this Bishop Wilson would say, What is surprising to me is the labour you have taken to attain so very little. You deserve for this the utmost credit a reasonable being can desire; for you, being so accurate and so painstaking, seem well aware of the uncertainty of some of your data, and of the possible futility, therefore, of your conclusions. For I am told that with all your pains, your Sciences contain within them so many examples of proved errors, that being candid men, you must often feel the material ground under your feet to be very slippery.

Be this as it may with regard to Knowledge, I hold (might continue the Bishop, redeeming his promise to tell us his notion of Faith), the opinion of my friend, Mr. John Locke, whose work was grievously misunderstood at Oxford, "that *Faith is a settled and sure principle of assent and assurance, and leaves no manner of room for doubt or hesitation.*"

And the ground of this supremacy of *Faith* in Locke's sense is that it is assent to what, on grounds of Reason, is believed to be a "revelation." "In these cases," he says, truly enough, "our assent can be rationally no higher than the evidence of its being a revelation, and that this is the meaning of the expressions it is delivered in." This opinion is, even maintained by the Commentator Thomas Scott, who in the most studied manner lays it down that "*no evidence can prove a real contradiction to our senses, or certain knowledge, to be a divine revelation.*"

Where I perhaps differ from John Locke is in the stringency of the proofs he requires of what is Revelation. For in that matter I should agree much more with your Frederick Maurice, who found such evidence in the Human Heart of Communion with God, that he was satisfied therewith; but I far prefer, he might say, even John Locke's reference to reason to the method of your Mansel, who seems, it may be only seems, incapable of believing that absolute goodness and justice can be in any real sense conceived through our poor experience thereof in our own nature.

Any way, my *Faith* is to me as strong a ground for *action* as your Knowledge. My Faith is a complex union of Knowledge and of Love, and does not need or admit logical demonstration. I exercise this kind of assent, confidence, or belief, first in religion, secondly in science, thirdly in propositions advanced by credible persons, and fourthly in persons, the fullness of my assent depending on the fullness of my evidence. Your Knowledge (or Science, if you will so call it), being, as you assert, confined to logical demonstration, would limit me more than my whole Faculties tell me my convictions need to be limited. Your Science has often to retrace its steps from the imperfection of your data, even in such a subject as Astronomy, which is counted to be the most precisely rigorous department of applied Mathematics.

I imagine that you also allow that your Science is forced to employ hypotheses in many stages, shifting your hypotheses as you find required, as in Owen's Archetype.

My faith has one hypothesis that has existed since the Human Race has possessed human faculties, that an Infinite Being, incomprehensible, everlasting, has made and does sustain all things.

That is the fundamental basis of my Faith, with all the consequences that flow therefrom. One consequence is, that I am sure that of the scheme of the Universe, material and moral, considered as a whole, I am ignorant. Your scientific discoveries, while they extend my conceptions, confirm me more and more in this conviction, which I share with Plato, Berkeley, Butler, Newton, Kant, and the Herschels.

With Bacon, I pray that "human things may not prejudice such as are divine; neither that from the unlocking of the gates of sense, and the kindling of a greater natural light, anything of incredulity or intellectual night may arise in our minds towards divine mysteries."

Thus, whether I look abroad on the Kosmos, or scan my own consciousness within, I pray still, "Give us Faith and Knowledge."

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If Bishop Wilson were now to step forward into our century, and thus address us, could Modern Science prove him wrong?

Is Knowledge exclusive of Faith?

[See next page.

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TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 1873.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

Hon. Roden Noel

## ON WILL.

Of the evil spirits Milton says :—

“Others apart sat on a hill retired,  
In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high  
Of Providence, foreknowledge, *will*, and *fate*,”

—but I will not quote the melancholy conclusion.

Free-will has been said to be the most important philosophical question of the day, that around which the hottest battle of the Schools will henceforth have to be waged. And I think we must all have felt in the course of our discussions in this Society that this is indeed true. Perhaps it is rather bold in me to invite controversy on it, but I should sincerely like to elicit the reasonings of some of our eminent thinkers on the direct point at issue. For my own part, I set out with confessing that I have never seen any sufficient answer to that old book of Jonathan Edwards' on the Will (though I do not fully agree with it now). The only freedom, says Edwards, of which man is capable, and which the vulgar impute to him, is the power anyone has of doing as he pleases or wills. A free man means a free agent. Yet those who maintain Free-will, maintain apparently that it consists in a self-determining power, that a volition does not depend on any cause out of itself, nor on anything prior to its own acts, which would render it necessary as bound up with its cause. The question is, Does not a particular act of choice or volition begin to be? If it does, then I do not see how we can except this from the dominion of that universal law of causality which intuition assures us of, all that begins to be has a cause, has a sufficient reason in that which existed before for becoming the precise mode of existence it actually becomes. The appeal made is generally to common-sense somewhat in this form : We feel free ; we can refrain from willing or determine to will a certain action, as we please. Now, who can deny this? And this is exactly why we feel free. It is our “pleasing” that determines our will. It is we ourselves in one state who determine ourselves

[NO. XXXI.]

in the next state. But then, also, if we inquire more curiously, we must ask, what made us please so to will as we do? For this process of choosing is a complex one, involving intelligent perception, imagination, pleasure, and pain; in some cases a peculiar sense of the *morality* of an action. All these spiritual elements certainly vary in each person, as they do in different races, and in different stages of development, individual and national. In some the power of realising consequences, even though well known, at the moment of temptation does not seem to be organised as in others. Some have not quick sympathies; or have a sluggish imagination, disabling them from putting themselves in the place of others,—have a feeble moral sense, or a perverted one. Some have taken positive delight in inflicting pain. Most men have consciences sensitive in some directions, and not so in others. A Sardanapalus may be averse to cruelty, and not to sensuality or idleness. A pure ascetic may not be averse to domineering cruelty. Some races have no word for guilt. Sir J. Lubbock mentions a race whose sense of guilt is peculiar, one of whose chiefs expressed his moral repugnance to the white man's custom of monogamy, saying that it was disgusting, and for all the world "like a Wanderoo monkey." These faculties and feelings seem to vary with vital organic development; no one can study the works of Spencer, Darwin, Dr. Carpenter, and others without feeling certain of that. But if they vary with it, certainly they are to a great extent (not wholly, however) determined by it. H. Spencer has maintained, and I think proved, that Life may be conceived as the "definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive, in correspondence with external co-existences and sequences," and that the highest creatures have reached those highly integrated, very definite, and heterogeneous organizations they possess through modifications upon modifications accumulated during an immeasurable past, together with those involved forms of consciousness which are the correlatives of these complex structures. Our perceptions and conceptions and feelings, then, are evidently determined for us largely by inheritance.

Here those who differ from me will probably demur. They will maintain that we have the power of using the capacities bestowed on us as we please, well or ill. As we please, granted; well or ill, no; we please to use them as our nature, together with our circumstances, oblige us to please. Certainly a person does give himself a

conscious deliberate education, but what kind of conscious education he gives himself does not depend on himself. It is urged that freedom of the will consists in a man's power to *deliberate*—not to yield to the impulse of the moment—to weigh his action in the balance of reason, so that conscience may conquer inclination, if need be. Now this power to deliberate men possess in different degrees. An overmastering impulse may be inherited. Some from the first are what we call creatures of impulse; some have much stronger passions than others—in proportion to their sense of right and wrong—to their faculty for reasoning upon consequences. The impulse to deliberate is certainly not the same in different men; nor can the result of their deliberation be the same; this will be according to their characters. No doubt these same characters are largely formed by prior acts, prior desires, and deliberations. But it is evident that if this power to deliberate (wherein certainly the only enviable or conceivable human freedom does consist), and if the volitional result of it, depends on prior desires and resolves, we cannot push the process back for ever. A power to deliberate will hardly be claimed for that first mysterious act of volition wherein the conscious creature first distinguishes self from not-self; nor even to any appreciable extent for subsequent impulsive volitions of the child. But the first conscious deliberation worthy to be so called must be moulded by these, as well as by the teaching a child has received, and its individual capacity for being taught. Well, but is there nothing more than inheritance in this? Is there nothing peculiar and individual? Assuredly there is. However continuous a person is with his ancestors, however similar in body, in mind, in tendencies, there is something special to him; that is, his vital and spiritual organism is new, is added to the sum of existence, if not quantitatively, at any rate qualitatively added; it has its own peculiar mode of becoming; if it were not so, infinite differentiations would not gradually have been accumulated as they have been, to be transmitted in the manner they are; though the new modes of existence, whether psychical or physical, have always had their representatives before, yet they are not absolutely the same; there is a difference, together with a sameness, which constitutes them what they are, and renders them knowable or distinguishable. What is the inference, then? That so far as a person is individual and peculiar, an altogether new manifestation of the personal principle, spiritual and vital,

the causes we have alluded to are insufficient to account for him. Here we come to something very like that self-determination which the advocates of Free-will appear to contend for. Moreover, I may go on to admit a principle similar to this in the more familiar instances of adult volitional history, and therefore still more resembling what they maintain. Is it, after all, quite true that every act of choice is a mere resultant of the past? External circumstances vary; the nervous structures are being constantly disintegrated and as constantly renewed, like the rest of the organism; this is true also of the perceptions, feelings, thoughts, volitions. These, however similar to the past, are, like the external agencies that co-operate with them, in some degree absolutely new—else there were no internal change—neither assuredly is the spiritual part of us merely passive to external change, but co-operative with it. Here, then, we have a constant present exertion of vital and spiritual force co-operating with physical; otherwise, I cannot conceive of the *progressive* personal identity, which is only identity on condition of being different and constantly varying: which is not a stagnant blank self-identity of  $A=A$ , but a mysterious progressive unity of diverse elements. What Edwards would not admit is, after all, true, then—there is an activity in the soul, something of a self-moving power; the manner of its exercise is, indeed, absolutely determined by the infinitude of interdependent past phenomena, but there is a constant renewal of its own peculiar power needed to co-operate with actual results of the past, and with progressive powers of the universe now and always acting. But does this admission really *help* the advocates of Free-will much? does it further the *object* they have in view? The Ego, a conscious Self, is truly present in the act of choice. I choose freely, because no external force compels me, except so far as either I am unconscious of it, or it enters into and becomes an element in my own intelligent self, desiring, deliberating, choosing. Still I can only understand, deliberate, and choose as I actually do, and the powers compelling me may be viewed objectively, as well as felt subjectively. But what is absolutely new and fresh in the conscious state which is to follow my present conscious state, I cannot directly determine. The desire of a future action is to some extent the same as that action,—it is that action *nascent*. That which is quite new in a volition is caused rather by the unconscious self, or Principle of Per-

sonality, which underlies the conscious, and defies understanding. It is true that we consciously will and desire what is not, and has not precisely been—for instance, in imagination and invention. But there is always much more in a designed effect than the designer ever put there; and if there were not, design and its effect were impossible; it *proceeds upon and implies a pre-existing order*. Moreover, the concomitant nervous changes themselves even imply ever fresh development of vital force, not entirely dependent on prior developments of it; and this again depends on mechanical motion, to which I believe I could prove that precisely the same law applies. Self-determination is implied even in mere change of place. Motion is the free-will of Nature, as Free-will is the tendency of spirit to motion. It seems to me a great mistake to speak, as Mr. Spencer and others do, of the one being transformed into the other, though their correlation is certain. Each kind of being implies, on the contrary, a perpetual Divine Creation for every change (of relative proportionate existence) that takes place in it; and more than this, implies a perpetual generation from its own kind of existence in past time, and a perpetual generation of its own future existence. Thought and will must generate thought and will; motion, motion; life, life; pain, pain; pleasure, pleasure, &c., yet *indirectly* these imply and constitute and generate their opposites; withdraw one, and the universe would collapse. The retrograde metamorphosis of a living cell liberates formative vital force, which rebuilds another from the nutriment—modified by the former—but also new, life entering into new combinations. Here we have personal thought and will born of the battle between Death (ganglionic decomposition) and Life. The correlative formative process itself would seem to be unattended with personal consciousness; perhaps only with that of the monad, or cell. Think, however, what vital and spiritual forces must be liberated by the death of the whole body! how much is required in the growth of a child! But if Motion cannot directly generate Will, neither do I see how Free-will can generate Motion, though theologians maintain the contrary. Even though will can direct and modify Motion, in experience this is not until Motion has directed and modified will. Of a motion that should not precede and reflect itself in thought from without, before being willed, we have no type in experience. So that the dogma of Divine will originating motion absolutely is difficult of

belief. Will is the *latest* and highest form of Power, but mechanical, chemical, and vital forms are implied in it, and necessary to its development. In human minds there is a phantasmagoria of ideas presented to the spirit through life from without ; we can but desire and reject, and press onward to a goal out of sight, all being infinite, but we, with a sense of our infinity, hearing vague reverberations from our infinite past, and dimly divining our infinite future. How, then, does this kind of universal self-determination help us ? It may be termed *Freedom*, because it coalesces with the Absolute Self-determination of the Divine All—but in that sphere Necessity and Freedom are one. The Freedom supposed to be required for Responsibility is, on the contrary, a *conscious* self-determination of the person. If responsibility depends on the Metaphysical Freedom of the Will, very surely there is none. But Edwards argues that virtue and vice are predicable of actual conscious states, not of their causes ; a virtuous man is one who has a strong and controlling moral sense ; a vicious man is one who has very little, and is not influenced by it. Virtuous people regard the latter with a moral indignation derived from their own moral sense of what is fitting or morally beautiful in character, and they desire to punish him because we naturally wish to hurt creatures we dislike. They have also good reasons,—the safety of society, preventing others from being like him, perhaps reforming him ; but his repellent nature is at the root of their desire to kick him, though they may do that calmly and judiciously, through ministers of justice. Why, then, do we feel remorse and indignation at our own conduct ? Because we view our own behaviour otherwise than before, with a more controlling moral sense. We blame and despise ourselves for being so wicked or so weak as to have our higher reason overborne by lower impulses. But it is of that very state the Bible speaks when it says that we are *in bondage* to sin, and we all feel that is a just expression. Even if a lapse has been gradual, the man in each indulgence could have done no otherwise. Why ? Because he is weak and evil. The highest form of human freedom is when the hierarchy of Reason, Conscience, and Desire holds its own in the spirit. The strongest desire may be in conflict with Reason and Conscience, which, being highest, are more *the Man* ; they are co-ordinating and judicial faculties ; so that the Man may will an act which yet he disapproves ; there is needed a transforming power to bring his nature into harmony with itself. But even

granted this perfection of character, it must be obvious that perfect Freedom and Moral necessity here coalesce. A true hero is bound by his Duty, by his love for the race; he cannot do other than right and noble actions. But in the end he does not owe this character to himself. Calvinists say he owes it to the grace of God. And it is not certain that a much better phrase can be found to express the fact than this. Yet those who see too forcibly that the extremest form of "reprobation" cannot logically be evaded by Calvinists, that the personal God must, according to their doctrines, be the cause of evil wills as well as good, may prefer to take refuge in the belief that God, as the only ground and substance of all actions, is incomprehensible and impersonal, is *Natura Naturans*, while good and bad wills belong to *Natura Naturata*. The Essential Antagonism we may not fathom, but veil our faces and pass on. After all, a very bad man is also very free; for his nature, too, is in harmony with itself; evil is his good; hell his heaven. Spinoza justly observes that an idiot, a madman, a drunkard, a dreamer, these all seem free to themselves; but, as a bad man is in bondage from a good man's point of view, these seem so, too, from a normal man's. No man is more *metaphysically* free than these. This view may reasonably modify our manner of regarding even the most repugnant to us,—chasten it into something of mystic awe and large pity. But with an *accidental* choice it were surely ridiculous to be angry, even if that were murder. The conception, indeed, of a creative Free-will imparting all their existence to innumerable created Free-wills—which yet are equally arbitrary and sovereign—is certainly not one easy to entertain. In fact, it seems a contradiction in terms.

One more objection requires an answer—that beforehand we feel we may take either of two courses, and are not bound to follow one of them, and that if we were, it would be no use our trying to do right rather than wrong. The answer is that we cannot tell beforehand what motives are destined to prevail, and our desires, aspirations, efforts, are factors in the determination of our volitions. On this head I will quote a passage from H. Spencer:—"The seeming indeterminateness in the mental succession is consequent on the extreme complication of the forces in action. The composition of causes is so intricate, and from moment to moment so varied, that the effects are not calculable. The irregularity and apparent free-

dom are inevitable results of the complexity, and equally arise in the inorganic world under parallel conditions. A body in space subject to the attraction of a single other body moves in a direction that can be accurately predicted. But if it is surrounded by bodies of all sizes, at all distances, its motion will be apparently uninfluenced by any of them; it will move in some indefinable varying line that appears to be self-determined; it will seem to be *free*."

But, need it be added, that, turning the tables on the Libertarians, we may argue how threats and punishments can only be useful as deterrent and reforming if motives have a calculable influence on the will; while if the will be sovereign and arbitrary, threats and punishments would be of no use whatsoever, nor would it be of any avail to give children a good and right education. Moreover, I have always failed to see how, if acts of will sprang up of themselves—if motives, reasons, desires, had no intrinsic influence to oblige them—how the will should be moral or immoral at all, and the subject of praise or blame. But as for the general scheme of things, men suffer from ignorant failure to foresee consequences, just as they suffer from deliberate neglect of them—though not in their consciences. And the worst men do not suffer in their consciences. If it is not unjust the savage beast should be killed, it cannot be unjust the anti-social man should be put out of the way. It is surely vain to apply the notions of justice and injustice, applicable to men's relations among one another, to the vast and ultimately incomprehensible system of the universe itself. I conclude, however, that *Liberum Arbitrium*, if it mean the absolute self-determination of one immanent Universal Cause, which is, and cannot be otherwise, since it is eternal, is true, but that this does not make human responsibility at all more comprehensible than before; while if the boasted Free-will does not mean this, it virtually makes human and Divine Wills the very centre of chaos and chance. Volition must be supposed to spring out of the Void with absolute indeterminateness by a constant succession of totally independent leaps. It may, therefore, be good or evil—this or that—and no one can ever calculate upon it. It is subject to no law, no intelligible order, it is pure caprice; this might explain the miraculous, no doubt, but it would scarcely explain what is perhaps more certain and obvious, the facts of every-day experience. If Will be subject to law and order in its successive developments, that is, if it be manifested in a uniform

and more or less ascertainable manner, then this manner of its manifestation must have a fixed self-existent cause producing it, rather than some other, for we cannot go back along an infinite series of tortoise and elephant. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. If a volition can start up by chance, so can the rest of the universe, and we are landed in blank atheism.

When it is said, I may look to the right or the left with sovereign freedom, the insignificance of the motives in such a case serves to conceal them. The accidental position, or involuntary movement of the eyes, may attract me more to one side than the other in the absence of preference. Volition, in its beginning, can best be understood as Mr. Bain represents it. When pain co-exists with an accidental alleviating movement, that is the movement that will be chosen and continued.

The shock of an alteration of state on the pleasurable side is a direct and immediate stimulus to the active forces of the system. The whole is founded on spontaneous movement in the organism, or, at least, movement determined by nutrition and stimulus. But pleasurable consciousness is attended with a heightened vitality, and pain with diminished vitality, so that pleasure, as it were, feeds itself, and pain starves itself. Under like circumstances, this becomes more and more easy and natural—because the nervous discharge, like other forces, follows the line of least resistance—and a particular organised association of sensations, ideas, and movements is established. Obviously this explanation applies also later in life; but, then, one sensation suggests more numerous ideas, a part of which represent consequences as they have occurred in experience, and there are various feelings suggested which were dormant before. So come hesitation and balancing. But I think it probable that this original discrimination of sensations as pleasant and painful constitutes the first dawn of consciousness—makes it possible. At the same moment, probably, of reaction against the pain, there dawns a faint sense of oneself opposing a hostile power. Here we see pain at the root of all higher life. Here, too, we have the rise of *will*—*opposing* forces that give pain, or would remove the cause of pleasure. Then follows the consciousness of our locomotive energy being resisted; but it seems that the consciousness of self must already be present for the knowledge of resistance to be possible. The sensation of a movement (a muscular

sensation) soon becomes more complex—becomes a perception of a limb moving, a very different thing—and the self-consciousness becomes proportionately definite, but the same law of will and action holds. Will is not, as has been maintained, our only type of power ; for we have no primitive consciousness of will, except *as our own power opposed to an opposite and external power.*

Nor should Will be regarded as a separate faculty at all. To desire one movement in preference to another is to will it. Afterwards we recollect, we judge, we reason, we invent. Our own activity in those different operations, which more or less involve one another,—that is our Will. Will seems to be present in germ, at least, wherever there is consciousness, for even the most dreamy train of ideas involves some attention. Sensori-motor and ideomotor actions involve Will only so far as they involve attention, and, with reflex action, show for how much Will counts in Motion. But when it is said that Desire and Will may be opposed, that seems inaccurate ; Will rather may be opposed to itself. The more completely consolidated are nervous changes,—that is, the more automatic and reflex in their character,—the more unaccompanied are they by consciousness. Herbert Spencer says, “When the adjustments of the organism to its environment begin to take in involved and infrequent groups of outer relations, when consequently the answering groups of inner relations include many elements of which some are not often repeated in *experience*, when as a necessary result there come to be hesitating automatic actions, then Memory, Reason, Feeling, Will, simultaneously become nascent. Thus the visceral functions we are scarcely conscious of, and thus a child consciously wills the formation of every letter or syllable in learning to read, but afterwards is scarcely conscious of the process ; it has become secondarily automatic. Progress by error and effort is the law of conscious life. Once a given stage of comparative ease attained by means of automatic organic adjustment, this becomes the platform on which to build further efforts, and by new errors and new sufferings to wrest from the Infinite Environment as yet undreamed adaptations in the sphere of Life, Intelligence, and Will.

When fatigued, it is difficult to think and resolve. The following is a striking account in Spencer’s “Psychology” why indigestion produces ill-temper from a physical point of view. Nervous action

depends on an equable degree of nutrition furnished by the capillary blood-vessels. Now if the supply of blood fails in quality or quantity, what happens? The nervous plexuses which co-ordinate the defensive and destructive activities, and in which are seated the accompanying feelings of antagonism and anger, are inherited from all antecedent races of creatures, and are well organised. But those which, by correcting and co-ordinating a variety of inferior plexuses, adapt their behaviour to a variety of external requirements, have been but recently evolved; so that besides being extensive and intricate, they are formed of much less permeable channels. Hence, when the nervous system is not fully charged, these latest and highest structures are the first to fail. Instead of being instant to act, their actions, if appreciable at all, come too late to check the action of the subordinate structures. Again, when all the central plexuses are rendered by excess of blood unduly sensitive, as well as initiators of unduly strong disturbances, consciousness becomes a torrent of intense thoughts and feelings: we have delirium. And if a chronic vascular derangement causes an abnormal nutrition of all the central plexuses, we get insanity. Mr. Spencer also shows why in the case of a failing genesis of nervous fluid, the aggregate of faintly aroused pleasurable feelings bears a decreasing ratio to the aggregate of faintly aroused painful feelings; so that the diffused consciousness, or vague background to our definite perceptions and ideas, may produce groundless gloom, or even despair. From this point of view one must own that Free-will looks rather "cribbed, cabined, and confined" in its vaunted freedom.

As regards the carrying-out of a train of thought, molecular motion of the nervous and muscular system seems implied. But this is not a conscious process. The will itself is directed on the consciousness desired. Yet indirectly the vital motion is influenced, determined by the mental effort. But the condition of this resolve was equally a definite vital motion, dependent on organic nutrition. This indirectly determined the will. We are considering two opposite faces of the same thing. But the element of motion, so far as its origination goes, is evidently generated by the previous organic state, together with the grand affiliated motions outside the individual organism. Thought and will are the subjective developments that correlate with given objective vital movements; these subjectively are clustered and serial sensations or ideas, which latter

involve perception or knowledge of qualities external to ourselves. It is the human objective vital movements (themselves a focus of external forces passing into corporeal organic unity) to which the condition of subjective personal conscious movements belongs. But the latter are not even necessarily conscious of the organic states as objective, as nervous and muscular. These produce each other unconsciously, and furnish the condition or basis of the conscious production of conscious states. The weariness, the exhaustion of thought, or action, we afterwards learn to refer to their objective concauses or conditions: the disintegration is out of proportion to the renewal. But we must also take into account the mysterious unity and identity of Person into which the differences of Thought, Will, and Sensation fall, and where they interpenetrate. It is not a mere *series*, as Spencer and some modern psychologists maintain; that unity, however, is, as we might expect, to be found elsewhere; in the *body* notably as objective—in chemical unions—even in all material things as isolated in space and time. It is true, however, that the subjective personal unity is *higher, more one*, than even the correlative vital organic unity; you are altogether in a more elevated region of being. Nevertheless, there is the vital unity of the different functions and organs at the base of this higher unity. Thus we have a system of innumerable nervous arcs (afferent and efferent) united, by means of centripetal and centrifugal nerves, in a centre of co-ordination, and again other systems united with these in a centre of compound co-ordination, with the cerebrum crowning the edifice as supreme centre of doubly-compound co-ordination—the vascular and digestive systems both ministering to and themselves dependent on the former. The more special centres play upon the higher and more general, these again playing upon them. The conscious co-ordinations of Will would be impossible without, are founded upon, these unconscious co-ordinations of nature. The unity of function, and even appearance, is maintained in the body, whose *change* is essential to its identity. *Power*, again, is revealed to us in perception as both within us and without us, as spiritual and material, as entering into the essence of every change; hence we cannot conceive of change without it, and hence the apodictic causal judgment when generalised and matured. Again, in the will to move a limb, we will it certainly as an external fact, because we have the type of a

similar one from experience; but the motion, as objective and external, is generated by previous organic motions, stimulated by the environment and by nervous equivalents of idea and desire; the Will only directs, and has a part in determining it; just as previous and present motions have in determining this particular volition. We cannot move a paralysed limb, however we may will it. There is some sort of inchoate, to us inconceivable consciousness and will, perhaps, present wherever there is a complex resultant of motions and forces—everywhere. Spencer in his “Psychology,” has subtly suggested the genesis of it through the nerveless undifferentiated protoplasm of the lowest zoophytes upwards. From this point of view I could conceive of the external world gradually gathering itself together, as it were, in motion, chemical composition, reflex action, instinct, reason, will, to know itself, and consciously design itself into new forms of beauty and utility, as before unconsciously. The categories of Being that we find in Spirit we may find also in Matter of the lowest kind—unity, diversity, motion, limit, quality, with perceptions corresponding to each quality, and innumerable poetic analogies founded in the nature of things—which shows they are not radically diverse, but that at the extreme limits of Personality and Object, we have only those essential differences, which constitute all real unity, raised to their highest power. Is not a flower in some sense a subjective self-developed unity, as well as an object? While a person may be regarded as object, though he is characteristically a subject with full self-realisation. Evolution, indeed, as hitherto expounded, is insufficient. The parentage of the higher is inadequately found in the lower. And the ever higher developments of life and spirit here must, I believe, be affiliated to similar higher developments elsewhere. The quantity of souls, bodies, and things is probably constant. Each is a monad entering into the constitution of a higher organic whole or monad, and each more or less confusedly reflects the Infinite in itself—living echoes all of One mysterious Voice, ever variously reverberating throughout eternity.

[See next page.]

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## NOTICE.

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock), are requested to write to that effect to "Mr. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S.W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*

Prof. Croom Robertson

## THE ACTION OF SO-CALLED MOTIVES.

THIS paper expands some remarks made in the course of our last discussion, with the object of reviving the debate upon a rather more definite issue.

When a man wills, it is common to say that he acts under some motive or motives. The expression, like other popular sayings about mind, has an objective or materialistic implication. As one ball may be motive, or the motor, of another, so a man is supposed to be put in motion, or determined to act, by something other than himself. Not that even in the common apprehension a distinction is not made between the moving of a man and the moving of a ball: a man is often seen to act, as it is said, of himself or of his own motion; when there is a motive supplied from without, this need not be a thing thought of as in any way moved; and any such motive is plainly seen to have its effect conditioned by the nature of a man in a fashion to which the inertia of a ball furnishes only the faintest analogy. But yet the general analogy is understood to hold, and very many cases of human volition admit of being described according to it, well enough for all practical purposes. It provides a kind of reason for the uniformity and constancy which men find, and are most interested to find, in the acts of their fellows. The variety and inconstancy also found, people deal with in practice as they best can, and do not pretend to explain.

The expression, however, has farther been drawn into the scientific or philosophic theory of will, being assumed alike by the determinist and the indeterminist for their opposite readings of the psychological process of volition. These theorists have in dispute between them what seems a strictly philosophical issue, and the only one involved in the secular question as to free-will. The determinist, or, to use Priestley's word, the necessarian, declares that volition is always wholly determined by motives,—that in some motive or motives the sufficient reason, or efficient cause, of every voluntary act is contained.

[NO. XXXII.]

On the other hand, the indeterminist contends that there is also the ego or will itself to be reckoned with; the ego may pass into action without motive, and with motives present is always called, if proceeding rationally, to decide which among the motives should be yielded to. The consciousness of such a power of self-determination, either absolute or with reference to some particular motive, which thus acquires an efficacy not its own, is the point perhaps most strongly urged by the indeterminist. It is replied by the other that the rational choice or supposed self-determination is only the coming into play of some other motive.

Looking at the two theories from without, I cannot but think that the determinist, with his causation by motives, fails to take due account of the subject that is determined. Call motive to a particular action some present or represented feeling which the action will in the one case sustain or in the other bring on, and in yielding to the motive or in its determining to the act, what is that which yields or is determined? Whether named subject, mind, ego, or will, it must be supposed something with a nature of its own, through which it will co-operate with the motive towards the resulting act; and this doubtless is what the indeterminist has in view, when he urges his counter-theory. But is the counter-theory, as it is expressed, less open to criticism? Hardly; for the terms employed to express the relation between the feeling and the act are in truth equally applicable to that which comes of the co-operation of the mind or ego. If the feeling is in any strict sense a motive to the act, the so-called rational determination through which, let us suppose, the feeling is overcome, and the particular act is deliberately repressed, can perfectly well be ascribed to the intervention of other motives. The determination, being rational, has its grounds, nor would it be without motive, even though it sprang from mere caprice. This a clear-headed thinker like Hamilton, himself no necessarian, is not only constrained to allow, but forward to assert against such an advocate for free-will, not clear-headed, as Reid, and accordingly he finds the moral liberty of the indeterminist wholly inconceivable. It is true that nevertheless he is able for himself to accept it as a fact upon the direct testimony of consciousness.

From the presence of such difficulty in each of the theories it would be wrong to infer that their antagonism is more apparent than real—more real and profound it could not be; but we may suspect

that for one or for the other the difficulty arises from a defect in the language employed by both, and with a different statement would vanish. Such defect appears to lie in the word "motive," which may have a serviceable application in the popular view of man and the world, but has no scientific, which is to say here psychological, value whatever. In the common apprehension, a man is an object among objects, acted upon by and reacting upon them, and only irregularly or vaguely is any account taken of the subjective conditions under which the reaction, when voluntary, takes place. Language, as begotten of common needs, follows suit, and consistently enough, at least for practice, speaks of a man as acting under motives, or of motives as influencing a man. Very naturally, then, when there is a beginning made of psychology, and mental states as such have to be considered, is the popular expression diverted from its original and proper reference to man as a physical object, and employed with a reference to mind, or still more specially to will, as if the mental states had a separate subsistence therefrom. But however natural, surely this is a most improper transference. In no strict sense can the feeling to sustain or bring on which an act is performed, be called a motive to that act as a psychological state. The feeling and the willing of the act are two successive moments in consciousness, and that seems the whole psychological statement of the case. Or, to be more particular, if the act is willed directly upon the feeling (present or represented) being had, that can only mean that a representation of action associated with the feeling becomes actualised, or passes into action present. If, on the other hand, it happens that, in spite of the feeling, the act is not willed, but either it is willed that the act be not done, or something else is willed, or there arises a state of mental suspense,—that can only mean that some other feelings and ideas have supervened in consciousness, and have acted themselves out or not, as the case may be. But from this point of view there is no more any question of an ego to be reckoned with for explanation of the volition. No doubt reference to a mind, ego or will, apart from the particular conscious states, is still possible, and not only possible, but under the conditions of language inevitable, for conscious state must be held to imply something of which it is the state, as much as motive implies something that is moved. Here, however, the reference is one of mere expression, which leaves the psycho-

logical explanation unaffected. While the correlate of a motive is truly a distinct thing objectively, to be separately allowed for, it is quite otherwise with the ego or mind, and *a fortiori* the will, spoken of as the subject of particular conscious states. A feeling which is a state of the ego, is the ego in a certain state, and not less the ego because the state at the particular moment might conceivably have been a different one, and does, in fact, the next moment give place to one that is different. Or, if a conscious state is not that, what is it? Now, with no ego left that can modify the succession of states as they emerge, to discover the psychological law of the succession is to give all the explanation that is possible of volition. The matter would then stand thus:—If so-called motives are not understood as definite mental states, they are of no account for the psychological explanation of will, and any theory of their action, deterministic or indeterministic, is unphilosophical. If they are so understood, they should in psychology be so expressed, and the theory of indeterminism, or more properly the doctrine of free-will, becomes untenable. It is tenable only if an ego can be found which is not an ego already determinate; but such an ego, though it may be logically distinguished and verbally expressed, is not a real factor in psychology.

The argument has this moral: that, if mental philosophy must use a language devised for purposes other than philosophical, it cannot be too careful about the inferences it founds upon the words. Even the objective sciences, as they advance, drift farther and farther away from the use of popular expressions, and beget a technical language of their own. Psychology only, though as subjective science it can least of all be served by common speech, developed as that has been with an almost exclusively objective regard, tries to work without such technical aid. This is not surprising, because, if it were sought to devise an appropriate and perfectly consistent language for the results of psychological analysis, it would differ so profoundly from common speech as to be unintelligible, even in its principle, to all but adepts; whereas in other sciences, however abstract, at least the principle is perfectly intelligible to people in general, and in most of them the difference is only one of greater constancy and precision in the use of the verbal or written signs employed. But the consequence is that, while popular conceptions and misconceptions do not gain a footing in the objective sciences, or can be easily extruded if they do, mental philosophy has always

been more or less tinctured by an admixture of popular opinion, not rendered more philosophic by being refined upon. There have been writers of no small repute who never could place themselves at the philosophical point of view, and there are no thinkers who, when it comes to expression, do not find it difficult or even impossible to maintain consistently the philosophical attitude. With language what it is, this must always remain so; but the greater is the need to signalize the difficulty and the danger.

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### NOTICE.

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to "Mr. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S.W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*





Archbp  
Bp of Gloucester  
Dr. Carpenter

Greg  
Dr. Ward

Moden Noel  
Shaw. Hodgson

Cr. Robertson (who read)

Pruskin

Huxley

F. Dalgarno  
Knowles.

Dean Westminster

Self

Hutton

Tyndall

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 1873.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.]

[PRIVATE.]

*Archbishop Manning*

## A DIAGNOSIS AND PRESCRIPTION.

It is my painful duty as Chairman to announce that the Metaphysical Society has been visited by symptoms of aphonia. It will make no utterance to-night. Whether or no any symptoms of ataxia have also appeared, whether the members of the body have refused to fulfil their office or not, I have not as yet learned; but for the first time after four years of unintermittent speech, it has suddenly become inarticulate. Had I known the impending danger in time, I for one would have endeavoured to avert the catastrophe; but I learned it too late to apply any stimulants, or to attempt any paper which could be offered to the Society as a thesis for discussion.

Nevertheless, as I am officially bound to announce our disaster, I have laid the fact before you. What I would therefore endeavour to do, is to turn this syncope in our proceedings to some use; and I think it may be made useful if we take a retrospect of the course the Society has thus far pursued, and note any points which need to be amended or supplied.

The Society was avowedly founded with a view to bring together the most various and even opposite schools of metaphysical thought; that is to say, the old and the new, the scholastic and the modern family of metaphysicians, who have multiplied and ramified into endless variations. All, however, may be reduced to two ultimate schools, namely, to those who take their point of departure from the intuitions of the Reason, and to those who take their point of departure from the reports of Sense.

For four years we have met and conversed, sometimes have contended, with great freedom of speech, perfect frankness, unflinching courtesy, and a kindliness which has never been for a moment overcast.

It has been, I think, a good thing that minds so scattered in the search and service of Truth, and moving in paths so incalculable by one another, should have met together and heard each other's  
[NO. XXXVI.]

speech. If nothing beyond this had resulted from the Metaphysical Society, it would have been alone a result of no light value. But it has done more. The relations of kindness, respect, and friendship, which have sprung up among the Members of the Society, will not be easily dissolved.

But more even than this has been attained. I subjoin a list of the Papers which have been read and discussed in the last four years. They will, I think, show that the Society has verified its intentions :—

1. MR. HUTTON.—“On Mr. Herbert Spencer’s Theory of the Gradual Transformation of Utilitarian into Intuitive *Morality* by Hereditary Descent.”
2. DR. CARPENTER.—“Common-Sense Philosophy of Causation.”
3. PROFESSOR HUXLEY.—“The Views of Hume, Kant, and Whately upon the Local Basis of the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul.”
4. DR. WARD.—“On *Memory* as an Intuitive Faculty.”
5. SIR J. LUBBOCK.—“The Moral Condition of Savages.”
6. HON. RODEN NOEL.—“What is *Matter*?”
7. REV. FATHER DALGAIRNS.—“On the Theory of a Soul.”
8. PROFESSOR SEDGWICK.—“The Vivification of *Belief*.”
9. PROFESSOR MARTINEAU.—“Is there any Axiom of Causality?”
10. MR. HARRISON.—“The Relativity of Knowledge.”
11. PROFESSOR HUXLEY.—“Has a Frog a Soul?”
12. MR. BAGEHOT.—“On the Emotion of Conviction.”
13. ARCHBISHOP MANNING.—“The Relation of the Will to Thought.”
14. SIR A. GRANT.—“The Nature and Origin of the Moral *Ideas*.”
15. LORD ARTHUR RUSSELL.—“The *Absolute*.”
16. MR. RUSKIN.—“On the Range of *Intellectual Conception* being Proportioned to the Rank in Animated Life.”
17. MR. FROUDE.—“On Evidence.”
18. MR. HUTTON.—“Mr. Herbert Spencer on Moral *Intuitions* and Moral *Sentiments*.”
19. BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.—“What is *Death*?”
20. PROFESSOR MAURICE.—“On the Words *Nature*, *Natural*, and *Supernatural*.”
21. DEAN STANLEY.—“Do we Form our Opinions on External Authority?”
22. DR. CARPENTER.—“What is *Common-Sense*?”
23. MR. GRAY.—“Wherein Consists the Special Beauty of Imperfection and Decay?”
24. MR. FROUDE.—“Are Numbers and Geometrical Figures *Real Things*?”
25. REV. M. PATTISON.—“The Arguments for a Future Life.”
26. ARCHBISHOP MANNING.—“That Legitimate Authority is Evidence of Truth.”
27. REV. FATHER DALGAIRNS.—“Is *God* Unknowable?”
28. MR. HARRISON.—“The Supposed Necessity for Seeking a Solution of Ultimate Metaphysical Problems.”

29. MR. S. HODGSON.—“Five Idols of the Theatre.”
30. DR. WARD.—“Can Expression Prove the Uniformity of Nature?”
31. LORD ARTHUR RUSSELL.—“On Darwinians and *Idealists*.”
32. MR. RUSKIN.—“The Nature and Authority of Miracles.”
33. DR. ACLAND.—“On Faith and Knowledge.”
34. HON. RODEN NOEL.—“On Will.”
35. PROFESSOR C. ROBERTSON.—“On the Action of Motives.”

Now upon this retrospect of our subjects, and from a recollection of our conversations, I would make the following remarks.

Three things may be chiefly noted as wanting in our discussions; and it is most desirable, for our better mutual understanding, and I may say, for the progress of metaphysical speculations, so far as we can affect them, that these three wants should be, as far as in us lies, supplied:—

1. The first want of which we must all have been conscious is that of a fixed and accepted Terminology. We have profusely employed the terms substance, matter, cause, law, motive, faith, evidence, authority, life, death, natural, supernatural, freedom, will, agent, personality, soul, right, wrong, morality, conscience, God; but I believe that we should find that the mental equivalents in many of us would have been found widely various, sometimes actually contradictory and exclusive of one another. In the Scholastic Philosophy a terminology ancient and traditional, which underwent a constant refinement and correction, excluded to a great extent equivocation and ambiguity, and fixed to a great extent the positive meaning of terms. So long as the Latin language continued to be the language of science, both Metaphysics and Physics had an universal and ascertained terminology. The breaking-up of this language of the Commonwealth of Science has opened a thousand ways to misconception, and I cannot but believe that a very large part of the Metaphysics of the last centuries has been a logomachy arising from the confusion of tongues. In our last Paper some remarks were made on the tendency of Science to form a terminology apart from common speech. This seems to be an inevitable law. Common speech is at least only approximately definite. Accurate processes of thought record themselves in accurate terms, and purify the terms of ambiguity in the process of appropriation. We have not as yet, it seems to me, if my ears have heard aright, and if I have rightly understood what I have heard, attained to such a mutually

intelligible and fixed terminology. But this want springs from one which is deeper.

2. The second want I would note, is that of a Common Method. Where there is no common method, there can hardly be a common terminology. Of the terms enumerated above, many are to certain metaphysical schools idols, non-entities, metaphysical superstitions. It is not surprising if they cease to retain the same mental equivalents in those who believe them to exist, and in those who disbelieve their existence. It is not indeed physically impossible that they should do so, but it is morally certain that in the long run they will not.

Now, we have been conscious throughout our discussions that two opposite methods were face to face: the one which, whether true or false, has been in possession throughout the intellectual history and system of the world,—that, I mean, which takes its starting-point from the Reason and its intuitions, and that which confines the reason within the circle and reports of Sense. In the former method there are truths anterior to those of sense; more certain than the reports of sense; higher, nobler, more human, more divine. I would take as an exhibition of this method the *Summa contra Gentes* of St. Thomas Aquinas, in which he starts from the intellectual demonstration of the existence and nature of God, and from thence goes on to the nature of the soul, of the human reason, will, and conscience; to the intrinsic contrariety of right and wrong, and the like. This method, I have said, is at least in possession. It pervades the ancient world. It has guided the philosophy of the Christian world; it is the basis of the Scholastic philosophy, and of all mental science derived from it. All science founded upon sense is accessory to it, and interpreted by it. Without it men would be “as trees walking,”—that is, physical organisations less by a head than the true stature of man. To such as hold this method, the procedure of those who deny it seems to be a mutilation of our nature. To make sense our starting-point, if it be to deny this higher method, is to limit our knowledge to that of which sense is the channel. The axiom *Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*, if taken as it sounds, denies the whole region of intellectual and intuitional truth as to our rational nature, with all its knowledge anterior to sense and independent of it. I am more certain that there is a God than that any particular report of my senses is accurate. If there be no God, no soul, no will, no con-

science, no intrinsic right and wrong, then I must go on to affirm that there is no reason in man; there may be a faculty developed from the instincts of a lower animal, but that is not the human reason, which is the fountain, if it be not the factor, of human speech. This *differentia* of man from all other creatures is ineffaceable in his nature. It is a frontier which cannot be obliterated. It marks him off from all other animals. Man and the lower creatures are indeed one kingdom of God, but man is the king of all the creatures by a right of birth, and nature, and inheritance, which does not ascend from below, but descends from above. Such I understand to be the one method which has been present in our discussions.

The other I will now endeavour as fairly and as justly as I can to describe. It admits that the method I have described is in possession, that it is ancient and wide-spread. But it affirms that it is the theology of human childhood and the superstition of our unscientific manhood. The scientific reason, we are told by Positivists, is that which interprets the reports of sense within the sphere of sense. Facts and phenomena are alone the proper matter of Science. Such metaphysical conceptions as law, cause, and the like, are mental figments. This method seems to be pursued by two kinds of reasoners. The one kind is consequent, thorough-going, and consistent. They deny the existence of all truths which do not reach us through the reports of Sense. We have no report of sense for the existence of the soul, of conscience, or of God. Our physical organisation is all we know. Thought, volition, feeling spring from it, and are its properties. Sense is the channel, the test, the measure of truth in their philosophy; as reason is the source, the test, and the measure of all truth to a rationalist. *De non apparentibus, et de non existentibus, eadem est ratio.* They say they do not and cannot know this no-man's-land of intuitions. The more guarded of this school are content with this *agnosis*. The less guarded deny the existence of that which they cannot prove, that is, they know that what they cannot know does not exist.

The other kind is of more moderate opinions. It admits the facts of our internal consciousness in respect to thought and will, but ascribes them to physical causes. They admit the intrinsic distinction of right and wrong, and the conscience or discernment of moral duty, but appear to deny or to doubt the existence of the independent spiritual soul, in which thought, feeling, and will reside, because the physical

organisation gives no evidence of it, and the physical organisation is alone the subject of the Senses.

Now it is clear that they who hold methods so diverse and opposed can hardly find common ground from which to start, and so far as this method exists among us—and I hope that I have not misrepresented it, and I believe that it does exist among us—we have a patent reason why our discussions should often have resembled railroads on different levels. We have seemed to be in contact, but under conditions which rendered it impossible for us to meet.

We have, however, arrived, I think, at one point of approximation. The Psychologists among us have fully admitted the help which may be derived from physiology. I am not so sure that the Physiologists have, in like manner, admitted the need they have of psychology. According to Professor Max Müller, Mr. Herbert Spencer has affirmed that there are in us physical changes parallel to, but not identical with the actions of thought, or that our states of nervous action may be parallel, but never identical with a state of consciousness. (*Fraser's Magazine*, May, 1873, p. 528.) This would satisfy the most ardent psychologist, who would not hesitate to admit any simultaneous modification of the brain, so long as that modification is not affirmed to be identical with thought. The thought is the act of the thinker, and the brain is the thinker's brain, but it is not the thinker himself. This is to beg the whole question. And the tradition of the whole world in its childhood, if you will, and in its metaphysical virility, gives one answer.

It would seem to me, of course, that the true reconciliation of Psychology and Physiology is to be found not in the school of Idealism like that of Berkeley, nor in the school of Sense, like that of Hume, but in the Scholastic Philosophy alone. Nevertheless, as an approximation of this result, and as a cobble-stone in the gulf between us, I would put in Professor Max Müller's account of the philosophy of Kant. I take for granted that he has all the conditions necessary to understand his own countryman. He ought to know the meaning of Kant. Professor Max Müller then says that the world-wide struggle of philosophy may be described as a conflict "for the primacy between mind and matter;" that in the middle of the last century, as in the middle of this, the materialistic view had gained the upper hand. "Never, perhaps, in the whole history of Philosophy did the pendulum of Philosophic thought swing so

violently as in the middle of the eighteenth century, from one extreme to the other, from Berkeley to Hume." "What secures for Kant his position in the history of Philosophy is that he brought the battle back to that point where alone it could be decided." "He wrote the whole of his Criticism of Pure Reason with constant reference to Berkeley and Hume." "It has been sometimes supposed that the rapid success of Kant's philosophy was due to its being a philosophy of compromise, neither spiritualistic, like Berkeley's, nor materialistic, like Hume's. I look upon Kant's philosophy not as a compromise, but as a reconciliation of spiritualism and materialism, or rather of idealism and realism." "Kant demonstrates that we are not merely passive recipients; that the conception of a purely passive recipient involves, in fact, an absurdity: *that what is given us we accept on our own terms.*" "If anything is to be seen, or heard, or felt, or known by us, such as we are,—and I suppose we are something,—if all is not to end with disturbances of the retina, or vibrations of the tympanum, or ringing of the bells at the receiving-stations of the brain, then what is to be perceived by us must submit to the conditions of *our* perceiving, what is to be known by us must accept the conditions of *our* knowing." This law Kant draws out into the twelve categories or inevitable forms of thought. "Put in the shortest way, I should say," says Professor Max Müller, "that the result of Kant's analysis of the categories of the understanding is, *Nihil est in sensu quod non fuerit in intellectu.* We cannot perceive any object except by the aid of the intellect. Turning against the one-sided course of Hume's philosophy, Kant shows that there is something in our intellect which could never have been supplied by mere sensations; turning against Berkeley, he shows that there is something in our sensations which could never have been supplied by mere intellect." Professor Max Müller says that all our phenomena become "perceptions of a human self." (*Fraser's Magazine*, May, 1873, pp. 531-539.) It would be more correct to say there is something in our knowledge resting upon sensations which could not have been derived from sense; or, as Leibnitz puts it, *Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu, nisi ipse intellectus.* The receiver is intelligent, or an intelligence who judges, discerns, predicates, and knows. And from this position nothing has yet dislodged the intellectual system of the world: within this entrenched camp it abides these six thousand years

unmoved; covered, perhaps, at times by volumes of smoke, but when the clouds are dispersed it remains in possession. I would put this in the words of Bishop Berkeley. Euphranor says: "By the person Alciphron is meant an individual thinking thing; and not the colour, skin, or visible surface, or any part of the outward form, colour, or shape of Alciphron." Alciphron answers: "This I grant." Euphranor: "And in granting this, you grant that, in a strict sense, I do not see Alciphron, *i.e.*, that invisible thinking thing." This argument he transfers at once to prove the existence of God. (*Berkeley's Works*, Vol. II., p. 145. Ed. Fraser.) But perhaps some one may say that the Bishop did not believe in souls except as ideas. If so, I will fall back upon Cicero, who, in the *Tusculum Disputations*, says: "Nos non sumus corpora nostra; nec hoc dico corpori tuo, sed tibi."

This sound and primeval philosophy has been well laid down by Whewell in the *Aphorisms* prefixed to his "*Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*":—

#### APHORISMS CONCERNING IDEAS.

- I. Man is the interpreter of Nature, Science the right interpretation.
- II. The *Senses* place before us the *Characters* of the Book of Nature; but these convey no knowledge to us, till we have discovered the Alphabet by which they are to be read.
- III. The Alphabet, by means of which we interpret Phenomena, consists of the Ideas existing in our own minds; for these give to the phenomena that coherence and significance which are not objects of sense.
- IV. The antithesis of *Sense* and *Ideas* is the foundation of the Philosophy of Science. No knowledge can exist without the union, no philosophy without the separation, of these two elements.
- V. *Fact* and *Theory* correspond to *Sense* on the one hand, and to *Ideas* on the other, so far as we are *conscious* of our Ideas: but all facts involve ideas *unconsciously*; and thus the distinction of *Facts* and *Theories* is not tenable, as that of *Sense* and *Ideas* is.
- VI. Sensations and Ideas in our knowledge are like *Matter* and *Form* in bodies. Matter cannot exist without form, nor form without matter: yet the two are altogether distinct and opposite. There is no possibility either of separating or of confounding them. The same is the case with Sensations and Ideas.
- VII. Ideas are not *transformed*, but *informed* Sensations; for without ideas sensations have no form.
- VIII. The Sensations are the *Objective*, the Ideas the *Subjective* part of every act of perception or knowledge.

(*Whewell's Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*, Vol. I., p. xviii.)

And this position of Whewell is, after all, only a disinterring of the Scholastic Philosophy, fragrant as fresh earth. It is St. Thomas

Aquinas in a Cambridge gown. The proposition that the soul is the form of the body gives ample scope for the two-fold phenomena of Psychology and of Physiology, which I must take leave to say cannot be otherwise accounted for. If the Scholastic Philosophy had never been disintegrated; if the two elements of reason and of sense, which are the conditions of all knowledge in the human subject, had not been violently sundered, and after their separation falsified by exclusive theories of the opposing schools of intuition and of sense, a great part of our discussions would have been impossible.

We have not yet come to a common theory as to the origin and conditions of human knowledge; it is not wonderful, therefore, that we want both a common method and a common terminology.

3. And this leads to the third want I have to note, namely, the want of definition which has marked our Papers and our discussions. Of the thirty-five Papers which have been read, hardly any bear as their title a definite proposition; almost all bear titles indefinite as to their purport. The definite have either affirmed or denied some predicate. They have been expressed in a definite proposition, and the subject and predicate of that proposition have been more or less defined. The indefinite Papers have, at least, been so far useful that they have raised a general discussion around and about many subjects which have elicited propositions in debate, but have left nothing permanent on record.

The following are the only definitions which our vigilant and diligent Secretary has been able to register:—

#### FAITH.

ARCHBISHOP MANNING.—“That rational act of the intellect which, after finding sufficient evidence that a thing is revealed—believing it to be true—refuses to doubt it any more.”

DUKE OF ARGYLL.—“An assured belief or conviction, but with different degrees of assurance.”

PROFESSOR HUXLEY.—“The surest and strongest conviction you can have.”

FATHER DALGAIRNS.—“Reason always makes a reserve—is open to conviction on further evidence. Faith, on the contrary, refuses to make any reserve—no additional evidence can shake it.”

#### WILL.

ARCHBISHOP MANNING.—“A rational appetite.”

PROFESSOR HUXLEY.—“The desire of an act of our own.”

MR. HUTTON.—“The power we have of increasing or diminishing the force of our own motives.”

MR. SEDGWICK.—“The *Ego* conscious of itself or acting.”

MR. HODGSON.—“Sense of effort for a purpose.”

PROFESSOR ROBERTSON.—“Action for feeling.”

DR. CARPENTER.—“Purposive determinative effort.”

MR. KNOWLES.—“The resultant of motives.”

MR. HINTON.—“Necessity.”

In reading them over we cannot fail to perceive by what wide intervals of space we are separated. But it is necessary that we should ascertain our distances as the first condition of approach. Unless we know where we are, and in what relation to each other, we can not only never take aim, but we can never shake hands. I would, therefore, propose to the Members of the Society that we should pass a resolution, or an order of the house, which may be called ‘a self-denying ordinance’: namely, that every Paper shall have a definite thesis, in the form of an affirmative or negative proposition; and that, before the writer enter upon his exposition, he shall first define the sense of both subject and predicate, and of any terms he is about to employ. In this way we shall not only save ourselves from much ambiguity and misconception, but we shall greatly enlarge the probability that by our discussions we may at least approximate to a common terminology and to a common method; if not to a common acceptance of the same Philosophical axioms, and to a commonwealth of the same Philosophical Truth.

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## NOTICE.

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*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*



TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, JULY 8, 1873.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

*Bishop of Gloucester & Bristol*

## EUTHANASIA:

[As there has been a double failure in the promise to write a Paper on EUTHANASIA for this Society, it is thought that the following remarks, which recently appeared, by one of our members, in a weekly periodical, may furnish a certain basis of discussion, in case the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, who has kindly given the Committee some hope that he will orally fill the gap, should not be able to do so.]

PROFESSOR NEWMAN, in a recently-published letter, declares that he feels no hesitation in asserting suicide to be sometimes a *duty*, and he intimates that this opinion is somewhat widely spread amongst cultivated persons, but suppressed, from the odium attaching to the profession of such opinions. I attribute very little importance to scattered expressions of opinion of this kind from persons who have not weighed the whole question in all its bearings, and whose imagination is probably greatly influenced by the painful impression produced by a mere individual case of hopeless suffering. All it seems to me to show is, what all of us have long known, that the importance attached to visible utilitarian consequences, as compared with the awe excited by spiritual instincts, is rapidly increasing, and that irresponsible individual opinion is much more apt to be hasty now in under-estimating the weight to be attached to unreasoned recoils from unnatural acts, and in over-estimating the argument from calculable and visible results, than it used to be. Probably, however, the very persons whom Professor Newman has found half favourable to suicide, or to the policy of extinguishing the life of sufferers in whose case there is no hope, would not only shrink from backing their opinion, as Mr. Tollemache and Professor Newman have done, by a publicly avowed conviction, but would find on reconsideration that

[NO. XXXVII.]

theirs was not a conviction at all, but a hasty impulse of pity for the suffering involved in a particular case. However, in the present discussion I limit myself strictly to the subject of Suicide. I observe that Professor Newman, though his letter ends by insisting on the formal assent of the patient, really implies much more, when he suggests that the Commissioners who visit Lunatic Asylums should be consulted as to the humanity of putting a term to hopeless sufferings; and when he refers to the very natural wish of the friends of persons "suffering agony, or even delirium and painful delusions, without hope," that the end may come soon, as testimony in his favour. In both cases, the testimony is evidently germane only to the vindication of the policy of extinguishing the life of others. An insane, delirious, or lunatic patient is just one whom it would be a mockery to consult about his own fate; while the hopeless paralytic, whose power of communicating with the external world is at an end, *could* not be consulted. Professor Newman, therefore, must hint at legalising, not merely voluntary and deliberate suicide, but the termination—by relations or friends—of the sufferings of others. As it is obvious, however, that the strength of the position of the Euthanasianists lies in the case of suicide deliberately decided upon by a mind in possession of its reason, and if it fails there, there will be little chance for them of success in their advocacy of the benevolent murder of patients unable to give a rational consent, I will confine what I have to say strictly to the discussion of Professor Newman's position,—that suicide may be right, or even a positive duty, and, of course, that in such cases it is simply wrong to interpose the veto of the law, and the moral opprobrium which the veto of the law carries with it.

Professor Newman's conviction of what he regards as the right or even the occasional duty of suicide is grounded, of course, on the serious sacrifices which are sometimes required from those who are not, or, at least, would not otherwise be, in any danger of death, in order to prolong, and that sometimes very slightly, the lives of those who are. He gives two instances:—In travelling rapidly through forest or desert countries, if the health of one of the party fail, either all must seriously endanger life, perhaps all perish, through waiting to help him, or they must leave him behind, helpless, to encounter a still more certain death. Now in such cases the sufferer sometimes begs to be killed, lest he perish by a much slower and

more painful death, that of starvation, or by the attacks of wild animals. Are you to sacrifice the lives of all to no purpose for his sake? or to leave him to a certain death, yet refuse to shorten the pain of that death? or to sanction his suicide? Again, Mr. Newman puts a case, not nearly so strong on its humane side, but intended, we suppose, to be stronger on the side of duty, of an aged man dying of a slow disease which wears out the health of those who tend him, though that health is far more important to the happiness and future prospects of those who sacrifice it, than the brief prolongation of a worn-out life can be to the happiness of the invalid, and he says boldly, "I (for one) look with horror on allowing tender kinsfolk to sacrifice youthful health in order to add days or weeks to my life, when worn out." In other words, he declares it would be the *duty* of such an invalid to liberate his nurses by putting an end to his own life. Now surely it is obvious that in the former case—that of the sick traveller in jungles or deserts—there is no new ethical element at all which is not present in almost all cases of proposed suicide. The really delicate question is that which bears upon the duty of abandoning the sick man rather than throwing away apparently the lives of all by delaying the march; but that is not a question of the morality of suicide; it is a question of a conflict of duties of a very urgent kind; and the decision that would be right for one such party of explorers might very well be wrong for another, —a great deal depending on the sort of tie between the different members of it. It is both natural and, no doubt, a duty to risk a far greater danger for one to whom there is a very close tie, than any it would be natural or a duty to risk for a comparative stranger to whom you have no intimate ties of feeling at all, while there may be very close ties to those interested in your welfare at home. But even if the question be determined in favour of abandoning the sick man to his fate at his own request, there is no advance at all towards the solution of the question of the right and duty of suicide. If suicide is right for an invalid suffering from hopeless disease at home, it is right here. If it is wrong for such an invalid, it is wrong here. The mere heightened terrors of a lonely, desolate, and perhaps horrible death can make no difference of kind in the problem. The agony may be worse than the agony of cancer and frequent delirium combined; but if it is right to endure the one agony patiently, it is right to endure the other. It is impossible to say in such a case that

it is a man's *duty* to cut short his own life. He is clearly showing far more fortitude and trust in waiting for death than in anticipating the end of his own pangs. Whatever else you said of a man who had endured to the end the lonely agony, no one would say of him that he had failed in his duty, that he *ought* to have sooner ended his own sufferings. There will always be a hesitation and a doubt about the motives of the man who terminates his own sufferings; there will never be any about the motives of him who suffers on bravely to the end.

But Professor Newman grounds the motive of the second case of suicide he puts, distinctly on the disinterested obligation of your duty to others. You *ought* not, he says, to let tender kinsfolk sacrifice youthful health in order to add days or weeks to a worn-out life. And he cordially approves of the high sense of duty shown, in his opinion, by the friend who, as he has reason to believe, "withdrew himself from life somewhat prematurely by mean of chloroform." Now, first, that sense of duty, if it were one, would surely be a very revolutionary sense of duty, supposing it were to spread much amongst the people. Where is the distinction between the duty of liberating anxious friends from painful and, for their particular purpose, fruitless demands on their strength and health, and the duty of our helpless pauper population of diminishing the pressure of the rates on the poorer ratepayers, by a similarly disinterested act of abdication? If such an act be duty at all, it must surely be a duty for every man to calculate whether he is more burden, or more help and pleasure, to the world in which he lives; and if he decides that he is the former, then in case he can remedy the mischief by no other mode, he should accept the duty of suicide. Here is a stringent mode indeed of providing for the unproductive classes by early educating their sense of duty. If a sick man is surrounded by "tender kinsfolk," he is, at least, at whatever loss of health and happiness to them, exercising some of the very highest affections and virtues,—disinterested love, patience, and self-sacrifice. But the wretched paupers who are not surrounded by tender kinsfolk at all, who see no good arising out of their sufferings, and who may know that they are costing much to fellow-sufferers, not more able to bear the burden than themselves—would not they be bound even more than the aged invalid whose case Professor Newman considers so clear, by the same rule? If, then, there is

to be a duty of suicide, it would surely be a duty by no means exceptional. It would be a duty affecting all who believed themselves to be, on the whole and without remedy, a burden and trouble to their fellow-creatures, instead of a blessing. Indeed, we are clear that if life is not to be regarded as a trust which we have no right to lay down, either merely at our own discretion or only because we think that it is the cause of more pain than pleasure to our fellow-creatures, a totally new and most dangerous class of questions, which might acquire a most serious significance for any nation that entertained them, would at once arise. If there be such a thing, as Professor Newman thinks, as the duty of suicide at all, it is a duty of enormously wide sweep, for it is hardly too much to say that a considerable portion of every population on the globe might have quite as much reason as his aged invalid to think themselves a mere burden on the face of the earth, a cause of irremediable sorrow to others and no cause of joy to themselves. And once let the duty turn on such a doubtful subjective balance of considerations, and where would this stream of apparently inexpensive, but ultimately costly spiritual emigration end? Does Professor Newman think that people would be deterred from suicide by a registrar's refusal to grant a *bene decessit* in their case, if they had once got rid, by the help of the law itself, of all scruple as to the morality of self-destruction?

But, next, to go a little nearer the root of the question, the fallacy, as it seems to me, in the assertion that a man ought to shorten his own life in order to defeat the tenderness and abridge the self-sacrifices of his kinsfolk, lies here,—that it denies the duty to live in itself, as distinguished from the duty of doing good to others and ourselves. Indeed there seems to be no reason why, if that be so, it would be otherwise than a noble act for the heir to a great fortune and estate, who was persuaded that his younger brother would fill it inestimably better than himself, but that nothing would persuade him to fill it during his own lifetime, to make a vacancy by suicide. It would be said very justly that a man could not know enough of his own and his brother's qualifications to decide on this so positively, that it would be great presumption, and putting himself in the place of Providence, to do so. No doubt; but that applies also, though perhaps in a less degree, to the case of the suicide who puts an end to his life to save his kinsfolk from sacrificing their

health and happiness. How does he know that the sacrifice of his life will not prematurely stop up some vein of affection and self-denial in the character of some of those kinsfolk of the importance of which he had no knowledge? Professor Newman's and Mr. Tollemache's theory is founded really on the belief that man is as good a judge of the time to terminate his life as he is of its other duties,—that his conscience can tell him as clearly when he should take the step into the next world, as when he should take any specific step in this. I hold, on the contrary, that God sets limits to our judgment and conscience, where He sets a limit to our sight. We cannot choose *as a duty* to go into a world into which we do not even know the conditions of right entrance. We cannot say that between the duty of fortitude for ourselves and for others, and the duty of taking a leap in the dark, the latter is the higher. There *is* a clear duty to be fulfilled in bearing misery well ourselves, while we are miserable, and also even in enduring with humility to be the cause of pain and suffering to others, where God has granted us no mode of alleviating it except a leap in the dark against which even nature rebels. The reaction against the theology which makes obedience and submissiveness the first of virtues, goes much too far when it encourages us to take into our own hands the discretion of giving up life itself,—on the strength of a blind and probably worthless calculation of the profit-and-loss account which the remainder of life is likely to yield.

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W. H. Hinton

## ON THE RELATION OF THE ORGANIC AND INORGANIC WORLDS.

IN order to place the following remarks in their right attitude, it seems necessary to me to state my views on one or two points on which it is not intended at present to solicit discussion:—

1. That our perception of the Physical world is caused by some object which has different characters from those that we perceive in it. I mean this in a similar sense to that in which we might say that our perception of a single object in a stereoscope is caused by the presence of an object having a different character, namely, that of duality; we are thus made to "perceive" a certain object, but know that the cause of our perception is not *its* existence. In respect to the physical world, we are situated as a child would be who should be shown an object in a stereoscope for the first time, with no knowledge of how he was caused to see it, but having discovered that there was not before him any such object.
2. Of the object, at present undiscovered, which is the cause of our perceiving the physical world, I hold (for reasons not now stated) two things to be affirmable: one, that it is not Physical; the other, that it is Conscious.
3. I do not hold Idealism, but believe that some object, conscious, and not physical, gives us our impression of the physical, in such way as the starry universe gives us our impression at night of an encircling vault.
4. To this Object, and not to the Physical world, I hold that the word "Nature" rightly applies; even as the term "Universe" belongs to the stars, and not to the apparent vault.

[NO. XXXVIII.]

THE great differences obvious to us between the Organic and Inorganic worlds have led to the opinion that some difference exists between them, rightly to be expressed by the statement that "Life" is present in the one, absent in the other. I submit that this distinction is untruly drawn: that the difference we perceive in these two portions of Nature is due to our different relation in respect to them; and that to apply the term "Life" to one and to withhold it from the other involves a hurtful error of thought, such as would be involved in the belief that the Earth and the other planets really were as different from one another as they are to our impressions.

The arguments by which the supposed difference of the Organic and Inorganic is (as I conceive) disproved are very simple, and indeed amount to no more than one: that when we endeavour to find the difference, it resolves itself into differences of mode and relation merely. The proof of the identity here, if carried out, would be the same as that which is given of the identity of two triangles, by superposing one on the other. The Organic and Inorganic, though to sense so different, yet as apprehended by the intellect, coincide. All that is in the former is traceable to the latter; and is but another presentation to us of the same elements. It would be out of place to recapitulate the current evidence that the force which exists in the living body is but a mode of that of which the inorganic forces are other modes: that heat, for example, enters the organic substance, and ceasing to appear as heat, *is* the vital force; reappearing again as heat, &c., when the cycle of the vital changes is complete. The evidence that the Forms of the Organic world also are results of the physical conditions existing around them is less complete, but it already contains sufficient details to stand on a firm basis of fact. And I venture to submit that the production of any physical form by a force admitted not to be special, except through the agency of physical conditions, approaches to a contradiction in terms, and can at most be imagined only as a continual miracle.<sup>1</sup>

But I will venture to pass so lightly over this part of the subject as to assume these points to be sufficiently admitted, the chief

<sup>1</sup> As a simple instance, however, of the determination of living form by physical conditions, I may refer to the spiral form of the heart, which can in some of the lower creatures be traced as arising "mechanically;" namely, as the result of an increase in length in a vessel previously straight.

interest of the question for our Society lying in another direction. But if the matter, force, and forms of the Organic alike are imparted by its inorganic "environment," there is surely no longer any meaning in affirming a difference between them; the thought is a relic of a time when our knowledge was still more imperfect than it is. The Organic and Inorganic worlds are the same thing, differently presented to our apprehension.

Now we may perceive some differences in the mode of our relation to these "worlds" respectively, and they are evidently such as would tend to produce the differences we find in the impressions we receive from them. For (1) in the Organic, we perceive *Wholes*; and (2) we perceive the Organic (at least in our own persons) directly; the Inorganic mediately, through Senses. Where we perceive Nature directly, namely, in our own bodies, we perceive it in a way we call living. And from them we extend the idea of "living" to all objects corresponding (even though remotely, as the vegetable world,) to our own bodies. The rest we have called not-living, but then we perceive it in quite another way. There must be some result from this difference of our relation, and what is it, if not this apparent life of the one, and absence of life in the other?

Then (2) in the Organic we see *Wholes*; that is, we see the relations of force complete. For while every change in Nature involves two processes precisely equal and opposite, our senses very frequently perceive but one in the Inorganic world, and it may need long searching to discover the complement; so that our impression there is doubly falsified, being not only of isolated and unconnected forces, but also of those forces themselves as single operations in one direction only. But in the Organic world, however much the "vital force" may impress us as an isolated force, apart from its due relation to the rest, yet it presents itself to us truly, at least so far as this—that it is a twofold process, a composition and a decomposition, a nutrition and a decay.

Perhaps no much better general idea of the force-relations in the Organic and Inorganic, respectively, can be given than that of an eddy formed in a stream. The stream runs on in one large current, appearing to our eye as if there were no equivalent counter-action; but when a partial limitation to its flow occurs, a new relation of force is manifested—a double current, one against the previous direction of the stream, and the other coinciding with it; a miniature

whirlpool. That which was hidden in the larger stream is now made manifest; the equal opposite movements are palpable to our sense, owing to the limit imposed upon them; but no one thinks of saying the smaller movement differs, except in accident of mode, from the larger one. But an organic body is related in the same way to the great stream of Nature's activity; as some of the force and substance of the stream enters into the eddy, performs within it first an upward and then a downward movement, and then re-enters the stream, so does some of the substance and force of the external world enter into the organic body, perform within it an upward and then a downward movement—nutrition and decay—and then re-enter the great stream—of Life. Is it possible to avoid the word? Or, if it be not life outside, how or in what sense is it life inside? Nothing is different but the mode. Nay, even the mode is not really different, only the size or scale. For in thinking of the Organic and Inorganic worlds as different, do we not suffer ourselves to be too much influenced by mere size? Taking any view of the Organic life, we must conceive the body as made up of molecules, small particles of carbon, oxygen, &c. Now I think no one supposes these minutest molecules themselves to be any more living within an organic body than elsewhere. The special "life" lies in the relation between them. Now would a creature, endowed with reason, and yet small enough to dwell on one of these molecules, and find them of an enormous size in relation to itself, perceive that they were parts of a living whole?

But it seems to me that the problem of Organic life may be well illustrated by that of Motion. For Motion is presented to us in two aspects, apparently very different—the motions of the heavenly bodies, and those we observe on the earth. The latter (to our senses) always cease, the former are unceasing. Accordingly we find that these two forms of Motion were considered as contrasted, and were called "corruptible" and "incorruptible." But to us they are but two modes of one Motion—the one incorruptible or unending Motion which alone we recognise. It has been discovered that the earthly motions, which to our perception cease, are truly unceasing, like the heavenly ones. And even so it has been found that the apparently unliving processes of the surrounding world are truly one with those that constitute the life of the Organic.

But the history of man's thought respecting Motion—first assum-

ing it as two, and then learning that it is one—has farther suggestions for us. It is true that in learning that motion does not cease, even on this earth, where practically every motion so surely ends, the supposed distinct and *inferior* earthly motions are identified with the heavenly motions, that had been exalted above them. But this is not the whole: we have learnt something also respecting the heavenly motions which mere observation of them never could have taught us: for motion is not presented to us, as we most truly think of it, in the heavens, any more than on the earth. Below, we see it under conditions which make it seem not to continue; above, we see it under conditions which make it seem not to continue in the same straight line. We hold two properties true of motion: that it continues, and that it proceeds always in the same line. Now, we nowhere see motion presenting to us *both* these characters. Every straight motion ceases; every continuous motion is a curve. We always perceive it under conditions which hide from us one or other of these two characters, which yet we unhesitatingly affirm always to belong to it. We always see it, either under resistance which makes it practically cease, or under gravity which makes it practically curved. What man has done is to unite in his thought of Motion at once the not-ending which he perceives in the heavens, and the not-bending which he discovers upon earth; from the two presentations of motion to him (which once he took for granted meant two kinds of motion), he has raised up MOTION: the one everlasting, rectilinear motion that he knows, and which Nature everywhere acknowledges for her own.

I would suggest that the very same lesson is put before us again by the diverse-seeming Organic and Inorganic worlds. There is some unity, some fact of Nature, which is presented to us under these two forms; neither truly as it is, but both together giving us the key to it. In the Inorganic, we miss some characters that it possesses; in the Organic, we fail of others. But also each possesses some that the other lacks. The subject cannot be treated yet, but even now we may see so much as this: that in the Inorganic we seem to discover uniformity, unchangeableness, necessity: in the Organic, we seem to perceive spontaneity, action, power. Yet in each, as it so appears, is something wanting: the unchangeable necessity seems to reveal no action; the spontaneous action seems as if changelessness and necessity were absent from it; each presents to us that which we

already begin to know cannot be the truth. Nay, already we have begun, even if unconsciously, to interpret each by the other; especially to discover that in Organic things there is no lack of necessity or want of perfect order of causation. So that already there glimmers before our eyes an action in which also is necessity, a necessity that does not banish action. It is true, we directly perceive it nowhere. Neither do we, nor *can* we, anywhere perceive that to which alone we truly give the name of Motion; but nowhere also do we perceive anything which does not demonstrate and reveal its presence.

Thus, to identify the Organic and the Inorganic, appears to me to demand a correction in our thought of the latter. For, undoubtedly, to our apprehension, there is very much more in the organic than in the inorganic. It seems to us as if in the one there was something added; and if we give up this view, then we must hold that in the other there is something unperceived. And this appears to me to be one among the many benefits we receive from recognizing their identity,—namely, that we are thus made to understand not only that our apprehension of the Inorganic is deficient, but something also of the way in which it is deficient. Since the characters which are presented to us by the Organic have their source in the Inorganic, they give proof that in the Inorganic, though unseen by us, there exist causes adapted to produce them. Absence of order does not produce order, any more than absence of force produces force. We may be assured that all the parts of Nature, even those which seem to us most merely mechanical and empty, are truly vivid with the characters which present themselves to our perception in the order, adaptation, and significance of the Organic realm.

It might, however, be remarked that I have not clearly stated what I mean by life. To this I would reply, that it does not seem to me to come within my present task to do so. I have argued only that two portions of Nature are not distinguished by the presence of *anything* properly to be called life in the one that is not in the other; that the mere differences of relation which alone examination suffers us to affirm between the Organic and Inorganic are misrepresented by the use of that term; which not only practically carries with it other ideas going much beyond, but rightly conveys them, and will continue to do so. To me it seems that if this point be conceded, an inevitable inference is that, in spite of the

appearance to us, whatever it is that is rightly called life is present throughout all Nature; so that the small "organic" fraction has for one of its offices to help us better to understand the rest. It is possible that until we had recognised this fact, "Life" must have remained a too vague term to us, because our thought of it was inadequately based. For by erecting it on the *visibly* living part of Nature alone, we have failed to include in it elements which only the part apparently not living could adequately supply.

And if Nature should be thus demonstrated to be more than our sensuous apprehension represents it, perhaps our own relation to it may become somewhat less a mystery. Our self-consciousness involves a limitation, and indeed is essentially dependent upon limitation. But if Nature is a living whole, then what else is needed but a limitation, to give us our phenomenal existence,—our conscious personality, or isolation? Why do we need to suppose anything added to constitute "us," when simply a non-perception of that which is present all around would give the characters of our Being? Where we touch Nature directly we feel it living, conscious; is there any reason for supposing our "existence" to be anything more than a limited consciousness of Nature—a limited consciousness, which necessarily involves false impressions; impressions of arbitrariness and isolation; the appearance of an absolute beginning of Being or of action, where the consciousness is cut off? Thus, at least, a definite hope might appear before us; that of a larger, and therewith a truer, consciousness of Nature.

But if this thought takes us beyond our present concern, there is another corollary from the unity of Nature which is more immediate in its bearing. Dividing Nature into two parts, and supposing life absent from all but the small fraction of which we are the head, makes us think of ourselves as exalted above Nature, and that makes us think that we must have a higher Law than Nature has. And so man tries to poise himself against Nature, with a different law from hers, and so his life is a failure. While Nature's "right" ever changes, yielding to every claim, he tries to bind himself with rigid rules which mean that his thought is fixed upon himself. The problem of man's life yet awaits him,—how to make Nature's law, to which all things are free, his own.

[See next page.]

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Mr Sidgwick

## UTILITARIANISM.

IN writing the present paper, it has been my object to avoid all but incontrovertible propositions. I have, therefore, left on one side many interesting questions, which must be included in a complete discussion of Utilitarianism; and have been careful not to dogmatise upon any point where scientific certainty did not appear to be attainable. If it be thought strange to offer to a society that exists for purposes of debate, a series of incontrovertible propositions, I would urge, first, that in most discussions on Utilitarianism I find one or more of these propositions, at important points of the argument, implicitly ignored; and secondly, that a wide experience shows that an ethical or metaphysical proposition is not the less likely to provoke controversy because it is put forward as incontrovertible.

By Utilitarianism I mean the ethical theory that the externally or objectively right conduct, under any circumstances, is such conduct as tends to produce the greatest possible happiness to the greatest possible number of all whose interests are affected.

This statement is not yet quite definite, but whatever vagueness attaches to it will (I hope) be removed in the course of my observations.

And first, let us distinguish this doctrine from others of a quite different nature to which the term 'Utilitarian' has been applied, but with which Utilitarianism, as above defined, has no necessary connection, though with some of them it has a certain natural affinity.

I. Utilitarianism, according to the definition, is an ethical, and not a psychological doctrine: a theory not of what is, but of what ought to be. Therefore, more particularly, it does not include the following psychological theories:—(1) The proposition that in human action, universally or normally, each agent seeks his own individual happiness or pleasure. This is obviously compatible with any theory of ethics, i.e., of right and wrong in outward conduct. For, as Aristotle says, our idea of a virtuous man includes the characteristic

[NO. XXXIX.]

that he takes pleasure in doing what he thinks he ought to do ; and the question whether we are to say that he does his duty because he recognises it as duty, or because he finds a moral pleasure in doing it, whatever importance it may have from some points of view, has at least no necessary connection with the question what conduct he ought to pursue. It may be said that from the psychological generalisation that all men do seek pleasure there is a natural transition to the ethical principle that pleasure is what they ought to seek. But, in the first place, this transition is at best only natural, and not logical or necessary ; and secondly, the ethical conclusion to which we thus pass is primarily that of Egoism or Egoistic Hedonism (which states the agent's *own* happiness as the ultimate end of his actions), and not of Utilitarianism, as I have defined it. Clearly, from the fact that every one actually does seek his own happiness, we cannot conclude, as an immediate and obvious inference, that he ought to seek the happiness of other people.

Nor (2) is Utilitarianism, as a theory of ethics proper, connected with the doctrine (belonging to what may be called ethical psychology), that the moral sentiments are derived from experiences of non-moral pleasures and pains.

For (a) these moral sentiments are now, (considered as facts of our present consciousness,) independent impulses, often conflicting with the more primary impulses from which they are thought to be derived, and having each its own proper pleasure and pain consequent on its being followed or resisted. And it seems quite arbitrary (and indeed opposed to our general notions of progress and development,) to assume that impulses earlier in the growth of the individual or of the race ought always, in case of conflict, to prevail over those that have emerged at a later period ; especially as the latter are commonly thought to be lower and coarser. In a similar way, the pleasures of the Fine Arts seem to be derivative from, and a kind of complex reflection of, more primitive sensations and emotions ; but that is not thought a reason why a cultivated person should now prefer the latter to the former.

And (b) it must be observed, on the other side, that however true this account of our moral sentiments may be, the conduct to which they impel us is none the less liable to conflict with the dictates of Rational Utilitarianism. For these sentiments will have been derived, on this theory, from a very partial experience of the effects of con-

duct, apprehended and interpreted by very imperfect sympathy and intelligence.

Indeed (3), even if we hold with Hume that our present moral likings always attach to conduct that gives non-moral pleasure, directly or indirectly, to ourselves or to others, and our moral aversions to the reverse, the question still remains undetermined whether we ought simply to yield to these sentiments, or to replace or control them by Bentham's calculus of consequences. Nay, further, the mere recognition and explanation of these sentiments, as facts of consciousness, does not necessarily affirm the ultimate and supreme authority either of the sentiments themselves or of Rational Utilitarianism (as above defined). For it may be held that these, along with other impulses, are properly under the dominion of Rational Self-love; and that it is really only reasonable to gratify them, in so far as we expect to find our own private happiness in such gratification.

II. It may seem superfluous to state that Utilitarianism (in my sense) or Universalistic Hedonism, as it might be called, is not to be confounded with the Egoistic Hedonism to which I have just referred. In fact the two principles are *primâ facie* incompatible, as a regard for the interests of society at large frequently imposes on the individual the (at least apparent) sacrifice of his own interests.

III. I understand Utilitarianism to supply a principle and method for determining the objective or material rightness of conduct. The distinction and occasional separation between this and subjective or formal rightness, rightness of intention; and the question which of the two is intrinsically better and more valuable; need not be taken as decided by Utilitarianism. The two kinds of rightness cannot present themselves to any one as competing alternatives, in the case of his own future conduct. No doubt they may so present themselves in our dealings with others; for the question may easily arise whether and how far we ought to induce others, by non-moral motives such as the fear of punishment, to do what we think right contrary to their consciences. But this question seems to present equal difficulties, whatever theory of ethics we adopt.

Let us now examine the principle itself somewhat closer. It propounds as ultimate end and standard of right conduct "the greatest happiness of all concerned," or (as the interests of some of the persons concerned must sometimes be sacrificed to the interests

of the remainder) "the greatest possible happiness" of "the greatest possible number." Now each of these notions requires somewhat more determination and explanation to make it quite clear. In the first place, "happiness" must be understood as equivalent to "pleasure." It has, I think, been always so understood in recent times, both by Utilitarians and their opponents; though in the ethical controversies of Greece very different views were held as to the relation of the corresponding notions *εὐδαιμονία* and *ἡδὺνη*. And even at the present day, many persons declare that "happiness" is something quite distinct from "pleasure." But such persons seem to use the term "pleasure" in a narrower sense than Utilitarians, who include under it all satisfactions and enjoyments, from the highest to the lowest, all kinds of feeling or consciousness which move the will to maintain them when present, and to produce them when absent. So understood, Pleasure cannot be distinguished from Happiness, except that Happiness is rather used to denote a sum or series of those transitory feelings each of which we call a Pleasure. The Utilitarian, then, aims at making the sum of preferable or desirable feelings in the world, as far as it depends on his actions, as great as possible. But here another qualification is required. For much of our conduct inevitably produces pain as well as pleasure to ourselves or to others; and a recognition of the undesirability of pain, seems an inseparable concomitant and counterpart of that recognition of the desirability of pleasure on which Utilitarianism is based. And in fact, Utilitarians have always treated pain as the negative quantity of pleasure. So that, strictly speaking, Utilitarian right conduct is that which produces not the greatest amount of pleasure on the whole, but the greatest surplus of pleasure over pain, the pain being conceived as balanced against an equal amount of pleasure, so that the two mutually annihilate each other for purposes of ethical calculation.

There is therefore an assumption involved in the very notion of **Maximum Happiness**, the magnitude and importance of which have somewhat escaped notice. It is assumed that all pleasures are capable of being compared quantitatively with each other and with all pains,—that every kind of feeling has a certain intensive quantity, positive or negative (or perhaps zero), in respect of preferableness or desirableness, and that this quantity can be known; so that each can be weighed in ideal scales against every other. Unless this be

assumed, the notion of Maximum Happiness is logically impossible ; the attempt to make "as great as possible" a sum of elements not quantitatively commensurable, is as much a mathematical absurdity as an attempt to subtract three ounces of cheese from four pounds of butter. It does not come within my plan to discuss whether this assumption be justifiable or not, but I wish to point out that it is at any rate not verifiable by experience, and that very plausible objections may be brought against it on empirical grounds. For though, no doubt, we all of us are continually comparing pleasures and pronouncing one preferable to another, we are all aware that in different moods we perform the same comparison with different results ; sometimes we are more susceptible of enjoyment from one source, and sometimes from another ; and similarly, in respect of our sensitiveness to pains. How, then, can we be sure that we are ever in a perfectly neutral mood, in which all pleasures are represented according to their true hedonistic value ? How can we tell that such a mood is actually possible, and not a philosophical chimæra ? And the difficulty is increased when we take into account the different preferences of different persons. How, *e.g.*, can we decide scientifically the old controversy between intellectual and sensual pleasures ? When Plato and Mill tell us that we must trust the decision of the intellectual man, because he has tried both, the argument is obviously inadequate, for we can never tell that he is capable of experiencing sensual pleasures equal in degree to those of the sensualist ; and in fact, it often appears on various grounds probable that he is not so capable. Therefore just as, for comparing the pleasures of a single individual, we have to assume a neutral or standard mood, in which he is free from any of those tendencies to over-estimate or under-estimate particular pleasures or pains, to which he continually finds himself liable in other moods ; so for the Utilitarian comparison we require to assume a standard man, who can represent to himself the pleasures of all men as they actually are, free from any bias for or against any kind of pleasure or pain. I repeat that I am not arguing against these assumptions ; but since Hedonism is often regarded as "Relativism" applied to morals, it seems important to show that, on the contrary, the hedonistic comparison necessarily assumes an absolute standard of preferableness in feeling which cannot be empirically exhibited : and that the "principle of Relativity," if rigorously applied, would render Utilitarianism a logical impossibility.

So much for "Greatest Happiness"; let us now consider the notion of "Greatest Number." The first question is, Number of what? Sentient beings generally, or any particular kind of them? Any selection is *primâ facie* arbitrary and unreasonable; and in fact, Utilitarians have generally adopted the former alternative. I notice this chiefly because the scientific difficulties of the hedonistic comparison just discussed seem thus considerably increased. Practically, Utilitarians have confined themselves almost entirely to human pleasures; adding, I suppose, to the assumptions above mentioned a further special assumption (also incapable of empirical proof) as to the comparative inferiority of the pleasures of the inferior animals. But even if we confine our attention to human beings, the notion of "greatest number" is not yet quite determinate. For we can to some extent influence the number of future human beings, and the question arises, how, on Utilitarian principles, this number ought to be determined. Now, of course, the more the better, supposing average happiness to remain the same. But supposing we foresee that an increase in numbers will be accompanied with a decrease in average happiness, or *vice versa*, how then shall we decide? It seems clear that, on the Utilitarian method, we have to weigh the amount of happiness enjoyed by the extra number against the happiness lost by the remainder. I notice this, because the Malthusian economists often seem to assume that *no* increase of numbers can be right which involves *any* decrease in average happiness. But this is clearly inconsistent with the Utilitarian principles which these economists commonly avow; on these principles, the point up to which population ought to increase is not that at which average happiness is a maximum, but at which the product formed by multiplying the number of the men into the amount of average happiness is the greatest possible.

If now the principle of Utilitarianism may be considered as sufficiently determined, as far as the limits of the present paper admit, I should like to say a few words about its proof. It may be said that it is impossible to "prove" a first principle; and this is of course true, if by proof we mean a process which exhibits the principle in question as an inference from premisses upon which it remains dependent for its certainty: for these premisses, and not the inference drawn from them, would then be the real first principles. Nay, if Utilitarianism is to be *proved* to a man who already holds some other

moral principles, say to an Intuitionist or Common-Sense moralist, who regards as final the principles of Truth, Justice, Obedience to authority, Purity, &c. ; or to an Egoist who regards his own interest as the ultimately reasonable end of his conduct : the process must be one which establishes a conclusion actually *superior* in validity to the premisses from which it starts. For the Utilitarian prescriptions of duty are *prima facie* in conflict, at certain points and under certain circumstances, both with Intuitionist rules, and with the dictates of Rational Egoism : so that Utilitarianism, if accepted at all, must be accepted as overruling Intuitionism and Egoism. At the same time, if the other principles are not throughout taken as valid, the so-called proof does not seem to be addressed to the Intuitionist or Egoist at all. How shall we deal with this dilemma ? and how is such a process (certainly very different from ordinary proof) possible or conceivable ? It seems that what is needed is a line of argument which, on the one hand, allows the validity, to a certain extent, of the principles already accepted, and on the other hand, shows them to be imperfect,—not absolutely and independently valid, but needing qualification and completion. It may be worth while to investigate briefly such a line of argument in the two cases of Intuitionism and Egoism respectively. To the Intuitionist the Utilitarian endeavours to show that the principles of Truth, Justice, &c., have only a dependent and subordinate validity : arguing either that the principle is really only affirmed by Common Sense as a general rule admitting of exceptions, as in the case of Truth ; or that the fundamental notion is vague, and needs further determination, as in the case of Justice ; and further, that the different rules are liable to conflict with each other, and that we require some higher principle to decide the issue thus raised ; and again, that the rules are differently formulated by different persons, and that these differences admit of no intuitionist solution, while they show the vagueness and ambiguity of the common moral notions, to which the Intuitionist appeals ; and that in all these cases common sense naturally turns to the Utilitarian principle for the further determinations and decisions required. Thus the relation between Utilitarianism and Intuitionism seems to have both a positive and a negative aspect. Positively Utilitarianism supports and sustains the general validity of the current moral rules, by showing a further justification of them, besides the intuitive recog-

dition of their stringency, and also a principle of synthesis and method of binding them into a complete and harmonious system. Negatively, in order to show them dependent and subordinate to its own principle, it has to exhibit their imperfections, as above. I may observe that each of these two aspects has been too exclusively prominent in different periods of the history of English ethical thought. Utilitarianism, as introduced by Cumberland, is too purely conservative; it dwells entirely on the general conduciveness of moral rules to the general good, and ignores the imperfections of these rules as commonly conceived. On the other hand, the Utilitarianism of Bentham is too purely destructive, and treats the morality of Common Sense with needless acrimony and contempt.

The relation between Utilitarianism and Egoism is much more simple, though it seems hard to state it with perfect exactness, and in fact, it is formulated very differently by different writers who appear to be substantially agreed, as Clarke, Kant, and Mill. If the Egoist strictly confines himself to stating his conviction that he ought to take his own happiness or pleasure as his ultimate end, there seems no opening for an argument to lead him to Utilitarianism (as a first principle). But if he offers either as a reason for this conviction, or as another form of stating it, the proposition that his happiness or pleasure is objectively "desirable" or "a good," he gives the requisite opening. For the Utilitarian can then point out that *his* happiness cannot be more objectively desirable or more a good than the happiness of any one else; the mere fact (if I may so put it) that *he is he* can have nothing to do with its objective desirability or goodness. Hence starting with his own principle, he must accept the wider notion of universal happiness or pleasure as representing the real end of Reason, the absolutely Good or Desirable: as the end, therefore, to which the action of a reasonable agent ought to be directed.

It is to be observed that the *proof* of Utilitarianism, thus addressed to the Egoist, is quite different from an exposition of the *sanctions* of Utilitarian rules; *i.e.*, the pleasures and pains that will follow respectively on their observance and violation. Obviously such an exposition cannot lead us to accept Utilitarianism as a first principle, but only as a conclusion deduced from or a special application of Egoism. At the same time, the two, proof and sanction, the reason for accepting the greatest happiness of the greatest number as (in

Bentham's language) the "right and proper" end of action, and the individual's motives for making it his end, are very frequently confused in discussion.

This is the last point that it seemed to me necessary to clear up, in order to obtain a distinct idea of that theory of right conduct which I believe to be generally meant by the term Utilitarianism, and of its relation to other theories of the right or reasonable in human action. Whether my statements are incontrovertible or not, I think that when the issues raised by them are definitely settled, it will perhaps be more profitable than at present to discuss the question whether one is or is not a Utilitarian.

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Tuesday July 13<sup>th</sup>

Dr. A. H. M. J. Hall

Dr. A. H. M. J. Hall

Knowles  
Burkin  
Hutton  
Carpenter  
Tennyson  
Sidgwick  
Dalgairns  
S. Hodgson  
Self  
}

dined

Archb. Westminster  
Huxley.

Lord Arthur Russell

10

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 1874.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

Lord Arthur Russell

## THE SPECULATIVE METHOD.

THE distinction between the Understanding and Reason has long been recognised among Metaphysicians,—the Understanding being the faculty by which the mind arranges and compares the objects given by observation and experience, and forms concepts (or notions) by the operation called reflection,—Reason being the power of the mind to apprehend Ideas, by grouping together the notions supplied to it by the labour of the Understanding, proceeding synthetically, as the Understanding proceeds analytically. Ideas are not the product of the mind, they are the elements of the mind itself; and the power of apprehending them is potentially contained in the mind, and to become conscious of them is the end and the object of its activity. The mind only knows by the means of ideas, and where there is no idea there is no thought.

In its pursuit of Truth, the mind can only be guided by its own method (logic), and can acknowledge the authority of no other method. Hegel has shown that the logic of the physical Cosmos and the logic of the human mind are the same. Both are parts of the same Universe. All science is based on the assumption that the physical Cosmos is intelligible. Faith that Nature is intelligible sustains the scientific man in his labours. The success of science in explaining some of the natural phenomena has been sufficiently great to encourage us to persevere in our work. Every phenomenon has a real and ideal side. Our mind can only assimilate the ideal side. After every experiment in the laboratory, there remains a residuum, an unknown quantity which we reserve for future investigation, with a hope that it may not always remain inexplicable. But we can only understand what is intelligible, and we can only comprehend what is comprehensible. It is of great importance to hold fast this truism. It is the true meaning of the profound saying of Aristotle,—that reason can only have reason for its object.

The mind can only assimilate the intelligible, the logical side of each phenomenon. The mind is satisfied when it recognises itself

[NO. XL.]

in the process of Nature, and not till then. It is contrary to the true scientific spirit to attempt to draw a line between the Knowable and the Unknowable, as Positivists and Agnostics would have us do; the line cannot be drawn. The Unknowable of to-day is not the same as the Unknowable of the middle-ages. The Unknowable must always remain the problem of science, and siege operations to reduce it to intelligible thought must be unceasingly carried on. But the mind which seeks logic in Nature (or which seeks itself) is not satisfied with a catalogue of disconnected observations collected by the experimental method. "The scientific mind can find no repose in mere registration"—(Professor Tyndall). The mind is impelled by its own nature to seek Unity in the diversity of phenomena. All our Knowledge begins by perception, experience, observation, and reflection. Then comes a time, among those at least who think at all, when a desire to establish order, and to find the bond of Unity in diversity, takes hold of us, and this craving the speculative method seeks to satisfy. We feel instinctively, when we begin to observe, that the Universe is a system—that is to say, that the parts which compose it form one organic total—and the progress of science confirms the truth of this belief. The speculative method, which is intent only on the intelligible side of phenomena, must therefore be systematic,—it must result in thoughts which form a system. A speculative system can never pretend to be anything but a hypothesis, an approximate solution of the problem of the Universe; but it supplies an imperative want of the human mind,—the desire to explain the greatest number of effects by the fewest causes. The many disastrous wrecks which strew the path of metaphysical science have brought the speculative method into discredit, but no warnings against the futility of constructing new hypotheses will stop the human mind in its pursuit of knowledge, and in its desire to explain and to understand. It is a common popular prejudice that the speculative metaphysician proceeds with a superb indifference to facts, and the extravagance of many speculative thinkers has done much to confirm this prejudice. But the mistakes of individuals prove nothing against the speculative method in itself. Mistaken inductions have not unfrequently been based on the experimental method. It is interesting and instructive to observe how often the most determined disbelievers in the speculative method unconsciously make use of words which

derive their only meaning from the labours of speculative thinkers, and have become generally current in the language of science. On a previous occasion, for example, I pointed out how Professor Huxley spoke of "the *potential* existence of the world in the primitive nebulosity."

The most consistent supporters of the Experimental method are compelled to do homage to the Speculative method, because without it their labours would be wanting in that intelligible, ideal element which alone gives them the character of sciences. I may quote Dr. Carpenter's words at Brighton:—"While the instincts of humanity and the profoundest researches of philosophy alike point to mind as the one and only source of power, it is the high prerogative of science to demonstrate the Unity of the Power which is operating through the limitless extent of the universe." Or the following striking passage from Professor Huxley's *Essays* (p. 347):—"If I were compelled to choose between absolute materialism and absolute idealism, I should feel compelled to accept the latter alternative."

Professor Tyndall has described in his *Essays*, and has acknowledged the importance of, the Speculative method, though without much logical accuracy, and by employing the word *imagination* to define it, he does much to confirm the popular error that arbitrary conjecture and poetic fancy are the same as speculative method. The speculative metaphysician is bound to keep his imagination under severe control. I think that Professor Tyndall understands and admits the Objective Logic, in the Hegelian sense, in a passage (p. 63) where he says that "when the law of reason has been rendered concentric with the law of nature, and not until this is effected, does the mind of the scientific philosopher rest in peace." Mr. Lewes, after spending many years of his life in warning men against the study of metaphysical problems as "idle and mischievous," has now discarded "the cardinal position of the Positive Philosophy," which he finds to be arbitrary and injudicious ("Problems of Life," p. 62), and has adopted the Objective Logic of Hegel (p. 73). That so fervent a Comtist should have been able to extricate himself from an untenable position, through the course of his own studies, is certainly an interesting occurrence in the development of the English school of metaphysics.

Observation shows that most men, even those whose studies have led them to take an interest in the problems of metaphysics, find

an insuperable difficulty in understanding that, in proceeding by the speculative method, spiritual facts must be spiritually discerned, and that the ideal side of the world has no material existence whatsoever. This arises from the natural habit of the human mind to attempt to facilitate the conception of abstract ideas by assimilating them to images taken from the sensible world. The Germans call this tendency *Vorstellung*. It is an endeavour to form some picture, some representation taken from the analogy of our experience, to help ourselves in forming an image of that which by its nature can only be thought. Rather than admit that the mind has no material existence, they conceive the spirit to be an unknown, imponderable substance, to which they ascribe the functions and faculties of the human soul. The progress of the natural sciences is incessantly undermining this mode of conceiving the spirit, but they cling to it with desperate tenacity, fearing to be led either into materialism, or else into a vacuum in which all life and all thought will be impossible,—whereas in truth it is only a materialistic conception of Mind they are asked to surrender. The spirit is nothing but *actus purus*, as the Schoolmen say. But this they will not admit, because they feel as if the ground were giving way under their feet. From this dilemma there is no issue, until we get to a clear and distinct understanding that the ideal side of Nature has no material existence whatever, that the existence of thought can only be proved by thinking, and that spiritual facts must be spiritually discerned by the speculative method.

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TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1874.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.]

[PRIVATE.]

Mr. Bagehot

## THE METAPHYSICAL BASIS OF TOLERATION.

ONE of the most marked peculiarities of recent times in England is the increased liberty in the expression of opinion. Things are now said constantly and without remark which even ten years ago would have caused a hubbub, and have drawn upon those who said them much obloquy. But already I think there are signs of a reaction. In many quarters of orthodox opinion I observe a disposition to say, "Surely this is going too far; really we cannot allow such things to be said." And what is more curious, some writers, whose pens are just set at liberty, and who would, not at all long ago, have been turned out of society for the things that they say, are setting themselves to explain the "weakness" of liberty and to extol the advantages of persecution. As it seems to me that the new theory and new practice of this country are great improvements on the old ones, and as I conceive that the doctrine of Toleration rests on what may be called a metaphysical basis, I venture to raise a discussion on the matter in this Society.

That I may not be subject to a censure from our Committee on Definition, I should say that, except where it is explained to the contrary, I use the word 'toleration' to mean toleration by law. Toleration by society of matters not subject to legal penalty is a kindred subject, on which, if I have room, I will add a few words, but in the main I propose to deal with the simpler subject,—toleration by law. And by toleration, too, I mean, when it is not otherwise said, toleration in the public expression of opinions. Toleration of acts and practice is another allied subject on which I can, in a paper like this, but barely hope to indicate what seems to me to be the truth. And I should add that I deal only with the discussion of impersonal doctrines. The law of libel, which deals with accusations of living persons, is a topic requiring consideration by itself.

Meaning this by 'Toleration,' I do not think we ought to be surprised at a reaction against it. What was said long ago of

[NO. XLII.]

slavery seems to be equally true of persecution,—it “exists by the law of nature.” It is so congenial to human nature, that it has arisen everywhere in past times, as history shows; that the cessation of it is a matter of recent times in England; that even now the practice and the theory of it are in a triumphant majority. As most men have so much preferred persecution, it is only natural that it should continually reappear in discussion and argument. One mode in which it tempts human nature is very obvious. Persons of strong opinions wish, above all things, to propagate those opinions. They find close at hand what seems an immense engine for that propagation; they find the *State*, which has often in history interfered for and against them, which has had a great and undeniable influence in helping some and hindering others, and in their eagerness they can hardly understand why they should not make use of this great engine to crush the errors which they hate, and to replace them with the tenets they approve. So long as there are earnest believers in the world, they will always wish to punish opinions, even if their judgment tells them it is unwise and their conscience that it is wrong. They may not gratify their inclination, but the inclination will not be the less real.

Since the time of Carlyle, “earnestness” has been a favourite virtue in literature, and it is customary to treat this wish to twist other people’s belief into ours as if it was a part of the love of truth. And in the highest minds so it may be. But the mass of mankind have, as I hold, no such fine motive. Independently of truth or falsehood, the spectacle of a different belief from ours is disagreeable to us, in the same way that the spectacle of a different form of dress and manners is disagreeable. A set of schoolboys will persecute a new boy with a new sort of jacket, they will hardly let him have a new-shaped penknife. Grown-up people are just as bad, except when culture has softened them. A mob will hoot a foreigner who looks much unlike themselves. Much of the feeling of “earnest believers” is, I believe, altogether the same. They wish others to think as they do, not only because they wish to diffuse doctrinal truth, but also and much more because they cannot bear to hear the words of a creed different from their own. At any rate, without further analysing the origin of the persecuting impulse, its deep root in human nature, and its great power over most men are evident.

But this natural impulse was not the only motive,—perhaps was not the principal one of historical persecutions. The main one, or a

main one, was a most ancient political idea which once ruled the world, and of which deep vestiges are still to be traced on many sides. The most ancient conception of a State is that of a "religious partnership," in which any member may by his acts bring down the wrath of the Gods on the other members, and so to speak, on the whole company. This danger was, in the conception of the time, at once unlimited and inherited; in any generation, partners A, C, D, &c., might suffer loss of life, or health, or goods,—the whole association even might perish because in a past generation the ancestors of Z had somehow offended the gods. Thus the historian of Athens tells us that after a particular act of sacrilege—a breach of the local privileges of sanctuary—the perpetrators were compelled "to retire into banishment; that those who had died before the date he is speaking of were "disinterred and cast beyond the borders." "Yet," he adds, "their exile continuing, as it did, only for a time, was not held sufficient to expiate the impiety for which they had been condemned. The Alkmoônids, one of the most powerful families in Attica long continued to be looked upon as a tainted race, and in cases of public calamity were liable to be singled out as having by their sacrilege drawn down the judgment of the gods upon their countrymen." And as false opinions about the gods have almost always been thought to be peculiarly odious to them, the misbeliever, the "miscreant" has been almost always thought to be likely not only to impair the salvation of himself and others in a future world, but also to bring on his neighbours and his nation grievous calamities at once in this. He has been persecuted to stop political danger more than to arrest intellectual error.

But it will be said,—Put history aside, and come to things now. Why should not those who are convinced that certain doctrines are errors, that they are most dangerous, that they may ruin man's welfare here and his salvation hereafter, use the power of the State to extirpate those errors? Experience seems to show that the power of the State can be put forth in that way effectually. Why, then, should it not be put forth? If I had room, I should like for a moment to criticise the word "effectually." I should say that the State, in the cases where it is most wanted, is not of the use which is thought. I admit that it extirpates error, but I doubt if it creates belief, at least, if it does so when the persecuted error was suitable to the place and time. In that case I think the effect has often been to eradicate a heresy among the few, at the cost of creating a scepticism

among the many; to kill the error, no doubt, but also to maim the general belief. And this is a cardinal point for the propagation of the "truth," is the end of the persecution, all else is only a means. But I have not space to discuss this, and will come to the main point.

I say that the State power should not be used to arrest discussion, because the State power may be used equally for truth or error, for Mohammedanism or Christianity, for belief or no-belief, but that in discussion truth has an advantage. Arguments always tell for truth as such, and against error as such; if you let the human mind alone, it has a preference for good argument over bad, it oftener takes truth than not. But if you do not let it alone, you give truth no advantage at all; you substitute a game of force where all doctrines are equal for a game of logic, where the truer have the better chance.

The process by which truth wins in discussion is this,—certain strong and eager minds embrace original opinions, seldom all wrong, never quite true, but of a mixed sort, part truth, part error. These they inculcate on all occasions, and on every side, and gradually bring the cooler sort of men to a hearing of them. These cooler people serve as quasi-judges, while the more eager ones are a sort of advocates; a Court of Inquisition is sitting perpetually, investigating, informally and silently, but not ineffectually, what on all great subjects of human interest is truth and error. There is no sort of infallibility about the Court; often it makes great mistakes, most of its decisions are incomplete in thought and imperfect in expression. Still, on the whole, the force of evidence keeps it right. The truth has the best of the proof, and therefore wins most of the judgments. The process is slow, far more tedious than the worst Chancery suit. Time in it is reckoned not by days, but by years, or rather by centuries. Yet, on the whole, it creeps along, if you do not stop it. But all is arrested, if persecution begins, if you have a *coup d'état*, and let loose soldiers on the Court, for it is perfect chance which litigant turns them in, or what creed they are used to compel men to believe.

This argument, however, assumes two things. In the first place, it presupposes that we are speaking of a state of society in which discussion is possible. And such societies are not very common. Uncivilised man is not capable of discussion: savages have been justly described as having "the intellect of children with the passions and strength of men." Before anything like speculative argument

can be used with them, their intellect must be strengthened and their passions restrained. There was, as it seems to me, a long preliminary period before human nature, as we now see it, existed, and while it was being formed. During that preliminary period, persecution, like slavery, played a most considerable part. Nations became such gradually by having a common religion. It was a necessary condition of the passage from a loose aggregate of savages to a united polity that they should believe in the same gods and worship these gods in the same way. What was necessary was that they should for a long period—for centuries, perhaps—lead the same life and conform to the same usages. They believed that the ‘gods of their fathers’ had commanded these usages. Early law is hardly to be separated from religious ritual; it is more like the tradition of a Church than the enactments of a statute-book. It is a thing essentially immemorial and sacred. It is not conceived of as capable either of addition or diminution; it is a body of holy customs which no one is allowed either to break or to impugn, the use of which is to aid in creating a common national character, which in after-times may be tame enough to bear discussion, and which may suggest common axioms upon which discussion can be founded. Till that common character has been formed discussion is impossible; it cannot be used to find out truth, for it cannot exist; it is not that we have to forego its efficacy on purpose, we have not the choice of it, for its prerequisites cannot be found. The case of civil liberty is, as I conceive, much the same. Early ages need a coercive despotism more than they need anything else. The age of debate comes later. An omnipotent power to enforce the sacred law is that which is then most required. A constitutional opposition would be born before its time. It would be dragging the wheel before the horses were harnessed. The strongest advocates both of Liberty and Toleration may consistently hold that there were unhappy ages before either became possible, and when attempts at either would have been pernicious.

The case is analogous to that of education. Every parent wisely teaches his child his own creed, and till the child has attained a certain age, it is better that he should not hear too much of any other. His mind will in the end be better able to weigh arguments, because it does not begin to weigh them so early. He will hardly comprehend any creed unless he has been taught some creed. But the restrictions of childhood must be relaxed in youth, and abandoned in

manhood. One object of education is to train us for discussion, and as that training gradually approaches to completeness, we should gradually begin to enter into and to take part in discussion. The restrictions that are useful at nine years old are pernicious at nineteen.

But it will be said, the theory of Toleration is not so easy as that of education. We know by a certain fact when a young man is grown up and can bear discussion. We judge by his age, as to which every one is agreed. But we cannot tell by any similar patent fact when a State is mature enough to bear discussion. There may be two opinions about it. And I quite agree that the matter of fact is more difficult to discover in one case than in the other; still, it is a matter of fact which the rulers of the State must decide upon their responsibility, and as best they can. And the highest sort of rulers will decide it like the English in India,—with no reference to their own belief. For years the English prohibited the preaching of Christianity in India, though it was their own religion, because they thought that it could not be tranquilly listened to. They now permit it, because they find that the population can bear the discussion of it. Of course most Governments are wholly unequal to so high a morality and so severe a self-command. The Governments of most countries are composed of persons who wish everybody to believe as they do, merely because they do. Some here and there from a higher motive so eagerly wish to propagate their opinions, that they are unequal to consider the problem of toleration impartially. They persecute till the persecuted become strong enough to make them desist. But the delicacy of a rule and the unwillingness of Governments to adopt it, do not prove that it is not the best and the right one.

Secondly, the doctrine that rulers are to permit discussion assumes not only, as we have seen, that discussion is possible, but also that discussion will not destroy the Government. No government is bound to permit a controversy which will annihilate it. It is a trustee of many duties, and if possible, it must retain the power to perform those duties. The controversies which may ruin it are very different in different countries. The Government of the day must determine in each case what those questions are. If the Roman Emperors who persecuted Christianity really did so because they imagined that Christianity would destroy the Roman Empire, I think they are to be blamed not for their misconception of duty, but for their mistake of fact. The existence of Christianity was not really more

inconsistent with the existence of the Empire in the time of Diocletian than in that of Constantine, but if Diocletian thought otherwise, it was his duty to preserve the Empire.

I acknowledge these two limitations to the doctrine that discussion should be free, but I do not admit another which is often urged. It is said that those who write against toleration should not be tolerated; that discussion should not aid the enemies of discussion. But why not? If there is a strong Government and a people for discussion, why should not the cause be heard? We must not assume that the liberty of discussion has no case of exception. We have just seen that there are, in fact, several such. In each instance, let the people decide whether the particular discussion shall go on or not. Very likely, in some cases, they may decide wrong; but it is better that they should so decide, than that we should venture to anticipate all experience, and to make sure that they cannot possibly be right.

It is plain that the argument, here applied to the toleration of opinion, has no application to that of actions. The human mind learns by freely hearing all arguments, but it does not learn by freely trying all practices. Society as we now have it cannot exist at all unless certain acts are prohibited. It goes on much better because many other acts are prohibited also. The Government must take the responsibility of saying what actions it will allow; that is its first business, and the allowance of all would be the end of civilisation. But it must, under the conditions specified, hear all opinions, for the tranquil discussion of all, more than anything else promotes the progressive knowledge of truth, which is the mainspring of civilization.

Nor does the argument that the law should not impose a penalty on the expression of any opinion equally prove that society should not in many cases apply a penalty to that expression. Society can deal much more severely than the law with many kinds of acts, because it need be far less strict in the evidence it requires. It can take cognisance of matters of common repute and of things of which everyone is sure, but which nobody can prove. Particularly, it can fairly well compare the character of the doctrine with the character of the agent, which law can do but very imperfectly, if at all. And it is certain that opinions are evidence of the character of those who hold them, not conclusive evidence, but still presumptive. Experience shows that every opinion is compatible with what every one would admit to be a life fairly approvable, a life far higher than that of the mass of men.

Great scepticism and great belief have both been found in characters whom both sceptics and believers must admire. Still, on the whole, there is a certain kinship between belief and character; those who disagree with a man's fundamental creed will generally disapprove of his habitual character. If, therefore, society sees a man maintaining opinions which by experience it has been led to connect with actions which it discountenances, it is justified in provisionally discountenancing the man who holds those opinions. Such a man should be put to the proof to show by his life that the opinions which he holds are not connected with really pernicious actions, as society thinks they are. If he is visibly leading a high life, society should discountenance him no longer; it is then clear that he did not lead a bad life, and the idea that he did or might lead such a life was the only reason for so doing. A suspicion was created, but it has also been removed. Nor does such a habit of suspicion, on the whole, impair free discussion; perhaps even it improves it. It keeps out the worst disputants, men of really bad character, whose opinions are the results of that character, and who refrain from publishing them, because they fear what society may say. If the law could similarly distinguish between good disputants and bad, it might usefully impose penalties on the bad; but of course, this is impossible; law cannot distinguish between the niceties of character; it must punish the publication of an opinion, if it punishes at all, no matter whether the publisher is a good man or whether he is a bad one.

The metaphysical basis of toleration I, therefore, hold to be this:—That the human mind, when of a certain maturity, prefers good argument to bad, and so selects from discussion truth rather than falsehood. Force, on the other hand, may be used as well against truth as for it,—and how many various sorts of belief or unbelief it might then be used to promote we cannot, I think, learn better than by looking round this table, and considering how little of this Society would be left, if *any* member was permitted to extirpate from among us all opinions with which he seriously disagreed.

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TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 1874.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

W<sup>r</sup>. J. Fitzjames Stephen

## SOME THOUGHTS ON NECESSARY TRUTH.

LIKE most of the members of this Society (I suppose), I have read with great interest the papers which Dr. Ward has been so good as to circulate amongst us, and which he has also published in the *Dublin Review*.

The last two papers consist, to a great extent, of controversial matter about Mr. Mill. It would hardly become me to maintain that Mr. Mill was infallible, or that controversy with him was necessarily unproductive, or that the plan of singling out a definite antagonist for definite attack is not recommended by many considerations. On the contrary, I think that nothing can give greater spirit, vigour, and precision to discussions which are only too apt to become vague. All this, however, is consistent with a sense of the inconveniences of such a method of procedure, the greatest of which is that it does not follow that because you confute A. B., you establish what A. B. denied. Whether Dr. Ward succeeds in finding real flaws in Mr. Mill's views I shall not inquire. But however that may be, he fails to convince me of the truth of his own opinion, for reasons which I now proceed to assign.

One of the great points which Dr. Ward labours in the papers in question is thus stated in syllogistic form on p. 18 of the last of them :—

Whatever the existent cognitive faculties of mankind testify is instinctively known by mankind as certainly true.

But the existent cognitive faculties of mankind testify that any given mathematical axiom is self-evidently necessary.

*Ergo*, it is instinctively known by mankind as certainly true that any given mathematical axiom is self-evidently necessary.

To say that I deny the major and the minor and the conclusion of this syllogism is an imperfect way of expressing my dissent from it. I feel that its author speaks a language different from mine, and lives, so to speak, in a different intellectual world. The words "know," "true," "necessary," and many

[No. XLII.]

others, must, I suppose, mean to him something which they do not mean to me. Apart, however, from this, the syllogism appears to me to exemplify in a striking manner the defect which Mr. Mill attributed, as I think justly, to all syllogistic reasoning. The major and minor premisses could never be affirmed unless the truth of the conclusion was independently known. Indeed, they are simply the conclusion stated in terms of increasing generality. Dr. Ward gets a conclusion to start with by supposing that there is something special in mathematical knowledge. He gets a minor by supposing that the special characteristic of mathematical knowledge is that it is obtained by a direct act of some special faculty of the mind, and the major is obtained by generalising the minor.

This appears more clearly upon examining the terms of the syllogism. The major proposition appears to me simply to repeat six times over the words "We know." Each of the six expressions "existent cognitive faculties," "testify," "instinctively," "known," "certainly," "true," asserts or implies the same thing, and the whole syllogism amounts to this:—"We know something. We know Euclid. Therefore we know Euclid." This appears to me a cumbersome way of saying "We know Euclid."

Again, I dissent from the psychological theory implied in the use of this language. A man, according to this syllogism, has existent cognitive faculties, and he has also other faculties by which he instinctively knows. Besides these two faculties, he is acquainted, I suppose, otherwise, with the meaning of the words "certainly true." The first set of faculties "testify." Thereupon the second set of faculties inform the common owner of the two sets that what the first set of faculties say is "certainly true." It occurs to me that the faculties which "instinctively know" require a voucher, as well as the "cognitive faculties" which "testify." After all, what are a man's faculties except the man himself when engaged in a certain act? and what meaning is there in the assertion that one set of his faculties corroborated another through a third? When all is said, what does it mean, except that people have certain ways of gaining knowledge which, from the nature of the case, they are obliged to trust. And did any one ever deny it? The whole apparatus of cognitive faculties, instinctive knowledge, and certain truth is only, as it seems to me, an expansion of the words "we know," and carries us no further.

Upon the whole, the substance and purport of the syllogism appears to me to be this :—There are two kinds of knowledge, or perhaps I should say we know two kinds of truths, contingent truths and necessary truths. The first class, namely, the class of contingent truths, includes all common facts, such as that so many persons, dressed in such a way, are sitting round a table at a given time and place. The other class, namely, the class of necessary truths, consists of general propositions, of which those which relate to time, space, and number are specimens. We can distinguish between contingent and necessary truths by an unfailing test. A contingent truth might be imagined to be, and might be, other than it is, but a necessary truth cannot; or to put the same thing in a different way, Omnipotence could alter the one, and cannot alter the other. Dr. Ward, I have no doubt, would accept the following illustration, though I do not give it as an exact quotation. Omnipotence could make white gold or cold fire, but could not make a quadrangular figure contained by three straight sides. I deny the existence of this distinction, and if I am right, Dr. Ward's syllogism is either wrong or unmeaning. If no truths are necessary it is wrong. If all truths are necessary it is unmeaning.

The expression "necessary truth" may have one of two different meanings. It may mean a fact which could not have been otherwise than it is, or it may mean a truth affirmed by the very use of certain words. Now, I say that if you mean by necessary truths facts which could not have been otherwise than they are, I am by no means sure that all truths whatever are not necessary, and I am much disposed to think they are. It is a truth that these lines were written on blue paper with a quill pen, by a man standing in front of a desk in the hollow of a window looking into the Inner Temple Garden, on the 16th of February, 1874. I can easily imagine any one of these circumstances having been different, but the assertion of their existence is as true as that two and two make four, and I was when they occurred equally unable to doubt of any one of them. Being past, they are unalterable (I suppose) even by Omnipotence, and in order that they might have happened otherwise, it might, for aught I can tell, have been necessary for the whole constitution of the universe to have been slightly altered from all eternity. What, then, is the meaning of the assertion that any fact whatever is contingent? Every fact whatever is. It would not be

a fact, if it did not exist; and if it exists, and comes under my "existent cognitive faculties," it is to me necessary. How can any power of imagining its absence, and the substitution for it of a similar but slightly different state of things, afford me any sort of evidence as to the possibility of its not having happened? When a man says, "This ink might just as well have been blue as black," all that he really means is that he can easily imagine the absence of the black ink and the presence of blue ink in its place, but for aught I know to the contrary, the presence of the black ink was determined by causes reaching far beyond Adam.

If, on the other hand, you mean by necessary truths, truths which are implied by the very use of certain words, then I say that facts come first, and that words ought to be made to fit them; and that when you describe the properties of space, time, and number as necessary truths, all that you ought to mean, all that you can prove, is that certain propositions about them (*e.g.*, that two straight lines cannot enclose a space,) describe in perfectly clear and adequate language facts which we learn by experience, just as we learn by experience that a given member of the Metaphysical Society reads a paper about necessary truths under given circumstances.

An illustration will show how very much the difference between contingent and necessary truth (using the word "necessary" in the second sense) is a difference as to the use of words. It is, we are told, a contingent truth that gold is yellow, and the reason is because God could make white gold, but could not make a quadrangular trilateral. It seems to me that the truth of the assertion that God could make white gold entirely depends on the meaning which men choose to attach to the word "gold." If by the word "gold" I mean a metal of a certain specific gravity, malleable, not liable to rust, and of a yellow colour, then God can no more make white gold than he can make a square triangle. If by the word "gold" I mean a metal of a certain specific gravity, malleable, and not liable to rust, whatever may be its colour, then God can (I suppose) make gold of any colour, but I know not why I should not annex the meaning "yellow" to the word "gold," as well as the meaning "metal." Dr. Ward somewhere observes that it would be easy for Omnipotence to make cold fire. All that I can say to that is that if Omnipotence made something which sparkled, and crackled, and smoked, but did not burn, I should not call it fire.

The difference, and the only difference which I can perceive, between the class of truths which relate to the properties of time, space, and number ; and propositions as to common objects and occurrences, is this : The words which relate to time, space, and number are perfectly simple and adequate to that which they describe, whereas the words which relate to common objects are in nearly every case complex, often to the highest degree ; the words "straight," "line," "plane," "surface," "angle," "circle," "triangle," have no ambiguity at all. A line means a line, add the idea of breadth, or thickness, or specific colour, or weight, and the word becomes inappropriate ; but the words "paper," "stick," "book," "man," "fire," "gold," and so on, mean a collection of many qualities which may be varied by imagination, without destroying the general resemblance between the image raised by the word used and the thing signified. If I hear of red gold, for instance, I understand a metal having all the other properties of gold as commonly known, except the quality of yellowness, for which redness is substituted. When I am told of a black swan, I mean a bird like a white swan, but of a different colour. But when I hear of straight lines two of which would enclose a space, or of a figure contained by three straight lines making four angles with each other, I know that if the words employed are employed in their usual senses the propositions into which they are introduced are not true.

I will consider immediately the manner in which we get our knowledge of the qualities of space, but before doing so I will make an observation on the character of the words in which we embody that knowledge, and of the thing to which they apply. Space has, as far as we know, no qualities or properties at all, except qualities and properties which the words used by us express with perfect clearness and adequacy ; and this I take to be the reason why the propositions which we make about space do not admit of being varied, and cannot even be imagined to be false. When we speak of a straight line, we mean an imaginary line resembling the lines popularly called straight, but distinguished from them by having no breadth, no thickness, and no deviation whatever from the apparent general direction. We can imagine a substance like gold in all respects except its colour, or its specific gravity, or its malleability, or its exchangeable value ; and we can think of gold with exclusive reference to any one or more of these

qualities. We thus find no difficulty in applying the word "gold" to numerous imaginary substances, differing from each other in many respects, but resembling each other in the particular matters of which we think when we use the word. Moreover, all the words which describe the qualities of gold admit of degrees. There are numerous shades of colour, for instance, to which the word "yellow" applies. Space, on the other hand, has no qualities at all, except the qualities of figure, and these qualities are described in words which have one meaning, and no more. Hence we cannot vary either our mental image of space itself, or the meaning of the words in which we describe it. If we tried to do so, we should speak without a meaning, and reduce the subject of our speech to the condition to which that eminent logician, Crambe, reduced his abstract Lord Mayor. When Martinus Scriblerus said that he could not conceive of a Lord Mayor without his gold chain or his turtle, Crambe replied that he could conceive of a Lord Mayor without gold chain, turtle, fur gown, swordbearer, chaplain, coach, office, body, soul, or spirit, which, he submitted, was the abstract idea of a Lord Mayor. Martinus, I am sorry to say, called Crambe an impudent liar, which, though rude, was not, I think, wholly unnatural; but seriously speaking, I think that to try to conceive of space as being other than it is is like trying to conceive of red as being blue. You can substitute one colour for another, but the sole property of any given colour is to be itself. Alter it, and you destroy it. It is the same of space. We cannot modify it in imagination, because there is nothing in it to modify, and because we have no experience of anything else, not quite the same, but very like it, which we can substitute for it.

I now come to the question by what means is our knowledge of the characteristics of Space acquired, and to this I reply it is acquired in precisely the same way as our knowledge of any common fact,—the fact, for instance, that a particular sheet of paper is blue, and not white,—namely, by the use of our senses. Now if this is the case, either all truths are necessary, or mathematical truths depend upon experience, like others, and may thus be called contingent.

The question,—What is the nature of time, space, and number? is quite independent of the question,—How do we become aware of their properties? I am not myself able to attach any meaning

to the words "Space" and "Number" apart from distinct objects existing in space, and of faculties capable of perceiving them as so existing, nor can I attach any meaning to the word "Time" apart from the faculty of memory; but whether space, time, and number are objective or subjective, whether they are the colour, so to speak, of the things we look at, or of glasses through which we are obliged to look, it is undeniable that our knowledge of them is entirely dependent upon our senses and our memory. A person who passed his life in dreamless sleep, so that he had no external perceptions at all, and whose mind was conscious of no succession of thoughts or impressions, would know nothing of space, number, or time. On the other hand, the instant a person begins to use his senses or his memory he becomes aware of space, time, and number, and he continues to be made aware of them at every instant at which he uses his faculties through the whole of his life. His early ideas on the subject are exceedingly confused, but by experience, especially if it is guided by instruction, they become perfectly clear and systematic; and when they have once reached a clear and systematic condition subsequent experience adds nothing to them. He knows them as well as they admit of being known, just as a lad of 14 knows his multiplication-table and his alphabet as well as he will ever know them, if he lives to be a hundred. The experience by which we learn to understand the words "before" and "after" is so early and simple that no one remembers its acquisition, but I should suppose most people remember learning the multiplication-table and the first elements of geometry. If I were to generalise from my own experience, I should say that we begin with exceedingly confused notions upon the matter, and that after a time, longer or shorter, as it may be, we see that the matter really is as we are told that it is,—that is to say, we see that our impressions of external objects really are summed up by the multiplication-table and geometrical axioms.

I distinctly remember the first day when I really understood the first proposition of the first book of Euclid, and how I demonstrated it to myself over and over again many times with extreme delight and satisfaction. It was exactly the same sort of feeling as one which I have often experienced in later life,—the feeling of discovering one's way about a place. If a man takes up his abode in a new neighbourhood,

and proceeds to explore it, he will find (at least I have often found) that at first he is very much astray, even if he has maps to help him. By degrees he begins to find his way, he mentally connects one road with another, and sees what are the relative positions of such and such woods, hills, houses, and other objects. The whole at last takes its place in his mind, sometimes by a kind of crisis which enables him, with striking distinctness and rapidity, to say, "Now I know where I am." When this happens he knows the country, and if he lives in it fifty years his knowledge will not alter, though, of course, it may become more detailed and minute.

Our acquaintance with the relations of space in general is, if I am not mistaken, of precisely the same nature as our acquaintance with particular portions of space. We learn the general meaning of the words "line," "surface," "solid," "point," "round," "square," and the like, as we learn the meaning of other common words. A nurse or a mother tells a child that the marks which she makes on a piece of paper are lines, just as she tells it that the creature which lies on the rug is a dog. I suppose no one ever yet studied Euclid who did not know perfectly well before he read a word of it what a straight and a crooked line, a round thing and a square thing, look like, nor can any one have seen a board, or a table, or a sheet of paper, without having received the impression of parallel lines. I should further suppose that no one ever learnt to walk without learning what is meant by a short cut from place to place. Experience teaches every human being who is not an idiot, and indeed every animal, that it saves time to cut a corner, and the difference between this homely proposition and the proposition that two sides of a triangle are greater than the third is only a difference of expression.

If it is denied that matters of this sort are learnt by experience, it appears to me that it ought, in consistency, to be denied that anything whatever is learnt by experience. It appears to me just as clear that experience teaches us to compare together the length of lines in general, and, in particular, to compare the length of a straight and crooked line terminating at the same points, as that it teaches us to compare together the lengths of any two specific lines. I see no difference whatever between the process by which we learn that the word "straight" means a line of a peculiar kind, like that which is apparently formed by a string tightly stretched, and that such lines are the shortest way from

point to point; and the process by which we learn that the Oxford Road is proximately straight, and that that road forms a shorter connection between Victoria Gate and the Marble Arch than the road which goes all round Hyde Park. The difference between the two propositions is simply that one of them refers to one particular corner of the contents of space, and the other to space, or which is the same thing, to the contents of space in general.

It is sometimes asked how you are enabled by any number of observations on particular parts of space to make general observations on it? I think Dr. Ward asks in one place what right Mr. Mill had to suppose that the conditions of space in Sirius were the same as they are here. The answer appears to me to be, that by the word "space" we mean that enormous apparent blue vault which appears to our senses to contain the earth, the solar system, and innumerable other systems, nebulae, and fixed stars. All these things we see with our eyes, and we picture space to ourselves as an enormous expanse or cavity in which they are all contained. No one, I suppose, will deny that experience enables us to draw an imaginary line between two trees or two book-cases, between which, if we pleased, we could draw a real line; or that it informs us that if we represent these lines on paper, we can reason about the relations of the objects to each other as well as we could if we confined our attention to the things themselves, and indeed, in many instances, much better. If the possibility of making and using maps is not a fact taught by experience, then experience teaches nothing at all. If it is, then when we draw imaginary lines from star to star, and argue about their distances, upon data which we have gathered from our local experience of space, we are proceeding upon experience, the experience upon which we proceed being that of our own eyesight, which assures us that fixed stars do exist in space, and that that which we call space is a vast homogeneous vault for them to exist in. I do not see how this can be denied by any one who does not confine the word "experience" to experience by touch. At this moment, I see a sparrow sitting on a tree, perhaps ten yards off. Behind the sparrow and through the fog, I see the sun, and I have identically the same reason for believing that the sun and the sparrow both exist in space.

I maintain, on the whole, that we learn the characteristics of Space by looking at things in it and by moving about in it, just as we learn

the shape of a room and the position of the articles of furniture in it by the very same process ; and I say that both or neither of the matters thus learnt are learnt by experience.

I have already attempted to explain the reason why it is practically impossible for us to imagine or conceive (I think the only difference between the two operations is in the greater distinctness of imagination, and its application to matters of which we are informed by the eye or ear,) any alteration in space, time, or number, their properties and relations, the reason being that our ideas of them are simple-ideas, and therefore cannot be altered without being destroyed. But I will pursue the matter a little further, with the view of showing two things, —first, that no inference whatever can be drawn from the extent of our power of imagining or conceiving ; and secondly, that though we cannot imagine or conceive of an alteration of the qualities of space, time, or number, we can readily imagine facts which, if they existed, would prevent us from forming our present ideas of space, time, and number, and would show that those ideas, if formed, were incorrect.

The first point may, I think, be established very shortly. The processes of imagining and conceiving consist, as far as we know, in combining together, in our own minds, things which we have seen apart in nature. When we imagine a centaur, we imagine part of the body of a horse combined with part of the body of a man, and so of everything else. Now time, space, and number enter into nearly every imagination of our minds. There may be some thoughts which have no relation to them, but these I need not at present consider. Now there is but one space, one series of numbers, and one course or stream of time, and our idea of each of the three is a perfectly simple idea, independent of everything else, and continually present to our minds. How, then, can we modify it in imagination ? It is as impossible to do so as to imagine a new colour, or to think out the common expression, "If I were you." Thus our incapacity to imagine or conceive certain things proves simply that we have no experience which enables us to do so. It neither proves, nor to my mind does it tend to prove, that what we cannot imagine or conceive cannot be conceived or imagined by any other intelligent being, even if he is omnipotent. To me the expression "space of four dimensions" conveys no meaning whatever, but I am far from denying that it might convey a meaning to a being with faculties differently constituted, and I believe mathematicians would be able to give grounds for supposing that it would.

As to the second point, I say, that though we cannot picture to ourselves a state of things, in which the conditions of time, space, and number differ from those with which we are acquainted, in the sense of forming a complete and coherent mental picture of it, we can easily imagine facts which would prevent us from forming our present ideas about time, space, and number, or would show that if formed, those ideas were false. If, then, such facts existed, our present ideas as to time, space, and number would not exist, or if they did, would be regarded as false. Hence their truth depends upon the continued non-existence of facts readily imaginable, and hence we must conclude either that they might be otherwise, or that no one fact which we observe could be otherwise, and in either case there is an end of their special character as necessary truths.

Not to trouble you longer, I will conclude with a single illustration of this. Dr. Ward says :—"Let there be 16 rows of pebbles, each containing 18. It is a necessary truth that the whole number is 288. Omnipotence could divide one pebble into two or create new pebbles, but it is beyond the sphere of Omnipotence to effect that, so long as there remain 16 rows of 18 pebbles each, the whole number of pebbles should be either more or less than two hundreds, eight tens, and eight units." There is, I believe, a superstition in Wiltshire that no one can count the stones at Stonehenge, but that if you pass your life in counting you will always bring out a different result. Now suppose this were the fact, and suppose it were a fact commonly observed, that if you counted Dr. Ward's pebbles over and over again, arranging them each time in a different order, you always brought out a different result, would it not follow that the multiplication-table was not true? That table assumes, and so implicitly asserts, that there are things which retain their identity for a certain time, and that they do not lose it by the alteration of their position. I do not see why this truth should not be otherwise, why there should not be a world in which the act of putting two pairs of things together should reduce the number to three, just as the juxtaposition of two drops of water produces one drop. It is true that the one drop contains as much water as the two contained, but this is very far from being immediately obvious, or from being incapable of being disproved by experience. Every proposition in the multiplication-table is indeed either merely arbitrary, or else it is a statement of the fact that by varying the arrangement

of groups of objects you do not vary their number, which is a property of matter learnt by experience. When you say three times three is nine, you either give a name to three groups of threes, which name might just as well be eleven or seven as nine, or else you affirm that the juxtaposition or rearrangement of three groups of three things does not affect their number, which is perfectly true, but is necessary only in the general sense already referred to.

Upon the whole, it appears to me that the one type of truth and knowledge is the proposition,—“This sheet of paper which I hold in my hand is blue, and that other is white,” and that all other assertions are reducible to this type. Truth thus means the correspondence between the thoughts or images raised by words, and the thoughts or images raised by the joint action of the senses and the mind directed to the things to which the words refer. Whether such truth is called “necessary” or not is to me matter of indifference. The essential point is that when we say that statements are true, we mean only that they correspond either with present perception, or with a present recollection of past perception. When we say that they are certain, we mean only that we do not, in fact, doubt them at the time when we make them. Truth and certainty never can be freed from any errors which may be inherent in our faculties or our memory, and every assertion which we make is, or ought to be, made subject to a tacit reservation in respect of such errors. You cannot have anything truer than truth or more certain than certainty, in the senses of truth and certainty just stated.

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*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*



C. Robertson  
Hutton  
Clifford  
S. Hodgson  
Hilton  
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Martineau  
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Sylvester  
Harrison  
Knowles  
Self  
F. Stephen  
Bayly  
Greg  
Dr. Bucknell

10 March 1874.

W. H. Hutton

## "LATENT THOUGHT."

It has struck me that a loose and somewhat obscure mode of speaking of "latent thought," and, indeed, of the intellect generally as an automatic machine independent of consciousness, has grown up of late,—a mode of speaking which is but an hypothesis, and, I believe, an unwarranted one, for accounting for a few curious mental phenomena, no doubt of the first importance, but quite inadequate for the purpose of establishing the very startling conclusion that you can reach some of the highest and best results of thought without thinking. My object, in the present paper, is briefly to classify the phenomena referred to, and maintain that they do not imply what they are supposed to imply, and what I do not think they could be supposed to imply if we realised fully the meaning of our words,—namely, that the brain, as distinct from the mind, is a sort of intellectual weaving-machine, from which, if you supply it with the raw materials of a mental problem, you may hope to take out the finished article without the exercise of any intellectual judgment or reflection. I don't think you can get the results of thinking without thought, of judging without judgment, of creative effort without the conscious adaptation of means to end. And I don't think that the phenomena—the real existence of which, of course, I fully accept—alleged as proving that this is possible, prove, or even legitimately suggest, so strange a conclusion.

(1.) One of the most remarkable evidences of what is called "latent thought" is furnished by the laws of perception. It is quite certain that there is for every person a *minimum visibile* or *audibile*, or generally a *minimum sensible* (to use somewhat bad Latin), anything less than which does not affect his perceptive faculties at all, but less than which yet is, of course, an essential part of that minimum itself. If the line I am writing on could be cut up into such a number of distinct spots that each of them was a trifle less than my *minimum visibile*, and if these spots were then removed to some distance from each other, I should not perceive their existence at all.

[NO. XLIII.]

But if any two of them were brought together, I should then become aware of the existence of a spot. It is clear, therefore, that there are such things as physical constituents of an object of perception which, taken alone, are not perceived, and yet which are elements of something that is perceived. If this is "latent perception," on the ground that one of these spots taken alone must affect me in some degree, though not in a degree sufficient to excite perception without combining with another of them,—then latent perception only means 'a latent physical condition of perception;' and that there are innumerable such latent physical conditions,—conditions which only become patent in conjunction with other conditions,—I suppose every observant man would admit. The colour of the spot, for instance, may be such a latent physical condition of perception, since a much smaller spot of bright colour can be seen on a dark ground, or a much smaller spot of dark colour on a bright ground, than could be perceived if the colour of the spot were more similar to that of the background. Hence the redness of the two halves of the *minimum visibile* may be a latent physical condition of their being perceived when they coalesce into one, just as much as their size. The latent physical conditions not only of perception, but of feeling and thought,—the conditions of the nervous system essential to feeling and thought,—are probably innumerable. But no one will say that unobserved, *i.e.*, latent physical conditions of feelings and thoughts, are feelings and thoughts, or we should be using language quite without that definiteness and appropriateness which are the main uses of language. The case I am now discussing is not one of latent perception, but of a latent physical condition of future perception. It constitutes no proof that you perceive without perception, though it may constitute a proof, to use Sir William Hamilton's language, that "what we are conscious of is constructed out of what we are not conscious of,"—a very different thing, though even that seems to me a little inaccurately stated, for it would be better to say, that what we are conscious of is constructed out of what we could not be conscious of without the concurrence of other conditions. Surely we are conscious of the whole *minimum visibile*;—though not of each half, yet of both halves. In the doctrine, then, of latent physical conditions of perception, I see no justification for the phrase, latent perception. There is either perception or no perception. What is unperceived is not perceived, though it may be

quite essential to something that is to be perceived. That something may be happening in my brain, to my optic nerve for example, even when only half the *minimum visibile* is opposite to my eye, and that this something is quite essential to what happens as soon as the whole is there, I am willing to admit. But the half does not cause a latent perception,—though it is a latent physical condition of perception.

(2.) Dr. Carpenter, in his learned and instructive book on “Mental Physiology,” speaks of the phenomena of recollection as proving a kind of activity of the brain or mind,—he guards himself against using the term ‘thought’ of anything of which we are not conscious, but evidently does not think the distinction much more than a question of words,—which is often even stimulated by our giving up the effort to recollect, and passing to other subjects. And he gives us many striking instances of phenomena of which we have all, probably, seen less striking instances, in which the effort to recollect being futile, the missing memory flashes back upon us soon after we have relinquished the search. Farther, he expresses his belief that when phenomenon A is connected with C, but only, *as far as our consciousness is concerned*, through B, A frequently suggests C directly, without any even momentary flash of B upon the mind, the substitute for B being the cerebral or nervous state formerly connected with B, though not, in this instance, serving to bring B back into consciousness. I have no doubt at all that that is often a perfectly true account of the missing links in a chain of memory. But who ever doubted that the restoration of a former state of consciousness may be accomplished by any avenue whatever which leads back to it? and that if phenomenon A be a flash of light causing a particular nerve to vibrate, which nerve, again, is in the same sheath with two others, one closely connected with phenomenon B, and the other with phenomenon C, it might well happen that the second nerve might set the third in motion, without itself suggesting phenomenon B, before the attention had been rivetted by phenomenon C? The sight of a certain species of chocolate always suggests to me the jaundice, but I have no doubt that originally the missing link between these two conceptions was a particular sensation in the mouth or stomach, which, as far as I know, I have never consciously recalled, but which the chocolate caused at a time when an attack of jaundice was coming on. It is quite possible that some very faint recur-

rence of that sensation—so faint as never to challenge conscious attention—was the missing link between the two impressions in my mind. But here, again, I see nothing like latent or unthought thought, but only unthought physical conditions of thought. I have no doubt Dr. Carpenter is right in saying that to leave off attempting to recollect and to rely on the trains of suggestion set going in the first effort, after the (probably misleading) control of the will has been withdrawn, is generally the best chance we have for recovering a missing impression. But Miss Cobbe's and Mr. Wendell Holmes's suggestion, to which Dr. Carpenter appears to lend a certain amount of credence, that this recovery is due to some mysterious so-to-say subterranean intelligence working beneath our consciousness, as a Secretary hunts up a quotation for his superior, seems to me thoroughly unscientific. Any man who observes his own mind, will notice that if he stirs up thoroughly any subject whatever by ransacking its intellectual neighbourhood, so to speak, he will for days afterwards have all sorts of cross-associations with it flashing up at times in his mind,—and this whether he is in search of a missing impression or not. When you take down an old shelf of College books, you have, for days after, waifs and strays of College memories haunting your mind, some of them coming by direct, some by quite inscrutably indirect and subtle paths of association. Of course it is not remarkable that when one of these impressions happens to be missing, it will come back to you on some such line of association. But all that this seems to me to signify, is that memory depends on a number of latent and involuntary physical conditions, as well as a number of conscious and involuntary mental conditions, and that when you have exhausted the latter unsuccessfully, you had better fall back on the chance of help from the former. Man being made up of body and mind, there is nothing astonishing in the fact that there are bodily links, of which he may often be unconscious, between states of mind not otherwise associated. But this is not latent or unthought *thought*, it is a latent or unthought physical condition of suggestion. And that such conditions exist, I think we shall all admit. It does not the least follow from the admission that the conditions of memory are rooted in involuntary physical as well as mental laws, that the process of inference or judgment, of analysis or synthesis, or even of recollection itself, could be unconsciously performed. Yet,

as I shall show, the theory is now held that you may recollect without recollecting, *i.e.*, recollect elaborately with your muscles what has not yet emerged into recognition by your mind.

Again, (3) there are such things as automatic habits, which, once formed, require exceedingly little thought or attention, so that you may read aloud, or play on the piano, or walk through a crowded street, absorbed all the time in a train of intense thought or feeling, as widely removed as the Poles asunder from your immediate action. Such habits seem to be in some sense mental analogies of the first law of motion,—seem to show, that is, that even a law of change, once established in our minds, tends to persevere, in the absence of any resisting force. But are these cases of unconscious thought, of latent intellectual effort? I think not. They show with how little conscious effort you can do that which it took you a great conscious effort to begin to do, but not that an under-mind is working without your knowing it, while the upper-mind works at something else. If an under-mind were working at reading aloud, for instance, while the upper-mind were dwelling on a totally different train of ideas, then we should expect that the drift of what you had been reading could be recovered by you in some future mental state. Now it is true, I think, that this sort of unconscious reading does sometimes impress the *sound* on your memory; the ear will retain what the ear hears, and sometimes a sentence comes afterwards back on you *verbally*, and then for the first time, if you take in the words, you apprehend what it means, and just as freshly as if you were then hearing it for the first time; but what one has read thus automatically is never apprehended by the mind, and consequently never recollected, unless it be indirectly by the lingering of the sounds in the memory, which sounds one translates into their import at some future time. It seems to me that these automatic habits imply no more than this,—that what takes but little effort and attention may be done simultaneously with what takes much. But this is no case of 'latent thought.' It is a case of giving exceedingly little thought to a thing which now requires little, and a great deal to another thing which requires much; the power of recalling afterwards, being generally proportional to the amount of attention given. That you cannot do even these semi-automatic acts without some attention is shown by the fact that if in such automatic reading you get to a new and difficult word, you have to break your chain of thought to read

it, or else you break down,—and that if in your walk in a crowded street you get to a barricade, you must recall your mind to circumvent it. These seem to me phenomena not of latent thought, but of a minimum of thought. Dr. Carpenter thinks that the power some remarkable calculators have of adding up a long column of figures almost at a glance, shows that the brain operates without the consciousness, inasmuch as there is not time to receive a distinct conscious impression of every figure. But that view appears to me to involve a great deal too much. If any one figure were changed, unquestionably the result would be differently given, if it were rightly given. Either, then, the mind takes account of every figure, though so rapidly as not to be able to recall it afterwards, or it does not take account of any, and the whole operation is unconscious,—which seems to me a much wilder supposition than the former. To say that a man *cerebrates* a sum more quickly than he could calculate it, seems to me like saying that an intellectual habit which, by practice and faculty, has become astonishingly easy and sure, has ceased to be intellectual by dint of its economy of intellect. But surely to require less effort and attention to a given achievement is not less, but more of a triumph of intellect than to require more. What is called 'cerebration' seems to me a mental operation marked by great economy of intellect and effort. But why is this more a case of 'cerebration' than the same operation slowly and painfully carried through all its stages? Where is the evidence that the less the amount of intellectual effort, the greater is the amount of brain activity? As far as I can see, the 'cerebrational' assumption assumes that there can be no real economy of brain-effort at all, that as soon as we have less mental trouble over an operation, there must be some compensation for the saving, in the shape of a great relegation of activity to the brain-processes of which we are not conscious. I suspect just the reverse,—that the greatest amount of 'cerebration' goes with the greatest amount of conscious attention and effort, and the least 'cerebration' with the least. Dr. Carpenter holds apparently (see p. 475 of the work referred to) that semi-automatic habits are due to the mechanism of a different set of nerves from those which are called into play when we first painfully learn our lesson:—

"Now, since," he says, "in those cases in which man *acquires* powers that are *original* or *intuitive* in the lower animals, there is the strongest reason for believing that a mechanism forms itself in *him* which is

equivalent to that congenitally possessed by *them*, we seem fully justified in the belief that in those more special forms of activity which are the result of prolonged 'training,' the Sensorimotor apparatus *grows-to* the mode in which it is habitually exercised, so as to become fit for the immediate execution of the mandate it receives (§ 194): it being often found to act not only without intelligent direction, but without any consciousness of exertion, in immediate response to some particular kind of stimulus,—just as an Automaton that executes one motion when a certain spring is touched, will execute a very different one when set going in some other way."

But admit that animal movements follow each other without any consciousness when a certain spring in the nervous system has been once touched, and that those animal movements are as well adapted as a locomotive with steam on to move a train, for the purpose which you had in view in starting them,—yet that does not prove in the least that the results of thought can be obtained without thought, except in the sense in which it is always true of a mechanism properly prepared,—the said locomotive, for instance,—that after you have ceased to think, it will, when properly set in motion by human purpose, do what it had been adapted to do. But *have* we a logical or calculating machine, like Professor Jevons's and the late Mr. Babbage's, in our brains, which will, when properly manipulated, draw inferences, and calculate arithmetical problems, without intelligence? I see no sign of it at all. I have no means of drawing an inference without understanding the premisses; I have no means of telling what the sin. 30° is without knowing what a sine means, and what 30° mean. That machines may be devised to imitate to some extent the methods of human thought, does not in the least prove that we possess such machines in our own brains in addition to the original intelligence which suggested them. And I don't think we do. My quarrel is with the notion that you can get all the results of calculation out of your brain without discriminating 2 from 5; that you can have all the fruits of recollection while your memory is a blank; that you can infer without a conscious act of attention; that you can judge without a trace of any weighing of the pros and cons. And this is what a part of Dr. Carpenter's doctrine seems to me to imply.

For (4) Dr. Carpenter gives as a tenable explanation of certain supposed facts adduced by spiritualists, that a person present at a séance, having some time ago known the facts reported by the move-

ments of the table, but having quite forgotten them, yet involuntarily and unconsciously caused the table to move so as to assert them, they being at the moment, in this person's own belief, not only false, but completely imaginary :—

"Another instance, supplied by Mr. Dibdin (*op. cit.*), affords yet more remarkable evidence to the same effect; especially as being related by a firm believer in the 'diabolical' origin of Table-talking :—A gentleman, who was at the time a believer in the 'spiritual' agency of his table, assured Mr. Dibdin that he had raised a *good* spirit instead of *evil* ones—that, namely, of Edward Young, the poet. The 'spirit' having been desired to prove his identity by c'ting a line of his poetry, the table spelled out, 'Man was not made to question, but adore.' 'Is that in your "Night Thoughts"?' was then asked. 'No.' 'Where is it, then?' The reply was 'J o b.' Not being familiar with Young's Poems, the questioner did not know what this meant; but the next day he bought a copy of them; and at the end of the 'Night Thoughts' he found a paraphrase of the Book of Job, the last line of which is, 'Man was not made to question, but adore.' Of course he was very much astonished; but not long afterwards he came to Mr. Dibdin, and assured him that he had satisfied himself that the whole thing was a delusion,—numerous answers he had obtained being obviously the results of an influence unconsciously exerted on the table by those who had their hands upon it; and when asked by Mr. Dibdin how he accounted for the dictation of the line by the spirit of Young, he very honestly confessed, 'Well, the fact is, I must tell you, that I had the book in my house all the time, although I bought another copy; and *I found that I had read it before.* My opinion is that it was a *latent idea*, and that the table brought it out.'"

Now, I don't know in the least if the fact here reported was accurately reported. I have never myself seen any trustworthy experiment of this kind. But assuming its accuracy, as Dr. Carpenter does, I confess his explanation seems to me a great deal less credible than the so-called spiritualist explanation. It is, at least, *possible* that invisible intelligences may correct our blunders of memory. But to ask me to believe that one and the same intelligence can have, at one and the same moment, nervous arrangements for recalling accurately by the mediation of his muscles, *yet without any act of memory*, how a thing really happened, while he is making, by an act of recollection, an erroneous statement on the same subject through his consciousness and his voice, is, I think, to ask me to believe a much more improbable explanation in

order to avoid a less improbable one. And this is why I think the former improbability the less. If the fact were as related, we should clearly have evidence that the table's movements were due to some agency which understood the structure of language and its meaning. Now if that agency were that of the person who, after having once read Young's 'Job,' had forgotten completely both the existence of the book and the line in question, it would follow that at the same moment of time, within the limits of the same organisation, there existed two distinct agencies, both able to use language as a means of conveying rational meaning, one of them, however,—the one apparently in command of the speech and the brain,—without any memory of Dr. Young's 'Job,' and of the line in question in it, and the other of them,—which must have had a certain control over the spinal chord and the system of reflex action,—retaining that memory perfectly. Now I submit that while we have ample experience of *successive* phenomena of this kind within the limits of the same individual's experience, we have not only no experience whatever of simultaneous phenomena of the kind, but that, if we had, our ideas of moral responsibility would be extraordinarily confused. Which of these two intellectual agencies is to be identified with the person of the individual who was the source of both? The one which remembered correctly and telegraphed the accurate memory through the table, or the one with a defective memory which asserted its inaccurate memory by the voice? If my spinal chord holds one view, and my cerebrum another, as to the events of my past life, the one might turn Queen's evidence against the other; but how one of them could be hanged, while the other received a free pardon, would be an embarrassing problem. Speaking seriously, it seems to me that this doctrine of a 'latent' memory capable of articulate telegraphy, in direct contradiction to the conscious memory,—which denies simultaneously all knowledge of the matter so telegraphed,—passes infinitely beyond any hypothesis warranted by the class of facts I have hitherto dealt with, and could hardly be true without our constantly coming across ample evidence of its truth. That men forget a thing one moment and remember it the next, is certain; but while they forget, they forget, and have, as far as we know, no oracle to consult in that part of their system to which the reflex actions are due, by the help of which the forgotten facts can be recalled. If some part

of my body can not only recover its hold of a story I have forgotten, but *put it into human speech*, while I continue quite sincerely to disown it, it seems to me perfectly clear that there are two intellectual agents under cover of my organisation, and not one. But that is far more surprising than the spiritualist hypothesis itself. It is conceivable at least, that an invisible intelligence might use my hands to transmit ideas of which I am not the originator, just as any one strong enough to do so may guide my hand when I am blindfolded, so as to write a letter, of the contents of which I am ignorant. But it is hardly conceivable that I myself can do so, without sharing the knowledge communicated by the means in question. If that could be, then "latent thought" must mean thought which can be communicated and made intelligible to others without anyone to think it; for I don't think it, I deny thinking it; and the automatic apparatus which communicates it does not *think* it, for, by the hypothesis, it is not attended by consciousness at all, and on appeal being made to my consciousness, it is promptly disowned. Now, what is there in the facts which are universally admitted as to the latent physical conditions of perception and memory, and as to the half automatic character of habitual actions, to justify so astounding a challenge to all experience as this? It is quite conceivable, of course, that in some abnormal sleep, under the influence of a different set of physical or mental suggestions, I might recall and correctly repeat a line I had completely forgotten, and refer it to its right author, while in my waking state I fail to recall it. But if I am at the very same moment to be *both* in an abnormal trance *and* awake, with a distinct mechanism for communicating my dreams and my recollections, an inconsistent set of statements to communicate, and only one consciousness,—which lends its imprimatur to the wrong set of the two, even while I am carefully comparing them,—then I conceive that no beam of light doubly refracted by Iceland spar could be in a worse condition for tracing its history than I.

(5) I do not intend in this paper even to attempt to explain the curious facts on which the doctrine of 'unconscious cerebration' is chiefly rested,—for a very good reason, because I can't. But a good many of them surely indicate a very different explanation,—namely, discontinuous states of active thought, in which both brain and consciousness must have in every sense fully co-operated, but the link between which has for some reason, connected more with

physical than mental causes, been temporarily lost. Dr. Carpenter has collected in his very valuable book many most curious illustrations of the way in which a great shock to the nervous system will utterly annihilate memory for a time, so that the sufferer has to begin to learn even the rudiments of knowledge anew, and often makes great progress, when another physical change in his or her brain restores all the former knowledge, but obliterates completely the memory of the painfully reacquired knowledge of the intermediate period. No one suggests even that the intellectual processes of the intermediate period were not consciously performed, though they are separated by a film of complete oblivion from the normal consciousness. Thus Dr. Carpenter himself gives us some very curious illustrations of the successful solution during sleep of problems unsuccessfully attempted during waking. Take this, for example, among many of the same kind :—

"The first case is given by Dr. Abercrombie, on the authority of the family of a distinguished Scottish lawyer of the last age :— 'This eminent person had been consulted respecting a case of great importance and much difficulty ; and he had been studying it with intense anxiety and attention. After several days had been occupied in this manner, he was observed by his wife to rise from his bed in the night, and go to a writing-desk which stood in the bedroom. He then sat down, and wrote a long paper which he carefully put by in his desk, and returned to bed. The following morning he told his wife that he had had a most interesting dream ;—that he had dreamt of delivering a clear and luminous opinion respecting a case which had exceedingly perplexed him ; and that he would give anything to recover the train of thought which had passed before him in his dream. She then directed him to the writing-desk, where he found the opinion clearly and fully written out ; and this was afterwards found to be perfectly correct.' (*Intellectual Powers*, 5th Edit., p. 306.)"

It cannot very reasonably be asserted that thoughts which were so completely in possession of this person's mind, as to have partially survived sleep, were not real and vivid exercises of the thinking power. Clearly here is a case of genuine and concentrated thought almost completely forgotten, in consequence of the cessation of the physical state in which the train of ideas was elaborated. In various other instances given by Dr. Carpenter the oblivion is more complete, but there is not less evidence of real *thought* (as distinguished from the mere train of suggestions which can alone be

plausibly referred to 'cerebration'). If now in these cases it is quite certain that, be the cerebral process what you please, there was as real and as conscious thought as any thinking man can ever boast of, and yet that very often the forgetfulness was nearly or quite complete, is it not fair to conclude that in a great many of the cases on which Dr. Carpenter appears to insist so much,—those in which, after a long apparent mental rest, we return to a subject to find it taking quite new and very much clearer shape in our minds,—the progress is probably due not to 'unconscious cerebration,' but to forgotten intervals of conscious intellectual work? For my own part, I am persuaded that this very often is the case. The side-glances one gives to a subject which is not exactly *before* the mind, but which is resting in it in comparative abeyance, are, I am sure, though seldom remembered, extremely fruitful. It is these which tell you where you have been pressing a favourite crotchet too hard, which set the balance of the judgment right, and which open up new and important tracks of consideration that had been well-nigh neglected under the pressure of too much eagerness. When one remembers that such side-glances may, for many men, take place in sleep no less than in waking hours, and would, without being individually recalled, alter completely the aspect in which a subject presents itself, I confess I see in facts of this kind no excuse for the startling hypothesis that you ever attain to a distinct conclusion without any conscious consideration of the conditions, that you ever 'cerebrate' a sum without mathematical process, or that you ever attest articulately a fact which at that very moment you have quite forgotten.

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to "Mr. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S.W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery *vis à voce*.*

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, MAY 12, 1874.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

*Father Dalgairns*

## THE PERSONALITY OF GOD.

THE position of Agnostics as represented by Mr. H. Spencer is a very peculiar one. A great deal, it appears, is known about the Unknowable. First, it is known that it exists. Secondly, that it is something mysterious and venerable, and accordingly it is printed in capital letters, as Mr. Huxley conjectures, to inspire fear, "like grenadiers' caps." Thirdly, it is known that it is so far beyond our faculties, as to render it hopeless even to form a conjecture what it is like. Yet, fourthly, it is known to be so far unlike what we do know, as to be in direct contradiction to a portion of our knowledge. It is especially supposed to be in contradiction to the idea of human personality. That this is the case is not only the doctrine of Mr. Spencer, but also of defenders of Christianity such as Dr. Mansel, the late Dean of St. Paul's. "There is a contradiction," he says, "in conceiving the Absolute as personal." Such also is Mr. Herbert's Spencer's conclusion. His position seems to be as follows:—"The consciousness," he says, "of an Immutable Power manifested to us through all Phenomena has been growing ever clearer, and must eventually be freed from its imperfections. The certainty that, on the one hand, such a Power exists, while, on the other hand, its nature transcends intuition, and is beyond imagination, is the certainty towards which intelligence has from the first been progressing." ("First Principles," p. 42.) Further on, he uses this Immutable Power as synonymous with the Ultimate Cause and the Absolute. He then allows that Dr. Mansel is right so far as he thinks there is a contradiction between the notion of the Absolute and Personality, or Intelligence and Will. (p. 109.) It is this proposition which I intend to oppose in this paper. I accept the view that an Immutable Power, the Absolute, exists, and I maintain that there is no reason that it should not be a Personal Being.

I begin by allowing that this Personality of the Absolute is a truth which has only gradually entered into the scientific idea of God. A broad distinction should be made between the popular and

[NO. XLIV.]

the scientific idea ; they proceeded in inverse ratio. Of course, in Polytheism there is no want, but an overplus of Personality ; and in what I take leave to call the Truth, I Am that I Am, there is no lack of the same element. It was different, however, with Hellenic thought. The first difficulty was to find the Absolute itself, that is, to heave the Being of God entirely out of the Universe of things, and to disentangle it from matter. Towards this all thinkers had been dimly struggling, but it does not seem as if the conception of a veritable Absolute, that is, of a being without any necessary relation to any other being, had entered into older thought, till Aristotle invented what was its equivalent, *Actus Purus*, pure actuality, as an expression for God. We must place ourselves in the very heart of Hellenic thought before we can enter into the expression. What first struck the Greeks was that perpetual change was a law of the Universe. That Thought was the only permanent thing had long been perceived, but it was a bold conception which led Aristotle to see in Thought the actual cause of all change, and yet to preserve it from being swamped and swallowed up in change. This he did by a complete separation of Potentiality (*δυναμικὸς*) from actual existence. He laid down the principle that all motion must come from a mover external to the moved. By movement he meant all variation of any kind, all succession, all changes, mental and material. Nothing can change itself by itself ; even the things which are partly potential and partly in act, and therefore seem to change themselves by their own solitary power, require something else to determine that which is in act to effect a change, else why should it not have moved before. This is plainly but a variety of the modern expression that that which begins to be must have a cause, that it must proceed from something previously existing. In Aristotle's view, that which is potential is non-existent, in as far as it is potential, and therefore nothing actual could ever have come into being, unless there had existed a wholly actual or Absolute Being, a Being who is all act. From this plainly results His Unity and Immutability, for there can be but one Absolute, and He is whatever He is all at once. At first sight, a more complete contrast to modern opinions can hardly be imagined. What we call potential is only the actual in disguise. It is energy stored up. Yet Aristotle's theory was one of development. According to him, the ordinary forces of Nature are competent to produce all forces, even to the souls of animals. Even generation is for him a development ;

and creative power steps in only where the animal soul is replaced by the thinking spirit of man. Matter was in his view eternal; even the universe had no beginning. In one sense, he would not deny that there could be an infinite series of changes. But what he did assert with all his might was that an eternal set of changes requires an eternal mover, so that side by side, so to speak, with this endless change, this false Infinite, there must have been a true Infinite and Absolute, in whom was no change, an Eternal Act without beginning, giving shape and form to all this formless chaos.

What concerns us most, however, is the question whether, according to Aristotle, this Absolute was a Person? I do not think this can be proved. It is true indeed that sometimes, by what I should call a happy inconsistency, the popular God intrudes into the scientific, and Aristotle attributes a careful Providence to his Absolute Being, but this is not a part of his philosophical demonstration. What, after all, is this pure Act, but Thought? How can we conceive the self-contained and the Absolute except as very Thought? Thus the pure energy, the active power of Aristotle is a Being engaged in θεωρία, everlasting self-contemplation. It is the assertion of the identity of Being and Thought where the subject and the object are the same. If he is the prime mover, and communicates movement to the highest heavens, it is not by material impulse, but because he is the το ἐραυμενον, the object of all desire. But can God Himself love? Is not emotion inconsistent with this immovable Mover of all things? Himself the End of all things, can anything else be an end to Him? I do not think that Aristotle ever asked himself the question. He had already passed over more bottomless abysses than this. He had never asked himself how his ultimate matter (*materia prima*) could have any existence at all, when it had no attributes whatsoever; how, though nothing could be predicted of it whatsoever, yet it was not nothing. He had so little risen above the level of the symbolical as to imagine that the *form* was "educed out of the potentiality of the matter," though that formless matter had no energy whatever. All this presented to him no difficulty; it was not wonderful therefore that the question seems never to have struck him whether this Absolute could have a will, and so be a Personal Being. To us this seems strange, but it is not more strange than the fact that he does not seem to have clearly caught the idea of a Personal Being at all. Two things have always appeared to me singular in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. I doubt

whether he ever had a clear idea of the freedom of the Will. Freedom to a Greek would have a purely political, not a moral meaning. The individual, according to Aristotle, has *πραίρεσις*, an intellectual power of choosing an end, yet from the marvellous analysis of habit in his second book I should conjecture that he looked upon man as more or less a slave to the laws of habit, or rather that he never inquired perfectly into the ultimate springs of choice. Secondly, in all his system of morals God is never named, except incidentally. The notion that the Absolute could have anything whatsoever to do with human actions apparently never entered into his head.

Such was the point of development that was reached by Aristotle, and I have no hesitation in allowing that, wonderful as was the step science had gained in establishing the existence of the Absolute, another step was required before it completely overcame its Pantheistic stage. God had been connected with the universe by the idea of Cause, and rescued out of and raised above it by being described as Absolute Reason. Yet I do not claim as yet for this Absolute Thought any exercise of Will. The laws of thought are necessary, and this thinking Being, lost in the contemplation of Himself, runs the risk of becoming an indifferent spectator of the state of the world, which has thus slipped into existence from his conscious intellect. This I have no difficulty in allowing; what I deny is the assertion of those who would bar all further progress, by declaring any addition of Will to thought to be a contradiction in terms. Mr. Spencer has even asserted, as an historical fact, that all progress in the scientific idea of the Absolute has lain in the direction of destroying what he calls its anthropomorphic elements, and ridding it of personality. He has even ventured on prophecy, and proclaims the fated and inevitable approach of a millennium in which the Absolute will have become the Unknowable. I, however, deny the fact, and disbelieve in the iron fatalism of thought. He will not, of course, accept the Christian centuries as an authority, yet he cannot deny the fact that the mediæval Aristotelians who corrected the great Hellenic thinker, not by rejecting his Absolute, but by adding on to the active forces the freedom of the Will, form a considerable gap in the continuity of what he calls a fatal progress. The God, even the scientific God of the Christian, is more anthropomorphous than the God of Aristotle. Mr. Spencer probably passes over with contempt the Christian system, as a retrogression of the great, irresistible wave of science.

Yet he cannot deny that what he calls anthropomorphic conceptions of God have threatened to flow back upon us from unexpected quarters, for the Absolute Ego of Fichte contains more anthropomorphic element than the Aristotelian God, even though it falls far short of the Christian. I do not claim for the German school the merit of shaking themselves free of Pantheism, yet, at all events, the very notion of the Absolute Ego shows that the tide of science refuses to flow in the narrow channels dug for it by the partisans of the Unknowable. Progress does not consist in the negation of what we have gained, but in proceeding to higher truths.

I now go on to show what I have affirmed, that there is nothing in the notion of an Absolute Being inconsistent with the idea of Cause; and here I cannot do better than quote the words of Mr. Mill, who treats this very question in his answer to Dean Mansel. He first cites from that writer an important definition, on which is founded the supposed inconsistency:—"By the Absolute is meant that which exists in and by itself, having no necessary relation to any other Being.' These latter words," proceeds Mr. Mill, "admit of two constructions. The words in their natural sense only mean capable of existing out of relation to anything else. The argument requires that they should mean incapable of existing in relation with anything else. Dr. Mansel cannot intend the latter. He cannot mean that the Absolute is incapable of entering into relation with any other being, for he would not affirm this of God. This, however, is the meaning necessary to support his case. For what is his first argument? That God cannot be known by us as Cause, as Absolute, and as Infinite, because these attributes are, to our conception, incompatible with one another. And why incompatible? Because a 'Cause cannot, as such, be absolute; the Absolute, as such, cannot be a Cause. The cause, as such, exists only in relation to its effect; the cause is a cause of the effect, the effect is an effect of the cause. On the other hand, the conception of the Absolute involves a possible existence out of all relation.' But in what manner is a possible existence out of all relation incompatible with the notion of a Cause. Have not all causes a possible existence apart from their effects? Would the sun (for example) not exist, if there were no earth or planets for it to illuminate?" I have inserted this quotation, notwithstanding its length, because if any man on earth was a judge of ideas logically inconsistent with each other,

it was Mr. Mill, and he can see no incompatibility between the conception of the Absolute Being and that of Cause. In reality, what is denied of the Absolute Being is not relation altogether, but only necessary relation, and what is incompatible with this Being is any compulsion, either within or without Him constraining Him to become a Cause. What our adversaries have proved is not the inconsistency of Absolute and Cause, but the compatibility of Absolute and Free-will. I do not mean to stretch this argument too far. It does not prove that the Absolute being is a Cause; this cannot be proved by any argument derived from the necessity of things, though it can be inferred in many ways; but it does demolish the argument which attempts to show it to be impossible for the Absolute to be the Cause of anything, for it leaves it open to Him to be a Personal Cause, that is, to create by an act of volition. What is inconsistent with the Idea of the Absolute is any being by His side which is not utterly dependent upon Him. Strange that men should ever have thought perfect independence inconsistent with the idea of the Absolute. The very contrary is true; a part of the idea is absolute freedom. Eternal, self-determining activity, pure act, without an atom of potentiality, energy not stored up, but ever actual, such is the conception at once of the Absolute and of Freedom.

A parallel argument may be drawn from what has been used as a plea for Pantheism. It has been argued that the Attribute of Infinity is inconsistent with any other real existence by the side of the Infinite. This is one of the many instances in which the materialism of Pantheism betrays itself. Existence is here treated in the same way as food by the advocates of natural selection, as though there was a quantity of it all so swallowed up by the Infinite that outside of Him there could be no more. What is proved is that no being can be outside of or independent of the Infinite, that He is immanent in all things, protecting them by His existence, calling them into being, and keeping them in His hand. But this is not Pantheism, it was not a Pantheist who said that "in Him we live and move and have our being." Again, it has been urged against human freedom that it is incompatible with the Absolute and Infinite God. It is incompatible, no doubt, with the existence of another independent and Absolute source of action, but who ever supposed human personality to be free in the sense of independent of God? This would be to ignore its whole nature. It would plainly be inconsistent with

the idea of the Infinite that a being should exist beside God without any bounds, wholly free, but such is not the liberty which we claim for the will of man.

It will be necessary for me to dwell upon this, because I think that the confusion between an absolute and a relative freedom has been productive of important consequences in this controversy. On the one hand, Fichte has confounded together the Absolute and the relative Ego, on the other, the defenders of Human Free-will have been attacked as though they held that each act of will was an act of creation and a causeless commencement. I must confess that Human Free-will has at times been defended in a way which lent a pretext to this objection. It has been argued sometimes that motives are not causes, sometimes that men can act without any motive at all. The fact is that the freedom of the human will consists, not in acting independently of motives, but in choosing one of two or more motives. How this is an act of creation or an instance of a causeless act I cannot conceive. If the volition produced an act without any motive at all, this would be an instance of a commencement without cause, but even then it would not be an act of creation. No doubt it is a bringing into being an entity which a moment before did not exist; but this is not creation, nor is it peculiar to the will. All living things, and above all, spiritual things, have the power of self-determination. There is spontaneity about all living organisms, yet no one would argue that their actions are uncaused. Again, there is a true spontaneity about the intellect; it produces its own thought, yet no one could call this an instance of creative power. A thinker who makes a discovery in experimental science, or a metaphysician who elaborates a system, brings into being an idea which a moment before was non-existent, yet no one calls him a creator because he raised it out of the depths of his consciousness. If an act of volition, then, is causeless, it cannot be because it is self-determining, but because it is free. I think that if we contrast the spontaneity of nature with the liberty of the will, we shall be able to detect the meaning and the proof of the freedom of the will. Even in natural objects I believe that there are active powers; their capacities for being acted upon are not simply passive, else the effect would be a mere repetition of the cause. Latent powers are evoked by the forces of nature which come into being by contact with the cause. Indeed, there is more, at least phenomenally, in the effect than in

the cause, just as the flash of the lightning and the roar of the thunder are other than the clouds which produced them. Why, then, do we not ascribe freedom or consciousness to the electricity of the atmosphere? The reason is because the phenomena are so tied to the chariot-wheels of the substance, that they cannot but follow, and no choice is left. The whole force of the substance goes into the phenomena, because it has no power of reflection, and therefore no reserve force to fall back upon. In other words, natural force has no self-consciousness even when it has spontaneity. It is otherwise with man; he not only has a habit, but he knows that he has it. Spirit, therefore, instead of exhausting itself in the production of effects, can turn back upon itself, pause to consult itself, and judge the motives which solicit it. I hold that will is nothing but thought, with a reference to outward action superadded. Free-will, then, is a consequence of free thought. It is true that there is no volition in mathematics, but there is free-will in morals, for ethical syllogisms are not in necessary matter. There is always something to be said on the other side in favour of vice and against virtue, from the point of view of pleasure. On the other hand, as long as the judgment subsists, with all its categories, the mind can negate what the lower desire affirms. Will is free because thought is free, that is, thought can have before it opposite motives on the same subject-matter, neither of which has constraining reasons for it, therefore the force of the spirit can give the casting-vote. It can throw itself into the scale, and cause the motive of submission to the universal reason to outweigh the particular, and it is in this, Hegel tells us, right-doing consists. The question for us to decide now is, What is this universal reason? I do not believe that it is the State, nor that conscience of the community which Hegel calls *Sittlichkeit*. I hold this universal reason to be a personal God.

While, however, I claim for the intellect a freedom which is real, I contend that this freedom is not absolute. The Ego knows itself to be a being with a cause, because it had a beginning; it is conscious of dependence on the Absolute, of whom its whole being is a free gift, from whom its own freedom is rather a concession than a possession. For we must remember that our free actions are the exception. In the immense majority of our actions we belong to the kingdom of nature. Slaves of the laws of generation in our birth, we are slaves of corruption in our death. Of our

vital actions one class alone are free. I mean such as involve morality. Even here, however, simultaneously with our new-born feeling of freedom, there comes on us as a part of it a feeling of another slavery in the shape of obligation and duty. There is, therefore, a very real distinction between the Freedom of the Absolute and our relative freedom. The argument, then, drawn from the Absolute and the Infinite against human freedom proves indeed that we should not be free unless He willed it. In other words, it proves His freedom, since we should not be free unless by a distinct act of His unfettered Will.

We have here reached the very heart of the question on which we are engaged. If once it were made out that personality, that is, intellect combined with a will, is not incompatible with Absolute Being, I believe that mankind would be with me in attributing the remarkable phenomena of man's moral being to a personal God. I must confess that I have never seen the imperative obligation of the moral law satisfactorily accounted for except on this view. For this I now proceed to offer proof. I do not claim for the arguments which I am about to adduce that they amount to a strict demonstration. I prefer to put them into a hypothetical shape, and to affirm that granting that there be a moral law, granting that there are certain actions to which there is immutably and necessarily attached the notion of intrinsic badness and goodness, then it follows that they derive this quality from conformity or repugnance to the nature of a personal being. I bow before the supremacy of conscience, but I still ask myself what right has one part of my being to lord it over the rest. When I hear this voice within me, and I ask myself who spoke, if no better answer can be returned than I myself, even though it be my highest self, I am still dissatisfied with the enormous disproportion between the authoritativeness of the tone and the littleness of the speaker. Like the child in Scripture, when this voice calls to me out of the darkness, I feel inclined to exclaim, "Who art Thou, Lord?" Nor can I consider the moral law simply as supreme truth. The account of it is not even exhausted by saying what is true, that moral sense is a kind of intellectual intuition. That evil is something more than a violation of the feeling of harmony, something more than unreasonable action, is proved by the poignancy of the pain which the consciousness of evil-doing inflicts, a pain utterly different from that caused by a false note in music to the most

sensitive musician, or a paralogism in reasoning to the sternest of logicians. Nor can I agree with one whose opinion I respect exceedingly, that the whole account is "that every ethical decision is in truth a preference, an election of one act as higher than another." Good and bad are not related as high and low. Moral judgments are not all relative, and when I praise a good action, as such, I have in my mind, not "what might have been done," but what must never be done, and what is unlawful throughout all time and all space. With a member of this Society, who has written one of the most suggestive of books, from the thoroughness with which he probes questions to the bottom, though I seldom agree with his solution of them, I 'desiderate in moral treatises a dissertation on the *criterion* of actions,' by which I mean 'that feature which makes the act right,' not "that which makes us suppose it right, the *causa existendi* of good actions, not the *causa cognoscendi*, what Aristotle calls the "final cause" of good. Even if definitive morality were denied, if it were denied that actions in themselves are good or bad as distinguished from the actor, yet it would still be possible to ask what quality in the actor's word, thought, or deed relegated his act into the category of bad, what made the enormous difference between the side of the Devil and the side of God. It is my conviction that the common-sense of mankind would hold that "whenever reason ratifies to me the intrinsic turpitude of this or that act, it further ratifies the prohibition of that act by some supreme legislation." Common-sense, however, is not enough for science, and I now proceed to inquire how it can be made out scientifically that the phenomena of the moral law indicate an Absolute Intellect and a Personal Will. "There are two things," says Bentham, "which are very apt to be confounded, but which it imports us carefully to distinguish in the motive or cause, which by operating on the mind of an individual is productive of any act, and the ground or reason which animates a legislator in regarding that act with an eye of approbation." It is the ground of the goodness or badness of actions which I am here considering, and I observe that even those who believe that the term "moral" is a simple ultimate idea, incapable of analysis, still ask the question what is the ground or foundation of morality, just as Kant inquires "how synthetic *a priori* propositions," such as those concerned with morals, are possible.

I begin, then, by saying I do not think that any school of thought

denies that moral law, the prescribing or the prohibition of certain definite actions, is an intellectual act, or the act of a conscious intellect with a purpose in view. Difficulties have been raised as to the apparent instances of design in the rational universe. Some thinkers have held that organic nature shows traces of a formative power instinctively executing an unconscious design, as a bee executes its hexagonal cells without knowing that that figure is the least wasteful of material. In the case of the moral law, however, no such difficulty can be urged. Even to the necessarian the moral world is a realm of ends consciously chosen by an intelligent being. To a utilitarian the virtuous man is he who constantly acts with the notion in view of the happiness of the greatest number. As for the school of Kant, there is no inference necessary to make out that a moral being, whether a legislator or a subject, is *ipso facto* a rational being. "The Categorical (*i.e.*, absolute or unconditional) imperative is not one which commands mediately or by the representation of any ulterior end whitherward the action might point, but is one which by the bare representation of the act cogitates it as immediately incumbent, and makes it objectively necessary" (p. 170). Every word in this sentence implies a conscious intellect. Again, "The idea Freedom is the product of the Pure Reason" (p. 69), by which man "is raised into a cogitable, super-sensible world, and breaks the bonds of caprice and imagination." I do not fear, therefore, to assume that to be capable of morality, a being must be intelligent. If he be a legislator, he must be rational in order to enact the law; if he be a subject, he must apprehend it in order to come under its operation. A Kantian would add, he must be a legislator, and re-enact it within himself, to be its subject.

The moral law, then, is the act of an intellect. Whose intellect? Here, I fear, I must beg leave to differ from my German friends. According to Kant, it would seem that not only every moral being is intelligent, but every rational being is capable of being a standard of duty to every other. This famous Categorical imperative presents us with the idea of every intelligent being as universally legislative (p. 45). There is, however, an imperfection in the human conscience which disqualifies it at once from being the standard of morals for all possible beings, or from being the ultimate ground of the moral law. It labours under this great defect, that we are forced to consider it as practically infallible, when all the while we know that it

may be mistaken. Such a conscience can plainly possess only a relative value. One intellect, and one alone, can be the ground of morals; that is one which is necessarily all that it is,—in other words, the Absolute. Either, then, the moral law is groundless and indefensible, or its ground is the Absolute. Either the human conscience is an arrant impostor, a claimant on a monstrous scale, or it is a shadow of the Absolute.

I believe that this reasoning would be convincing for all of us, if it were not for a phantom which stands in our path to frighten us. I mean the Impersonal Reason. That the Absolute is Thought, I believe will not be denied. Science has never gone back from Aristotle's discovery that the Absolute is Thought. The only being which is self-contained, perfect in itself, and wanting no relation outside itself, in a word, the Absolute, is plainly Thought. The last word of German philosophy thus coincides with the last word of Greek. "We have then," says Hegel's English interpreter, "the Universe composed of Thought and its other, Thought meaning all the notions which we find implied in the structure of the world; for God is a Spirit and thinks, and the form of His thinking must be contained in his work. Nay, as God is a Spirit and thinks, His work can only be thought; as God is a Spirit and thinks, the form of His thinking can only be that which is. In rigorous accuracy only God is." I fear, then, but little contradiction when I say that the Absolute is Reason, and that the Moral Law is the Thought of the Absolute.

This is not denied, nay, it is affirmed by Hegel, but it is affirmed in a way which is useless to my purpose, for as I have already implied, to a Hegelian, Thought is impersonal, in other words, thought does not imply a thinker. I have too much intellectual respect for Hegel to pass this over in silence, though it would be absurd to affect to think it possible to refute him in the space at my command. As far, then, as my subject is concerned, I need only point out what I consider the fundamental mistake of the system. His arguments do not apply to the Absolute at all, but to the abstract idea of Being in general. Of this *Seyn* or Being, it is perfectly true to say that it is nothing. This has been sneered at as nonsense, but it is a mere fact that that which is perfectly undetermined is nothing in particular, and therefore nothing. Of it, nothing can be predicated as known; it is pure abstraction, it has no attributes. But this is not the

Absolute, for by the Absolute is designated that which has no necessary relations outside itself, for the very opposite reason, because it is perfect in itself, that is, it has, or rather is, the very plenitude of being. It is almost incredible that a man like Hegel should have fallen into so great a blunder. Did he not see that he was compelled to hypostatize Reason, whilst he insisted on its impersonality? With him the Notion and the Idea are spoken of as if they had an independent life, a movement, a self-evolution of their own, previous to having found a thinker to think them, for spirit comes later into the field. It must come at last, and so, to our astonishment, we learn that the Notion, the bare naked thought, "traverses a number of development-steps before it manifests itself as spirit." Thus thought, instead of being evoked by the spirit, on the contrary, evokes the spirit. How far we are here from the active forces of Aristotle! The Absolute becomes! The necessary Being progresses. And what a progress! The notion of Being *an Sich*, in itself, that is, in other words, thought without a thinker, is gradually transformed into Being *an und für Sich*, that is, it becomes personal!

I do not think, then, the view of an Impersonal Reason tenable. I shall not be quitting my subject, but, on the contrary, completing it, if I point out the source of this strange mistake. It was due to what I cannot but consider a very false principle, which arose through German philosophy, the separation between the intellect and the will. It had been begun in Kant. The possibility of truth being real to the Practical Reason, and unreal to the Pure Reason is an instance of what I mean. The being of man is very complicated, his actions involve thought, and his thoughts are actions. If I might venture to point out the original mistake of so great a thinker as Kant, I should say that he diverged from the truth, and took a fatally wrong turning, when he laid down that the Ego in a proposition such as "I think" does not indicate a reality, but is only the expression of the logical necessity for reducing our thoughts to unity. My belief is that it indicates a great reality, the truth that human thought is the active operation of a thinker. If for "I think" we substitute "I doubt," it seems to me that the free activity of the thinking spirit appears. Of course I do not mean that we have the power of doubting whatever we choose, for I have already stated that human freedom is limited or relative. There is such a thing as necessary truth; and short of this, oftentimes the intellect comes

down upon the will with such overwhelming evidence, that it is overpowered, and cannot but believe. It is easy to mistake the intellect, as Hegel did, for some all but physical outward force which compels assent. But in cases of legitimate doubt, the will announces its freedom, and its action becomes at once visible. It suspends the judgment, it throws its weight into the scale and closes with a side. At this moment I do not inquire whether it is right or wrong, I only state the fact. Again in proving a logical dilemma the intellect often takes lower ground than it might for the purpose of persuading, and this it does at the bidding of the will. It seems, then, that the Ego in propositions is not simply a logical or grammatical expression for the unity of thought, but implies personality. Kant answers himself at the expense of consistency in his *Metaphysic of Ethics*. He there lays down that all Intelligent Beings possess freedom. From this view it would directly follow that this Absolute Intellect is also an Absolute Will. To me I must confess the contrary is inconceivable. Intellect and Will are so intertwined, both subsisting in the consciousness that they are inseparable. We thirst for knowledge, and falsehood is intolerable to us, because we both see the truth and love the truth. This love for truth impels and guides the physical investigator in his experiments as well as the metaphysician. Again, it is inconceivable that a Being should see moral goodness perfectly, and not at the same time love it. A being who should look with a cold, purely intellectual gaze at moral evil, in whom vice created no indignation and virtue no delight, would be not the Absolute, but something very different. I believe, then, that intellect in the Absolute implies will as well as intellect, that is, personality.

I trust that I am now in a condition to answer two objections, in responding to which I hope to be able to throw light upon this great question. The first I will state in the form of a quotation from Bentham, cited by Mr. Hodgson:—"Bentham, I think it was, who recently remarked that if the Will of God was the criterion of right and wrong, we should still need a criterion of the Will of God." It appears from the context that the criterion here means the way in which we know right from wrong. I shall, however, take it in a sense in which I have before used it, as the formal cause of right, as that which constitutes right. Now on this I observe, if by this it were meant that the ultimate idea of wrong is that which is prohi-

bited by God, it is difficult to avoid reasoning in a circle. A man lives and enjoys life in peace. Suddenly there comes before him some object of desire to which he feels a strong attraction. Simultaneously there arises within his mind a feeling which bids him pause, and threatens him with a sharp pain called remorse if he yields. If, furthermore, he asks, Why should I not do this thing? the answer, Because it is prohibited by God, will hardly satisfy him, for, he may still ask, Why should what is prohibited by God be wrong? If it be said that God is our Creator, and therefore Supreme, this is hardly satisfactory. If our Creator were an Omnipotent demon, I hardly think we should be bound to obey him. To Creator you must add All-holy, before you can realise the necessary obligation of conforming your actions to His. The ultimate reason, then, is that He is Holy, and the question arises, Why is He necessarily Holy? Why may not our Creator be a Demiurge or an Ahriman? I answer, because our Creator is the Absolute, that is, a Being who cannot but be all that He is, whose acts are not alternations of activity and repose like ours, but identical with His essence, so that His action is everlasting repose. It follows from this that in Him Will and Intellect are not separate faculties from His essence, but are the Essence itself. They culminate in a higher unity, and are necessarily conformed to the highest reason,—that is, to the over-reason. I cannot help thinking that this is the ultimate notion of right, conformity to the nature of God. We are thus, says Dr. Mansel with a happy inconsistency, impelled by the consciousness of moral obligation, to assume the existence of a moral Deity, and to regard the absolute standard of right and wrong as constituted by the nature of that Deity.

Strange that the same author who has spoken so well of the identity of the moral law with the nature of the Deity should have gone on to say that human goodness is different, not only in degree, but in kind, from the goodness of God. If this were true, then human goodness would not give us an idea of God's goodness at all. He even argues that what in man would be demoniacal malevolence, might be quite consistent with benevolence in God. "We must remain content with the belief that we have that knowledge of God which is best adapted to our wants and training. How far that knowledge represents God as He is we know not, and we need not know" (p. 96). I must confess that I, for one, am not content with a

knowledge of God which is utter ignorance. Rather I know that my conception of Him is inadequate, but true. I know that I know Him not as he is, but because I do know in what respects I know Him not, my ignorance turns into transcendent knowledge, and my darkness into light. He gives me warning when He is unlike me by the failure of my faculties to apprehend Him, but this very unlikeness teaches me what He is not, so that the very negation turns into a positive perfection. "We cannot say that our conception of the Divine Nature resembles that Nature in its Absolute existence, for we know not what that absolute existence is." We know, however, thus much, that it differs from our own finite and conditioned being, therefore we know something about it. Because however inadequately we are enabled to say what that Divine Nature is not, we do know therefore in a measure what it is. Goodness is goodness even in God, only that being the goodness of an Absolute Being, it is not a separate quality from his substance, but one with it. It is essential goodness, not separable. It is not true, then, that as we have not the ability to affirm, we have not the ability to deny. Behind this sort of sanctified Unknowable we disdain to shelter ourselves. Rather because we have the ability to deny, therefore we have the ability to affirm. Thus much we know of the Absolute, that it is wanting in all the imperfections of the Relative. Because, then, human goodness is relative, we know that the goodness of God is essential and necessary. In the same way, because the human person implies a multitude of faculties over which the Personality reigns supreme, and because this involves weakness, therefore we deny multiplicity and affirm simplicity of the Divine. This multiplicity, however, is not essential to the idea of Personality. The true contradiction would be to assert Personality, and at the same time to deny Intellect and Will to God. There is no inconceivableness in the notion that Will and Intellect, which are two in the finite being of man, may be one in the Divine nature. This is a true *aufhebung*, or elevation, multiplicity reconciled into a higher unity; the false *aufhebung* is destruction. There are some contradictions which no amount of manipulation could reconcile, such are justice and cruelty, good and evil. Others are not contradictions, but only aspects of the same thing which look like contradictions because we do not adequately know the reality itself. A thing which is really one may look like two to us, yet to say that it is two is not false, because in that one thing there is a reality which makes it look

like two to us. Our knowledge is not an island of light surrounded by utter darkness, but rather a lucid mist, through which we see objects really, but imperfectly. In this way it is that God seems to us to be divided into Substance and Attribute, though in reality each attribute is the one substance. This apparent contradiction is, then, not confined to will and intellect, but it is true of all attributes. There is as much difference between the *aufhebung* of Hegel and this reconciliation of what seems to be different by identity in a higher oneness, as there is between "Friend, go up higher," and "Tolle, crucifige."

I believe that most arguments against God's Personality arise from a confusion between human personality and personality in general, as those brought against human free-will arise from forgetting that it never pretends to be absolute. In corroboration of this, I will conclude with an objection and a reply from German authors. "Personality," says Strauss, "means a self gathering itself together in opposition to Another, which it thus separates from itself. Absoluteness, on the contrary, is the All-embracing Limitless, which excludes nothing from itself, except that very exclusiveness which forms the very concept of Personality. An absolute personality, then, is a *non-ens*, which is incapable of being thought." On the other hand, answers Lotze, "Only in the notion of a finite spirit lies the ground why the development of its personal consciousness comes to pass through the reaction of a Non-Ego, not because it requires the opposition of a strange Ego in order to be a personal being, but because the conditions of its being in this or any other respect lie not in itself. This limitation does not take place in the essence of the Infinite. He alone, therefore, is capable of a personality (*Für-sich seyn*, being for self) which wants neither to be induced, nor to be further developed through something which is not itself, but is self-contained in an eternal, unbeginning, inner movement. In God alone is perfect Personality, in all limited spirits there is only a feeble imitation of it."

The thesis, then, which I would venture to propose for discussion to the Society, is that there is no contradiction between the Absolute and Personality, and therefore it is good Metaphysics as well as good Theology to say that God is Absolute Love.

[See next page.]





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## NOTICE.

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to "Mr. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S. W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery *vivâ voce*.*



12<sup>th</sup> May 1874

F. Dalgairns  
S. Hodgson  
Knowles  
F. Stephen  
Lubbock  
R. Noel  
Self

dined.

Martineau  
Bp. Gloucester  
C. Robertson  
Tyndall  
Clifford.

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 1874.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

Prof. Clifford

## ON THE NATURE OF THINGS IN THEMSELVES.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY quotes a simile of Berkeley's, wherein the water of a fountain, rising to a great height, and then falling back into the basin, is made to represent a mind which rises out of a crude idealism into materialism, only to fall back inevitably to its true idealistic home. The application of this simile depends very largely on the starting-point; and it will serve quite as well to illustrate the course of one who begins at the simple objective facts of science, soars for awhile into the clouds of idealism, and then, bringing only so much air as may freshen the sparkle of the pool, returns to a materialist faith which is rank enough for all practical purposes. To indicate this course of thought, and to justify its conclusion, is the end of the following remarks.

### *Meaning of the Individual Object.*

My feelings arrange and order themselves in two distinct ways. There is the internal or subjective order, in which sorrow succeeds the hearing of bad news, or the abstraction "dog" symbolises the perception of many different dogs. And there is the external or objective order, in which the sensation of letting go is followed by the sight of a falling object and the sound of its fall. The objective order, *quâd* order, is treated by physical science, which investigates the uniform relations of *objects* in time and space. Here the word *object* (or *phenomenon*) is taken merely to mean a group of my feelings, which persists as a group in a certain manner; for I am at present considering only the objective order of my feelings. The object, then, is a set of changes in my consciousness, and not anything out of it. Here is as yet no metaphysical doctrine, but only a fixing of the meaning of a word. We may subsequently find reason to infer that there is something which is not object, but which corresponds in a certain way with the object; this will be a metaphysical doctrine, and neither it nor its denial is involved in the present determination of meaning. But the determination must be taken as extending to

[NO. XLV.]

all those inferences which are made by science in the objective order. If I hold that there is hydrogen in the sun, I mean that if I could get some of it in a bottle and explode it with half its volume of oxygen, I should get that group of possible sensations which we call "water." The inferences of physical science are all inferences of my real or possible feelings; inferences of something actually or potentially in my consciousness, not of anything outside it.

*Distinction of Object and Eject.*

There are, however, some inferences which are profoundly different from those of physical science. When I come to the conclusion that *you* are conscious, and that there are objects in your consciousness similar to those in mine, I am not inferring any actual or possible feelings of my own, but *your* feelings, which are not, and cannot by any possibility become, objects in my consciousness. The complicated processes of your body and the motions of your brain and nervous system, inferred from evidence of anatomical researches, are all inferred as things possibly visible to me. However remote the inference of physical science, the thing inferred is always a part of me, a possible set of changes in my consciousness bound up in the objective order with other known changes. But the inferred existence of your feelings, of objective groupings among them similar to those among my feelings, and of a subjective order in many respects analogous to my own; these inferred existences are in the very act of inference *thrown out* of my consciousness, recognised as outside of it, as *not* being a part of me. I propose, accordingly, to call these inferred existences *ejects*, things thrown out of my consciousness, to distinguish them from *objects*, things presented in my consciousness, phenomena. It is to be noticed that there is a set of changes of my consciousness symbolic of the eject, which may be called my conception of you; it is (I think) a rough picture of the whole aggregate of my consciousness, under imagined circumstances like yours; *quâd* group of my feelings, this conception is like the object in substance and constitution, but differs from it in implying the existence of something that is not itself, but corresponds to it, namely, of the eject. The existence of the object, whether perceived or inferred, carries with it a group of beliefs; these are always beliefs in the future sequence of certain of my feelings. The existence of this table, for example, as an object in my consciousness, carries with it the belief that if I climb

up on it, I shall be able to walk about on it as if it were the ground. But the existence of my conception of you in my consciousness carries with it a belief in the existence of you outside of my consciousness, a belief which can never be expressed in terms of the future sequence of my feelings. How this inference is justified, how consciousness can testify to the existence of anything outside of itself, I do not pretend to say; I need not untie a knot which the world has cut for me long ago. It may very well be that I myself am the only existence, but it is simply ridiculous to suppose that anybody else is. The position of absolute idealism may, therefore, be left out of count, although each individual may be unable to justify his dissent from it.

#### *Formation of the Social Object.*

The belief, however, in the existence of other men's consciousness, in the existence of ejects, dominates every thought and every action of our lives. In the first place, it profoundly modifies the object. This room, the table, the chairs, your bodies, are all objects in my consciousness; as simple objects, they are parts of me. But I, somehow, infer the existence of similar objects in your consciousness, and these are not objects to me, nor can they ever be made so; they are ejects. This being so, I bind up with each object as it exists in my mind the thought of similar objects existing in other men's minds; and I thus form the complex conception, "this table, as an object in the minds of men,"—or, as Mr. Shadworth Hodgson puts it, an object of consciousness in general. This conception symbolises an indefinite number of ejects, together with one object which the conception of each eject more or less resembles. Its character is therefore mainly ejective in respect of what it symbolises, but mainly objective in respect of its nature. I shall call this complex conception the *social object*; it is a symbol of one thing (the *individual object*, it may be called for distinction's sake,) which is in my consciousness, and of an indefinite number of other things which are ejects and out of my consciousness. Now, it is probable that the individual object, as such, never exists in the mind of man. For there is every reason to believe that we were gregarious animals before we became men properly so called. And a belief in the eject—some sort of recognition of a kindred consciousness in one's fellow-beings—is clearly a condition of gregarious action among animals so highly developed as to be called conscious at all. Language, even in its first beginnings,

is impossible without that belief ; and any sound which, becoming a sign to my neighbour, becomes thereby a mark to myself, must by the nature of the case be a mark of the social object, and not of the individual object. But if not only this conception of the particular social object, but all those that have been built up out of it, have been formed at the same time with, and under the influence of, language ; it seems to follow that the belief in the existence of other men's minds like our own, but not part of us, must be inseparably associated with every process whereby discrete impressions are built together into an object. I do not, of course, mean that it presents itself in consciousness as distinct ; but I mean that as an object is formed in my mind, a fixed habit causes it to be formed as social object, and insensibly embodies in it a reference to the minds of other men. And this sub-conscious reference to supposed ejects is what constitutes the impression of *externality* in the object, whereby it is described as *not-me*. At any rate, the formation of the social object supplies an account of this impression of outness, without requiring me to assume any ejects or things outside my consciousness except the minds of other men. Consequently, it cannot be argued from the impression of outness that there is anything outside of my consciousness except the minds of other men. I shall argue presently that we have grounds for believing in non-personal ejects, but these grounds are not in any way dependent on the impression of outness, and they are not included in the ordinary or common-sense view of things. It seems to me that the prevailing belief of uninstructed people is merely a belief in the social object, and not in a non-personal eject, somehow corresponding to it ; and that the question "Whether the latter exists or not ?" is one which cannot be put to them so as to convey any meaning without considerable preliminary training. On this point I agree entirely with Berkeley, and not with Herbert Spencer.

#### *Difference between Mind and Body.*

I do not pause to show how belief in the Eject underlies the whole of natural Ethic, whose first great commandment, evolved in the light of day by healthy processes wherever men have lived together, is, "Put yourself in his place." It is more to my present purpose to point out what is the true difference between body and mind. Your body is an object in my consciousness ; your mind is not, and never can be. Being an object, your body follows the laws of

physical science, which deals with the objective order of my feelings. That its chemistry is ordinary chemistry, its physics ordinary physics, its mechanics ordinary mechanics, may or may not be true; the circumstances are exceptional, and it is conceivable (to persons ignorant of the facts) that allowance may have to be made for them, even in the expression of the most general laws of nature. But in any case, every question about your body is a question about the physical laws of matter, and about nothing else. To say, "Up to this point science can explain; here the soul steps in," is not to say what is untrue, but to talk nonsense. If evidence were found that the matter constituting the brain behaved otherwise than ordinary matter, or if it were impossible to describe vital actions as particular examples of general physical rules, this would be a fact in physics, a fact relating to the motion of matter; and it must either be explained by further elaboration of physical science, or else our conception of the objective order of our feelings would have to be changed. The question, "Is the mind a force?" is condemned by similar considerations. A certain variable quality of matter (the rate of change of its motion) is found to be invariably connected with the position relatively to it of other matter; considered as expressed in terms of this position, the quality is called Force. Force is thus an abstraction relating to *objective* facts; it is a mode of grouping of my feelings, and cannot possibly be the same thing as an *eject*, another man's consciousness. But the question, "Do the changes in a man's consciousness *run parallel* with the changes of motion, and therefore with the forces in his brain?" is a real question, and not *primâ facie* nonsense. Objections of like character may be raised against the language of some writers, who speak of changes in consciousness as *caused* by actions on the organism. The word *Cause*, *πολλαχῶς λεγόμενον* and misleading as it is, may yet be of some use, if it is kept to denote a relation between objective facts, to describe certain parts of the phenomenal order. But only confusion can arise if it is used to express the relation between certain objective facts in my consciousness, and the *ejective* facts which are inferred as corresponding in some way to them and running parallel with them. For all that we know at present, this relation does not in any way resemble that expressed by the word *Cause*. To sum up, the distinction between *eject* and *object*, properly grasped, forbids us to regard the *eject*, another man's mind, as coming into the world

of objects in any way, or as standing in the relation of cause or effect to any changes in that world. I need hardly add that the facts do very strongly lead us to regard our bodies as merely complicated examples of practically universal physical rules, and their motions as determined in the same way as those of the sun and the sea. There is no evidence which amounts to a *prima facie* case against the dynamical uniformity of Nature; and I make no exception in favour of that slykick force which fills existing lunatic asylums, and makes private houses into new ones.

*Correspondence of Elements of Mind and Brain-Action.*

I have already spoken of certain ejective facts—the changes in your consciousness—as running parallel with the changes in your brain, which are objective facts. The parallelism here meant is a parallelism of complexity, an analogy of structure. A spoken sentence and the same sentence written are two utterly unlike things, but each of them consists of elements; the spoken sentence of the elementary sounds of the language, the written sentence of its alphabet. Now the relation between the spoken sentence and its elements is very nearly the same as the relation between the written sentence and its elements. There is a correspondence of element to element; although an elementary sound is quite a different thing from a letter of the alphabet, yet each elementary sound belongs to a certain letter or letters. And the sounds being built up together to form a spoken sentence, the letters are built up together, *in nearly the same way*, to form the written sentence. The two complex products are as wholly unlike as the elements are, but the manner of their complication is the same. Or, as we should say in the mathematics, a sentence spoken is the same function of the elementary sounds as the same sentence written is of the corresponding letters.

Of such a nature is the correspondence or parallelism between mind and body. The fundamental “deliverance” of consciousness affirms its own complexity. It seems to me impossible, as I am at present constituted, to have only one absolutely simple feeling at a time. Not only are my objective perceptions, as of a man’s head or a candlestick, formed of a great number of parts ordered in a definite manner, but they are invariably accompanied by an endless string of memories, all equally complex. And those massive organic feelings

with which, from their apparent want of connection with the objective order, the notion of consciousness has been chiefly associated,—those also turn out, when attention is directed to them, to be complex things. In reading over a former page of my manuscript, for instance, I found suddenly, on reflection, that although I had been conscious of what I was reading, I had paid no attention to it; but had been mainly occupied in debating whether faint red lines would not be better than blue ones to write upon, in picturing the scene in the shop when I should ask for such lines to be ruled, and in reflecting on the lamentable helplessness of nine men out of ten when you ask them to do anything slightly different from what they have been accustomed to do. This debate had been started by the observation that my handwriting varied in size according to the nature of the argument, being larger when that was diffuse and explanatory, occupied with a supposed audience; and smaller when it was close, occupied only with the sequence of propositions. Along with these trains of thought went the sensation of noises made by poultry, dogs, children, and organ-grinders; and that vague diffused feeling in the side of the face and head which means a probable toothache in an hour or two. Under these circumstances, it seems to me that consciousness must be described as a succession of groups of changes, as analogous to a rope made of a great number of occasionally interlacing strands. This being so, it will be said that there is a unity in all this complexity, that in all these varied feelings it is I who am conscious, and that this sense of personality, the self-perception of the Ego, is one and indivisible. It seems to me (here agreeing with Hume) that the “unity of apperception” does not exist in the instantaneous consciousness which it unites, but only in subsequent reflection upon it; and that it consists in the power of establishing a certain connection between the memories of any two feelings which we had at the same instant. A feeling, at the instant when it exists, exists *an und für sich*, and not as *my* feeling; but when on reflection I remember it as *my* feeling, there comes up not merely a faint repetition of the feeling, but inextricably connected with it a whole set of connections with the general stream of my consciousness. This memory, again, *quid* memory, is relative to the past feeling which it partially recalls; but in so far as it is itself a feeling, it is absolute, *Ding an sich*. The feeling of personality, then, is a certain feeling of connection between faint images of

past feelings; and personality itself is the fact that such connections are set up, the property of the stream of feelings that part of it consists of links binding together faint reproductions of previous parts. It is thus a relative thing, a mode of complication of certain elements, and a property of the complex so produced. This complex is consciousness; when a stream of feelings is so compacted together that at each instant it consists of (1) new feelings, (2) fainter repetitions of previous ones, and (3) links connecting these repetitions, the stream is called a consciousness. A far more complicated grouping than is necessarily implied here is established when discrete impressions are run together into the perception of an object. The *conception* of a particular object, as object, is a group of feelings symbolic of many different perceptions, and of links between them and other feelings. The distinction between Subject and Object is twofold; first, the distinction with which we started between the subjective and objective *orders* which simultaneously exist in my feelings; and secondly, the distinction between me and the social object, which involves the distinction between me and you. Either of these distinctions is exceedingly complex and abstract, involving a highly organised experience. It is not, I think, possible to separate one from the other; for it is just the objective order which I do suppose to be common to me and to other minds.

I need not set down here the evidence which shows that the complexity of consciousness is paralleled by complexity of action in the brain. It is only necessary to point out what appears to me to be a consequence of the discoveries of Müller and Helmholtz in regard to sensation; that at least those distinct feelings which can be remembered and examined by reflection are paralleled by changes in a portion of the brain only. In the case of sight, for example, there is a message taken from things outside to the retina, and therefrom sent in somewhither by the optic nerve; now we can tap this telegraph at any point and produce the sensation of sight, without any impression on the retina. It seems to follow that what is known *directly* is what takes place at the inner end of this nerve, or that the consciousness of sight is simultaneous and parallel in complexity with the changes in the grey matter at the internal extremity, and not with the changes in the nerve itself, or in the retina. So also a pain in a particular part of the body may be mimicked by neuralgia due to lesion of another part.

We come, finally, to say, then, that as your consciousness is made up of elementary feelings grouped together in various ways (ejective facts), so a part of the action in your brain is made up of more elementary actions in parts of it, grouped together *in the same ways* (objective facts). The knowledge of this correspondence is a help to the analysis of both sets of facts, but it teaches us in particular that any feeling, however apparently simple, which can be retained and examined by reflection, is already itself a most complex structure. We may, however, conclude that this correspondence extends to the elements, and that each simple feeling corresponds to a special comparatively simple change of nerve-matter.

*The Elementary Feeling is a Thing-in-Itself.*

The conclusion that elementary feeling co-exists with elementary brain-motion in the same way as consciousness co-exists with complex brain-motion, involves more important consequences than might at first sight appear. We have regarded consciousness as a complex of feelings, and explained the fact that the complex is conscious, as depending on the mode of complication. But does not the elementary feeling itself imply a consciousness in which alone it can exist, and of which it is a modification? Can a feeling exist by itself, without forming part of a consciousness? I shall say *no* to the first question, and *yes* to the second, and it seems to me that these answers are required by the doctrine of evolution. For if that doctrine be true, we shall have along the line of the human pedigree a series of imperceptible steps connecting inorganic matter with ourselves. To the later members of that series we must undoubtedly ascribe consciousness, although it must, of course, have been simpler than our own. But where are we to stop? In the case of organisms of a certain complexity, consciousness is inferred. As we go back along the line, the complexity of the organism and of its nerve-action insensibly diminishes; and for the first part of our course, we see reason to think that the complexity of consciousness insensibly diminishes also. But if we make a jump, say to the tunicate molluscs, we see no reason there to infer the existence of consciousness at all. Yet not only is it impossible to point out a place where any sudden break takes place, but it is contrary to all the natural training of our minds to suppose a breach of continuity so great. All this imagined line of organisms is a series of objects in

my consciousness; they form an insensible gradation, and yet there is a certain unknown point at which I am at liberty to infer facts *out* of my consciousness corresponding to them! There is only one way out of the difficulty, and to that we are driven. Consciousness is a complex of ejective facts,—of elementary feelings, or rather of those remoter elements which cannot even be felt, but of which the simplest feeling is built up. Such elementary ejective facts go along with the action of every organism, however simple; but it is only when the material organism has reached a certain complexity of nervous structure (not now to be specified) that the complex of ejective facts reaches that mode of complication which is called Consciousness. But as the line of ascent is unbroken, and must end at last in inorganic matter, we have no choice but to admit that every motion of matter is simultaneous with some ejective fact or event which might be part of a consciousness. From this follow two important corollaries.

1. A feeling can exist by itself, without forming part of a consciousness. It does not depend for its existence on the consciousness of which it may form a part. Hence a feeling (or an eject-element) is *Ding an sich*, an absolute, whose existence is not relative to anything else. *Sentitur* is all that can be said.

2. These eject-elements, which correspond to motions of matter, are connected together in their sequence and co-existence by counterparts of the physical laws of matter. For otherwise the correspondence could not be kept up.

We are thus led to a doctrine which agrees with the *transfigured realism* of Spencer and Helmholtz, so far as that goes. Every object which I perceive is in my mind, a part of me. A similar object may exist in the mind of every other man. But besides all these objects in our minds, there is something else, different from them, of which, however, each object is a picture; this is the thing in itself, not an object in our consciousness nor in any consciousness (except when the corresponding object is part of the action of a brain), and yet made of the stuff that minds are made of. In thus assigning the *nature* of things in themselves, our theory goes beyond the transfigured realism afore-mentioned, in that it makes the substratum a known thing, instead of an unknowable. In the case of mind, we say there is no substratum; consciousness is the whole fact, and the elements out of which it is built up

are things in themselves. In the case of matter, the substratum is compounded of the elements of consciousness, and bears the same relation to my consciousness that the material object does to my brain. Your brain is object to me ; your consciousness is the thing in itself that underlies it. The universe is made up of elementary mental facts, proceeding according to certain laws ; when certain of these attain a particular kind of complexity, they become a consciousness, and subsequent development may form in this consciousness a point-for-point representation or transfigured picture of the external universe. Such a picture is then a material world, like that which exists in my brain or yours. We have thus one substance, and *no* unknowable, but only vast unknown complication of elements to investigate.

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Dr. Ward

Greg

Knowles

Archbishop

Martineau

Dalguish

C. Robertson

Clifford

Carpenter

Dr. Noel

Dr. Bucknell

Sell  
J

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, JULY 14. 1874.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

Mr. Harold

## A REPLY ON NECESSARY TRUTH.

At the February meeting of our Society, Mr. Fitzjames Stephen read a paper, criticising some articles which I had published in the *Dublin Review* on Necessary Truth. I was prevented from being present on that occasion : but had the case been otherwise, I do not see how I could have defended myself fully, except by reading another paper in reply ; and if another paper were to be read, it had better (I think) be printed and circulated beforehand. Nor, considering the vital and critical importance of the question, do I consider that any apology is due for bringing it a second time before our Society.

My best course will be, firstly, to select, from the various arguments I have used, those which are most strictly relevant to Mr. Stephen's objections ; and then to consider those objections themselves. But before doing either of these things, I must make a few preliminary remarks to make clear the point at issue. If I may make one general comment on Mr. Stephen's paper, I should say that he does not impress me as having taken nearly sufficient pains to place clearly, before his own mind and that of his hearers, what is the exact matter of debate.

I. I will call the two contending parties by the respective name of Necessists and Phenomenists. The latter hold, that all our knowledge is derived from experience ; whereas the former maintain, that considerable portions of it are acquired *a priori*, and possess the character of necessity.

II. Many phenomenists deny the cognisableness of necessary verities, on the ground that we have no means of knowing, that the subjective declaration of our faculties corresponds with objective truth. Mr. Stephen, however, does not at all take up this ground ; and in the present paper therefore, I shall assume that it is untenable. I do not of course mean, that necessists have any right to take its falsehood for granted, or are exempt from the obligation of disproving it : on the contrary, one of the articles noticed by Mr. Stephen is devoted

[NO. XLVI.]

to the express purpose of such disproof. But no one can always be proving everything; and in this paper I am not engaged with what Catholics call the rule and motive of certitude. My present thesis in fact may be expressed hypothetically. "If the declaration of our faculties is known by us to correspond with objective truth,—then necessists are right and phenomenists wrong in their respective doctrines."

III. Next we have to ask,—What is meant by the phrase "necessary verities?" On this again I have no difference with Mr. Stephen. I may explain the term "necessary verities" with sufficient accuracy for my present purpose, by saying that they are verities "which could not be otherwise"; "the reversal of which is outside the sphere of Omnipotence." Those verities, which are not "necessary," are called "contingent."

IV. Non-Catholic writers of either school have divided propositions into "analytical" and "synthetical." It so happens however, that Catholic philosophers use these respective words in a fundamentally different sense. I have therefore availed myself in the *Dublin Review* of Sir W. Hamilton's phrases "explicative" and "ampliative," to express what is substantially the distinction intended; and for my own part, indeed, I think this a more serviceable terminology. I call a proposition "explicative," when its predicate does no more than express in other terms what has already been expressed in its subject. It is an "explicative" proposition, *e.g.*, that "hard substances resist pressure"; because resistance to pressure is that very quality, which is expressed by the word "hard." In fact, all "explicative" propositions are reducible to the form "A is A." The above-named proposition signifies neither more nor less, than that "all hard substances are hard."

It will be better, however, to divide propositions, in this respect, not into two, but into three classes. There are (1) "Identical propositions" or "truisms;" in which the predicate expresses no more than has been explicitly expressed by the subject: as "this apple is this apple," or "this apple is an apple." There are (2) "explicative" propositions; in which the predicate expresses no more than has been implicitly expressed in the subject: as "hard substances resist pressure," or "a square is rectangular." And there are (3) "ampliative" propositions, in which the predicate expresses what has been neither explicitly nor implicitly expressed by the subject: as "diamonds are

combustible," or "the base angles of an isosceles triangle are mutually equal."

Now, though Mr. Mill uses some extraordinary language on the matter, I cannot fancy that phenomenists in general would have any difficulty in saying, that both "identical" and "explicative" propositions are "necessary." So Mr. Stephen very reasonably (p. 4) gives, as one meaning of "necessary truths," "truths which are implied by the very use of certain words." In so speaking, phenomenists are in no way unfaithful to their characteristic doctrine, that all our knowledge is derived from experience; for surely the proposition "A is A" cannot be said to convey any knowledge worthy of the name. The point at issue, then, between them and their opponents is this: they deny that there are any *ampliative* propositions cognisable as necessarily true; while necessists maintain, that there is a large number of ampliative propositions cognisable as necessary.

This will be the proper place for commenting on a paragraph of Mr. Stephen's paper, which seems to me one of the most singular I ever read, and which is printed at length in a foot-note.<sup>1</sup> "If you mean by necessary truths," he says, "facts which could not have been otherwise than they are,"—which, of course, is just what we do mean—it is not improbably a necessary truth, "that these lines were written on blue paper with a quill pen," &c., &c. What can Mr. Stephen mean by saying that probably "this fact could not have been otherwise?" The only reason he gives is, that "in order that the fact might have happened otherwise, it might, for all he can tell, have been necessary for the whole constitution of the universe

<sup>1</sup> "The expression 'necessary truth' may have one of two different meanings. It may mean a fact which could not have been otherwise than it is, or it may mean a truth affirmed by the very use of certain words. Now, I say that if you mean by necessary truths facts which could not have been otherwise than they are, I am by no means sure that all truths whatever are not necessary, and I am much disposed to think they are. It is a truth that these lines were written on blue paper with a quill pen, by a man standing in front of a desk in the hollow of a window looking into the Inner Temple Garden, on the 16th of February, 1874. I can easily imagine any one of these circumstances having been different, but the assertion of their existence is as true as that two and two make four, and I was, when they occurred, equally unable to doubt of any one of them. Being past, they are unalterable (I suppose), even by Omnipotence, and in order that they might have happened otherwise, it might, for aught I can tell, have been necessary for the whole constitution of the universe to have been slightly altered from all eternity. What, then, is the meaning of the assertion that any fact whatever is contingent? Every fact whatever is. It would not be a fact, if it did not exist; and if it exists, and comes under my 'existent cognitive faculties,' it is to me necessary."

to have been slightly altered from all eternity." Even if that were so,—even if it were conceded that the course of nature has *existed* from all eternity,—is it beyond the sphere of Omnipotence, to have made a different constitution of nature from that which exists? Perhaps Mr. Stephen will reply that, "for all he can tell," to have done this *is* beyond the sphere of Omnipotence. Let this also be conceded, then, for argument's sake. Still it would only follow, that the fact in question may *possibly* be a necessary truth, not at all that it is *cognisable* as such; but this last is the only point at issue. What necessists would say is this,—At the moment when Mr. Stephen was about to begin writing, it was fully within the sphere of Omnipotence (so far as we can see) to paralyse his hand, or otherwise prevent his writing at all; it was fully within the sphere of Omnipotence (so far as we can see) to compel him, against his will, instead of beginning his essay, to describe an isosceles triangle; but we do know for certain, that it was beyond the sphere of Omnipotence to effect, that such triangle should have unequal base angles.

Mr. Stephen next makes this remark, as to the circumstances under which he was writing: "I can easily imagine one of these circumstances being different: but the assertion of their existence is as true as that two and two make four; and I was, when they occurred, equally unable to doubt of any one of them:" its most true remark. My only difficulty lies in understanding, what Mr. Stephen can possibly suppose to be its bearing on the question. And the same comment may be made on his further very safe statement, that "no fact would be a fact if it did not exist."

Lastly he says: "If a fact exists and comes under my existent cognitive faculties, it is to me necessary." Now, throughout this paragraph, he is avowedly using the word "necessary" to express that "which could not have been otherwise." Here therefore he affirms, that every fact, which exists and is known to him, must inevitably be one which could not have been otherwise. I may fairly ask for some elucidation of this dark saying.

On the other hand, of course I at once admit, that past facts "are unalterable even by Omnipotence." It is a necessary, and indeed an identical proposition, that "past facts are past." When Mr. Stephen had written his essay, it was outside the sphere of Omnipotence to effect, that his essay had not been written.

I proceed, then, with my argument. The question at issue

between phenomenists and necessists is, whether certain ampliative propositions are cognisable as necessarily true; nor is it possible (a philosopher of either school will readily admit) to exaggerate the importance of this most vital and critical issue. Now I think there is no other field on which this battle can be so decisively fought out, as that which I chose, and on which Mr. Stephen has assailed me, —the field of geometrical truths. There are various reasons why I think this; and Mr. Stephen has incidentally named a strong one. "The words which relate to time, space, and number," he says most truly and importantly, "are perfectly simple and adequate to that which they describe; whereas the words which relate to common objects are in nearly every case complex, often to the highest degree." This statement includes arithmetical science as well as geometrical: but I will not on the present occasion refer to the former science more than I can help; because some able thinkers are of opinion, that arithmetical axioms are explicative and not ampliative. This opinion, I confess, surprises me; and it is opposed as heartily, both by Mr. Stephen and by Mr. Mill, as it would be on occasion by myself. But it will be immeasurably more convenient, to abstain from complicating the present all-important question with another entirely different.

Now my critic will certainly admit, that, if reason declares the necessary truth of geometrical axioms, it no less certainly declares the necessary validity of the syllogistic process; and consequently, that to establish the necessary truth of the axioms, would be to establish the necessary truth of the whole fabric of geometrical science. This therefore is to be now our immediate point of debate: are geometrical axioms cognisable as necessarily true? And by "axioms," of course, I mean those ampliative verities, which the geometer assumes as indisputable and uses as first premisses. Mr. Stephen holds that their truth is not otherwise known to us than by experience (see, *e.g.*, pp. 8, 9): necessists affirm on the contrary (1) that they are cognisable by us quite independently of experience; and (2) that they are cognisable by us, not as mere observed facts, but as necessary truths.

The axiom, which throughout my articles I have chosen for the purpose of illustrating this question, has been the axiom, that "all trilateral figures are triangular;" and I have chosen this because (for reasons which will presently appear) it is more calculated than

any other I could think of, for establishing an absolutely crucial test. Of course, indeed, as Mr. Stephen enunciates a universal negative, his opponent has a right to choose his own instance for establishing the affirmative; but still I will not fail, when I have done with my own chosen illustrative axiom, to deal directly with his. I have now, however, to establish, that the triangularity of trilaterals (1) is not a fact made known to us by experience; and (2) that it is known to us as a necessary truth. I begin with the former.

I am so very confident of my cause, that I earnestly desire to exhibit the phenomenist theory at its thoroughly best advantage. I will put it therefore this way. The proposition was once placed before me for the first time in a formulised shape (perhaps in some "object-lesson"), that "horses differ greatly from each other in colour." Though (by hypothesis) I have never before expressly contemplated this proposition in form, I at once recognise it as expressing a freshly familiar truth; a truth vividly known to me by every day's experience. Now the very same thing took place—so phenomenists would say—when the proposition was first placed before me in a formulised shape, that "all trilaterals are triangular:" I recognised it at once, as expressing a freshly familiar truth, vividly known to me by every day's experience. According to them, the triangularity of trilaterals is a truth as freshly known to me by daily experience, as is the fact that horses are of different colours, or that wood floats on water.

Now I affirm, as an indubitable matter of fact, that a phenomenist is here contradicted by the most obvious experience. I affirm as an indubitable matter of fact, that ninety-nine hundredths of mankind—not only do not know the triangularity of trilaterals with this extraordinary freshness of familiarity—but do not know it *at all*. Those who have not studied the elements of geometry—with hardly an exception—if they were told that trilaterals are triangular (and if they understood the statement) would as simply receive a new piece of information, as they did when they were first told the death of Napoleon III. Then as to those who study mathematics. A youth of fifteen is beginning to learn geometry, and his tutor points out to him that every trilateral is triangular. Does he naturally reply—as he *would* if his tutor were telling him that *horses are of different colours*—"of course the fact is so; I have observed it a thousand times?" On the contrary, in all probability the proposition will be

entirely new to him ; and yet, notwithstanding its novelty, will commend itself as a self-evident truth on being duly pondered. Lastly, take those who learned the elements of geometry when they were young, and are now busily engaged in political, or forensic, or commercial life. If the triangularity of trilaterals were mentioned to them, they might remember that they had been taught in their youth to see the self-evidence of this truth ; but they would also remember that for years and years it had been absent from their thoughts. Is it seriously my critic would allege, that they know the triangularity of trilaterals with the same freshness of familiar experience, with which they know the tendency of fire to burn and of water to quench it ? or with which they respectively know the political events of the moment, or the practice of the Courts, or the habits of the Stock Exchange ? I am sure, from his writings (if he will allow me to say so), that he has far too much practical sense for such an outrageous paradox.

But is it not then—he might ask—a matter to every man of every-day experience, that trilaterals are triangular ? If by “every-day experience” he means “every-day *observation*”—and his argument requires this—I answer confidently in the negative. In the first place—putting aside that very small minority who are predominantly occupied with mathematical studies—the very notion of a “trilateral” does not occur to men at all, except accidentally and on rare occasions. It is not because your eyes light by chance on three straws mutually intersecting, or on some other natural object calculated to suggest a trilateral—that therefore any thought of that figure either explicitly or implicitly enters your mind. You are probably musing on matters indefinitely more interesting and exciting ; the prospects of the coming Parliamentary division, or the point of law which you are going down to argue, or the symptoms of the patient whom you are on your way to visit, or the probable fluctuation of the Funds. The keen geometrician may see trilaterals in stocks and stones, and think of trilaterals on the slightest provocation : but what proportion of the human race are keen geometricians ?

Then secondly—still excluding these exceptional geometricians—for a hundred times that observation might suggest to you the thought of a trilateral, not more than once perhaps will it suggest to you the *triangularity* of such trilateral. Mr. Stephen himself will

admit, I suppose, that such *explicit* observation is comparatively rare ; but he will urge probably, that you *implicitly* observe the triangularity of every trilateral which you remark. I will make then a very simple supposition, for the purpose of testing this suggestion. I will suppose that all *rose stalks* within the reach of human observation *had leaves of the same shape with each other*. On such supposition, the shape of its stalk-leaves would be a more obvious and obtrusive attribute of the rose, than is triangularity of the trilateral ; and yet, beyond all possibility of doubt, one might very frequently observe a rose, without even implicitly noticing the shape of its stalk-leaves. I can testify this at first-hand. In a life of sixty odd years, I have often enough smelt roses and handled their stalks ; and yet I had not the slightest notion whether their leaves are or are not similarly shaped, until I asked the question for the very purpose of this illustration. And it is plain, that if I did not observe the mutual dissimilarity of their leaves,—neither should I have observed their similarity had it existed. Now I appeal to Mr. Stephen's common sense, whether what I said at starting is not undeniably true ; viz., that every ordinary person is very far more likely to observe the shape of rose-stalk leaves, than to observe the number of angles formed by the sides of a trilateral.

Here, then, let me sum up my reasoning in favour of my first thesis. The phenomenist admits, that we can know with absolute certainty the triangularity of all trilaterals ; but he adds, that our mode of obtaining that knowledge is experience and observation. My first thesis has been merely negative ; viz., that these assuredly are *not* the ways in which such knowledge is gained. For this statement I have given two reasons. Firstly, not one man in a million *has* observed the fact, that trilaterals are triangular ; and secondly, in the enormous majority of instances, when the axiom is first known by us, it is accepted as an entirely new proposition, and yet as being (notwithstanding its novelty) self-evidently true.

My second thesis is, that this axiom is known by us as necessarily true. For this also I give two reasons.

(1.) I do not see how any one can deny—certainly Mr. Mill expressly admits—that the triangularity of all trilaterals can be known by purely *mental* experimentation, by the mere process of *imagining* a trilateral. The axiom, then, is self-evident, or in other words, is known to be true by the mere process of being duly pondered. Now,

I am assuming in this paper, that the declaration of our faculties infallibly corresponds with objective truth. Take, then, any trilateral which can be formed by Omnipotence itself ; we know infallibly of this trilateral, that it is triangular : or, in other words, it is outside the sphere of Omnipotence, to make a trilateral which shall not be triangular.

(2.) My second reason for my second thesis is based on that conviction of necessity, which inevitably arises in our mind, when we contemplate this or any other geometrical axiom. We pronounce at once,—on the question being placed before us,—that the triangularity of trilaterals is not simply a phenomenon which prevails within the region of our experience, but a truth which could not be otherwise ; of which Omnipotence could not effect the contradictory. I allege this as a fact, of which every one must be cognisant who carefully and fairly examines his own mind. If phenomenists reply by denying this fact,—they may benefit themselves in argument, but I am confident they will greatly lose in influence. The psychological fact on which I rest is so very obvious to the careful and unprejudiced inquirer, that if phenomenists were avowedly driven to take refuge in its denial, such an inquirer would need no more to convince him that phenomenism is false. Mr. Mill admitted always that the psychological fact is as necessists allege ; and he did his best accordingly to reconcile the fact with his theories. Here, indeed, I may be allowed perhaps to say, that in my humble judgment no other person has done nearly so much as Mr. Mill to promote the spread of phenomenism ; and that the reason of his success was partly his unusual power of apprehending an opponent's point of view, partly his exemplary candour in admitting facts which (on the surface, at all events) told against him. I am the more desirous to express my sense of what seem to me his rare philosophical endowments, because just now there is, I think, a tendency, even within his own school, unduly to disparage them.

Let me now return to this conviction of *necessity*, with which we contemplate a mathematical axiom. Such conviction cannot be possibly due to the mere frequent experience and observation of that axiom. As to the particular axiom before us, I have been pointing out that the triangularity of trilaterals is a fact, by no means frequently, but on the contrary very rarely, observed. On the other hand, take a fact which we *are* constantly experiencing

and observing, the warmth-givingness of fire. Every Englishman has more frequent experience and observation of this, than he has of even two and two making four: yet there is no kind of conviction existing in our mind, as to the necessity of this fact; we see no repugnance whatever in the notion, that in some other planet a substance may be found, which in every other respect resembles fire,—in consumption of coal or wood, in destroying or melting this or that portion of matter—but yet which does *not* possess this particular property of imparting warmth.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible therefore that our conviction of necessity can arise from uniform experience and observation: because that which we have hardly ever (if ever) observed—the triangularity of trilaterals—we regard as necessary; while that which we have habitually and unexceptionally observed—the warmth-givingness of fire—we regard as contingent.

I have now stated my two theses, and for each of them have given two arguments. I am quite unable even to guess how Mr. Stephen would reply to these arguments, because (though their exposition occupied many pages of the *Dublin Review*) he has entirely failed to observe them. Instead of replying to the arguments which I did adduce,—he apparently credits me with another (see pp. 4, 10), which not only I did not adduce, but which I emphatically disavowed in one of my articles, and should repudiate (I may almost say) with abhorrence. He apparently understands me as arguing, that geometrical axioms are necessarily true, because we cannot conceive their contradictories. Imagine a *Catholic*, of all men, committing himself to such an argument! Imagine a *Catholic* implying, that what is inconceivable is necessarily false! Did any one *e.g.* ever dream of maintaining, that human beings on earth can conceive in its integrity the dogma of the Blessed Trinity? Of course I heartily agree with my critic, that things, utterly inconceivable by the human intellect, may to beings of a higher nature be the simplest of truths.

I now come to the axiom, selected by Mr. Stephen as his own

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Stephen says that I speak somewhere of “cold fire.” On the contrary, I agree with him, that warmth-givingness is a property connoted by the very name “fire.” No doubt, I have said in the *Dublin Review*, as I say in the text, that the warmth-givingness of fire is not cognised as a necessary truth. It would be more strictly correct to say: “We do not cognise as a necessary truth, that every substance, possessing the other qualities of fire, must possess the particular quality of imparting warmth.”

illustration, viz., that "a straight line is the shortest path between two points." And I admit readily, that my argument does not come out on the surface so irresistibly in this as in the former case, because we have all indubitably very often observed the truth of this particular axiom in a large variety of shapes. So much as this, however, may be said without further investigation. Mr. Stephen will not allege, that different geometrical axioms stand on different footings. If, therefore, he once admitted it to be a necessary truth that trilaterals are triangular, he would no less admit it to be a necessary truth that a straight line is the shortest path between two points.

But there is at last no difficulty in dealing directly with this axiom. Let me suppose Mr. Stephen to have some pupil, an intelligent and educated youth, and to be placing before him what purports to be a map of the moon, so far as observation has enabled us to know it. He would not hesitate, while drawing inferences from that map, to assume that a straight line is the shortest path between two points. But the pupil, having imbibed his teacher's phenomenistic doctrines, demurs to this. "I know, of course," he urges, "that in Europe or in the United States this is true of straight lines, because otherwise we should certainly have heard the contrary. But we can have no communication with inhabitants of the moon, nor any possible means, therefore, of knowing how the case stands in that satellite." How would Mr. Stephen reply?

And this leads me to notice an argument of my critic's which, as far as I can see, tells exclusively and indeed forcibly, not against me, but against himself. "The possibility of making and using maps," he says (p. 9), "is a fact taught by experience." By help of maps "we can reason about the relations to each other of the objects represented, as well as we could if we confined our attention to the things themselves, and, indeed, in many instances much better." This is true within certain limits, but surely untrue beyond those limits. Suppose I have before me the map of a landed estate in Wales, and know from competent authority that the relative distance and position of the various parts are there represented with great accuracy. There are many inferences which I can draw from that map, more readily than "if I confined my attention to the things themselves." True, but *what* inferences? Those, and those only, which have for their premisses (in addition to the data of the map)

mathematical truths. Suppose it were a plain map, merely exhibiting (as I have said) the relative position and distance of the various parts. Then, further, suppose that I wished to find out what are the qualities of the soil, or what the colour of the neighbouring sea, or whether there is coal or precious metal below the surface. Of what use would the map be to me for such purposes as these? I should be acting very absurdly, no doubt, if I sent to Wales to inquire whether throughout the given estate a straight line is the shortest path between two points; but I should act no less absurdly, if I attempted to discover the nature of the soil by arguing from the map. Why does this distinction exist? Of course, because mathematical truths differ from such other facts as I have mentioned, by being cognisable independently of experience.

According to Mr. Stephen (p. 9), our own eyes inform us that "the conditions of space in Sirius are the same as they are here." But what does he mean by "the conditions of space?" If he merely means to express the fact, that in the region of the fixed stars, no less than on this earth, the three dimensions are predicable of all material objects, I will accept his statement, at all events for argument's sake: but then this was not that question of mine, to which he professes a reply. The question I asked was this: how can we tell that, in the region of the fixed stars, trilaterals are triangular, and a straight line the shortest path between two points? Mr. Stephen considers that we do not know of these truths holding good on our own planet, except by means of experience; and *experience* has certainly nothing to report on the question, whether they equally hold good in the stellar region. Indeed this fact alone ought surely to refute the phenomenistic theory. Imagine grave philosophers, telescope in hand, endeavouring to discern some trilateral in distant space, in order that they may carefully count the number of its angles!

I will be very brief on Mr. Stephen's concluding reference to arithmetical truths, because (as I have already said) I think it would be a pity if our discussion proceeded along two different grooves. But as he has expressed his opinion on this head, I suppose I may fairly be expected to express mine. Briefly then I will say this. (1.) I agree with him as to the fundamental axiom of arithmetic: that axiom being, as I conceive, that objects of thought are not varied in number, by being arranged in different groups. (2.) I also agree with him, that this axiom is ampliative and not merely explicative.

(3). I hold however, in opposition to him, that the axiom is known independently of experience and as a necessary truth. (4). I do not see any impossibility in his supposition, that there should be "a world in which the fact of putting two pairs of" material "things together should reduce the number to three." (5). On such a supposition,—if the inhabitants possessed reason they would know that some power is constantly at work, destroying material objects which had existed, or uniting material objects which had been distinct. As Mr. Stephen has not assigned any reasons for his opinions on this head, I need not assign any reasons for mine.

And now, as I have replied to all the arguments against me which I can find in Mr. Stephen's paper, nothing remains for me but to conclude my own.

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to "Mr. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S.W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*



Mr. J. Fitzjames Stephen

## ON A THEORY OF DR. NEWMAN'S AS TO BELIEVING IN MYSTERIES,

ONE of the subjects discussed in Dr. Newman's "Grammar of Assent" is the possibility of believing in and assenting to mysteries. His theory upon the subject is contained in the following passages:—

Assent, he says, "is in itself the absolute acceptance of a proposition without any condition," and "it presupposes in order to its being made . . . some concomitant apprehension of its terms." When we assent to a proposition, "we consider it for its own sake, and in its intrinsic sense. That sense must be in some degree known to us, else we do but assert the proposition, we in nowise assent to it." He then observes, "The only question is what measure of apprehension is sufficient. And the answer to this question is equally plain,—it is the predicate of the proposition which must be apprehended. In a proposition one term is predicated of another, the subject is referred to the predicate, and the predicate gives us information about the subject; therefore, to apprehend the proposition is to have that information, and to assent to it is to acquiesce in it as true. Therefore, I apprehend a proposition when I apprehend its predicate. The subject need not be apprehended *per se* in order to a genuine assent, for it is the very thing which the predicate has to elucidate, and therefore, by its formal place in the proposition, so far as it is the subject, it is something unknown, something which the predicate makes known; but the predicate cannot make it known unless it is known itself." He gives several illustrations, of which it will be enough to quote one:—"If a child asked, 'What is lucern?' and is answered, 'Lucern, is *Medicago sativa*, of the class *Diadelphia* and order *Decandria*,' and henceforth says obediently, 'Lucern is *Medicago sativa*,' &c., he makes no act of assent to the proposition which he enunciates, but speaks like a parrot. But if he is told, 'Lucern is food for cattle,' and is shown cows grazing in a meadow, then, though he never saw lucern, and knows nothing at all

[NO. XLIX.]

about it besides what he learnt from the predicate, he is in a position to make as genuine an assent to the proposition, 'Lucern is food for cattle,' on the word of his informant, as if he knew ever so much more about lucern; and as soon as he has got as far as this, he may go further. He now knows enough about lucern to enable him to apprehend propositions which have lucern for their predicate, should they come before him for assent, as, 'That field is sown with lucern,' or, 'Clover is not lucern.' (pp. 11-13.)

It appears to me that this theory of the nature of assent and of the apprehension essential to it is wrong, and that for the theory that we can assent to propositions of which we apprehend the predicate we should substitute this:—We can assent to propositions only when we distinctly understand all their terms, and can distinctly imagine, conceive, or otherwise represent to our minds the facts which they state.

I will try to show this by examining Dr. Newman's theory in detail. A child, he says, can assent to this proposition, "Lucern is food for cattle," if it knows the meaning of the words "food for cattle." Suppose the proposition were, "Lucern food for cattle hai." The child might know perfectly well what "food for cattle" means, but unless it happened also to know that "hai" is the Hindoostanee for "is," how could it assent to the proposition, or even know that anything was proposed to it? Moreover, it could not assent to the proposition in its true meaning, unless it knew that lucern was the name of a sort of vegetable growing in the fields. This appears from Dr. Newman's own words, for he says, "If he is told lucern is food for cattle, *and is shown cows grazing in a meadow*, then he may give a genuine assent to the proposition, 'Lucern is food for cattle.'" No doubt he may, but that is because he has been told, not indeed by words, but by signs and words combined, that lucern is the name of a plant which grows in fields and is food for cattle; that is to say, he has been made to attach a distinct meaning to every part of the proposition, and to see the connection of its different parts. He can therefore give an intelligent assent to it. The next sentence makes this still more clear. "He now knows enough about lucern to enable him to apprehend propositions (*i.e.*, to understand the predicate of propositions) which have lucern for their predicate, should they come before him for assent, as, 'That field is sown with lucern,' or, 'Clover is not lucern?'" Surely this

would not be true if the child had not been told by signs or otherwise that lucern is the name of a plant which grows in fields, for if he did not know this, which he certainly could not learn from the predicate of the proposition "Lucern is food for cattle," he might assent to propositions having lucern for their predicate in a sense altogether different from that in which they were proposed to him. Thus, in assenting to, "Clover is not lucern," he might assert that clover was not food for cattle. The inference is that no assent can be given to more of a proposition than the person assenting understands.

The theory upon which Dr. Newman's illustrations are based seems to me to be characteristic of him. "In a proposition," he tells us, "one term is predicated of another. The subject is referred to the predicate, and the predicate gives us information about the subject." This regards propositions merely as collections of words, and leaves out of account the truth that propositions are important in so far as they deal with things, and that the principal use of words is to supply the place of sensation, as to things which are not within the sphere of our senses, by raising in our minds images like those which would be raised by the things to which the words apply if we had them before us. A proposition upon this theory is a set of intelligible words so disposed as to excite in the mind a distinct group of images, and upon this view, unless the words which denote the subject and the copula are understood, the predicate conveys no information at all. A proposition no doubt adds to our knowledge, but it does so not by making an intelligible affirmation about something altogether unknown, but by making an intelligible affirmation about something partially known. The proposition "London is the capital of England" does not assume absolute ignorance about London on the part of the person addressed. On the contrary, it assumes that he knows that London is the name of a town, and that he also knows what is meant by "is" and by "the capital of England." That of which he is assumed to be ignorant is the fact that the town so called is the capital of England. Indeed, till the words of a proposition are understood, it is impossible to say which is the subject and which the predicate of any proposition whatever. "Bahut gurm is the capital of British India" is a proposition which would mislead anyone who did not happen to know that 'Bahut gurm' means 'very hot,' and that those words are therefore the predicate, and not the subject of the proposition. A person who did not know this would probably suppose

that "Bahut gurm" was the name of a town, and if he assented to the proposition "Bahut gurm is the capital of British India" under that impression, he would assent not to what he was told, but to something altogether different. "I saw him" is a simple proposition, but unless it is known what both 'I' and 'him' stand for it cannot be assented to. According to Dr. Newman's rule, a man ought to be able to assent to it if he knew to whom 'him' referred, though he was completely ignorant as to who was denoted by "I." This is not all. We must not merely understand all the terms of a proposition, but their collective effect, before we can assent to it. For instance, how could any one possibly assent to these propositions, "Lightning consoles thunder," "It is six miles from one o'clock to London Bridge"? Such combinations of words are, in the strict sense of the term, nonsense, and they suggest a remark which may serve to introduce the consideration of the corollary to Dr. Newman's proposition as to the degree of apprehension necessary to belief, which is that mysteries can be assented to.

I think that many people do not clearly understand the strict sense of the word 'nonsense.' I do not think that Dr. Newman himself does so. He says in one place, "Words which make nonsense do not make a mystery. No one would call Warton's line, 'Revolving swans proclaim the welkin near,' an inconceivable assertion." (p.44.) Perhaps not, nor should I call it nonsense, strictly speaking. It is possible to affix a meaning to it. It may mean, for instance, that the fact that several swans are flying round and round each other or round a common centre shows that the sky is near us, or that it is falling on us. Now these words have a meaning, though they do not, so far as we know, correspond to any fact. The imagination can picture to itself "revolving swans," and can understand the assertions that the sky is a solid sphere capable of approaching or receding from us, and that the revolving swans are a symptom of its approach; but to such a proposition as "Lightning consoles thunder," or "It is six miles from one o'clock to London Bridge," it is as impossible to attach any meaning at all, as if the words forming the so-called propositions had been taken at random out of a dictionary. I say 'so-called' propositions, because in reality they are not propositions at all. A proposition implies, not only words which have an apparent grammatical connection; but words which call up a distinct group of images or thoughts in the mind, and unless the images or thoughts

so called up form a coherent whole, the proposition is unmeaning or nonsensical. Meaning, I fear, is only "Meinung," but I have often felt that it ought, so to speak, to be 'going-between,' 'middling,' that image in the mind which goes between the word which excites it and the thing which it resembles. When we say that the word "horse" has a meaning, and that "abracadabra" has no meaning, we say that the word "horse" calls up an image more or less distinct as we pay greater or less attention to it, whereas "abracadabra" calls up no other image than that of the sound and the letters which express it. "Nonsense" means "not sense," and this implies that sensation is an indispensable condition of language and of knowledge. Thus where there is no sensation there is no meaning, and where there is no meaning, thought ends and vain jargon begins.

With these observations I pass to the consideration of Dr. Newman's corollary that we can not only assert, but assent to mysteries. It is introduced in the fourth chapter, under the head of "Profession" (pp. 43-50), in these words:—"We have no mental hold upon the incomprehensible, except in so far as we know what is meant to be conveyed by the word. We cannot assent to a proposition which is not only beyond conception, but directly beyond comprehension. We can but assent to the truth of it."

"This leads me to the question whether belief in a mystery can be more than an assertion. I consider it can be an assent, and my reasons for saying so are as follows:—A mystery is a proposition conveying incompatible notions, or is a statement of the inconceivable. Now, we can assent to propositions (and a mystery is a proposition), provided we can apprehend them; therefore, we can assent to a mystery, for unless we apprehended it we should not recognise it to be a mystery, that is, a statement uniting incompatible notions. The same act, then, which enables us to discern that the words of the proposition express a mystery capacitates us for assenting to it. Words which make nonsense do not make a mystery." "But the question follows,—Can processes of inference end in a mystery? that is, not only in what is incomprehensible, that the stars are billions of miles from each other, but in what is inconceivable in the co-existence of (seeming) incompatibilities? For how, it may be asked, can reason carry out notions into their contradictions?—since all the developments of a truth must, from the nature of the case, be consistent with it and with each other.

I answer, certainly processes of inference, however accurate, can end in mystery, and I solve the objection to such a doctrine thus:—Our notion of a thing may be only partially faithful to the original; it may be in excess of the thing, or it may represent it incompletely, and in consequence it may serve for it, it may stand for it, only to a certain point, in certain cases, but no further. After that point is reached the notion and the thing part company, and then the notion, if still used as the representative of the thing, will work out conclusions not inconsistent with itself, but with the thing to which it no longer corresponds.” Dr. Newman illustrates this at considerable length, referring, amongst other things, to the application of algebra to geometry, which, he says, might so used so as to imply that space has four dimensions, and which produces the inexplicable formula  $\sqrt{-a}$ . This, he says, “has sometimes been considered as an abortive effort to express what is really beyond the capacity of algebraical notation, the direction and position of lines, as well as their length. When the calculus is urged on by the inevitable course of the working to do what it cannot do, it stops short as if in resistance, and protests by an absurdity.” He adds, “Our notions of things are never simply commensurate with the things themselves. They are aspects of them, more or less exact, and sometimes a mistake *ab initio*.”

The whole theory, whatever its value may be, appears to me to be vitiated by what I regard as Dr. Newman's mistaken view about the amount of apprehension necessary to enable us to assent to propositions. Of course, if you can assent to every proposition of which you can understand the predicate (which is his theory), you can assent to a proposition “conveying incompatible notions,” which is his definition of a mystery. You could assent, *e.g.*, to the proposition, “Black is white.” It equally follows that if I am right in saying that you can assent to a proposition only if and in so far as you understand its terms and their relation to each other, you cannot assent to a proposition conveying incompatible notions. Therefore, whether Dr. Newman is right in thinking that mysteries, as he defines them, can be assented to, or I, in thinking that they cannot, depends upon the question which of us is right as to the degree of apprehension necessary to assent.

To discuss the value of the theory itself would lead me too far, and would require special knowledge to which I make no claim. I



may observe, however, that persons who wish to believe in mysteries appear to me, in many cases, to give simple verbal fallacies, more or less ingenious, as illustrations of mysteries which must be believed, and which thus may serve to humble the human mind. Zeno's puzzles about motion, which are stated at length and energetically defended in Bayle's article on Zeno, have always seemed to me to fall under this category. Many of the arguments used to show that space can neither be infinitely divisible nor not infinitely divisible, seem to me to depend upon using the word "infinite" alternately as meaning too large to be measured and too small to be measured. A well-known algebraical puzzle, which I print in a foot-note, and which was once seriously proposed to me as a mystery, before which reason ought to hold its peace, is in plain words no more than this:—Twice nothing equals once nothing, therefore  $2 = 1$ .<sup>\*</sup> Algebraical mysteries are readily solved when we appreciate fully, or even as partially as I do, the symbolical character of algebra.

These considerations make me very sceptical as to the possibility of laying a foundation for Dr. Newman's argument, but admitting under protest that this can be done, the argument itself seems to me to supply a good illustration of a habit, which is eminently characteristic of its author, the habit of drawing from given premisses the opposite conclusion to that which they suggest to an ordinary mind. He tells us that a mystery is a "proposition conveying incompatible notions;" and he explains the process by which he thinks we may arrive at mysteries, by telling us that our notions about things are never simply commensurate with the things themselves, and that in consequence it often happens that our common language applies to that which it describes only up to a certain point, after which it ceases to apply to it, and so produces contradictions and absurdities. This conception of a mystery implies that it is an absurdity which marks the point at which language fails to express the facts which it was originally meant to express. To use Dr. Newman's own vigorous metaphor, "the notion and the thing have parted company, and then the notion, if still used as the representative of the thing, will work out conclusions not inconsistent with

<sup>\*</sup> Let  $a = b$ . Then  $a^2 = b^2 = ab$ .  
 $\therefore a^2 - ab = a^2 - b^2$ .  
 $\therefore a(a - b) = (a - b)(a + b)$ .  
 $\therefore a = a + b = 2a$ .  
 $\therefore 1 = 2$ .

itself, but with the thing to which it no longer corresponds." If so, a mystery is a *reductio ad absurdum* of inadequate premisses, manifesting their incompetency to represent the facts which they profess to represent. When language, legitimately used, presents absurd and conflicting results, the inference is that the terms with which we originally started must have been inadequate. "Our notions of things," as Dr. Newman says, "are sometimes a mistake *ab initio*." How can we ever have a better proof that this is so in any particular case, than the proof given by their producing absurdities and contradictions when they are worked out to their legitimate results?

This being so, I cannot understand how a mystery, as Dr. Newman defines it, can possibly be the object of assent or belief in any case. If reached in the manner described by him, it is a mere absurdity, a contradictory proposition testifying to the weakness of human language, and its inadequacy to describe certain facts. Under such circumstances, language surely becomes useless, and all that a rational person can do, is to confess his own ignorance and incompetence to deal with the subject at, or rather away from, which his language impotently points. The mystery, the proposition combining incompatible notions, suggests not that the premiss which leads to it represents the truth, but that it does not represent the truth. This is no mystery at all, but a confession of ignorance, an admission that we have got into a region of which we know nothing, and therefore ought to say nothing. To speak of a combination of contradictory words as in any sense the object of belief is, I think, a mere abuse of language; such words mark the point at which belief, knowledge, distinct or profitable thought of any kind, becomes impossible.

The only escape that I can see from this is by saying that the incompatibility is only seeming, and that the apparent mystery could be cleared up by facts with which we are unacquainted, if only we were acquainted with them. Such a mystery, it may be said, can be the object of assent. I cannot think so. We might in such cases, to use Dr. Newman's own phrase, assent to the truth of the mystery,—that is to say, we might assent to the proposition, 'Those words mean something true to somebody,' but we could not assent to the mystery or inconsistent proposition itself, because it would be to us unmeaning. A mystery so conceived is a mere riddle, and no one can assent to a riddle unless he knows the key to it. The point of a riddle is that it combines propositions as inconsistent, or

at least as incongruous as possible, relating to the same word, or parts of that same word, understood in different senses. Here is an instance which appeared to me pretty :—

“My first is a sounding sea,  
And my last is a rushing river,  
And though I am filled with a thousand sounds,  
I am doomed to be dumb for ever.”

It is easy to believe all this when you are told that it applies to a cod. But till this information is obtained, all that any one can believe on the subject is, that there is something (if one could but think of it) to which all the different and apparently incongruous propositions may be applied. Perfectly ambiguous propositions also throw light upon the impossibility of believing mysteries. If a man says that he believes “*Aio te Æacida Romanos vincere posse*,” or “Charles told James that unless he rode to London directly on his horse he would be ruined,” the incorrectness of his assertion might be immediately shown by the question whether he believed that Pyrrhus could conquer the Romans, or that the Romans could conquer Pyrrhus; that Charles or that James must ride to London on Charles’s or on James’s horse, lest Charles or lest James should be ruined. In all such cases as these the mysterious character of the proposition proposed for acceptance renders assent to it and belief in it impossible, as long as it lasts and as far as it goes.

To sum up the whole in a few words, if a mystery really purports to combine incompatibilities, it is nonsense, and cannot be believed at all.

If a mystery purports to combine seeming incompatibilities which are not real, it is a riddle, and cannot be believed till it is explained, and so ceases to be a mystery.

If contradictory consequences can be drawn from premisses which are apparently true and complete, the proper inference is, not that the contradictions are true, but that the premisses are not really true and complete. This will, in most cases, be equivalent to the inference that human language, and the observation upon which it is founded, and which it describes, are alike imperfect.

It will be observed that these consequences follow from Dr. Newman’s own premisses, modified only by what I venture to regard as a correction of his error as to the degree of apprehension necessary to assent to a proposition. If I am right, he proves that every

mystery is either nonsense, or a riddle, or a monument of the incurable defects of human language and human observation.

I now proceed to make some remarks on a subject which, though separate from, is closely connected with, the one first discussed.

In the second chapter of the "Grammar of Assent" Dr. Newman dwells upon and illustrates at some length the difference between assenting to a proposition and assenting to the truth of a proposition. The distinction seems to me to be so broad that the only objection to the language employed is, that it conveys a false impression of a greater similarity between two very different things than really exists. To assent to a proposition is mentally to assert its truth. To assent to the truth of a proposition is to assert that words of which the meaning is not understood by the assertor mean something true to some one else. Any one who understands English can assent to the proposition that the Trojans performed funeral rites at Hector's grave. No one who does not understand Greek can go beyond assenting to the truth of the proposition, *Οἷον' ἀμφίεπον τάφον Ἑκτορος*. Before considering the conditions under which it is reasonable to assent to the truth of propositions, when we cannot assent to the propositions themselves, I wish to express my dislike of the phrase "assenting to the truth of a proposition," and to explain its grounds. In a passage already quoted, Dr. Newman says, "There is a way in which a child can give an indirect assent even to a proposition in which he understood neither subject nor predicate. He cannot, indeed, without care assent to that proposition itself, but he can assent to its truth. He cannot do more than assert that lucern is *Medicago sativa*, but he can assent to the proposition that lucern is *Medicago sativa* is true." (p. 13.)

In another part of his book, Dr. Newman describes assenting to the truth of propositions thus:—"This virtual, interpretative, prospective belief is called to believe *implicitè*." The effect of this phraseology is to lead people to think that express and implied belief are two species of the same genus belief, and that a man who believes "implicitè" does the same thing under slightly different circumstances as a man who believes explicitly. I think, indeed, that in the common, popular use of language, implicit belief would be regarded as a stronger, deeper sort of faith than explicit belief. I doubt, indeed, whether one person in ten thousand knows the difference. "When you tell me that he is a good man, I believe you implicitly," would generally mean,

"I believe you absolutely, without a shadow of doubt"; in other words, it would generally mean, "I believe you explicitly." In opposition to this, I maintain that the act of believing an intelligible proposition to be true, and the act of trusting another person's assertion that an unintelligible statement is a true proposition, have so little in common that they ought not be called by the same name. To illustrate this, I will give an instance of a proposition, to the truth of which only (to use Dr. Newman's expression) most members of this Society would probably be able to assent. Let it be supposed that it is affirmed on competent authority that the following words embody a truth :—"Tu Khudáwand ko, jo terá Khudá hai, apne sáre dil, aur apni sári ján, aur apne sáre zor, aur apni sári samajh se piyár kar ; aur jaisá ap ko, waisá hí apne parosi ko." Suppose this to be believed on competent authority, what effect could that belief have on any one's mind ? How would it differ from believing this proposition on the same authority ? It is true that "Iskú tarjuma Yunani zabán se zabán i Urdú men Banaras men kiyá gayá." Each belief would be of equal value, and would, indeed, amount only to this,—that the person believing supposed the person speaking to speak the truth, or what he believed to be the truth. Next, suppose that the propositions themselves, and not the truth of the propositions, are assented to. To assent to the first proposition is to assert mentally. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. A man who really asserted this, who did actually believe it, would have adopted a principle of action capable of colouring his whole life. To assent to the second proposition would be to assert that the translation from Greek into Hindoostanee (from which the quotations are taken) was made at Benares, an assertion which could have no moral value or effect whatever. It seems to me that to call a belief in the truth of either of these propositions an implicit or indirect belief in the proposition itself is an abuse of language certain to mislead those who make use of it. It is as if "Barmecide's feast" or "dining with Duke Humphrey" were described as "implicit eating."

I may observe, in general, that the words "virtual," "interpretative," "prospective," "constructive," and the like, always appear to me to indicate an intention on the part of the person using them to escape from an error by a fiction. Legal instances

of this were once common. The law relating to contracts does not provide for certain cases, let us call them implied contracts. The definition of murder (killing with malice aforethought) is too narrow. Instead of admitting this, and amending it, let us extend it by inventing a thing which we will call implied malice or malice in law. The law of high treason is not wide enough. Well, let us stretch it a little by the doctrine of constructive treason. Whatever we do, let us never, in any case, admit that the law itself is wrong. This used to be the policy of lawyers, though it is now given up. Dr. Newman's implicit faith appears to me to be much the same sort of contrivance. "Believe and you shall be saved, do not believe and you will be damned." "I am most anxious to do what you wish, but I really do not understand you, and how can I believe what I do not understand?" "Well, of course, you cannot really believe, that is, expressly believe, what you do not understand, but you can do so virtually, and interpretatively, and implicitly, and constructively; in short, you can believe that whatever I say is true, whatever it means; and if that is not quite the same thing as believing what I say, it is very nearly the same, and it will do just as well for all practical purposes. The one is assenting to a proposition, the other is assenting to the truth of a proposition which is an indirect assent to the proposition itself. You see there is no real difference." Language of this sort may be highly convenient, but I cannot call it either sincere or accurate.

I pass, however, to the question of the conditions under which we can properly believe that words which we cannot understand do express a truth to some one else. This question cannot be fully discussed within the limits of a paper, for it is substantially identical with the question what circumstances ought to induce us to place confidence in assertions which we cannot verify by the use of our own senses. If a man tells me that a letter which he has burnt contained such and such statements, in what cases ought I to believe and in what cases ought I to disbelieve him? This question, as I have said, cannot be completely answered. As each particular case occurs, we have to decide what course we will take about it, under its special circumstances. A few observations, however, may be made which will throw some light on the subject.

The proposition  $\text{Log. cos. } 20^\circ 14' = 9.5388804$  is, to the great mass of mankind, absolutely unmeaning. I believe it,

because I found it so stated in Todhunter's trigonometry, which is a well-known text-book on the subject to which it relates; because I know enough of mathematics to know in a very general way what a logarithm is, and to have an idea of what is meant by the logarithm of the cosine of an angle of a certain number of degrees; and because I know that it is of great practical importance to work out such formulæ correctly, and that competent persons are employed to do it. In other words, though I do not understand the particular proposition, I have strong grounds to believe that those by whom it is affirmed do understand it, and I know of my own knowledge that methods of inquiry upon such subjects are in use which lead to correct results in similar cases.

This example admits of being generalised. It shows that one case in which it is reasonable to believe, on the authority of another, what you do not yourself understand, is the case in which you understand the method by which the unintelligible result is said to have been obtained, and in which you can see that the result may have been attained by it, though it is out of your power to see for yourself that such actually was the case. I know not whether any one now living except a few computers at Observatories know, of their own knowledge, that the common tables of logarithms are correct; but a very slight degree of mathematical knowledge is sufficient to enable any one to understand the principle upon which logarithms are calculated, to know that the correctness of the calculations actually made is continually being tested by practice, and to be aware that correct results are in fact brought out every day by innumerable processes which presuppose the correctness of the tables.

This principle will, I think, account for nearly every case in which it would be generally admitted that reasonable men ought to believe what they cannot themselves understand. In dealing with so wide and difficult a subject, I should be sorry to affirm positively that no other case can be put in which such a belief would be reasonable, but none occurs to me. The difficulty of putting such a case may be illustrated, by considering some instances in which it would be unreasonable to believe the truth of an unintelligible proposition.

Suppose A were to call upon us to believe that *Conx Ompax* was true, and suppose he were to accompany the demand with an admission that neither he himself nor any one else had the least notion as to what *Conx Ompax* meant, to what department of knowledge

it referred, who knew it to be true, or by what method the person who did know it to be true had arrived at his knowledge. I cannot see that any quantity of goodness, wisdom, and veracity which any one chooses to ascribe to A would afford the slightest reason for believing that *Conx Ompax* was true, in the face of A's admissions as to his own ignorance.

Next suppose that A, being a man of extraordinary goodness and veracity, and of wonderful knowledge on all sorts of subjects, were to say, "I know that the words '*Conx Ompax*' express a truth of the highest importance, though I do not choose to tell you how I know it, or to what department of things it belongs, Would it be reasonable to believe him? I think that the reasonable state of mind would be neither belief nor disbelief, but doubt. The assertion that a proposition is true, is a fact from which we may or may not draw the inference that it is true. Continual experience, varied in every possible way, shows us that assertions are frequently made, not because they are true, but for some other reason, and that the argument, "he says it, therefore it is true," is inconclusive, unless we are in a position to judge both of the motives and of the means of knowledge of the assertor and of the generic resemblance of the matter asserted to other matters of the same kind. The proof of this is to be found in carrying the illustration I have given further."

The real test of belief, to my mind, is the influence of an opinion on practice, its weight as a motive. I do not think anybody quite knows what he really does believe on any subject till circumstances call upon him to risk something on his opinion. The vulgar remark, "What will you bet?" And the vulgar inference that if a man will not back his opinion, it is because he does not really believe in it, has, I think, the deepest possible root in human nature. Applying, then, this stringent test, let us suppose A to draw practical inferences from the alleged truth of *Conx Ompax*; and let us see in what cases we ought to act on them.

Suppose, first, that A, in the most pathetic and persuasive manner, and with the help of arguments and illustrations coming home to every one, were to call upon us to practise the virtue of charity partly because *Conx Ompax* was true. "For my sake, and for the sake of *Conx Ompax*, love your neighbour as yourself." Such an exhortation would, no doubt, be influential, apart from *Conx Ompax* and the touch of mystery, the appeal for some degree of personal confidence, would

greatly increase the effect of the appeal itself upon many people. People like to be asked to make sacrifices, especially intellectual sacrifices which remind them of their ignorance and excuse their weakness.

In order to show how the *Conx Ompax* part of this statement really affects the case considered as an argument, it is necessary to vary the illustration. Suppose, then, A to declare that it follows from the truth expressed by *Conx Ompax* that every one ought to say the words "*Conx Ompax*," and that every one who does so will thereby avoid grievous miseries after his death. As there is no obvious or assignable objection to saying "*Conx Ompax*," it might perhaps be prudent to say so in the case supposed.

Next, let us suppose that the practical inference was that every one ought to cut off his hands and feet or put out his eyes. As a matter of mere argument, it would be difficult to show that this inference was less probable than the one last mentioned. Indeed, plausible reasons might be suggested for considering the latter inference the more probable of the two. It is possible to imagine some unknown power which might be gratified by a voluntary mutilation, though it is difficult to form a notion of any power which would care to make men utter two unmeaning words. I think, however, that we should all agree that a person who was ready to cut off his hands and feet and put out his eyes because any one, however wise and virtuous, advised him to do so because *Conx Ompax* was true, was a contemptible fanatic, whose sufferings one would in no degree pity if they turned out to be utterly useless. It seems to me at least to be a simple insult to any rational being to call upon him to mutilate himself for any object, except one which he can himself perceive and feel to be important enough to counterbalance the pain and the loss of the mutilation.

Lastly, let us suppose the inference suggested to be that we ought to accept as a divine command an intimation from A that the sins of the world would be atoned for by a human sacrifice on a large scale, accompanied with every circumstance of horror,—for instance, by burning alive a certain number of persons who could not or would not assert the truth of *Conx Ompax*. Very plausible arguments and respectable precedents for such a suggestion might be found, but I suppose I need not discuss the question whether such a proposal ought to be rejected with horror and disgust.

An easy and complete explanation of these illustrations is to be found in the simple reflection that the assertion of the truth of *Conx Ompax* under the circumstances suggested would afford no reasonable ground for anything more than a suspicion that it might be true, and that therefore it might perhaps be prudent to follow the advice of the person who asserted its truth, so long as he suggested practical inferences which could do no harm and give no trouble, though it would be the height of folly or crime, as the case might be, to follow his advice if he suggested acts which apart from it would be foolish or criminal.

The difficulty of giving any other explanation may be shown by some further illustrations. Let us suppose A to be a physician of the highest possible scientific attainments; and let us suppose that instead of affirming the truth of *Conx Ompax*, he were upon examining his patient to tell him that unless he submitted at once to the amputation of both his legs he would infallibly die in a few hours, and were to state his grounds for this opinion. In this case the patient would be guilty of as much weakness and cowardice in not submitting to mutilation, even though he did not understand the surgeon's reasons, as he would be if in the other case he submitted to it. Suppose, again, that a number of shipwrecked passengers were at sea in a boat, that one of them was taken ill, and that A declared that he must die in a day or two, and that unless he was thrown overboard at once he would infect and so kill all the rest. Would any one in this case hesitate to throw him overboard?

Here we have two cases of submission to mutilation, one an act of courage, the other an act of fanatical madness; and two cases of human sacrifice, one an abominable crime, and the other a case of justifiable homicide. The submission to mutilation is courageous when the person who submits to it has no reasonable doubt that it is necessary for the preservation of his life. It is disgusting and contemptible when he has some ground to conjecture that it may be highly beneficial to him after death. The human sacrifice is justifiable when those who perform it have no reasonable doubt that it is necessary for the preservation of human lives. It is an abominable crime when there is some slight evidence that it will appease some unknown being able to inflict consequences worse than death on the whole human race. This can be only because in the one case doubt is, whereas in the

other it is not, reasonable. The reasonableness or otherwise of the doubt turns upon such considerations as the following. On the one hand, every one knows that in some cases surgical operations are necessary, that it is possible to ascertain by study and observation what those cases are, that a particular class of men do study and observe the subject with a good deal of success, and that A is a distinguished member of that class of men. In the other case, though by the supposition it is known that A is a good man and an extraordinary person, his means of knowledge, the extent of his liability to error, his motives for speaking the truth, his motives for deception, his power of judging what is best for those whom he advises, are all matters of conjecture; and these elements of uncertainty ought, I think, to have this effect,—that the persons addressed should do nothing merely because A told them to do it, unless apart from his authority it is either unobjectionable or advisable, or at least advisable upon hypotheses not improbable in themselves. No doubt, the positive assertion by a good and wise man that he knows a not improbable hypothesis to be true adds something to its probability. But it does not seem to me to add much till he explains himself as to his means of knowledge.

In order to disentangle the subject from all questions collaterally connected with it, I have presented it in the barest and most abstract form, but I may observe in conclusion that the “*Conx Ompax*” illustration is designedly made quite unlike anything ever said to have been revealed to men by any person claiming to be divinely authorised to make a revelation. The history of religious controversy and of the gradual development of theology, when properly considered, deprives abstract speculations about the terms on which unmeaning words may be believed to be true of nearly all their practical importance. Theological mysteries, so far as I am aware, are never put forward in the “*Conx Ompax*” form. If they were, they would have absolutely no effect at all on the human mind. Most theological mysteries do not at once appear to be mysteries; they do not seem to involve incompatibilities when they are first stated. Vivid statements are made which excite devotional feelings in the highest degree, and the belief in which affords satisfaction to numbers of people, who wish to have some ideal object of love and devotion. The difficulties are discovered by degrees, as attempts are made to reconcile these statements with others referring to cognate subjects. These difficulties are met by

carefully constructed propositions, devised to defend the original statements against objectors; and such propositions are alleged to be mysteries. Theological mysteries are thus in many cases in the nature of explanations, and were by no means regarded by those who devised them as propositions conveying incompatible notions. It is as impossible to me to believe that the author of the Athanasian Creed or the author of the doctrine of Transubstantiation supposed himself to be putting together unmeaning words, which were to be admitted to be true, whatever they meant, as it is to believe that the Athanasian Creed and the doctrine of Transubstantiation were revealed straight out of heaven. They bear upon their faces all the marks of being the result of controversies of the ordinary type, which, as a matter of historical fact, we know they were.

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Archbishop of York

## WILL AND RESPONSIBILITY.

Not long since, the discovery that murders and suicides admitted of being calculated by average, and that the laws of Insurance could be applied to frauds by trusted servants, created a natural but unreasonable alarm. It was only a more precise form of those probabilities which gave us twelve Judges and fixed two Gaol Deliveries in one year. That there will be ten murders a year, is not more fatal to the doctrine of freedom, than that there will be *some* murders. In the one, and the other, we recognise the probable sway of a destructive passion, working as one among many ingredients of civilisation. If there are ten murders in ten millions, this does not at all affect with its necessity the individuals A and B, though people have spoken as if it did. For aught we know, A and B may have been tempted to do murder, as much as X and Y who did commit murder; but A and B may have escaped by the help of education, religion, self-respect, or internal power of resistance. If, indeed, we found that the number of ten murders was a constant element in all assemblies of a like number of men, whatever the state of religion, law, or civilisation, then we should have to recast our definition of moral freedom; for we should have to find room for this necessity. Every one, however, admits that the number of crimes can be acted on, and reduced, by means of controlling forces. That being so, there is no more a doctrine of necessity involved in average morals, than there is in average education or average income. Each represents a present, but an alterable condition. One may smile to find Büchner, who holds that a criminal is only an instrument, remarking, in a page which might serve as part of a homily on good works, "If it is impossible to imagine a state of society in which *all* crime will be rendered impossible, one can hardly deny that at least we can imagine one in which the number of crimes will be reduced to a minimum by the suppression of the causes that produce them." ("Science and Nature," vol. ii., p.

[NO. L.]

79.) That the faults and virtues of men owe something to their time and place, is as easy for all schools of thought to admit, as that they are owing to their temperament and passions.

It is one thing to invest men with the power of will, and another to suppose that that will has no limits ; and yet the two are often confounded. Actions where the motives are perfectly balanced, and only await the slightest breath of will to weigh down the vibrating scale, are rare to find ; actions in which the will has no share, on account of the overwhelming pressure of circumstances, are somewhat less rare ; but the great number of human acts are those in which the will appears to have freedom left to it, whilst it acts under the powerful pressure of motives, which combine to make one course more difficult than its opposite.

Let us suppose that it were not so, and that all actions were only the inevitable sum of several forces, acting on us, and let us see how far this view could be reconciled with social laws and order. At first sight, it appears that those who would abolish will, must also abolish punishments, or else extend them to a large class of matters that are not now thought to be criminal. If man is a mere automaton, and his actions strictly determined, then the judge upon his seat, pronouncing sentence of death in the name of an outraged society, upon a murderer whose crime has been really the act of society itself, which has produced such a man in such a state of poverty and ignorance, is a monstrous anomaly. Yet the worst enemies of the will do not propose to abolish punishments for offences. The arguments by which they would sustain them ought to throw light upon the question of liberty. Social laws are mental laws written large.

The primitive notion of punishment, it is said by some modern materialists, had nothing of expiation about it ; nor was there any of the modern idea, that laws have for their object to enable Society to protect itself. Punishment was the redressing of the balance, when something had disturbed it. If one man knocked out the eye of another, he had gained thereby an advantage over him ; and the law would redress the wrong by some mulct equal, or supposed to be equal, to the loss of the eye. The words *pæna*, *guilt*, *were-geld*, and others, have this sense of a payment or compensation. The business of the law was to indemnify a man for what he had lost at the expense of the man who had got the advantage, so that the balance might be restored. As civilisation advanced, this notion of

personal payment gave way to the notion of satisfaction to the whole society, for an alarm or disturbance of its order and security. In neither case is it necessary to weigh the motives of action, or the amount of moral wrong. Society has only to hold the balance against all disturbing forces ; the degree of guilt or the freedom of an action she neither can nor ought to weigh.

This explanation fails historically. Speaking generally, there were two primitive ideas of punishment ; the one, that crime offended against some higher law or being, and was visited with wrath and vengeance ; the other, that loss must be compensated,—an eye for an eye, payment of money for the life of a slave and the like. The evil days foreseen by Hesiod for the world in its age of iron, were days when Aidos and Nemesis should have wrapped their shining robes about them, and soared away to impenetrable heights. But days had been when Nemesis watched the world, punishing great crimes and redressing unequal fortunes, not from the point of view of man's claims, but from that of divine justice. In some form or other the idea of Nemesis has appeared in other systems. Sometimes there was more of wrath than of justice in the deities, and more of terror than of trust in the sacrifices and rites. But it may be said that the government of men upon a pure system of compensation to them for losses by crimes, is not a condition of things disclosed by history. Both these ideas, the Nemesis and the compensation, have undergone a change ; and for the former we now put the wrong done to society ; for the latter, the private injury, we provide compensation by "damages." But these two are very differently treated, both as to the extent of the consequences and the discredit of them. The former may affect social position, personal liberty, life itself ; the latter involves a money payment ; and personal consequences of another kind come in only where the payment is in default. What is the reason of this enormous difference ?

A man is assaulted in the street. In a moment of frenzy he snatches up a knife from a neighbouring butcher's shop, and stabs his assailant to the heart. A man is assaulted in the street. He draws a knife from his breast, and slays his assailant. It is proved that he has carried the knife about for weeks, has declared that if this person assailed him he would use the knife, has made known an undying hatred which he bears him. In each case a life has been taken, and society is asked for redress. The one case is

manslaughter, and the other is murder ; for the one a slight punishment is awarded, for the other death. There seems to be no reason for this difference, if society has only to redress and compensate the loss of a life in each case. The difference is one of malice and intention only.

It may also be asked whether capital punishment could ever be inflicted as a restoration of a disturbed balance. If a murder makes a widow and orphans, it is to no one's advantage that the murderer should also leave a widow and orphans. The *vendetta* thus set on foot has, in more than one country, produced a chain of murders.

In short, the doctrine that the criminal is a man who gets more than his share, and that social laws, by assuring him that all that he takes more than his share must be repaid, make it not worth his while to offend, leaves something out of the account, and only partially explains the facts of the cases.

Another favourite theory at present is that of general utility. Society punishes what is injurious to her ; still more, what threatens her existence. On the side of society, self-preservation is the object of punishment ; on the side of the individual who suffers punishment, the object is to deter him and others from offences against society, by means of the motive of fear, and so to force him to live in harmony with, and no longer as an enemy of, the social system in which he finds himself. It is only in harmony with society that he can find his own happiness. There is no tyranny in inflicting on a man such punishment as will deter him from injuring society. "To punish a man for his own good, is no more unjust than to administer medicine." [J. S. Mill.]

But this theory fails in all the most serious cases. For a grave crime a man is imprisoned for years or for life, or is put to death. It is a mockery to say that these punishments educate him as a member of society ; they begin by taking possession of that life, or the best years of it, in which alone he can serve society. The spectacle may deter other people from like crimes, but he is sacrificed. Why have such encroachments been made on his liberty for society's sake ? Even in cases of lighter punishments, he must have little knowledge of them, who thinks that a sojourn in a gaol is a step in good education. Far more often it stamps the offender with the permanent seal and token that he belongs to the criminal class. We

had better admit at once that, for the sake of the rest of society, we disregard the effects on the criminal himself in a greater or less degree.

In this kind of self-defence, "the only condition required is that the end, which society is attempting to enforce by means of punishment, should be a just one." [J. S. Mill.] Now what are "just rights" of society? What is its "good"? "The good," says Mole-schott, "is that which, at a given moment in the development of humanity, corresponds to the needs of the human race." But on this point, the man punished has some right to an opinion. It would require something more than the vote of a majority to silence his defence. What is best for the species? If the crime is poaching, he believes the time to be come already when the Game Laws have ceased to be for the interest of the human race, and should be abolished; but if so, it is tyrannous to take his liberty for violating their complex provisions. Even the crime of infanticide might be justified on the ground that a particular people had not room to live, and that the population must be reduced. A man may be heavily punished at one time for what will be no crime at all a little later; yet Society can justify this on the same ground, that makes it "just to put a wild beast to death." [J. S. Mill.] Mr. Mill makes light of the notion that the theory of utility would admit the punishment of people who are only bores or encumbrances. Yet it is difficult to see how they are protected under it. The violent removal of a useless monarch, of the old and helpless, of the hopelessly diseased, of a lunatic proprietor of large estates which his son would administer better; all these are cases which the law at present forbids, but which might receive legal sanction under the influence of modern theories.

It is curious to notice that in all these discussions another element is always waiting at the door ready to slip in. Büchner, in the passage quoted above, appeals to the wills of men to remove out of the way such obstacles as enslave men's wills. Mill seems to abandon the whole question when he admits that "we are under a moral obligation to seek the improvement of our moral character," and calls it a "vital truth in moral psychology that we can improve our character *if we will*."

This admission is all that need be demanded. Punishments are only justified, as it would appear, on the supposition that every

man has in him, until he has lost or destroyed it, not only the will, but the will to promote his own good and his own improvement; that he is accountable for the use to which he puts this power; and that the reason he is accountable is that, in spite of motives which determine his actions, he has either by himself, or by means of helps external to him, or by both, the power to promote his own improvement more or less, and to avert his fall. Accountable to God, he is also accountable to society, which is not bound to frame laws to suit those who violate the laws of their own being. Society, having provided that the fruits of industry and frugality shall be guaranteed to those who gather them, punishes the marauder not because he is a nuisance, not because he is in a minority as to his opinions on property, but because he has, with frugality and industry before him as examples, chosen to degrade himself, and to oppose them instead of imitating, and so has forfeited his rights. Such a power of self-improvement is not necessarily a single power or act of the soul; we do not go into that question. But if it is more than mere will, it implies will. Nor does it seem to be possible to reason on these subjects, even for a few minutes, without allowing the conception of a power of volition to creep in. The language of the judge to the criminal, fully interpreted, would always be, "You have sold yourself into bondage by your offences. A mind that might have been making a step towards freedom has by its act of guilt enslaved itself, and so we treat you as a slave."

Modern legislation seems to aim at giving shape to the theory that men are free, but are biassed towards vice and crime in different degrees. By reformatory education after first conviction, by a sliding scale of penalties that presses with increasing force on each new conviction, by a delicate graduation of fines, of times of imprisonment, and of conditions of labour, and the like, the various grades of responsibility are recognised; and they are so numerous and obscurely marked, that no system can measure them completely. The irresponsible may now and then be punished; in vulgar language, the person who "never had a chance" may be sentenced as if he had been free. In the crime of murder justice will always perhaps think more of defending society than of tempering punishment to responsibility. But upon the whole, the modern tendency is to recognise the two factors—the free power of self-improvement, and the determining force of circumstances, and to graduate punishments according to the relative power of these two.

From some modern systems of philosophy, however, one of those factors is excluded, and not without danger perhaps to real liberty. The right of man to freedom and safety rests on the principle that as long as he uses his power of self-conduct, without any moral offence, there is no right to use him as a slave, a means, a thing, and to punish him for the general good. The young recruit, in a terrible crisis of battle, falters and trembles at the sight of blood ; he is shot down as a warning to cowards ; but there was no real guilt, and his death was an evil incident in an evil condition, that of war. Civil society could not imitate it, and be in a true sense an association of free men. A moment's nervous tremor is not enough to forfeit one's right to life. But if, as Mill says, individual right is only a power which it is the interest of society to confer on the individual ; and if society has the right to do all that is necessary for the race in the particular phase of its development, then the individual is wholly dependent on the society, and the charter of his rights can be torn and scattered at any time, on the plea of a social necessity. Happily our actions are wider than our philosophy.

The heroes of history are those who have had to set their wills against the social system, or above it ; and posterity honours and thanks them, because they showed that they held their rights in themselves, and from some higher power, and not as agents and lessees of society.

Perhaps we shall come nearer to truth, on the subject of the human will, in studying the will and freedom of man, as reflected upon our legal and social system, than by direct analysis. Of matter, life, consciousness, and freedom, we can give but a lame account. We constantly postulate their existence, and bungle when we try to define them. When we pursue the roots of will down into the soil where they grow, we find the soil of causes only ; and we are apt to say that there is nothing but a heap of causes, determining all that shall grow out of them. But in dealing with life and conduct, we cannot escape for a minute from the conceptions of a will and of right. It is said that man, like the rest of creatures, is the result of mechanical causes, that he is an automaton, that his acts are necessary and determined ; but if we only have left us the fact that he has the power to intend, and labour towards, his own improvement, we may be content to admit that he is in many respects dependent, and his actions controlled and biassed. We have here a sufficient fulcrum

on which to rest wise laws, education, aspirations after a highest good, infinite hopes for the soul ; and we need not fear to explore those natural influences to which he owes the limitation of his freedom on the one side, and from which he borrows motives to assist his feeble will on the other.

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TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 1875.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

Prof. Clifford

## ON THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF MORALS.

I MEAN by Science the application of experience to new circumstances, by aid of an order of nature which has been observed in the past, on the assumption that such order will continue in the future. The simplest use of experience as a guide to action is probably not even conscious ; it is the association by continually-repeated selection of certain actions with certain circumstances, as in the unconsciously-acquired craft of the maker of flint implements. I still call this science, although it is only a beginning ; because the physiological process is a type of what takes place in all later stages. The next step may be expressed in the form of a hypothetical maxim,—“If you want to make brass, melt your copper alone with this blue stone.” To a maxim of this sort it may always be replied, “I not want to make brass, and so I shall not do as you tell me.” This reply is anticipated in the final form of science, when it is expressed as a statement or proposition : brass is an alloy of copper and zinc, and calamine is zinc carbonate. Belief in a general statement is an artifice of our mental constitution, whereby infinitely various sensations and groups of sensations are brought into connection with infinitely various actions and groups of actions. On the phenomenal side there corresponds a certain cerebral structure, by which various combinations of disturbances in the sensor tract are made to lead to the appropriate combinations of disturbances in the motor tract. The important point is that science, though apparently transformed into pure knowledge, has yet never lost its character of being a *craft* ; and that it is not the knowledge itself which can rightly be called science, but a special way of getting and of using knowledge. Namely, science is the getting of knowledge from experience on the assumption of uniformity in nature, and the use of such knowledge to guide the actions of men. And the most abstract statements or propositions in science are to be regarded as bundles of hypothetical maxims packed into a portable shape and size. Every scientific fact is a short-hand expression for a vast number of practical directions : if you want so-and-so, do so-and-so.

[NO. LI.]

If with this meaning of the word "Science," there is such a thing as a scientific basis of Morals, it must be true that,—

1, The maxims of Ethic are hypothetical maxims

2, derived from experience

3, on the assumption of uniformity in nature.

These propositions I shall now endeavour to prove; and in conclusion, I shall indicate the direction in which we may look for those general statements of fact whose organisation will complete the likeness of ethical and physical science.

### *The Tribal Self.*

What we commonly call *self* is an aggregate of feelings and of objects related to them which hangs together as a conception by virtue of long and repeated association. My self does not include all my feelings, because I habitually separate off some of them, say they do not properly belong to me, and treat them as my enemies. On the other hand, it does in general include my body regarded as an object, because of the feelings which occur simultaneously with events which affect it. My foot is certainly part of myself, because I get hurt when anybody treads on it. When we desire anything for its somewhat remote consequences, it is not common for these to be represented to the mind in the form of the actual feelings of pleasure which are ultimately to flow from the satisfaction of the desire; instead of this, they are replaced by a symbolic conception which represents the thing desired as doing good to the complex abstraction *self*. This abstraction serves thus to support and hold together those complex and remote motives which make up by far the greater part of the life of the intelligent races. When a thing is desired for no immediate pleasure that it can bring, it is generally desired on account of a certain symbolic substitute for pleasure, the feeling that this thing is suitable to the self. And, as in many like cases, this feeling, which at first derived its pleasurable nature from the faintly represented simple pleasures of which it was a symbol, ceases after a time to recall them and becomes a simple pleasure itself. In this way the self becomes a sort of centre about which our remoter motives revolve, and to which they always have regard; in virtue of which, moreover, they become immediate and simple, from having been complex and remote.

If we consider now the simpler races of mankind, we shall find not only that immediate desires play a far larger part in their lives, and so that the conception of self is less used

and less developed, but also that it is less definite and more wide. The savage is not only hurt when anybody treads on his foot, but when anybody treads on his tribe. He may lose his hut, and his wife, and his opportunities of getting food. In this way the tribe becomes naturally included in that conception of self which renders remote desires possible by making them immediate. The actual pains or pleasures which come from the woe or weal of the tribe, and which were the source of this conception, drop out of consciousness and are remembered no more; the symbol which has replaced them becomes a centre and goal of immediate desires, powerful enough in many cases to override the strongest suggestions of individual pleasure or pain.

Here a helping cause comes in. The tribe, *quâ* tribe, has to exist, and it can only exist by aid of such an organic artifice as the conception of the tribal self in the minds of its members. Hence the natural selection of those races in which this conception is the most powerful and most habitually predominant as a motive over immediate desires. To such an extent has this proceeded that we may fairly doubt whether the selfhood of the tribe is not earlier in point of development than that of the individual. In the process of time it becomes a matter of hereditary transmission, and is thus fixed as a specific character in the constitution of social man. With the settlement of countries, and the aggregation of tribes into nations, it takes a wider and more abstract form; and in the highest natures, the tribal self is incarnate in nothing less than humanity. Short of these heights, it places itself in the family and in the city. I shall call that quality or disposition of man which consists in the supremacy of the family or tribal self as a mark of reference for motives, by its old name *Piety*. And I have now to consider certain feelings and conceptions to which the existence of piety must necessarily give rise.

#### *Approbation and Conscience.*

The tribe has to exist. Such tribes as saw no necessity for it have ceased to live. To exist, it must encourage piety; and there is a method which lies ready to hand.

We do not like a man whose character is such that we may reasonably expect injuries from him. This dislike of a man on account of his character is a more complex feeling than the mere dislike of separate injuries. A cat likes your hand, and your lap, and the food you give her; but I do not think she has any conception

of you. A dog, however, may like *you* even when you thrash him, though he does not like the thrashing. Now such likes and dislikes may be felt by the tribal self. If a man does anything good for the tribe, my tribal self may say, in the first place, I like that thing that you have done. By such common approbation of individual acts the influence of piety as a motive becomes defined; and natural selection will in the long-run preserve those tribes which have approved the right things. But in the second place, a man may as a rule and constantly, being actuated by piety, do good things for the tribe; and in that case the tribal self will say, I like *you*. The feeling expressed by this statement on the part of any individual, "In the name of the tribe, I like you," is what I call *approbation*. It is the feeling produced in pious individuals by that sort of character which is beneficial to the community.

Now suppose that a man has done something obviously harmful to the community. Either some immediate desire, or his individual self, has for once proved stronger than the tribal self. When the tribal self wakes up, the man says, "In the name of the tribe, I do not like this thing that I, as an individual, have done." This Self-judgment in the name of the tribe is called Conscience. If the man goes further and draws from this act and others an inference about his own character, he may say, "In the name of the tribe, I do not like my individual self." This is remorse. Mr. Darwin has well pointed out that immediate desires are in general strong but of short duration, and cannot be adequately represented to the mind after they have passed; while the social forces, though less violent, have a steady and continuous action.

In a mind sufficiently developed to distinguish the individual from the tribal self, conscience is thus a necessary result of the existence of piety; it is ready to hand as a means for its increase. But to account for the existence of piety and conscience in the elementary form which we have hitherto considered, is by no means to account for the present moral nature of man. We shall be led many steps in that direction if we consider the way in which society has used these feelings of the individual as a means for its own preservation.

#### *Right and Responsibility.*

A like or a dislike is one thing; the expression of it is another. It is attached to the feeling by links of association; and when this association has been selectively modified by experience, whether consciously or unconsciously, the expression serves a *purpose* of retain-

ing or repeating the thing liked, and of removing the thing disliked. Such a purpose is served by the expression of tribal approbation or disapprobation, however little it may be the conscious end of such expression to any individual. It is necessary to the tribe that the pious character should be encouraged and preserved, the impious character discouraged and removed. The process is of two kinds; direct and reflex. In the direct process the tribal dislike of the offender is precisely similar to the dislike of a noxious beast; and it expresses itself in his speedy removal. But in the reflex process we find the first trace of that singular and wonderful judgment by analogy which ascribes to other men a consciousness similar to our own. If the process were a conscious one, it might perhaps be described in this way: the tribal self says, "Put yourself in this man's place; he also is pious, but he has offended, and that proves that he is not pious enough. Still, he has some conscience, and the expression of your tribal dislike to his character, awakening his conscience, will tend to change him and make him more pious." But the process is not a conscious one; the social craft or art of living together is learned by the tribe and not by the individual, and the purpose of improving men's characters is provided for by complex social arrangements long before it has been conceived by any conscious mind. The tribal self learns to approve certain expressions of tribal liking or disliking; the actions whose open approval is liked by the tribal self are called right actions, and those whose open disapproval is liked are called wrong actions. The corresponding characters are called good or bad, virtuous or vicious.

This introduces a further complication into the conscience. Self-judgment in the name of the tribe becomes associated with very definite and material judgment by the tribe itself. On the one hand, this undoubtedly strengthens the motive-power of conscience in an enormous degree. On the other hand, it tends to guide the decisions of conscience; and since the expression of public approval or disapproval is made in general by means of some organised machinery of government, it becomes possible for conscience to be knowingly directed by the wise or misdirected by the wicked; instead of being driven along the right path by the slow selective process of experience. Now right actions are not those which are publicly approved, but those whose public approbation a well-instructed tribal self would like. Still, it is impossible to avoid the guiding influence of expressed approbation on the great mass of the people; and in those cases

where the machinery of government is approximately a means of expressing the true public conscience, that influence becomes a most powerful help to improvement.

Let us note now the very important difference between the direct and the reflex process. To clear a man away as a noxious beast, and to punish him for doing wrong, these are two very different things. The purpose in the first case is merely to get rid of a nuisance ; the purpose in the second case is to improve the character either of the man himself or of those who will observe this public expression of disapprobation. The offence of which the man has been guilty leads to an inference about his character, and it is supposed that the community may contain other persons whose characters are similar to his, or tend to become so. It has been found that the expression of public disapprobation tends to awake the conscience of such people and to improve their characters. If the improvement of the man himself is aimed at, it is assumed that he has a conscience which can be worked upon and made to deter him from similar offences in future.

When a man can be punished for doing wrong with approval of the tribal self, he is said to be *responsible*. Responsibility implies two things :—(1), The act was a product of the man's character and of the circumstances, and his character may to a certain extent be inferred from the act ; (2), The man had a conscience which might have been so worked upon as to prevent his doing the act. Unless the first condition be fulfilled, we cannot reasonably take any action at all in regard to the man, but only in regard to the offence. In the case of crimes of violence, for example, we might carry a six-shooter to protect ourselves against similar possibilities, but unless the fact of a man's having once committed a murder made it probable that he would do the like again, it would clearly be absurd and unreasonable to lynch the man. That is to say, we assume a uniformity of connection between character and actions, infer a man's character from his past actions, and endeavour to provide against his future actions either by destroying him or by changing his character. I think it will be found that in all those cases where we not only deal with the offence but treat it with moral reprobation, we imply the existence of a conscience which might have been worked upon to improve the character. Why, for example, do we not regard a lunatic as responsible ? Because we are in possession of information about his character derived not only from his one offence

but from other facts, whereby we know that even if he had a conscience left, his mind is so diseased that it is impossible by moral reprobation alone to change his character so that it may be subsequently relied upon. With his cure from disease and the restored validity of this condition, responsibility returns. There are, of course, cases in which an irresponsible person is punished as if he were responsible, *pour encourager les autres* who are responsible. The question of the right or wrong of this procedure is the question of its average effect on the character of men at any particular time.

*The Categorical Imperative.*

May we now say that the maxims of Ethic are hypothetical maxims? I think we may, and that in showing why we shall explain the apparent difference between them and other maxims belonging to an early stage of science. In the first place, ethical maxims are learned by the tribe and not by the individual. Those tribes have on the whole survived in which conscience approved such actions as tended to the improvement of men's characters as citizens and therefore to the survival of the tribe. Hence it is that the moral sense of the individual, though founded on the experience of the tribe, is purely intuitive; conscience gives no reasons. Notwithstanding this, the ethical maxims are presented to us as conditional; if you want to live together in this complicated way, your ways must be straight and not crooked, you must seek the truth and love no lie. Suppose we answer "I don't want to live together with other men in this complicated way; and so I shall not do as you tell me." That is not the end of the matter, as it might be with other scientific precepts. For obvious reasons it is *right* in this case to reply, "Then in the name of my people I do not like you," and to express this dislike by appropriate methods. And the offender, being descended from a social race, is unable to escape his conscience, the voice of his tribal self, which says, "In the name of the tribe, I hate myself for this treason that I have done."

There are two reasons, then, why ethical maxims appear to be unconditional. First, they are acquired from experience not directly but by tribal selection, and therefore in the mind of the individual they do not rest upon the true reasons for them. Secondly, although they are conditional, the absence of the condition in one born of a social race is rightly visited by moral reprobation.

*Ethics are based on Uniformity.*

I have already observed that to deal with men as a means of in-

fluencing their actions implies that these actions are a product of character and circumstances ; and that moral reprobation and responsibility cannot exist unless we assume the efficacy of certain special means of influencing character. It is not necessary to point out that such considerations necessarily involve that uniformity of nature which underlies the possibility of even unconscious adaptations to experience, of language, and of general conceptions and statements. It may be asked "are you quite sure that these observed uniformities between motive and action, between character and motive, between social influence and change of character, are absolutely exact in the form you state them, or indeed that there are exact laws of any form ? May there not be very slight divergencies from exact laws, which will allow of the action of an 'uncaused will,' or of the interference of some 'extramundane force' ?" I am sure I do not know. But this I do know ; that our sense of right and wrong is derived from such order as we can observe, and not from such caprice of disorder as we may fancifully conjecture ; and that to whatever extent a divergence from exactness became sensible, to that extent it would destroy the most wide-spread and worthy of the acquisitions of mankind.

*The Final Standard.*

The matters of fact on which rational ethic must be founded are the laws of modification of character, and the evidence of history as to those kinds of character which have most aided the improvement of the race. For although the moral sense is intuitive, it must for the future be directed by our conscious discovery of the tribal purpose which it serves. Now the tribal purpose is perfection, and not happiness ; for which reason it seems to me that the ethic of science is not utilitarian in the ordinary sense. *Farri migliori ; questo ha da essere lo scopo della vostra vita.*

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to "Mr. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S.W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*

Bishop of Peterborough

## HOSPITALS FOR INCURABLES CONSIDERED FROM A MORAL POINT OF VIEW.

I PROPOSE in this paper to attempt the practical application in a single instance of certain theories of Human Life and Morals recently set forth with much weight of authority. I shall, in the first place, state the conditions of the problem to be solved, in their simplest and most elementary form; and in the next place, the respective theories by the help of which I propose to attempt its solution.

### *Problem to be solved.*

Given an old woman afflicted with incurable cancer—certain to die, say, in twelve months from the present date—and meanwhile unable from poverty to obtain proper nursing, medical alleviation of her sufferings, or even the means of sustaining existence, without the aid of others, while I, on the other hand, am able to supply all her wants in these respects.

Given further, the following conditions:—

A. That there is nothing *supernatural* in either of us,—*i.e.*, nothing in which our nature essentially differs from that of any other known animal,—our differences from other animals being purely anatomical, as, for instance, that she and I are possessed of thumbs, of great toes of a peculiar shape, of hippocampus majors in our brains, and of certain useless intestinal appendages, by virtue of which we claim to be superior animals, but animals merely.

B. That there is nothing *supernatural* outside of us,—*i.e.*, that there is no being distinct from us who has created us, and whose relation to each of us as creator might be for us the ground of certain relations and mutual obligations, or who could have given us either information or direction as to these relations and obligations, or as to any design of our being, by accordance with or discordance from which the moral qualities of our dealings with each other might be tested.

The question arises,—What, under these conditions, is my duty  
[NO. LII.]

towards that old woman, and what is the duty of the State towards us both as regards Hospitals for Incurables?

I have obviously before me the proverbial three courses. I may—

- (1) Provide her with medical and other comforts for the remainder of her days ; or I may
- (2) Leave her alone ; or I may
- (3) Terminate her existence.

I may comfort, neglect, or kill her. Which of these three courses ought I to take? If this question were to be decided on the ground of authority only, I should probably choose the second of these courses, which has in its favour the example of the great majority of mankind in all ages. But inasmuch as each of the other two courses has in its favour the example of considerable minorities of mankind, and as the third has not only the prestige of great antiquity, but the presumption in its favour of a power of survival which has preserved it to the present day, the argument from authority, powerful as it is in questions of morals, cannot here be regarded as conclusive. It cannot, I think, be pressed farther than to show that no one of these three courses can be regarded as inhuman or unnatural.

We must have recourse to other bases of Morals in order to decide which of these courses is the right one to follow.

### *Three Bases of Morals.*

Of these Bases of Morals there are three, by the help of each of which I would propose to consider in this case the proper course of action.

These are :—

1. The Mechanical.    2. The Utilitarian.    3. The Perfectionist.

Let us take each of these in their order.

According to the first of these, if I understand it rightly, all of us, both men and brutes, are conscious automata—machines, that is to say (though improperly so called, inasmuch as a machine implies a mechanist), machines all whose actions are *mechanically* necessary, —the inevitable and involuntary result of certain mechanical agitations in our brains, accompanied by, but in no way whatever caused by, certain sensations, one of which we call volition, but which volition has nothing to do with the genesis of our actions, and is itself as mechanically and as necessarily generated by circumstances wholly beyond our choice or control as they are.

On this theory I confess myself utterly unable to see anything save the absolute moral indifference of these three courses of action. I feel myself necessarily impelled by the molecular agitations which logic produces in my brain to say that there can be no moral responsibility attaching to the mechanically necessary movements of machines, the consciousness which accompanies these movements being as mechanical and as necessary as the movements themselves.

If I were to drive a knife into the heart of this supposed old woman, no one would dream of blaming the knife for its share in that transaction; it being not only an involuntary, but an unconscious agent. If a stronger being than myself were to fasten a knife in my hand and drive it against my will into her heart, no one would dream of blaming me for my share in that transaction,—I being, though not an unconscious, yet an involuntary agent.

If my consent or will happen to go with that act of the stronger being, or if I perform the act myself—the consent or the action being in this case as completely beyond my control and as purely mechanical and necessary as the motion of my hand in the former case—I cannot see how, in this case, I am one whit more morally responsible than my arm in the second, or than the knife in the first case.

Nay, there is even a secondary and improper sense in which we might blame the knife, and in which we cannot blame the man. We might say of the knife, if it did its work bluntly and ineffectually, that it was a bad knife; but we should say this because we regarded the knife as a machine, whose maker designed it for a particular end, viz., sharp cutting, and therefore in a metaphorical and analogical sense, we might say of the knife which failed to answer the design of its maker that it was a bad knife. But it is clear that we could not say this of any human being, unless we suppose him to have had a maker and to be made with a design. Any application, therefore, of moral epithets to human actions should be carefully eschewed by those who reject the idea of a designer of humanity, inasmuch as they certainly tend to foster this idea.

I know that I am warned against these conclusions by high authority as savouring of "logic," of which I am told I am to "beware,"—a warning which seems to me, however, as reasonable and as hopeful as that of the driver of a train who, having driven it to the edge of a precipice, should jump off as it was going over, with

the warning to the passengers,—“Beware of steam!” Logic is as real a fact as steam. Once on the two grooves of the Major and Minor of a syllogism, we must go on whither they lead us, in spite of all the warnings of the man who has laid down the rails and got up the steam.

Admitting, however, for argument's sake, the moral quality of mechanically necessary actions, there is much to be said in favour of the third of these three courses. Undoubtedly, if we had in like case to deal with one of those animals which we are pleased to call inferior, we should not hesitate to shoot it, either in order to put it out of its misery, or to save ourselves the cost of keeping it, or the pain of witnessing its agonies. Now, assuming that this old woman is simply an animal, and no more, I fail to see how the fact that she is a superior animal should give her any exemption from the fate of an incurably diseased horse or dog. I can see no more sacredness, on this theory, in the one form of life than in the other. The assertion that there is seems to me fraught with dangerous and even (if I may use the word “moral” in this context) immoral consequences. For if the superior animal, simply because it is superior, may rightfully kill the inferior animal, I cannot see why a very superior man may not rightfully kill a very inferior man, supposing in both cases, of course, sufficient reason of convenience or comfort to the superior were to call for this killing,—as, for instance, why Babbage and Leech might not rightly have killed the organ-grinders who were killing them; or why a Sir Isaac Newton might not rightfully kill a Crétin, between whom and Sir Isaac there would probably be less difference than between the Crétin and an intelligent dog.

And if it be alleged that human nature revolts against the idea of destroying diseased and repulsive human beings for our own convenience and comfort, or even to relieve them from misery, and that therefore such an action, if not immoral, is at any rate unnatural and odious; we must remember that human nature, or what we practically mean by that term—namely, our English human nature—has for many centuries been under the influence of certain beliefs as to the sacredness of human life—which, if they are ever dispelled by pure science, might leave a human nature by no means so averse to the killing of human beings as ours now in most cases happens to be.

There are, however, certain considerations of enlightened self-

interest which tend, I admit, rather in the direction either of leaving this old woman alone, or even of placing her in a Hospital for Incurables. It may be urged that the knowledge of the best means of alleviating incurable disease acquired in such an Hospital might prove useful to ourselves; and also that the principle that one human animal may, for its own greater convenience or comfort, kill an inferior human animal, might, if generally acted on by inconsiderate or ignorant persons, have unpleasant consequences for ourselves. To the former of these pleas, however, it may be replied that it might, after all, be better for ourselves, that if incurably diseased, we should be painlessly extinguished, than that we should be alleviated. As regards the latter of these, it might be urged that, at any rate, it could not apply to the extinction of diseased lives, under proper precautions and with due solemnities, by the State.

On the whole, therefore—on this mechanical theory of human life—I incline to the opinion that if there be any morality in the case, the balance is rather in favour of the extinction than of the preservation of the incurably diseased life; if not by the individual, yet, at least, by the State. I do not think, however, that on this theory we should be justified in pronouncing either of the two other courses to be immoral.

#### *The Utilitarian Theory.*

Let us, in the next place, try this question on the Utilitarian or “greatest happiness of the greatest number” theory, and as this theory is confessedly too difficult of application to be a guide for the actions of individuals, I shall test by it my second question,—whether the State should allow of Hospitals for Incurables.

I confess, however, to a serious practical difficulty in the way of applying this theory to any actions whatsoever. It gives us no definition of what is this “greatest number” whose happiness is to be aimed at. Is this the greatest number of sentient beings, no matter of what kind or quality, or is it the greatest number of human beings? If the former, then undoubtedly the State ought to extinguish all cancerous old women, inasmuch as the number of sentient beings who would find happiness in devouring them after death would be incalculably greater than the number of persons so extinguished, even if we add to it the small number of persons who now find their happiness in ministering to their wants. On the same principle, we may observe that the resistance

of a tribe of Africans to the locusts who find their "greatest happiness" in eating green crops would be decidedly immoral. If, on the other hand, we limit the right of "greatest happiness" to human beings, we can only do so on the principle that the right to happiness depends, not on the number, but on the quality of the sentient beings concerned,—men, for instance, because they are men, *i.e.*, higher animals, being more entitled to be happy than locusts.

But this limitation is obviously fatal to the "greatest number" theory, inasmuch as it proceeds on the exactly opposite principle, that a lesser number of superior beings, and therefore of superior human beings, have a better right to be happy than a greater number of inferior ones, a theory which we know was long insisted on in defence of the enslaving of black men by white ones.

Assuming, however, that this greatest happiness is the right of the superior members of the human race, and that the State should aim at this, it may be questioned whether this is not merely a roundabout way of saying that the State should aim at making good men happy ; and if so, the answer to the question whether the State, on this principle, should allow of Hospitals for Incurables depends on ascertaining whether their existence gives happiness to good men. But inasmuch as if these Hospitals are not good or right institutions, good men ought not to approve of them, we get here into the vicious circle of testing the goodness of an institution by the goodness of the persons who take pleasure in it, and then of testing the goodness of these persons by the goodness of the institution that makes them happy.

Assuming, however, this 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' to mean that of the greatest number of human beings simply, it seems to me clear that Hospitals for Incurables should be suppressed by the State, as decidedly immoral institutions. For obviously, on this theory, the quantity of happiness for humanity is limited, and a good Government is, therefore, bound to sacrifice the happiness of the lesser to that of the greater number of its subjects. But if happiness be a limited quantity, so also must be many of its factors, *e.g.*, wealth, comfort, leisure, amusement, cheerfulness, gaiety, and the like. Clearly, therefore, all diseased, helpless and repulsive forms of existence detract from the general stock of human happiness,—indirectly by contributing nothing to it, directly by withdrawing from it the wealth, leisure, cheerfulness, or gaiety which otherwise would

go into the general stock of happiness. All such existences are injurious to the State, they are the *bouches inutiles* in the great siege which humanity sustains against misery and should be dealt with accordingly. Indeed, they may even be reckoned among the *classes dangereuses*. An old woman with a cancerous diathesis is as truly, though not as seriously, inconvenient to the State as an old woman with a murderous diathesis. The molecular constitution of each is socially mischievous, and though it is true that the murderous constitution is more dangerous than the cancerous, yet, on the other hand, the former is presumably curable, and may be treated by appropriate remedies,—the latter, being incurable, can only be dealt with effectually by extinction. These arguments for the extinction of incurably diseased lives by the State are strengthened considerably by those which have lately been urged in favour of suicide.

It is argued, with much plausibility, that it is the duty of those whose lives are hopelessly burdensome to themselves and to others, to relieve themselves and Society of this burden by self-extinction. Clearly, therefore, to assist such persons in prolonging their lives, is immorally to aid and abet others in an immoral neglect of duty. It is only carrying this principle one step further, to say that the State should at least forbid such aid, as being socially mischievous, even if it do not go the length of requiring such persons to do their duty to themselves and their families, or if they fail to do it, of doing it for them.

It may, however, be urged, on the other hand, that such a course of action on the part of the State might tend to produce a hard and uncompassionate temper of society, and that as compassion is undoubtedly an emotion of great social utility, such a proceeding would be contrary to sound Utilitarian principles. The answer, however, is obvious. The *emotion* of compassion is undoubtedly of high social utility. But the indiscriminate *gratification* of that emotion is undoubtedly most mischievous to society, while the restraint of its exercise to proper objects no more tends to weaken the emotion itself than the narrowing of a stream tends to make it shallow. Once let it be clearly understood that incurably diseased paupers are not proper objects for the exercise of compassion, and the prolongation of their lives will excite, in all properly regulated minds, the same indignation that is now excited by indiscriminate almsgiving,—an indignation which is felt, as we know, by persons of the most warm and active benevolence.

There is, I admit, one fatal objection to the whole of this argument, namely, that it assumes the moral right of the greatest number to be happy, and that this again assumes the moral right of any one individual to be happy, and that this again assumes, as its only possible basis, that argument from design which modern science so decidedly rejects. This objection, however, lies outside the scope of this paper, which only pretends to apply—and not to discuss—the theories with which it deals.

*The Perfectionist Theory.*

Lastly, we may apply to this question the theory of a Scientific basis of Morals set forth in a paper lately read before this Society. On this theory, the ultimate standard of morals is not utility, but perfection, society, we are told, tending naturally and inevitably towards this perfection by the development of a Tribal Self, whose office it is to inform and guide the conscience of the individual self, whose “piety” consists in willingness to submit to these external revelations of the tribal self, and who, if he “impiously” resist them, may be “dealt with by appropriate methods” on the part of this tribal self. In attempting any practical application of this theory, we encounter, as it seems to me, two serious practical difficulties.

First, this theory supplies no definition of that “Perfection” which is its ultimate standard of Morals. Does this perfection, or does it not, include the idea of morality? If it does, then we are at once involved—in deciding any practical question of morals—in the vicious circle of first making tribal perfection a test of morality, and then of making morality a test of tribal perfection. Clearly, if we must know what morality is in order to define perfection, the knowledge of perfection can be no great help to us in defining morality. To call that a basis of morals of which morality is a part is equivalent to saying that morality rests on morality, a basis which seems to me to lack the rigorous exactness which we expect from Science. If, on the other hand, the definition of perfection exclude the idea of morality, then we are thrown back on that Utilitarian theory for which this has been proposed as a substitute.

Secondly, this standard of Morals fails us exactly at the point where we most need it, namely, where there arises a conflict of moral judgment between the Individual and the Tribal Self; such, for instance, as might conceivably arise between a tribal self and the

diseased pauper it was about to immolate. In every such case it is clear that it is a fallacy to speak of the moral judgment of the majority as that of the tribal self. For it is clear that the individual who dissents from that judgment is a part of that very tribal self that is to judge, the tribal self being nothing but the sum of the individual selves of which it is composed. The judgment, therefore, of the majority of a tribe is not that of the tribal self, but only of a part of that self; and, therefore, as the tribal self in this case cannot possibly have spoken, I fail to see the "impiety" on the part of the individual in resisting the judgment.

It is true that the Tribal Self, that is, Society, may deal with the Individual in that case, "by appropriate methods," *i.e.*, may hang or imprison him; but unless might make right, or unless majorities are infallible and, therefore, individual reformers always impious, it does not follow that Society is right in doing so. My difficulty (in one sentence) is, that whenever society and I differ, I cannot possibly get that judgment of the Tribal Self which should inform my conscience. Further, the individual may, I think, fairly allege, that as Society is, on this theory, not perfect, but only tending to perfection, he may, for aught he knows to the contrary, be advancing that perfection by indulging to the fullest extent his own propensities, whatever these may be—certain that in the end the strongest propensities, and, therefore, on this theory, the best, will prevail, by a process of natural selection.

On this theory, therefore, I confess myself quite unable to say anything respecting the morality or immorality of Hospitals for Incurables, or indeed of anything else. All that I can say is, that if there be any 'ought' in the case, it is that each person ought to do as forcibly as he can whatever he feels the strongest impulse to do, satisfied that thus he is best contributing his share to the ultimate perfection of the tribal self.

*Summary.*

To sum up, therefore, the result of the attempt to apply to the case of Hospitals for Incurables the Mechanical, the Utilitarian, and the Perfectionist theories of life and morals. According to the first of these, such Hospitals most probably ought not; according to the second, they certainly ought not, to be supported by individuals or tolerated by the State; according to the third, we ought each of us to please himself, and when the State has come to an absolutely

unanimous judgment on the matter, we or our posterity shall know who was right.

Hospitals for Incurables, and all other works of pure mercy and compassion to our fellow-men, can, I fear, be logically justified only on the assumption that the conditions I assumed for my problem are not correct; that there may be something supernatural in man, something essentially different from all qualities of all other animals,—which cannot be ascertained by comparative anatomy, or brought under the rule of merely physical laws; and also that there may be, without and apart from man, a Supernatural Author of his existence, out of whose relations to him arise certain relations of all men to each other, which make the real and essential difference between nations of men and herds of brutes; and that from this Being man may have derived those rights to live and to be happy which it seems so difficult to establish on any scientific basis. Nay, that He may even have given to Man some information as to the existence of these facts and of these rights which might be more useful to him than the external revelations of the Tribal Self,—that is to say, that there may be a Supernatural revelation of a Basis of Morals suited to a Supernatural creature.

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*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, MAY 11, 1875.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

W. R. Ruskin

(Theorem.)

## SOCIAL POLICY MUST BE BASED ON THE SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLE OF NATURAL SELECTION.



It has always seemed to me that Societies like this of ours, happy in including members not a little diverse in thought and various in knowledge, might be more useful to the public than perhaps they can fairly be said to have approved themselves hitherto, by using their variety of power rather to support intellectual conclusions by concentric props, than to shake them with rotatory storms of wit; and modestly endeavouring to initiate the building of walls for the Bridal city of Science, in which no man will care to identify the particular stones he lays, rather than complying farther with the existing picturesque, but wasteful, practice of every knight to throw up a feudal tower of his own opinions, tenable only by the most active pugnacity, and pierced rather with arrow-slits from which to annoy his neighbours, than windows to admit light or air.

The Paper read at our last meeting was unquestionably, within the limits its writer had prescribed to himself, so logically sound, that (encouraged also by the suggestion of some of our most influential members), I shall endeavour to make the matter of our to-night's debate consequent upon it, and suggestive of possibly further advantageous deductions.

It will be remembered that, in reference to the statement in the Bishop of Peterborough's Paper, of the moral indifference of certain courses of conduct on the postulate of the existence only of a Mechanical base of Morals, it was observed by Dr. Adam Clarke that, even on such mechanical basis, the word "moral" might still be applied specially to any course of action which tended to the development of the human race. Whereupon I ventured myself to inquire, in what direction such development was to be understood as taking place; and the discussion of this point being then dropped

[NO. LIII.]

for want of time, I would ask the Society's permission to bring it again before them this evening in a somewhat more extended form ; for in reality the question respecting the development of men is twofold,—first, namely, in what direction ; and secondly, in what social relations, it is to be sought.

I would therefore at present ask more deliberately than I could at our last meeting,—first, in what direction it is desirable that the development of humanity should take place? Should it, for instance, as in Greece, be of physical beauty,—emulation, (Hesiod's second Eris),—pugnacity, and patriotism? or, as in modern England, of physical ugliness,—envy, (Hesiod's first Eris),—cowardice, and selfishness? or, as by a conceivably humane but hitherto unexampled education might be attempted, of physical beauty, humility, courage, and affection, which should make all the world one native land, and *πᾶσα γῆ τόπος?*

I do not doubt but that the first automatic impulse of all our automatic friends here present, on hearing this sentence, will be strenuously to deny the accuracy of my definition of the aims of modern English education. Without attempting to defend it, I would only observe that this automatic development of solar caloric in scientific minds must be grounded on an automatic sensation of injustice done to the members of the School Board, as well as to many other automatically well-meaning and ingenious persons ; and that this sense of the injuriousness and offensiveness of my definition cannot possibly have any other basis (if I may be permitted to continue my professional similitudes) than the fallen remnants and goodly stones, not one now left on another, but still forming an unremovable cumulus of ruin, and eternal Birs Nimroud, as it were, on the site of the old belfry of Christian morality, whose top looked once so like touching Heaven.

For no offence could be taken at my definition, unless traceable to adamantine conviction,—that ugliness, however indefinable ; envy, however natural ; and cowardice, however commercially profitable, are nevertheless eternally disgraceful ; contrary, that is to say, to the grace of our Lord Christ, if there be among us any Christ ; to the grace of the King's Majesty, if there be among us any King ; and to the grace even of Christless and Kingless Manhood, if there be among us any Manhood.

To this fixed conception of a difference between Better and Worse,

or, when carried to the extreme, between good and evil, in conduct, we all, it seems to me, instinctively and, therefore, rightly, attach the term of Moral sense;—the sense, for instance, that it would be better if the members of this Society who are usually automatically absent were, instead, automatically present; or better, that this Paper, if (which is, perhaps, too likely) it be thought automatically impertinent, had been made by the molecular action of my cerebral particles, pertinent.

Trusting, therefore, without more ado, to the strength of rampart in this old Sarum of the Moral sense, however subdued into vague banks under the modern steam-plough, I will venture to suppose the first of my two questions to have been answered by the choice on the part at least of a majority of our Council, of the third direction of development above specified as being the properly called “moral” one; and will go on to the second subject of inquiry, both more difficult and of great practical importance in the political crisis through which Europe is passing,—namely, what relations between men are to be desired, or with resignation allowed, in the course of their Moral Development?

Whether, that is to say, we should try to make some men beautiful at the cost of ugliness in others, and some men virtuous at the cost of vice in others,—or rather, all men beautiful and virtuous in the degree possible to each under a system of equitable education? And evidently our first business is to consider in what terms the choice is put to us by Nature. What can we do, if we would? What must we do, whether we will or not? How high can we raise the level of a diffused Learning and Morality; and how far shall we be compelled, if we limit, to exaggerate, the advantages and injuries of our system? And are we prepared, if the extremity be inevitable, to push to their utmost the relations implied when we take off our hats to each other, and triple the tiara of the Saint in Heaven, while we leave the sinner bareheaded in Cocytus?

It is well, perhaps, that I should at once confess myself to hold the principle of limitation in its utmost extent; and to entertain no doubt of the rightness of my ideal, but only of its feasibility. I am ill at ease, for instance, in my uncertainty whether our greatly regretted Chairman will ever be Pope, or whether some people whom I could mention, (not, of course, members of our Society) will ever be in Cocytus.

But there is no need, if we would be candid, to debate the principle in these violences of operation, any more than the proper methods of distributing food, on the supposition that the difference between a Paris dinner and a platter of Scotch porridge must imply that one-half of mankind are to die of eating and the rest of having nothing to eat. I will therefore take for example a case in which the discrimination is less conclusive.

When I stop writing metaphysics this morning, it will be to arrange some drawings for a young lady to copy. They are leaves of the best illuminated MSS. I have, and I am going to spend my whole afternoon in explaining to her what she is to aim at in copying them.

Now, I would not lend these leaves to any other young lady that I know of; nor give up my afternoon to, perhaps, more than two or three other young ladies that I know of. But to keep to the first-instanced one, I lend her my books, and give her, for what they are worth, my time and most careful teaching, because she at present paints butterflies better than any other girl I know, and has a peculiar capacity for the softening of plumes and finessing of antennæ. Grant me to be a good teacher, and grant her disposition to be such as I suppose, and the result will be what might at first appear an indefensible iniquity, namely, that this girl, who has already excellent gifts, having also excellent teaching, will become perhaps the best butterfly-painter in England; while myriads of other girls, having originally inferior powers, and attracting no attention from the Slade Professor, will utterly lose their at present cultivable faculties of entomological art, and sink into the vulgar career of wives and mothers, to which we have Mr. Mill's authority for holding it a grievous injustice that any girl should be irrevocably condemned.

There is no need that I should be careful in enumerating the various modes, analogous to this, in which the Natural selection of which we have lately heard, perhaps, somewhat more than enough, provokes and approves the Professorial selection which I am so bold as to defend; and if the automatic instincts of equity in us, which revolt against the great ordinance of Nature and practice of Man, that "to him that hath, shall more be given," are to be listened to when the possessions in question are only of wisdom and virtue, let them at least prove their sincerity by correcting, first, the injustice which has established itself respecting more tangible and more

esteemed property ; and terminating the singular arrangement prevalent in commercial Europe that to every man with a hundred pounds in his pocket there shall annually be given three, to every man with a thousand, thirty, and to every man with nothing, none.

I am content here to leave under the scrutiny of the evening my general statement, that as human development, when moral, is with special effort in a given direction, so, when moral, it is with special effort in favour of a limited class ; but I yet trespass for a few moments on your patience in order to note that the acceptance of this second principle still leaves it debateable to what point the disfavour of the reprobate class, or the privileges of the elect, may advisably extend. For I cannot but feel for my own part as if the daily bread of moral instruction might at least be so widely broken among the multitude as to preserve them from utter destitution and pauperism in virtue ; and that even the simplest and lowest of the rabble should not be so absolutely sons of perdition, but that each might say for himself,—“For my part—no offence to the General, or any man of quality—I hope to be saved.” Whereas it is, on the contrary, implied by the habitual expressions of the wisest aristocrats, that the completely developed persons whose Justice and Fortitude—poles to the Cardinal points of virtue—are marked as their sufficient characteristics by the great Roman moralist in his phrase, “Justus, et tenax propositi,” will in the course of nature be opposed by a civic ardour, not merely of the innocent and ignorant, but of persons developed in a contrary direction to that which I have ventured to call “moral,” and therefore not merely incapable of desiring or applauding what is right, but in an evil harmony, *prava jubentium*, clamourously demanding what is wrong.

The point to which both Natural and Divine Selection would permit us to advance in severity towards this profane class, to which the enduring “Ecce Homo,” or manifestation of any properly human sentiment or person, must always be instinctively abominable, seems to be conclusively indicated by the order following on the parable of the Talents,—“Those mine enemies, bring hither, and slay them before me.” Nor does it seem reasonable, on the other hand, to set the limits of favouritism more narrowly. For even if, among fallible mortals, there may frequently be ground for the hesitation of just men to award the punishment of death to their enemies, the most beautiful story, to my present knowledge, of all antiquity, that

of Cleobis and Bito, might suggest to them the fitness, on some occasions, of distributing without any hesitation the reward of death to their friends. For surely the logical conclusion of the Bishop of Peterborough, respecting the treatment due to old women who have nothing supernatural about them, holds with still greater force when applied to the case of old women who have everything supernatural about them ; and while it might remain questionable to some of us whether we had any right to deprive an invalid who had no soul, of what might still remain to her of even painful earthly existence ; it would surely on the most religious grounds be both our privilege and our duty at once to dismiss any troublesome sufferer who *had* a soul, to the distant and inoffensive felicities of heaven.

But I believe my hearers will approve me in again declining to disturb the serene confidence of daily action by these speculations in extreme ; the really useful conclusion which, it seems to me, cannot be evaded, is that, without going so far as the exile of the inconveniently wicked, and translation of the inconveniently sick, to their proper spiritual mansions, we should at least be certain that we do not waste care in protracting disease which might have been spent in preserving health ; that we do not appease in the splendour of our turreted hospitals the feelings of compassion which, rightly directed, might have prevented the need of them ; nor pride ourselves on the peculiar form of Christian benevolence which leaves the cottage roofless to model the prison, and spends itself with zealous preference where, in the keen words of Carlyle, if you desire the material on which maximum expenditure of means and effort will produce the minimum result, " here you accurately have it."

I cannot but in conclusion, most respectfully but most earnestly, express my hope that measures may be soon taken by the Lords Spiritual of England to assure her doubting mind of the real existence of that supernatural revelation of the basis of morals to which the Bishop of Peterborough referred in the close of his paper ; or at least to explain to her bewildered populace the real meaning and force of the Ten Commandments, whether written originally by the finger of God or Man. To me, personally, I own, as one of that bewildered populace, that the essay by one of our most distinguished members on the Creed of Christendom seems to stand in need of explicit answer from our Divines ; but if not, and the common application

of the terms "Word of God" to the books of Scripture be against all question tenable, it becomes yet more imperative on the interpreters of that Scripture to see that they are not made void by our traditions,<sup>1</sup> and that the Mortal sins of Covetousness, Fraud, Usury, and Contention be not the essence of a National life orally professing submission to the laws of Christ, and satisfaction in His Love.

J. RUSKIN.

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<sup>1</sup>"Thou shalt not covet; but tradition  
Approves all forms of Competition."—ARTHUR CLOUGH.

[See next page.]

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## NOTICE.

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*Lord Arthur Russell*

## THE RIGHT OF MAN OVER THE LOWER ANIMALS.

1. THE question whether man is justified in inflicting pain on animals, in order to increase his knowledge, has of late caused considerable anxiety to the public mind.

2. I am of opinion that taking the life of animals to satisfy the carnivorous appetites of man is defensible; and further, that if by the infliction of pain on some animals we can obtain knowledge which will enable us to cure or to alleviate pain or illness in man, the action is not only not culpable, but may become (as Sir Thomas Watson writes) a positive duty.

3. The opponents of the practice are animated by a conscientious fear lest experiments on living animals may produce a callous and cruel race of men. Now, experience teaches that men who have studied the natural sciences are, as a rule, less brutal than ignorant and illiterate men.

4. Physiologists, as a class, are not more habitually cruel than the sportsmen, as a class, who prolong the agonies of animals merely for fun, and not to acquire knowledge. Surgeons, taken as a body, are as kind-hearted, humane, and willing to help the poor without pay as the clergy, so far as my experience goes.

5. At the same time, I hold that a good surgeon, without being cruel, should have some habit of his art acquired by practice, and that his hand should not shake with emotion during a difficult operation; if it did, I might feel sympathy with his kindly nature, but I would not seek his help.

6. The infliction of pain on animals by means of the whip to promote the convenience of man is sanctioned by the public conscience. It becomes, then, a question of degree whether the infliction of greater pain on some animals in order to reduce the amount of human suffering can be justly sanctioned by the public conscience.

7. The fear that the study of biology by means of experiments on  
[NO. LIV.]

animals will lead to moral degeneracy is contradicted by experience. I do not believe that the student of biology suffers morally from his studies, any more than the surgeon from the practice of his art.

8. The health and vigour of the human race appear to me more important in the economy of the world than the immunity of some of the lower animals from pain. My opponents object that the *moral health* of mankind will suffer from the indifference which is fostered by cruel practices to promote his *physical health*. "It is better to be weak than to be wicked," said the Rev. Newman Hall, three weeks ago, addressing the Peace Society.

9. His Eminence Cardinal Manning, in a letter dated May 18, says with great truth:—"The infliction of physical pain *without just cause* is an abuse of the dominion that God has given to man over the lower animals. It is lawful to take their life for the food of man, but it is not lawful even for this just and necessary purpose to take their life by *needless* pain."

From this point of view, the problem for inquiry is what is *needless* pain, and what is the infliction of pain *without just cause*? I hold that the desire to alleviate the burden of human suffering is a just cause. Experiments on animals can only be correctly described as "cruel," when they can be shown to be useless.

10. A writer in the *Spectator*, May 15, uses the somewhat singular argument that the use of domesticated animals for physiological experiments involves a sort of breach of faith, which makes torture inflicted on animals taught from their first hour to trust men a kind of treachery as well as cruelty. The breach of faith does not appear to me greater than in the case of the confiding sheep which is suddenly converted into mutton-chops, a treachery which is sanctioned by the national conscience. "Not being a vegetarian," says Mr. Freeman, "I believe that the butcher follows a lawful craft."

11. Another writer in the *Spectator*, May 15, whose sincerity in the statement of his views must command our respect, says:—"We would infinitely rather that men should bear a physical evil, *even though capable of remedy, for all generations*, than that the habit of treating the lower animals callously and without sympathy should grow upon us, as we fear it will." The opinion here expressed is based on a view of life which I do not share, namely, the view that the greater resignation with which we bear the evils of this world, the greater will be our moral perfection. This is the mediæval or monastic view,

whereas most modern thinkers hold the opinion that it is our duty to help our fellow-men in labouring to lessen the amount of human suffering on this planet and during this life.

12. Experiments on guinea-pigs have been conducted under the direction of the Privy Council which have led to a better understanding of the treatment of pulmonary consumption. I do not agree with the writer above quoted that it is better that human beings should die of consumption for all generations than that these experiments should have been tried.

13. I do not believe that we participate in a great national sin by not raising our protest against the sanction of these experiments by the Government. I have quoted these arguments from the *Spectator*, in order to show that sentiment is a very unsafe guide in legislation.

14. If one of my children had been saved from pain by the sacrifice of a hecatomb of guinea-pigs, rats, and rabbits, my conscience would be at ease.

15. I feel grateful towards the men who are engaged in these laborious, painful, and repulsive studies, and I believe that I should be acting as a bad citizen if I were to join an agitation to hold them up to the execration of the ignorant masses, as I have been pressed to do.

16. Mr. Mitton writes in the *Spectator*, April 3 :—"It may become necessary, by an Association formed for the purpose, to lay the horrors of their secret torture-chambers before popular audiences. In such a case, a feeling will quickly be aroused in the country which will lead to far more drastic legislation than is now contemplated."

If an association of agitators were to entertain popular meetings with authentic details of all that is done with the human subject in schools of anatomy, a feeling of popular horror would quickly be aroused in this country, which would make even the study of anatomy very difficult. The agitators might be actuated by the sincerest religious veneration for the sanctity of death, yet their conduct would be unjustifiable, in my opinion.

17. Mr. Hoggan concludes a letter which was published in February last, and to which the humanitarian agitators attach great importance, on account of the sickening details it reveals, by exclaiming :—"I am prepared to see not only science, but even mankind perish, rather than have recourse to such means of saving it." Surely

this silly conclusion shows that Mr. Hoggan's tender heart is in the wrong place.

18. Mr. Freeman says, *Fortnightly Review*, May, 1874 :—"My experience of the fox-hunter teaches me that men are very likely, when their interests, their pleasures, or their tastes are concerned, to say, and even to believe, that things are not cruel which a disinterested judge knows to be cruel. I must look on scientific men as being, no less than fox-hunters, simply men liable to human temptations and human infirmities, and subject, like other men, to the subtle power of self-delusion. I therefore do not accept the scientific man, any more than I do the fox-hunter, as judge in his own cause."

But in another passage he says:—"Mere knowledge, even if it lead to nothing practical, is something higher than mere sport, and if it can be shown that experiments in vivisection have led to discoveries by which painful diseases can be cured or lessened, this, to my mind, is as much as to say that there are cases in which vivisection can be justified." These admissions are made by one of the most humane and eloquent opponents of all cruelty to animals, even in its most venial aspect of fox-hunting.

19. A kind of manifesto or allocution, signed by the heads of the Comtist Church, Mr. Bridges and Mr. Congreve, appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, on the question before us. "Vivisection," it says, "is the continuance, in a time when it has ceased to be appropriate, of a form of investigation which has had its use under very different conditions. We object to any such addition to the hardening process of intellectual training." But the following important admission is made :—

"We think that man, who takes animal life so freely for his good, may occasionally inflict suffering for the purpose of clearing up his scientific knowledge. If it appears that a problem, given its sufficient importance, would probably be solved at the cost of some animal suffering, it would be legitimate to exact that suffering. We do not call for penal legislation on the subject."

20. I conclude with the opinion that the right of using the life of animals, for food or for knowledge, but never needlessly or wantonly, is the birthright of man in his struggle for existence.

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Greg, Martineau  
Graser, Ginstone  
Knowles, Patterson  
Hutton, Clifton  
Mivart, Sylvester  
Self

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, JULY 13, 1875. ]  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

Mr. Sidgwick

## THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION IN ITS APPLICATION TO PRACTICE.

CURRENT philosophical notions, characteristic of the most recently accepted system or manner of thought in any age and country, are apt to exercise over men's minds an influence which is often in inverse ratio to the clearness with which the notions themselves are conceived, and the evidence for the philosophic doctrines implied in their acceptance is examined and estimated. For any such notion may easily have different shades of meaning, and according to the relations in which it is used may imply many distinct propositions, which have no necessary connection with each other, and for which the evidence is very various, both in kind and degree; while yet, with whatever portion of this meaning and implication it may be employed, it is apt to carry with it the impressiveness and prestige which it naturally possesses as the last outcome of philosophical reflection. The fallacy of which we thus run a risk cannot be exactly classed among Bacon's *Idola Fori* or *Idola Theatri*, as it is neither due to the defects of popular language nor to the defects of philosophical method: we must rather call it a hybrid between the two species, resulting from the communication between the *Theatrum* and the *Forum*, now much more fully established than it was in the time of Bacon. I propose as the aim of our discussion to-night to guard ourselves against this source of error in respect of the notion of *Evolution*. I wish, however, to narrow the field of discussion by considering only Biological Evolution, leaving out of view all speculation as to the development of the inorganic world out of chaos; and further, to consider it only in its bearing on Ethics,—that is, on the theory of what men, as reasonable beings, ought to do.

I. The widest sense in which the term *Evolution* is used appears to be merely exclusive of *Special Creation*. Thus, Mr. Spencer says that in forming a "conception of the mode in which living bodies in general have originated. . . . we have to choose between two

[NO. LV.]

hypotheses,—the hypothesis of Special Creation and the hypothesis of Evolution." This latter hypothesis, as he immediately explains, is that "the multitudinous kinds of organisms that now exist, or have existed during past geological eras. . . . have arisen by insensible steps, through actions such as we see habitually going on." Similarly, when Mr. Darwin speaks of "Evolution in any form," he seems to mean the general hypothesis just stated, in contradistinction to his own special hypothesis of Evolution by Natural Selection. It should be observed that in the above statement the production of living organisms out of inorganic matter is implicitly excluded from the hypothesis, for Mr. Spencer does not hold that this is among the actions that we see habitually going on. What we do see is that living things change slightly in the course of their life, and also produce other living things somewhat different from themselves; the hypothesis, then, is that all the differences among living organisms which we must conceive as having begun to exist at some point in the history of the organic world have been produced by the accumulation of these slight differences. And without examining minutely the possibility of living things being brought to the earth from without, we may take it for granted that most of the living things that have existed here have also been originated here.

Now it appears to me that in this wider and more general signification—and only in this—the hypothesis of Evolution has in its favour, independently of all specific evidence, a great force of scientific presumption. We can hardly conceive proof strong enough to convince a scientifically instructed mind that an organism, or any other material thing that has begun to exist, was not formed out of pre-existent matter by the operation of pre-existent forces according to universal laws: so that if we do not suppose each new organism to be developed out of some pre-existing organism, we are forced to regard it as causally connected in some totally unknown way with inorganic matter; and this is an alternative which few will embrace. And again, it is contrary to a fundamental canon of scientific reasoning to assume that any new organic form was produced suddenly, *per saltum*, and so in a manner of which experience affords us no example, until it is proved that it could not have been produced by the gradual accumulation of such slight variations as experience shows us continually occurring.

On this point I need not lay stress. It is more important to argue

that the theory of Evolution, thus widely understood, has little or no bearing upon Ethics. Of course it must to some extent influence our practice to know that the world in which we have to act is one in which change is gradual and not abrupt, and of which the infinitely varied order has resulted from the slow accumulation of insensible differences. But such influence as this is secondary and subordinate; it does not affect the form or fundamental principles of ethical reasoning. Some, however, have supposed that it is of great importance in ethical controversy to prove that the Moral Faculty is derivative, and not original. And no doubt the requisite proof is supplied by the theory we are considering; when we trace back in thought the series of organisms of which man is the final result, we must—at some point or other, it matters not where—come to a living being (whether called Man or not) devoid of moral consciousness; and between this point and that at which the moral faculty clearly presents itself, we must suppose a transition-period in which the distinctly moral consciousness is gradually being derived and developed out of more primitive feelings and cognitions. All this seems necessarily involved in the acceptance of Evolution in any form; but when it is all admitted, it does not appear that any criterion is obtained for distinguishing true, practical principles from false, nor (I should add) any effective argument for general moral scepticism. For all the competing and conflicting principles that men have ever anywhere assumed are equally derived, equally the result of Evolution; and again, there can be no reason for distrusting the enunciations of the moral faculty, because it is the outcome of a long process of development, which does not apply as much to our apprehension of any truth whatsoever. It is obviously absurd to make the validity or invalidity of any judgments depend on the particular stage in the process of development at which this class of judgments first made their appearance; especially since it is an essential point of the Evolution-theory to conceive this process as fundamentally similar in all its parts.

II. The hypothesis of Evolution gains an important step in definiteness, if we understand by it not merely a process of gradual continuous change, but also a progress from simpler to more complex organisation, or as Mr. Spencer more elaborately phrases it, from “indefinite, incoherent homogeneity,” to “definite, coherent heterogeneity.” And it is plain that the development of existing organisms

out of the earliest which the geological record shows us must have been a process of this kind; and therefore, though there is no necessary connection between continuous change and increasing complexity, the latter qualification is naturally included in the common notion of Evolution. But evidently the admission of this additional characteristic will have no bearing on the fundamental questions of Ethics; we may draw from it the corollary that the problems of practice will, as the process of the universe goes on, become continually more complex, but we can get no guidance as to the principles upon which they ought to be dealt with. There is, however, one practical inference from this continually increasing heterogeneity of organisms, which, though it does not concern the form or method of Ethics, is, perhaps, worth noticing here, as it seems to be exercising a considerable influence on reflective minds at the present time. For more than a century, one element of this heterogeneity—the inequality of different ranks in society in respect of wealth, culture, and other means of happiness—has been regarded with more or less vehement aversion by most philanthropists; and the aim of most extensive schemes of social reform has been to produce, by whatever means, greater equality among the different members of the human community. Now the acceptance of the doctrine of Evolution often tends, I think, to carry with it a more or less vague conviction of the futility of all such efforts; and it is a perhaps not unimportant element in the present “Conservative Reaction” that the influence of Darwin and Spencer is supplanting the influence of Mill over that part of the community which is most receptive of new ideas. A closer study of sociology, however, scarcely seems to sustain this conviction. For though the increase in heterogeneity, which Mr. Spencer calls “differentiation of functions,” is undoubtedly an ever-present feature of social development, still, history shows us with equal clearness, side by side with this, that other process which one of Mr. Spencer’s disciples<sup>1</sup> calls the “continually distincter individuation of the constituent units of the community.” And this considerably qualifies and, to some extent, counteracts the tendency to heterogeneity; for the attribution of rights and claims to the individual as such gives a point of view from which the elements of the community are regarded as equal and similar, and tends *pro tanto* to homogeneity.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fiske, “Cosmic Philosophy,” Vol. II., c. 12.

It is obvious, *e.g.*, that an ancient society with a fully developed caste-system, where the existence of the individual was absorbed in and identified with his social function, was in some respects more heterogeneous than our own, in spite of the greater differentiation of functions in the latter. Thus, history does not show the social reformer an unqualified tendency to social inequality against which it were vain to struggle; but two conflicting tendencies, the exact compromise between which cannot be determined by any deductions from the doctrine of evolution.

III. For so far I have not included in my statement of the doctrine any assertion that this complexity or heterogeneity is *good*, either in itself or as a means to some other end, but only that it has a continual tendency to increase. Now, however, we have to notice, as a third quite distinct implication in the current notion of Evolution, that it is a process of improvement, a continual progress from worse (or less good) to better. All the chief expositors of the theory from time to time imply this:—Mr. Spencer, for example, gives it as a ground for preferring Evolution to Special Creation, that the former hypothesis relieves us from at least a portion of the religious difficulties caused by the existence of evil; for the evolutionist, though he may not be able to explain why things are partly bad, at least sees in the whole cognisable manifestation of Divine Power a continual operation of making them better. Here, at length, I find a fundamental bearing on Ethics in the theory of Evolution, though not so much in what it directly affirms as in what it implies and presupposes. For before we can accept the doctrine, as just stated, with clear and intelligent conviction, we must suppose the fundamental question of Ethics to have been already raised and answered. We must know what is Good or Ultimately Desirable, before we can say whether the evolution of organic life is a process of continually making better. And if we know what is good, we know in outline what we ought to aim at, the ultimate end and first principle of rational action. All other knowledge—even the very important knowledge that the normal operation of the Power manifested in the universe is continually producing the results which we rationally desire—can only affect the application of this principle.

What, then, is the Evolutionist view of Good? I do not find it very easy to say. Sometimes it seems as if a greater degree of complexity or heterogeneity of organisation were thought to be in itself

good. "We regard as the highest life," says Mr. Spencer, "that which, like our own, shows great complexity in the correspondences, great rapidity in the succession of them, and great length in the series of them;" and the term "higher," in this and similar passages, seems to mean "better" or "intrinsically preferable." And others besides Evolutionists seem to consider, *e.g.*, the life of the more civilised man as intrinsically preferable to that of the less civilised, because it is more varied and complex. I am aware, however, that I may misapprehend the significance of Mr. Spencer's term "correspondence," for he and his disciples seem in their employment of this and the nearly synonymous terms "adjustment" and "adaptation" to blend two different meanings, and imply the necessary connection of two distinct characteristics: to imply, namely, that the more exactly and discriminatively the changes in an organism represent or respond to the different changes in its environment, the more will the organism be "fitted to its conditions of existence" in the sense of being qualified to preserve itself under these conditions. But surely we cannot assume off-hand that this connection will hold universally; for example, the responsiveness of an invalid's organism to the changes in its environment is often more discriminating and delicate than that of a man in strong health, though less effective for self-preservation. Shall we then say that an organism is more completely "adjusted" or "adapted" to its circumstances in proportion as it is more likely to preserve itself in the latter, and that all living things are in a better or worse state in proportion as they have more or less of this tendency to self-preservation? Mr. Spencer in several passages seems to imply this. Or again, shall we define 'good' to consist in tendency to the preservation of the species rather than the individual? This seems to be Mr. Darwin's view, as I find that in his "*Descent of Man*" (2nd edition, p. 121) he defines "general good" or "welfare" as "the rearing of the greatest number of individuals in full health and vigour [and with all their faculties perfect]<sup>1</sup> under the conditions to which they are subject;" and distinctly lays down that "general good or welfare," as thus interpreted, is to be taken as the ultimate end and standard of right conduct. Mr. Darwin in this passage ex-

<sup>1</sup> I have put this clause in brackets, because the term "perfect" implies some standard of "good" or "well-being;" and if this standard were different from that which the definition gives, the definition would be palpably faulty; while if it be the same, the clause seems superfluous.

plicitly rejects "general happiness" as a standard or ultimate end, and thus distinguishes his Ethics from Utilitarianism as commonly understood. Mr. Spencer, however, in several passages seems to interpret the improvement which is characteristic of Evolution as increase of happiness. "Slowly, but surely," he says, in the passage before quoted ("Biol.," s. 120), "Evolution brings about an increasing amount of happiness," so that we are warranted in believing ("First Princ.," s. 176) that "Evolution can only end in the establishment of the most complete happiness."

Which, then, of these views are we to take?—for it is evident that we can hardly accept a definition of Good which assumes their coincidence or floats vaguely among them. In fact, the germs of most ethical controversies are latent in the differences of definition which I have just noticed; and to overlook these differences would make the construction of an ethical system a very simple and easy, but a very useless performance. We cannot, as before said, assert that more highly organised beings are necessarily more likely to live, or that the greater fullness of life which they enjoy necessarily involves an increase in happiness or the sum of pleasurable feelings; for the intense life may be intensely painful, and a high organisation is thought to involve an increased susceptibility to pain no less than to pleasure;—thus it is by no means uncommon for reflective persons to hold that intellectual development, while it elevates life and makes it better, does not make it happier. Nor, again, does the greatest pleasure or happiness of a sentient organism seem to be always a concomitant of that mode of existence which most tends to its preservation. It is no doubt true that voluntary actions conservative of the organism are generally pleasurable, and those which tend to its destruction painful;—indeed, as Mr. Spencer says, the organism could not continue to exist if it were otherwise. Still this is by no means universally the case, nor is the converse at all equally true. Some pleasures are positively deleterious, and some pains positively salutary; and as Mr. Bain has observed, there is a large margin within which we may either indulge or starve our susceptibilities to pleasure without any appreciable effect on health. Certainly, common observation of human beings would not lead us to regard a life of keen enjoyment as more self-conservative than one, I will not say absolutely pleasureless, but with few and dull pleasures. It seems, therefore, to make a great difference whether we take Happiness or Preservation

of Life to be the Good which Evolution tends to promote. So again, there may be great differences between that constitution and condition of an organism which is most adapted for self-preservation, and that which has most tendency to the preservation of the species. For example, in view of the latter end, a greater degree of fertility would seem to be an advantage outweighing many aptitudes and endowments beneficial to the individual; and thus, the races that have most chance of surviving in the struggle for existence may not always be those of which the individuals are either happiest, or most highly-developed, or most long-lived.

IV. If, now, we turn to consider how any of these views as to the essential nature of Good or Well-being is to be established, it does not at first appear that the theory of Evolution or any other physical doctrine can furnish us with conclusive arguments. For all such theories relate only to what is, not to what ought to be, or the object of rational desires and efforts. If, however, we could obtain a clear view of that part of the whole process of Evolution which is concerned with the moral faculty, we might thereby be enabled to settle this question; for we might see that the development of the moral faculty has been so manifestly the means of attaining a particular end, that we should be compelled to distrust our own moral faculty if it did not pronounce this end to be ultimate good. But from what has been said, it will appear that there is not actually much hope of getting this result; as we are not likely to extract from Evolutionism a clearer and more consistent view of the end of moral development, than of the Good which development generally is believed to promote,—in fact the two are commonly and naturally treated as coincident. And when we examine more in detail the most probable account that can be given of the evolution of the moral faculty, we seem to see how, while much of the process tends equally to promote all the different ends that I have compared and distinguished, at the same time different parts of it tend to develop respectively the different moral principles of which the conflict afterwards causes ethical controversy. For example, as Mr. Darwin points out, Natural Selection as applied to individuals will have developed prudence, self-control, energy, and generally the habits which tend to self-preservation; but the altruistic virtues could not be produced in this way, as though in certain ways and under certain circumstances they are indirectly beneficial to the virtuous agent, in other ways and under

other circumstances they tend to his injury and destruction ; for the origination of these, therefore, we have to fall back on Natural Selection as it operates not between competing individuals, but between competing tribes. In this way we may get a plausible historical explanation of the conflict which reflection afterwards finds in the mature moral consciousness between the individual's happiness and his virtue, or in Butler's phraseology, between Self-love and Conscience ; but such an explanation does not bring us any nearer to a rational solution of this conflict.

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to "Mr. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S.W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*



TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, NOV. 9, 1875.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

W. G. Figgames Stephen

## REMARKS ON THE PROOF OF MIRACLES.

I WISH to offer for the consideration of the Society a few remarks upon the controversy as to the proof of Miracles, which, though they are probably old, I do not happen to have met with. I do not profess to handle the subject completely.

The first remark is, that it appears to me impossible to discuss with profit the special question whether miracles can be proved. To ask such a question is like asking,—What is the proper manner of proving a battle? The answer would be,—There are rules which relate to the proof of facts generally, but none which are specially appropriate to the proof of battles. The nature of the proof must depend on the circumstances of the particular case. Battles fought in our own times, in the last century, in the early days of Greece or Rome, and before the period of authentic history, must be proved in different ways; and the consideration of the evidence relating to them will involve very different principles. The circumstance that in each instance fighting is alleged to have occurred, throws no light at all on the manner in which the allegation is to be made good.

This observation is more important as regards miracles than as regards battles, for the battles of all ages and countries have some features in common; but the word “miracle” is applied to so many different things, that it is almost impossible to define a miracle with any approach to precision. Its etymological meaning is merely “an event which produces wonder,” and it is obvious that this quality is not distinctive of any particular class of events. To an astronomical observer, the fact that the sun reached the zenith a few seconds earlier or later than he ought, would produce intense wonder. An ordinary person would not notice it. An ignorant person would not be surprised at it. On the other hand, the savage is surprised at the eclipse which the astronomer foretells. In short, the wonder excited depends not on the character of the event, but on that of the observer.

[NO. LV.]

To define a miracle as a violation of a law of nature, or to introduce such a phrase as "law of nature" into the discussion at all, appears to me to be a mistake. A law of nature is simply a formula which sums up a number of observed facts, and which enables us to predict the recurrence of similar facts upon certain assumptions. If any facts are produced really at variance with such a formula, the formula must itself be wrong. If they are only apparently at variance with it, they may (as in the case of the perturbations of the orbit of Uranus and the discovery of Neptune) turn out to be strong confirmations of its truth; but I do not see how a belief in the fact itself, or the ease or difficulty of proving it, can be affected by the relation in which it is afterwards discovered to stand to the so-called law of nature. If there had been a controversy as to the truth of the theory of gravitation, the fact that Uranus did not move precisely in the direction which the theory appeared to require, would have been common ground to each party in the controversy.

Canon Westcott defines miracles as "phenomena which, either in themselves or from the circumstances under which they are presented, suggest [I suppose he means 'truly'] the immediate working of a personal power producing results not explicable by what we observe in the ordinary course of nature," and many other writers adopt a similar view. This mode of using the word no doubt has its conveniences for certain purposes, but if it is regarded as a definition, it is open to the objection that it substitutes an inference from facts for the facts themselves. In order to bring any event within the definition, it would be necessary to prove not merely that it had occurred, but that it was not caused in any other manner than that alleged, and this would obviously be in most cases not only difficult, but practically impossible.

Upon the whole, it seems to me impossible to draw any distinction between rules as to the proof of miracles, and rules as to the proof of other events. If this conclusion appears strange, a few illustrations will perhaps show that in many cases there would be no difficulty in proving the occurrence of an event which would fall within any possible definition of a miracle.

A prophecy would perhaps be as distinct a case of a miracle as can be suggested. Suppose, now, that a man were to publish in tomorrow's newspapers a list of the topics which would be discussed in the *Times* on that day fifty years, the miracle

could be proved to absolute demonstration. An interference with the motions of the heavenly bodies would be a miracle still more portentous, if such a matter admits of degrees. Suppose a man announced that he could at pleasure reverse the direction of the earth's motion, and that on such a day he would do so accordingly. Suppose that on the appointed day the sun for several hours, together with the other heavenly bodies visible from different parts of the earth, appeared to move from West to East, instead of moving from East to West ; suppose that this fact was witnessed by all the inhabitants of both hemispheres, and that astronomers and other scientific men of every kind made minute and careful observations of the event, and recorded them for the instruction of future generations. Surely in such a case the miracle would be proved as distinctly as the transit of Venus. These illustrations might be multiplied to any extent. They seem to me to show that any state of facts which can be distinctly imagined might be proved to exist or to have existed, whatever might be its cause, and however much it might vary from the common course of events. In other words, such illustrations show that the proof of miracles does not form an exception from ordinary rules as to the proof of alleged matters of fact.

What, then, is that process? The process of proving alleged matters of fact, when closely considered, will be found to consist in connecting the past with the present, by tracing backwards the various chains of cause and effect which have led from the one to the other. To take a very simple case. The question is whether A paid B a sum of money a year ago. A produces B's written receipt for it. Here the existence of the receipt is a present fact, of which any one who has to determine the question can assure himself by the exercise of his own senses. The alleged cause of the existence of the receipt is that B wrote it, and B's writing it is said to have been caused by his receiving the money. Thus, A's production of the receipt is the effect of the payment by A to B. This is a very simple case, but the principle applies equally to the most intricate and elaborate inquiries. It would be possible, for instance, to exhibit the whole of the evidence given on the Tichborne Trial in the shape of innumerable effects caused by the prisoner's being or not being the person he pretended to be. His ignorance of French, for instance, was said to be an effect of his being an uneducated Englishman ; his recognition by Lady Tichborne the effect of his being her son, and so on.

This process implies a classification of events as causes and effects, without which it would be impossible to move a single step in it ; “habitually speaking and thinking in French from infancy to the age of twenty-three causes people to know French at forty-three ;” “constant observation of a son’s features causes his mother to know him,” and innumerable maxims of the same kind must either be known or assumed before such words as “proof” and “evidence” have any meaning at all in relation to matters of fact. Before they can be applied to particular cases, it is generally necessary to qualify and restrict them by explanations and adjustments more or less elaborate, according to circumstances. And nearly every mistake which is made upon matters of fact may be traced to mistakes in the framing and application of these maxims. The two instances which I have given will afford an illustration. The true mode of applying them to the particular case which suggested them was somewhat as follows :—“Men do not forget their native languages except under extraordinary circumstances, which are not alleged in this instance ; and this man was, by his own account, specially unlikely to forget his native language, for he says he remembers Spanish, which he picked up in a journey of a few weeks at the age of twenty-three, though he has forgotten French, in which he talked, wrote, and thought up to that age.” “A mother would usually recognise her son even after a lapse of many years, but a woman may easily persuade herself that an impostor is her son if she earnestly hopes that he may turn out to be so, and if she has for years refused to believe in her son’s death.”

The art of investigating questions of fact depends principally on the closeness or looseness with which the process of adjusting generalities to particular circumstances is performed, and the observation which I feel disposed to make on the proof usually alleged in favour of miraculous narratives is, that in most cases those who assert their truth neglect well-established limitations which, as constant experience proves, ought to be imposed upon some of the generalities on which they rely ; whilst, on the other hand, they employ in other cases generalities which are not supported by experience at all.

To be more specific, I think that those who assert the truth of miraculous narratives are apt to neglect the limitations which should be imposed upon the argument, “A man not accused of fraud says that he saw this, therefore he did see it ;” and that they employ without any warrant for doing so the argument, “Miracles are a well-

established class of causes, therefore any given event may not improbably have been the effect of a miracle." I will consider each of these generalities in its turn.

"A person who is not accused of fraud, and who, if he tells the truth, had opportunities of observation, affirms that he saw this occur. Therefore it did occur," is the argument which those who attempt to prove miraculous narratives usually seek to establish. Let us suppose for the moment that a case is established in which a person not alleged to be fraudulent declares that he was the eye-witness of an important event; ought we at once to believe him, so as to act upon the supposition of the truth of his statement? I say that every day's experience of the common affairs of life shows that the argument is not strong enough to produce a reasonable conviction upon any matter of importance, unless much more appears. I will illustrate this by an example. Suppose a man were to affirm that he saw another person push some one else into the river above the Falls of Niagara, and that he saw the person so pushed in carried over the falls. Suppose that the person accused declared that the assertion was not true, or that he even said nothing at all; would any court of justice hang the accused person for murder, if the evidence rested there? In order to raise the question, it must be supposed that there was absolutely no corroboration at all of the alleged eye-witnesses's statement; that no one else had seen the murdered man or the alleged murderer near the spot; that no body was ever found; that no one was missed from the neighbourhood; in a word, that the whole history rested exclusively on the uncorroborated assertion of the accuser. I venture to say that no English jury would convict the accused in such circumstances. I think that in any country in which such evidence was considered as sufficient to warrant a conviction, life and property would be very unsafe. Let us, however, consider the illustration in a little detail. There is, in the first place, nothing intrinsically improbable in the incident. Murders are not very common occurrences, but they do, beyond all question, occur from time to time. The absence of the body could be accounted for by the circumstances. A body carried over Niagara would never be seen again. The accused person's denial of guilt would go for very little. A man who committed such a crime would naturally deny it. It might be extremely difficult to suggest any reason which could induce the witness to tell a lie. He would gain

no object by it, and might get himself into great difficulties. All these remarks are forcible, but forcible as they are, I do not think that they either would or ought to overcome the allegations which might be made on the other side. These allegations might be put in various forms, but would amount to this,—that any one of many possible reasons may lead a man to make a false statement either wilfully or otherwise, and that unless the statement can, so to speak, be fitted into other facts independently ascertained, it will no more warrant an important conclusion than a single brick will form an arch.

Perhaps it may be observed upon this illustration, that though in the case supposed it might not be proper to hang the accused person as a murderer, many people would believe that he had, in fact, committed murder; and no doubt this is true. Almost any confident statement is believed by a greater or a less number of hearers, especially when nothing turns upon believing or not believing. The only real test of the power of evidence is to be found in the strength of the conviction which it ought to produce,—that is to say, which it can be shown to be generally expedient that it should produce. The sort of belief which people would not act upon in matters of importance hardly deserves the name. If it be true that in the case supposed it would be to the last degree rash and cruel to hang the person denounced, that can only be because the evidence ought not to produce a conviction of his guilt; and if this is conceded, the illustration proves that a bare uncorroborated assertion by a person professing to be an eye-witness of an event is not sufficient evidence of that event to warrant action of an important kind based upon the supposition of its occurrence. When you are obliged to guess, such an assertion may be a reason for making one guess rather than another. Less evidence than this would make a banker hesitate as to a person's credit, or would lead a customer to doubt whether his banker was solvent; but in such cases all that is possible is a guess, more or less judicious, and a guess, however judicious, is a totally different thing from settled rational belief.

To pass, however, to another topic. The illustration which I have given is one in which the uncorroborated assertion involves no intrinsic improbability,—an expression which I do not stop to attempt to analyse, but which I suppose may be roughly defined as a supposition involving some departure from or exception to common well-

known rules as to the manner in which events happen. If a certain amount of such improbability is introduced, the value of the evidence would be diminished in a corresponding degree. Suppose the imaginary witness were to assert that he saw the event in question through a brick wall, or that an animal told him of its occurrence. He would simply be laughed at, however rational and collected he might appear to be. The person charged with the murder would not only not be convicted, but he would not be for a moment suspected. I know of no case except the case of miracles in which an assertion, at once improbable in itself and uncorroborated by other evidence, would receive the least attention.

The matter, however, may be carried still further. Let us suppose that the story suggested was told by a person who affirmed that he was one of several people who witnessed the same event; and let us further suppose that years afterwards his statement was discovered, but that no record remained of what was said by the other spectators, if, indeed, they ever said anything.

In such a case, surely the rational judgment on the whole subject would be that the opportunity of ascertaining the truth of the assertion had been lost, and that the matter must remain involved in doubt.

Lastly, let us suppose that the statement of the original alleged eye-witness had not been preserved at all, and that nothing was preserved except some other person's account of what he said. In such a case no one would think the matter worth inquiring into for any serious practical purpose.

If we put together the different considerations indicated by these remarks, they will produce the following results:—Human testimony, directly or indirectly, is the source upon which all of us are obliged to rely for nearly the whole of our knowledge and of our opinions, but its cogency depends upon the degree to which it complies with certain well-ascertained conditions. The value of a simple assertion taken alone is, in regard to knowledge, as small as the strength of a single arm in regard to architecture. If you had no assertions you would have no knowledge, and if men had no hands they would have no buildings; but the value of the individual assertion depends upon other assertions with which it is connected and interwoven, just as the efforts of a single hand are important because they are connected with those of other hands, and so form part of a general plan working towards a common result.

The strongest illustration of the force of these remarks is to be found in the administration of justice. Whatever people are or are not in earnest about, they are in earnest about processes upon which depend their lives, their liberty, their characters, and their property. With all its defects, some of which relate to this very subject, it will hardly, I think, be denied that the administration of justice in this country is specially distinguished by the skill with which it provides for the investigation of matters of fact, and this is due to a very great extent not so much to what are technically known as the rules of evidence (though they, subject to some excrescences and technicalities, are of the greatest possible value), as to the general conception of the nature of evidence which pervades, and has indeed moulded and formed those rules. Its general purport is somewhat as follows:—The existing state of things is not to be interfered with; the life, the liberty, the character, and the property of men are to be maintained *in statu quo*, unless the facts which would justify interference with them are proved in a distinct, satisfactory way. In order that they may be so proved, they must not be merely asserted to exist barely and in an unconnected way. They must be connected by well-known links of cause and effect, with assertions made or things actually produced before the person who is to decide. The assertions must in every case (rare and closely defined exceptions only excepted) be the assertions of eye and ear-witnesses, and these assertions must before they are trusted be subjected to the test of cross-examination, and to the further test of contradiction. Every one who has any interest in the matter must have the fullest opportunity of producing any one who can throw any light upon it. If a document is referred to, either the original, or under strictly defined regulations, a proper copy must be produced. Each party to the inquiry, again, must be fully heard upon all that is brought forward, and each is, generally speaking, actuated by strong motives to support the proposition for which he contends. Lastly, the whole process is regulated and superintended by persons whose ability and inclination to discharge those functions properly are secured by the most elaborate precautions. These are, and I think are wisely, deemed to be absolutely indispensable precautions before any interference with established interests on the ground of the existence of alleged facts can be justified.

I am sensible that the tests of truth, when thus enumerated, sound

common-place and trivial. To appreciate their value it is necessary to see them at work. Having passed many years in continually watching their practical application, my opinion upon them is that as negative tests they are altogether indispensable, but that as positive tests they are very insufficient. That is to say, many things which are not true are often proved by legal evidence; but I find it hard to imagine reasonable grounds for undoubting belief of any matter of fact which cannot even be proved by legal evidence.

The imperfections of legal evidence upon the commonest matters of fact would form a curious subject of inquiry. At present I can only illustrate it, and I will do so shortly. Perhaps the most striking of all illustrations is to be found in the continual conflict of evidence which arises in nearly every instance of conflicting interests and wishes. I will give a single instance of this which struck me greatly.

A great manufacturing firm at one of the largest towns in England wished to buy the business of another firm, the existence of which was practically the only thing which stood between the first firm and the monopoly of a great article of commerce. The terms of the purchase were arranged between six persons at a conference which took place at a certain hotel, and lasted for several hours. Two of the leading manufacturers of the town in question, and one leading attorney were present on each side. All of them were men of high character, one a person of distinguished ability. The attorneys had no personal interest in the matter. A, B, and C told this story. A and B discussed the matter with D and E for several hours, and at last it was agreed that A and B would make the purchase if D and E would pledge themselves to the truth of certain statements. To this they agreed. A, B, and C left the room, and went into another room, and at C's suggestion there drew up a paper recording the statements to be guaranteed by D and E. They produced the paper written on a sheet bearing the hotel stamp. They then went back to the room where they were at first, and read over the paper, to which the other party agreed. A and B swore to this in the most minute detail. C swore to the truth of the part ascribed to him, and particularly to the preparation of the paper by his advice. D, E, and F utterly denied the whole story, and declared that they had never seen the paper at all till it was produced in the arbitration-room.

For various detailed reasons I do not myself think that in this particular instance either or all of the parties committed wilful perjury.

What the real truth was I cannot even guess, but I imagine that each party had asserted and talked over their own version of what passed till they persuaded themselves of its truth. The case was decided by the arbitrator (now a Judge) on the sensible ground that the plaintiff had failed to prove his case, and that the defendant was entitled to the benefit of the doubt. Let us suppose that either half of this story had been lost, that the other had been preserved and had been for years propagated amongst the partisans of the one side or the other, that the proceeding had been connected in some way or other with matters of political or religious interest, and that those who afterwards represented the side defeated at the time, had repeated their own version of the story long afterwards as an instance of injustice and oppression, how plausible their case would have been. Put newspapers and printing out of account, and suppose that Arthur Orton were to found a sect, and that when all other records of his trial had perished a garbled summary of his own view of the case were brought to light, how easy it would be to make him a martyr and a hero hunted down by a dark conspiracy of wicked great men.

In a word, as regards all detailed matters of fact, I think that there is a time, greater or less, during which the evidence connected with them may be collected, examined, and recorded. If this is done, a judgment can be formed upon the truth of allegations respecting them at any distance of time. Such judgments are rarely absolute, they ought always, or nearly always, to be tempered by some degree of doubt, but I do not think they need be affected by the lapse of time. It is now nearly twenty years since the trial of the notorious Palmer. Reports of his case may be had without difficulty, and I think that a reader of those reports will be able to form quite as good an opinion of his guilt or innocence a thousand years hence as the jury who tried him in 1856,—assuming, of course, that neither human nature itself nor the habits of life alter to such an extent as to deprive the facts proved of their significance.

If, however, this opportunity is lost, if no complete examination is made at the time of an incident, or if being made, it is not properly or fully recorded, clouds of darkness which can never be dispelled settle down upon it almost immediately. All that remains behind is an incomplete outline which can never be filled up.

If it be asked how far I should carry scepticism of this kind, I reply that I can fix no precise limit to it, because the nature of the

case admits of none, but I can in general describe the limits which I cannot define. If we look at the events of our own day we shall, I think, see that it is not only difficult but almost impossible to imagine a falsification of the broad outline of general public history by any process short of a root-and-branch destruction of civilisation and all its products. To deny or to affect to doubt that in 1870 and 1871 there was a war in which the Germans defeated the French, conquered Alsace and Lorraine and exacted an enormous fine, would be simply foolish. If we take a more remote period, original documents of every kind, laws, Acts of State, despatches in the archives of various countries, public monuments, and elaborate histories might be produced in proof of the wars of Louis XIV. or of Philip II. As we travel up the stream it becomes less voluminous. The battle of Cannæ is recorded by Livy, Polybius, and Plutarch. We rely on Thucydides for the siege of Syracuse, but when we come to the siege of Troy we are in a mist where nothing can be clearly distinguished, and this mist is quite as thick, though it may not be quite as difficult to dispel, when we look at the details of contemporary history. Such stories as the sinking of the 'Vengeur,' Nelson's order at Trafalgar, and others of the same character, illustrate the ease with which mistakes or fictions find a place in history. Surely the result is that our view of past events is like our view of distant objects. The details, unless they happen to be specially remembered, soon recede and disappear; the broad outlines for a time stand out with a distinctness which they owe to the suppression of details, and which make masses of jagged rock and precipitous snow look like smooth sheets of many-coloured paper. As we get still further off, all sink together into indistinguishable haze, which at the distance of a few yards makes the details of a leaf or flower as indistinct as it makes the stars of a nebula at the distance of billions of miles.

The practical inference from all this is, that whoever attempts to draw important inferences from the alleged occurrence of any detailed matter of fact which was not closely, impartially, and completely inquired into at the time, the result of the inquiry being authentically recorded for future reference, is trying to make a pyramid stand on its point.

If such an inquiry is shown to have taken place, and if its result is to ascertain the fact that an observer not proved to be fraudulent asserts that he witnessed the event, and if this assertion is uncor-

roborated and unconfirmed, it is worth next to nothing. If the assertion is, besides, either hearsay or intrinsically improbable, I should say that it is worth nothing whatever.

I now come to the second point on which it appears to me that the assertors of miracles are apt to be mistaken,—their employment, without any warrant at all, of the argument: “Miracles are a well-established class of causes, therefore any given event may not improbably have been the effect of a miracle.”

I cannot, on the present occasion, give a more careful definition of probability than the one given already, but I may add that the word “improbable” means something more than uncommon, for an event may be in the highest degree uncommon, but probable in an equally high degree. For instance, the transit of Venus will take place in about seven years from this time, and will not take place again for 100 years, or thereabouts, if the heavenly bodies continue during that period to move in the same manner as they move at present. Every combination is uncommon, if not unique. Probably no two games at whist were ever precisely alike, but there is nothing improbable in the occurrence of any combination of the cards.

I suspect that if the matter were worked out, it would appear that in using the words “probable” and “improbable” we refer rather to our belief in those intermediate generalisations to which I have already referred than to specific facts. In saying that a miracle is, or that miracles are probable, a man usually means to say that he accepts as true the proposition that miracles do from time to time occur, that they form a recognised part of the economy of the world, and that to account for the cure of a particular disease, *e.g.*, by the supposition of a miracle, is like ascribing it to the administration of a well-known medicine; that it is no more than the ascription of a well-known effect to a well-recognised cause.

Those who hold this opinion must, of course, use the word “miracle” in the specific sense of a case in which some unseen spiritual being—God, an angel, or a saint, for example—exerts direct force upon material objects in the same way as a man might do if he had the necessary knowledge and power. This is the only way in which the word “miracle” can be used which will make sense of any such theory. I do not know that any one either supports or is interested in supporting the opinion that from time to time simply

unaccountable events occur which may be regarded as breaks in the common chain of cause and effect, and which cannot be explained in any way whatever. I must assume, therefore, that in this connection the word "miracle" is used in the sense above ascribed to it.

Those who take this view have, I think, a perfect right to say that the mere rarity of the occurrence of such interferences as they believe in is no argument against their existence.

The illustrations already given prove sufficiently that, under certain conditions, rare occurrences are quite as probable as common ones. The main condition of the probability of such an event is that the rare occurrence should from its nature, and from the circumstances under which it occurs, be capable of being observed, and that the evidence of it should be recorded in the manner which I have already described. If a moa were caught alive and publicly exhibited for money, or if the body of a sea-serpent were to be cast up upon the coast and duly examined by competent naturalists, the existence of moas and sea-serpents would be proved beyond all reasonable doubt. The reason why their existence is disbelieved or doubted is not that they are seen, if at all, so seldom, but because in each particular instance they are seen, if at all, in such an unsatisfactory way that it is doubtful whether they ever were seen.

There are innumerable ghost-stories in circulation, but as far as I know no instance has ever yet been even alleged to exist in which the existence of a ghost has been properly authenticated, nor has any reason ever been assigned why, if such beings exist, their existence should not be authenticated as readily and as conclusively as that of any other being whatever.

Stories of the interference of unseen agents stand upon exactly the same footing, speaking generally. Isolated instances occur in all ages and countries, but the common characteristic of them all is to be unauthenticated. Ten cases distinctly proved under the conditions referred to in the earlier part of this paper, would do more to settle the question of the existence of miracles as a class, than innumerable cases depending on assertions which were not properly examined when they were originally made, and which can now never be examined. On the other hand, what reason can possibly be suggested why the action of an invisible person upon matter, should not be ascertained quite as clearly as the action of a visible person. The restoration of a dead body to life might, if it occurred

be proved as conclusively and as notoriously as the death of a living person, or the birth of a child. If such events formed a real class to which new occurrences might be assigned, a large number of instances of their occurrence would be, so to speak, upon record, established beyond all doubt, and the very existence of the controversy shows that nothing of the sort exists. If it should be observed upon this that in most ages and countries narratives of miracles and prodigies are common, the reply is obvious. The supposition that any strange event is caused by an unseen personal agent is the first explanation of such events which suggests itself to an uninstructed mind. Moreover, the poetical faculty, the tendency to personify natural agents, and to give to real or imaginary events a marvellous dress, was for ages, and still is, in various shapes, one of the most powerful and general instincts of the human mind, and these considerations completely explain a general belief in miracles and prodigies not resting on experience. Such a belief raises a probability that the assertion that a miracle has occurred is untrue, just as the prevalence of a report known to be false deprives specific repetitions of it of their value. To put the same considerations in a slightly different shape, every one admits that an enormous mass of miraculous stories are false. To maintain the opposite would involve a necessity for discussing the truth of "The Arabian Nights" and the adventures of the Hindoo gods. Even if it is admitted that some miraculous stories are true, how are we to distinguish them from the many which are false? and if they cannot be distinguished, how, when a new event occurs, is it to be determined whether it ought to be referred to the class of events falsely supposed to be miraculous, or to the class of events truly supposed to be miraculous?

It has become common in these days to argue in favour, at all events, of some miracles, on the ground of their fitting into certain historical theories. This argument is, I think, far too wide and vague to be brought to bear upon any specific question of fact. To pass over living authors, take such a work as Bossuet's *Discours sur L'Histoire Universelle*. No doubt he makes the Jewish and Christian miracles the centre and back-bone of human history, and no one, I think, can deny the genius which he displayed in doing so, but the history of mankind may be told in all sorts of ways, and upon all kinds of hypotheses as to the truth and falsehood of different creeds. And it seems to me to be idle to suggest that the notion

that a fact gives some kind of dramatic unity to the history of the world is entitled to be regarded as affording any indication whatever of its truth. Why should there be any dramatic unity in human history? Is it likely that if there is, it should be comprehended, developed, and pointed out by any single writer?

As to the value of common belief as an argument in favour of a miraculous narrative (which is also frequently urged), I will content myself with saying that it would prove not only contradictions, but wild absurdities, and I will conclude this paper by a curious example of this.

"The Institutes" of Menu begin with an account of the origin of Castes. "The Principle of Truth . . . . . created the Bramin from his mouth, the Chehteree from his arms, the Bice from his thighs, and the Soodra from his feet." The translator, Mr. Halhed, observes, "The faith of a Gentoo (misguided as it is, and groundless as it may be), is equally implicit with that of a Christian, and his allegiance to his own supposed revelations of the Divine Will altogether as firm. He, therefore, esteems the astonishing miracles attributed to a Brihma, a Raam, or a Krishen, as facts of the most indubitable authenticity, and the relation of them as most strictly historical. . . . . "The translator can positively affirm that the doctrine of the Creation, as set forth in the prefatory discourse to this Code, is there delivered as simple and plain matter of fact, and as a fundamental article in every pious Gentoo's creed; that it was so meant and understood by the compilers of this work unanimously, who bore the first characters in Bengal, both for their natural and acquired abilities; and that their accounts have been corroborated by the information of many other learned Bramins in the course of a wide and laborious inquiry."

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to "Mr. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S. W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*





Gladstone  
Huxley  
Knowles  
F. Stephen  
Ward  
S. Hodgson

Miwart  
Self  
Hutton  
Martineau  
Clifford  
Rector of Lincoln

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, DEC. 14, 1875.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M. ]

[PRIVATE.]

*L. Carpenter*

## ON THE FALLACIES OF TESTIMONY IN RELATION TO THE SUPERNATURAL.

No one who has studied the history of Science can fail to recognise the fact that the rate of its progress has been in great degree commensurate with the degree of *freedom from any kind of prepossession* with which scientific inquiry has been conducted. And the chapters of Lord Bacon's "Novum Organon" in which he analyses and classifies the prejudices that are apt to divert the scientific inquirer from his single-minded pursuit of Truth, have rightly been accounted among the most valuable portions of that immortal work. To use the felicitous language of Dr. Thomas Brown, "the temple which Lord Bacon purified was not that of Nature herself, but the temple of the mind; in its innermost sanctuaries were all the idols which he overthrew; and it was not till these were removed, that Truth would deign to unveil herself to adoration."

Every one, again, who watches the course of educated thought at the present time, must see that it is tending towards the rigorous application of scientific method within the sphere of Religious inquiry. Science is gradually undermining the old Bases of Belief; and men in almost every religious denomination, animated by no spirit but that of reverent loyalty to Truth, are now seriously asking themselves whether the whole fabric of what is commonly regarded as authoritative Revelation must not be carefully re-examined under the searching light of modern criticism, in order that what is sound may be preserved and strengthened, and that the insecurity of some parts may not destroy the stability of the whole.

Circumstances have led me from a very early period to take a great interest in the question of the value of Testimony, and to occupy myself a good deal in the inquiry as to what has been termed its "subjective" element. And the conviction has been more and more forced upon me, that as to all that concerns the "supernatural"

[NO. LVI.]

(using that term in its generally understood sense, without attempting a logical definition of it), the allowance which has to be made for this element is so large, as practically to destroy the validity of any testimony that is not submitted to the severest scrutiny according to the strictest scientific methods.

It was nobly said thirty years ago<sup>1</sup> (I believe by Francis Newman) that "every fresh advance of certain knowledge apparently sweeps off a portion of (so-called) religious belief, but only to leave the true religious element more and more pure;" and that "little as many are aware of it, faithlessness is often betrayed in the struggle to retain in the region of Faith that which is already passing into the region of Science, for it implies doubt of the value of Truth.' Thoroughly sympathising in this view—finding no abstract difficulty in the conception that the Author of Nature can, if He will, occasionally depart from that ordinary uniformity of sequence on which the man of Science bases his conception of Laws of Nature—and not presuming to deny that there might be occasions which to His wisdom may require such departure, I consider the question, without conscious prepossession, from the side of Testimony,—Have we any adequate historical ground for the belief that such departure has ever taken place? And I now propose to inquire, in a spirit not of iconoclasm, but of reverent conservatism, what inferences we may fairly draw from scientific study in regard to the validity of Testimony as to supernatural events.

The question has now passed into a phase altogether different from that which it presented a century or two ago. It was then, "Are the narratives genuine or fictitious? Did the narrators intend to speak the truth, or were they constructing a tissue of falsehoods? Did they really witness what they narrate, or were they the dupes of ingenious story-tellers?" It is now, "Granting that the narrators wrote what they firmly believed to be true, as having themselves seen (or thought they had seen) the events they recorded, or as having heard of them from witnesses equally trustworthy; is *their* belief a sufficient justification for *ours*? What is the extent of allowance which we are to make for prepossession,—(1) as modifying their interpretation of the occurrence at the time, and (2) as modifying their subsequent remembrance of it? And (3), in cases in which we have not access to the original records, what is the amount of allowance which we

<sup>1</sup> "Prospective Review," Vol. I., p. 53.

are justified in making for the accretion of other still less trustworthy narratives around the original nucleus?

In the prosecution of this inquiry, I desire to keep steadily in view my own liability to scientific 'prepossessions.' The votary of Science is apt to have his 'idols' as well as the Theologian; but while the true disciple of Bacon is on his guard against 'idolatry,' and is constantly finding himself rudely knocked about if he falls into it, the pledged upholder of any religious system can be scarcely other than, in some degree, an 'idolater.' The real 'philosopher,' says Schiller, is distinguished from the 'trader in knowledge' by his "always loving Truth better than his system."

Bacon's classification of 'Idols' is based on the *sources* of our prepossessions; and although his four types graduate insensibly into each other, yet the study of them is very profitable. Sir John Herschel is, I think, less successful when he classifies them as (1) prejudices of opinion and (2) prejudices of sense; because an analysis of any of his "prejudices of sense" shows that it is really a "prejudice of opinion." My present object is to show that we are liable to be affected by our prepossessions at every stage of our mental activity, from our primary reception of impressions from without, to the highest exercise of our reasoning powers; and that the value of the testimony of any individual, therefore, as to any fact whatever, essentially depends upon his freedom from any prepossessions that can affect it.

That our own states of consciousness constitute what are, to each individual, the most certain of all truths—in a philosophical sense, (as J. S. Mill says) the only certain truths—will, I suppose, be generally admitted; but there is a wide *hiatus* between this, and the position that every state of consciousness which represents an external object has a real object answering to it. I might pile up any number of instances of visual deception, for example, in which the subject would be ready to affirm without the slightest hesitation that he sees something which greatly differs from the object that actually forms the picture on his retina; his erroneous interpretation of that picture being induced by a prepossession derived from antecedent experience. I could show, too, that the same picture may be interpreted in two different modes: a skeleton diagram, for example, suggesting two dissimilar solid forms, according as we fix our eyes on one or another of its angles, and a photograph of a coin or a

fossil being seen as a cameo or as an intaglio, according as the position of the light affects the interpretation of its lights and shadows. So, again, in those more complex combinations of natural objects which the pictorial artist aims to present, the different modes in which the very same scene shall be treated by two individuals working at the same time and from the same point of view, show how differently they interpret the same visual picture, according to their original constitution and subsequent training. As Carlyle says, "The eye sees what it brings the power to see."

But mental prepossessions do much more than this; they *produce* sensations having no objective reality. I do not here allude to those "subjective sensations" of Physiologists, which depend upon physical affections of nerves in their course, the circulation of poisoned blood in the brain (as in the delirium of fever), and the like; but I refer to the sensations produced by *mental expectancy*, a most fertile source of self-deception. The medical practitioner is familiar with these in the case of 'hysterical' subjects; whose pains are as real experiences to them, as if they originated in the parts to which they are referred. And I have no reason to doubt that the 'sensitives' of Reichenbach really saw the flames they described as issuing from magnets in the dark; as a very honest and highly educated gentleman assured me that he did, as well when the magnet was there, and when he believed it to be still there (in the dark), after it had been actually withdrawn. So there are 'sensitives' in whom the drawing of a magnet along the arm will produce a sensible *aura* or pricking pain; but this will be equally excited by the belief that the magnet is being so used, when nothing whatever is done.

Now, the phenomena of which these are simple examples, appear to me to have this Physiological signification,—that changes in the Cerebrum which answer to the higher mental states act *downwards* upon the Sensorium at its base, in the same manner as changes in the Organs of Sense act *upwards* upon it; the very same state of the sensorium being producible through the nerves of the *internal* and of the *external* senses, and the very same affection of the sensational consciousness being thus called forth by impressions *ab extra* and *ab intra*. Thus, individuals having a strong pictorial memory can reproduce scenes from nature, faces, or pictures, with such vividness that they may be said to see with their 'mind's eye' just as distinctly as with their bodily eye; and such as possess a strong pictorial

imagination can thus *create* distinct visual images of what they have never seen through their bodily eyes. And although this power of voluntary representation is comparatively rare, yet we are all conscious of the phenomenon as occurring involuntarily in our dreams.

Now, there is a very numerous class of persons who are subject to what may be termed 'waking dreams,' which they can induce by placing themselves in conditions favourable to reverie; and the course of these dreams is essentially determined by the individual's prepossessions, brought into play by suggestions conveyed from without. In many who do not spontaneously fall into this state, fixity of the gaze for some minutes is quite sufficient to induce it; and in the 'spiritualistic' performances of the present time, we seem to have reproductions of many of the states which in ancient times were regarded, under the influence of religious prepossession, as results of divine inspiration. I have strong reason to believe (from my conviction of the honesty of the individuals who have themselves narrated to me their experiences) that they have really seen, heard, and felt what they describe, where intentional deception was out of the question, that is, that they had the same distinct consciousness in states of expectant reverie, of seeing, touching, and conversing with the spirits of departed friends, that most of us occasionally have in our dreams. And the difference consists in this,—that whilst one, in the exercise of his common-sense, dismisses these experiences as the creation of his own brain, having no objective reality, the other, under the influence of his prepossession, accepts them as the results of impressions *ab extra* made upon him by 'spiritual' agencies.

The faith anciently placed, by the heathen as well as the Jewish world, in dreams, visions, trances, &c., thus has its precise parallel in the present day; and it is not a little instructive to find a very earnest religious body, the Swedenborgians, implicitly accepting as an authoritative revelation the visions of a man of great intellectual ability and strong religious spirit, but highly imaginative disposition, the peculiar feature of whose mind it was to dwell upon his own imaginings, which he seems to have so completely separated from his worldly life that the Swedenborg who believed himself to hold intercourse with the spiritual world and Swedenborg the mechanician and metallurgist may almost be regarded as two distinct personalities.

We have similar examples of the like dualism at the present time. If the high scientific attainments of Huggins, Wallace, or Crookes,

and our confidence in their honesty, be held to require our assent to what they narrate as their experiences, in regard to a class of phenomena which they declare that they have witnessed, but which they have not submitted to scientific tests, and which they cannot reproduce for the satisfaction of the incredulous, then we must, in like manner, accept the records of Swedenborg's revelations as binding on our belief. That they were *true to him*, I do not doubt; and in the same manner, I do not question that Mr. Crookes is thoroughly honest, when he says that he has repeatedly witnessed the 'levitation of the human body.' But I regard his statements in no other light than as evidence of the degree in which certain minds are led by the influence of strong prepossession, to a firm belief in the creations of their own imagination. And all history shows that nothing is so potent as Religious enthusiasm, in fostering this tendency; the very state of enthusiasm, in fact, being the 'possession' of the mind by fixed ideas, which overbear the teachings of objective experience. These, when directed to great and noble ends, may overcome the obstacles which deter cooler judgments from attempting them; but, on the other hand, may also move not only individuals, but great masses of people, to extravagances at which sober common-sense revolts,—as the history of the Flagellants, the Dancing Mania, and other Religious Epidemics of the middle-ages, forcibly illustrates. And nothing is more remarkable in the history of these epidemics, than the vividness with which people who were certainly not asleep, saw visions that were obviously inspired by the prevalent religious notions of their times.

In the next place, I would briefly direct attention to the influence of prepossessions on those *interpretations* of our Sensational experiences, which we are prone to substitute for the statement of the experiences themselves. Of such misinterpretations, the records of Science are full; the tendency is one which besets every observer, and to which the most conscientious have frequently yielded; and I do not know any more striking illustrations of it than I could narrate from my own inquiries into Mesmerism, Spiritualism, &c. The most diverse accounts of the *facts* of a séance will be given by a believer and by a sceptic. One will declare that a table rose in the air, while another (who had been watching its feet) is confident that it never left the ground; a whole party of believers will affirm that they saw Mr. Home float out of one window and in at another, whilst a single

honest sceptic declares that Mr. Home was sitting in his chair all the time. And in this last case we have an example of a fact, of which there is ample historic illustration, that during the prevalence of an Epidemic Delusion, the honest testimony of any number of individuals on one side, if given under a prepossession, is of no more weight than that of a single adverse witness,—if so much. Thus I think it cannot be doubted by any one who candidly studies the Witchcraft trials of two centuries back, that, as a rule, the witnesses really believed what they deposed to as facts; and it further seems pretty clear that in many instances the persons incriminated were themselves ‘possessed’ with the notion of the reality of the occult powers attributed to them. No more instructive lesson can be found, as to the importance of the ‘subjective’ element in human testimony, than is presented in the records of these trials. Thus, Jane Brooks was hung at Chard Assizes in 1658 for having bewitched Richard Jones, a sprightly lad of twelve years old; he was seen to rise in the air and pass over a garden wall some thirty yards; and nine people deposed to finding him in open daylight, with his hands flat against a beam at the top of a room, and his body two or three feet from the ground! If this “levitation of the human body,” confirmed as it is in modern times by the testimony of Mr. Crookes, Lord Lindsay, and Lord Adair, to say nothing of the dozen witnesses to Mrs. Guppy’s descent through the ceiling of a closed and darkened room, has a valid claim on our belief, how are we to stop short of accepting, on the like testimony, *all* the marvels and extravagances of Witchcraft? If, on the other hand, we put these witnesses out of court, as rendered untrustworthy by their ‘prepossession,’ what credit can we attach to the one-sided testimony of any individuals or bodies dominated by a strong religious ‘prepossession;’ that testimony having neither been recorded at the time, nor subjected to the test of judicial examination?

Though I have hitherto spoken of ‘prepossessions’ as Ideational states, there are very few in which the Emotions do not take a share; and how strongly the influence of these may pervert the representations of actual facts, we best see in that early stage of many forms of Monomania, in which there are as yet no fixed delusions, but the occurrences of daily life are wrongly interpreted by the emotional colouring they receive. But we may recognise the same influence in matters which are constantly passing under our

observation ; and a better illustration of it could scarcely be found than in the following circumstance, mentioned to me as having recently occurred in the practice of a distinguished physician :—The head of a family having been struck down by serious illness, this physician was called in to consult with the ordinary medical attendant ; and after examining the patient and conferring with his colleague, he went into the family sitting-room to report his judgment on the case. This he delivered in the cautious form which wise experience dictated :—"The patient's condition is very critical, but I see no reason why he should not recover." One of the daughters screamed, "Dr. — says Papa will die !" another cried out, in a jubilant tone, "Dr. — says Papa will get well." If no explanation had been given, the two ladies would have reported the physician's verdict in *precisely opposite terms*, one being under the influence of *fear*, the other of *hope*.

Still more do all these forms of 'prepossession' act involuntarily in modifying the memorial traces of past events, even when they were originally rightly apprehended. A gradual change in our own mode of viewing them will bring us to the conviction that we always so viewed them ; as we recently saw in the erroneous account which Earl Russell gave of his action as Foreign Secretary in the negotiations which preceded the Crimean war. His subsequently acquired perception of what he should have done at a particular juncture, wrought him up to the honest belief that he really did it. To few persons of experience in life has it not happened to find their distinct impressions of past events in striking disaccordance with some contemporary narrative, as perhaps given in a letter of their own. An able lawyer told me not long since that he had had occasion to look into a deed which he had not opened for twenty years, but which he could have sworn to contain certain clauses ; and to his utter astonishment, the clauses were not to be found in it. His habitual conception of the purpose of the deed had constructed what answered to the actual memorial trace.

Now this constructive process becomes peculiarly obvious in a comparison of the narratives given by the believers in Mesmerism, Spiritualism, and similar occult agencies, when there has been time for the building-up of the edifice, with contemporary records of the events, made, perhaps, by the very individuals themselves. Everything which tends to prove the reality of the occult influence, is

exaggerated or distorted; everything which would help to explain it away, is quietly (no doubt quite unintentionally) dropped out. And convictions thus come to be honestly entertained, which are in complete disaccordance with the original facts.

Of the manner in which this constructive process will build up a completely ideal representation of a personality (with or without nucleus of reality), which shall gain implicit acceptance among a whole people, and be currently accepted by the world at large, we have a 'pregnant instance' in the William Tell tradition. For the progressive narrowing-down of his claims, which has resulted from the complete discordance between the actions traditionally attributed to him and trustworthy contemporary history, leaves even his personality questionable; while the turning-up of the apple-story in Icelandic sagas and Hindoo myths seems to put it beyond doubt that this, at any rate, is drawn from far older sources. The reality of this process of gradual accretion and modification, in accordance with current ideas in regard to the character of an individual or the bearing of an event, cannot now be doubted by any philosophic student of history. And the degree in which such constructions involve ascriptions of supernatural power, can be shown in many instances to depend upon the prevalent notions entertained as to what the individual might be expected to do.

No figure is more prominent in the early ecclesiastical history of Scotland, than that of St. Columba, "the Apostle of the Scoto-Irish," in the sixth century. Having left Ireland, his native country, through having been brought into collision by his fearless independence with its Civil powers, and been excommunicated by its Church-synods, he migrated to Scotland in the year 563; and acquired by royal donation the island of Iona, which was a peculiarly favourable centre for his evangelising labours, carried on for more than thirty years among the Picts and Scots, and also among the northern Irish. No fewer than thirty-two separate religious foundations among the Scots, twenty-one among the Picts, and thirty-seven among the Irish, many of which occupied conspicuous places in the monastic history of the earlier middle-ages, seem to have been planted by himself or his immediate disciples; the most celebrated of all these being the College of the Culdees at Iona, which kept alive the flame of learning during a prolonged period of general ignorance and superstition, and became a centre of a religious in-

fluence which extended far beyond the range of its founder's personal labours, and caused his memory to be held in the deepest veneration for centuries afterwards. It is not necessary for my present purpose to discuss the relation of the Culdee community to the Hierarchical and Monastic institutions of the Church of Rome, into which it subsequently became absorbed; but the point on which I desire to lay stress is *the continuity of history*, as trustworthy as any such history can be; the incidents of St. Columba's life having been originally recorded in the contemporary *fasti* of his religious foundation, and transmitted in unbroken succession to Abbot Adamnan, who first compiled a complete *Vita* of his great predecessor, of which there still exists a manuscript copy, whose authenticity there is no reason to doubt, which dates back to the early part of the eighth century, not much more than one hundred years after St. Columba's death. Now, Adamnan's *Vita* credits its subject with the possession of every kind of miraculous power. The Saint prophesied events of all kinds, trivial as well as grave, from battles and violent deaths, down to the spilling of an ink-horn, the falling of a book, the omission of a single letter from a writing, and the arrival of guests at the monastery. He cured numbers of people afflicted with inveterate diseases, accorded safety to storm-tossed vessels, himself walked across the sea to his island home, drove demons out of milk-pails, outwitted sorcerers, and gave supernatural powers to domestic implements. Like other Saints, he had his visions of angels and apparitions of heavenly light, which comforted and encouraged him at many a trying juncture,—lasting, on one occasion, for three days and nights.

Now, it seems to me beyond all reasonable doubt that St. Columba was one of those men of extraordinary energy of character and earnest religious nature, who have the power of strongly impressing most of those with whom they come into contact, moulding their wills and awakening their religious sympathies, so as to acquire a wonderful influence over them,—this being aided by the commanding personal 'presence' he is recorded to have possessed.<sup>1</sup> And it is not surprising that when themselves the subjects of what they regarded as 'supernatural' power, they should attribute to him the

<sup>1</sup> We have had in our own times a curious reproduction of a somewhat similar type in the person of Peter Cartwright, the celebrated American Revivalist preacher, of whose 'muscular Christianity' some very racy stories are current in the backwoods which formed the scene of his ministrations.

exercise of the same power in other ways. In fact, to their unscientific minds it seemed quite 'natural' that he should so exert it; its possession being, in their belief, a normal attribute of his saintship. That he himself believed in his gifts, and that many wonders were actually worked by the concurrent action of his own faith in himself and his followers' faith in him, will not seem unlikely to any one who has carefully studied the action of Mental states upon the Bodily organism. And that round a nucleus of truth there should have gathered a large accretion of error, under the influence of the mental preconception whose *modus operandi* I have endeavoured to elucidate, is accordant with the teachings of our own recent experience, in such cases as that of Dr. Newton and the Zouave Jacob. In these and similar phenomena, a strong conviction of the possession of the power on the part of the healer seems to be necessary for the excitement of the faith of those operated on; and the healer recognises, by a kind of intuition, the existence of that faith on the part of the patient. Do not several phrases in the Gospel narratives point to the same relations as existing between Jesus and the sufferers who sought his aid? The cure is constantly attributed to the 'faith' of the patient; whilst, on the other hand, we are told that Jesus did not do many mighty works in his own country "because of their unbelief,"—the very condition which, if these mighty works had been performed by his own will alone, would have been supposed to call forth its exertion, but which is perfectly conformable to our own experience of the wonders of Mesmerism, Spiritualism, &c.

The potency of influences of the opposite kind upon minds pre-disposed to them, and through their minds upon their bodies, is shown in the 'Obeah practices' still lingering among the negroes of the West India colonies, in spite of most stringent legislation. A slow pining-away, ending in death, has been the not unfrequent result of the fixed belief, on the part of the victim, that 'Obi' has been put upon him by some old man or old woman reputed to possess the injurious power; and I see no reason to doubt that the Obi-men or women were firm believers in the occult power attributed to them.

Every Medical man of large experience is well aware how strongly the patient's undoubting faith in the efficacy of a particular remedy or mode of treatment assists its action; and where the doctor is himself animated by such a faith, he has the more power of exciting

it in others. A simple prediction, without any remedial measure, will sometimes work its own fulfilment. Thus, Sir James Paget tells of a case in which he strongly impressed a woman having a sluggish, non-malignant tumour in the breast, that this tumour would disperse within a month or six weeks; and go it did. He perceived the patient's nature to be one on which the assurance would act favourably, and no one could more earnestly and effectively enforce it. On the other hand, a fixed belief on the part of the patient that a mortal disease has seized upon the frame, or that a particular operation or system of treatment will prove unsuccessful, seems in numerous instances to have been the real occasion of the fatal result.

Many of the so-called 'miracles' of the Romish Church, such as that of the 'Holy Thorn' (narrated in the History of the Port Royalists) which stood the test of the most rigid contemporary inquiry, carried on at the prompting of a hostile ecclesiastical party, seem to me fully explicable on the like principle of the action of strongly excited 'faith' in producing bodily change, whether beneficial or injurious; and nothing but the fact that this strong excitement was called forth by religious influences, which in all ages have been more potent in arousing it than influences of any other kind, gives the least colour to the assumption of their supernatural character.

I might draw many other illustrations from the lives of the Saints of various periods of the Roman Catholic Church, as chronicled by their contemporaries, many of whom speak of themselves as eye-witnesses of the marvels they relate; thus, the "levitation of the human body"—*i.e.*, the rising from the ground and the remaining unsupported in the air for a considerable length of time—is one of the miracles attributed to St. Francis d'Assisi. But it will be enough for me to refer to the fact that some of the ablest Ecclesiastical historians in the English Church have confessed their inability to see on what grounds—so far as *external evidence* is concerned—we are, to reject these, if the testimony of the Biblical narratives is to be accepted as valid evidence of the supernatural occurrences they relate.

But the most remarkable example I have met with in recent times of the 'survival' in a whole community of ancient modes of thought on these subjects (the etymological meaning of the term 'supersti-

tion'), has been very recently made public by a German writer, who has given an account of the population of a corner of Eastern Austria, termed the Bukowina; a large proportion of which are Jews, mostly belonging to the sect of the Chassidim, who are ruled by 'Saints' or 'Just Ones.' "These Saints," says their delineator, "are sly impostors,<sup>1</sup> who take advantage of the fanaticism, superstition, and blind ignorance of the Chassidim in the most bare-faced manner. They heal the sick by pronouncing magic words, drive out devils, gain law-suits, and their curse is supposed to kill whole families, or at least to reduce them to beggary. Between the 'Saint' and 'God' there is no mediator, for he holds personal intercourse with the Father of all, and his words are oracles. Woe to those who should venture to dispute these miracles in the presence of these unreasonable fanatics! They are ready to die for their superstitions, and to kill those who dispute them."<sup>2</sup>

Now, I fail to see what stronger external evidence there is of any of the supernatural occurrences chronicled in the Old Testament, than that which is afforded by the assured conviction of this Jewish community as to what is taking place at the present time under their own eyes. And assuming, as I suppose we most of us should be ready to do, that the testimony to these contemporary wonders would break down under the rigorous test of a searching examination, I ask whether we are not equally justified in the assumption that a similar scrutiny, if we had the power to apply it, would in like manner dispose of many of the narratives of old time, either as distortions of occurrences, or as altogether legendary?

And even in regard to the New-Testament miracles, I fail to see that the external testimony in their behalf is nearly as strong as it is for the reality of the miracles attributed to St. Columba; more especially since Christians have, as a rule, ignored the contrary testimony of the great mass of the Jewish people among whom they are said to have occurred,—accepting, like the 'Spiritualists' of the

<sup>1</sup> The principal evidence that they do not share in the prevalent belief in their powers, seems to me to lie in the degree in which they turn the exercise of them to their own advantage; one of the most distinguished of them, to whom the faithful make pilgrimages from the interior of Russia and from Western Austria, the aged Rabbi of Sandragora, near Czernowitz, "who has been performing miracles for many years," is said to have accumulated an enormous fortune, and lives like a prince.

<sup>2</sup> E. Kilian, in *Fraser's Magazine*, for December, 1875.

present time, the testimony of 'believers' only. I cannot but think that some of these difficulties must have been present to the mind of Locke, when he recorded, in the Common-place Book published by Lord King, the remarkable aphorism that "the doctrine proves the miracles, rather than the miracles the doctrine."



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*t*

Prof. Huxley

## THE EVIDENCE OF THE MIRACLE OF THE RESURRECTION.

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IN the course of a recent discussion, a strong desire was expressed by a believer in Miracles that those who fail to perceive the cogency of the evidence by which the occurrence of miracles is supported, should not confine themselves to the discussion of general principles, but should grapple with some particular case of an alleged miracle.

Being assured that such a proceeding on our side would not be regarded as an offensive attack upon beliefs dear to those who hold them, I undertook the task, and now fulfil my engagement, though it is not without a strong unwillingness, arising from the fear that I may, by some oversight, let slip phrases that may needlessly wound some of my hearers ; or, what would be still worse, fail in expressing my own profound reverence for the subject of the alleged miracle of which I propose to treat.

I am not one of them whose zeal for Science would suffer him to "botanise upon his mother's grave," and I shrink from speaking of even the bodily frame of the greatest moral genius the world has seen—as if it were a fit subject for physiological study. Indeed, if I thought that the attempt to clear away some of the mist which has so long shrouded and obscured the real grandeur of Jesus of Nazareth—and which has, in my judgment, degraded him from his unique place, as the realised ideal of almost perfect humanity, to a mere niche in the pantheon of deifications—could be justly interpreted as an indication of want of veneration for him, I should be disposed, for my own sake, if for no better reason, to treat of some other miracle.

But, on this ground, the miracle of the Resurrection has an advantage. By the nature of the case, Jesus himself cannot have professed to have worked this miracle ; and I see no reason for holding him responsible for the opinions which have been held respecting the occurrence, if it ~~was~~ no miracle. In the next place,



we have all been talking *at* this miracle, though not *of* it. Moreover, there are persons courageous enough to affirm that it is the best-established of all miracles, and that the doctrine of Jesus stands or falls by it—both propositions from which, in passing, I may express my utter dissent. Finally, the subject-matter of this particular miracle is such as I may appropriately deal with, for the affirmation of the occurrence of the miracle involves the proposition that a dead organism has been made to live. Whether an organism said to be dead has been revived or not is a question of evidence, and must be decided by the general laws of evidence. But whether the organism said to be dead was really dead or not so, is a question of biology. It therefore falls within the range of those questions with which it is my ordinary business to concern myself. I may therefore be permitted to deal with the question exactly as if it were one respecting which I expected to be called as an expert before some medico-legal tribunal. And I shall state the case as it is put by the three Synoptical Gospels, assuming that the statements upon which they are all agreed are true; and leaving on one side those points on which they disagree, or respecting which one only testifies.

Jesus of Nazareth was affixed to a cross, and remained in that position for a period of not more than six, nor less than three hours. He then suddenly ceased to exhibit any signs of life. The body was taken down by certain of his friends, wrapped in linen, and placed in a rock sepulchre, the mouth of which was barred by a large stone, the same evening.

Of what happened between the time of deposition in the sepulchre and the early morning of the next day but one, there is no evidence. But, at the period last mentioned, some of the friends of Jesus visited the tomb, and found the body gone.

On the same day, several persons saw Jesus alive and spoke with him.

This I apprehend to be a full and fair statement of all the facts of the case about which the witnesses tell the same story. I, for my part, see no reason for doubting its general accuracy. Moreover, it appears to me to be quite possible to accept the final conclusion of the followers and friends of Jesus, that God had raised him from the dead, if we are careful to attach to their words the significance which they attached to them; and if we avoid those modern connota-

tions of which they certainly had as little conception as the ordinary mass of people at the present day have.

A man left for dead on the field of battle at Sedan or Bazeilles, and picked up by some kind-hearted peasant after six-and-thirty hours of unconsciousness, would say, and very justly, in one sense, that he owes his life to God; that God preserved him, that without the help of God, he had been a dead man. Still more would the Palestinian Jew, to whom God was immanent in a sense few Western people realise, but which is still familiar enough to the Oriental, see in such a restoration to life of a man who was dead in the only sense of the word they comprehended, an event only to be understood as the result of a direct intervention of the Deity.

But if the case is put to me as a question of physiology—if I am asked whether the facts here stated afford sufficient proof of the propositions which theological speculators have based upon them—I reply that, so far from being proof, they are not even evidence. They are hopelessly and utterly irrelevant to the issue.

For the theological speculator, thrusting aside the modest and, as I believe, substantially truthful statement in which the Evangelists concur, will have us accept two propositions, which, we may safely assume, neither Matthew nor Mark, nor even Luke, the “physician” himself, could have comprehended.

1. That the body of Jesus of Nazareth died in the strict sense of modern physiology.

2. That this mere dead organic fabric was miraculously re-endowed with the composition, structure, and functions which it possessed before death, and became a sound and healthy human body.

Now I affirm, without the slightest hesitation, that if I ventured, before the medico-legal tribunal which I have imagined, to maintain that the facts of the case, as established by the concurrent testimony of the witnesses, offer the slightest justification for such conclusions as these, the lawyers, who understand the rules of evidence, would regard me as a fool; while the biologists, who understand what is needed to prove the occurrence of death, would, I fear, look upon me as something worse, inasmuch as they would be aware that I was asserting that which I knew to be untrue.

The former would probably look up Dr. Carpenter’s “Human Physiology,” and would read me such a passage as the following:—

"The state of Syncope is sometimes so complete, that neither can the heart's action be perceived, nor any respiratory movements be observed, all consciousness and powers of movement being at the same time abolished; and yet recovery has spontaneously taken place, which could scarcely have been the case, if all vital action had been suspended" (p. 904). And I should further be asked if I had ever heard of the history, avouched by competent witnesses, of the Indian Fakcer restored to life after burial for three days, under the direct superintendence of an English officer, and who, "when disinterred, was quite corpse-like, and no pulsation could be detected in the heart or in the arteries; the means of restoration employed were chiefly warmth to the vertex and friction of the body and limbs."

The cross-examination of the physiologist would be still more severe, and I should be obliged to make the following damaging admissions:—

1. There is a broad distinction to be drawn between *somatic death*—or the cessation of the obvious functions of the living body, which result from the activities of the <sup>2</sup>molecules living of the body—and *molecular death*, which is the cessation of those activities. If a wound-up watch should stop, because a hair had got into the escapement, it might be said to be *somatically* dead; but if it should stop because the materials of its spring and of its wheels had become soft and pasty, it would be *molecularly* dead. From the one condition, the watchmaker could readily restore it to activity, but the other would be irrevocable stoppage.

So, in the animal body, after somatic death, even though the obvious functions may have been long suspended, restoration is possible; but there is every reason to believe that molecular death is final and irreparable.

2. The fundamental physiological point in the story of the Resurrection is the proof, whether molecular death did or did not occur. But it is one of the most difficult of problems to determine whether, in any given case, molecular death has taken place or not.

It is well known that many animals, such as the common wheel animalcules, can be dried and reduced to a condition of apparently lifeless matter; that they may remain in this condition for weeks or months, and that yet when placed in water, they speedily pass into full vital activity.

In this case, somatic death has taken place, and even (so far as our means of investigation enable us to judge) a negative molecular death, I mean a cessation of all manifestations of vital activity. Yet the molecular structure of the living matter remains; the works of the watch are, so to speak, jammed by the withdrawal of something essential to their mobility, and when this substance, in the present instance water, is restored, they go on again. In such a case as this, there is no test by which we can judge whether molecular death has taken place, or not, except moistening the creature. If it comes to life again, we say it has never been dead. But this is a *petitio principii*. In the case of the higher animal organisms, it is not certain that there is any single absolutely trustworthy test of irreparable molecular death. But there are three indications of the occurrence of molecular death upon which reliance may be confidently placed.

The first, is the occurrence of death-stiffening, or *rigor mortis*; the second, is the fall of the temperature of a warm-blooded animal to that of the surrounding medium; the third, is the commencement of general putrefaction.

It is safe, in the present state of knowledge, to assume that molecular death has really set in if these three signs are present; if they are not present, it is wholly impossible to declare that irrecoverable dissolution has occurred.

All these statements must be admitted. They are part of common, every-day physiological knowledge. But having admitted these propositions of my examiner—if I further had to admit that the case, as stated, does not contain an iota of evidence bearing upon them; if I had to admit that it is just as likely as not that the death of Jesus was somatic and not molecular; if I had to admit that the friends of the teacher, who saw no harm in healing the sick on the sabbath, might themselves see no sin in rescuing their loved master from the grave at the cost of sabbath-breaking; if I had to admit that it is quite possible that he may have been brought to life after less than thirty-six hours of somatic death, by means such as those which restored the Fakeer after three days' persistence in a like state; if I had to make all these fatal admissions, what would become of my credit for honesty, if I still maintained that there was, I will not say good evidence in support of the miraculous nature of the Resurrection, but so much as a shadow of justification for professing to believe in it?

Not only is that justification absent now, but it can never have existed. It would be at once foolish and revolting to suggest that Joseph of Arimathæa, or any of the sorrowing friends who bore the body of their beloved Master to his resting-place, looked upon it with the eye of a physiologist; but if Galen himself had formed one of that grief-stricken little company, the brief moment before the white linen cloth had reverently hidden the corpse from observation would have yielded him no sufficient opportunity for observation; and even if the opportunity had sufficed, Galen himself, without modern appliances, could have given no opinion worth having.

Therefore it is as absurd as it is repugnant to imagine such an investigation. But if no such investigation did take place, the question whether Jesus died or not, in our modern scientific sense of the word, not only never can be answered, but never could be answered. And if it is not possible for us to say whether the body of Jesus underwent molecular death or not, it would be a mere futility to discuss the further question, whether he was miraculously resuscitated or not.

The students of physical science are not unfrequently told that their pursuits unfit them for the estimation of moral probability. And it may be so, for I am afraid that to those who are accustomed to severe reasoning, either in the province of Science or in that of Law, reasoning from 'moral probability' is apt to be regarded as a process of accumulating inconclusive arguments, in the hope that a great heap of them may, at least, look as firm as one good demonstration.

But, on the other hand, we have one advantage. We are daily, and by rough discipline, taught to attach a greater and greater responsibility to the utterance of the momentous words, 'I believe.' The man of science who commits himself to even one statement which turns out to be devoid of good foundation loses somewhat of his reputation among his fellows, and if he be guilty of the same error often he loses not only his intellectual, but his moral standing among them. For it is justly felt that errors of this kind have their root rather in the moral than in the intellectual nature.

Doubtless, men thus sharply disciplined, are apt to apply their own standards of right and wrong universally. And when such a

story as the miraculous version of the Resurrection is presented to them for acceptance, they not only decline to believe it, but they assert that, from their point of view, it would be a moral dereliction to pretend to believe it. Looking at fidelity to truth as the highest of all human duties, they regard with feelings approaching to abhorrence, that cynical infidelity which, when Reason reports "No evidence," and Conscience warns that intellectual honesty means absolute submission to evidence, attempts to drown the voice of both by loud assertion, backed by appeals to the weakness and to the cowardice of human nature.

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Froude

Greg

Bagshot

S. Hodgson

Misart

Hutton

Ward

Knowles

S. J.

Hutcheon.

F. Stephen

Harrison

Clifford.

W. B. Shadworth Hodgson

## THE PRE-SUPPOSITIONS OF MIRACLES.

THE preceding discussions have turned chiefly on the evidence requisite to establish the fact of occurrences, including occurrences of a supposed miraculous character. And these discussions have disclosed the circumstance that some, at least, among the miracle-credents maintain that the supposed miraculous character of an occurrence, when the belief of it may have morally good effects, is in itself a ground of probability in favour of the fact of its occurrence; so that less stringent evidence is to be required of the fact, on the ground that it is helped out by this *a priori* probability.

To this position of the question I propose to address myself in the present paper, taking, as a preliminary or *designative* definition of a miracle, "a change in the known order of nature effected by a supernatural power." I shall attempt a *connotative* definition farther on.

The definition turns upon the notions of a known order of Nature and of the possible relations of something supernatural to it. It leads us at once to the law, postulate, formula, assumption, axiom—call it what you will—of the Uniformity of Nature.

Now, some men of science are satisfied with holding the Uniformity of Nature as a regulative and not a constitutive truth. It appears in this light in the following expression of it, kindly furnished me by Professor Clifford, though I do not understand him as himself committed to the view of its being a regulative truth merely:—

"We *ought not* to believe anything beyond our experience, except upon the assumption that what we do not know is like what we do know."

This is evidently a practical maxim, a rule of ethic, applied to the case of reasoning and judgment; not a constitutive truth itself, although, as governing *all* our reasoning, it lies at the basis of all constitutive truth. For the sake of brevity, I will call those who take this view of the matter "Section A."

[NO. LIX.]

Some of the miracle-credents, on the other hand, assume as their first principle (as was evident from the preceding discussion) the direct contradictory of this, which I think I may fairly formulate as follows :—

We *ought* to believe *some* things beyond our experience, without the assumption that what we do not know (viz., the miracle) is like what we do know.

I will call those who take this view “Section B.”

Observe the remarkable identity of position. The ground of both the contradictory assumptions (for no one makes assumptions without some reason for doing so) is of a moral, practical kind. This is a new thing on the side of Section A. It would seem that they had adopted the view long held by Section B, and thus expressed by Coleridge :—“The Christian likewise grounds his philosophy on assertions; but with the best of all reasons for making them—namely, that he ought so to do.”<sup>1</sup>

This amounts to nothing less than suspending the whole of constitutive truth upon regulative or practical. The vista it opens is one of prolonged contention between two opposing schools of *morals*. The settlement of ethical questions, which are the more difficult, is made preliminary to the settlement of constitutive, which are the less difficult, depending less upon individual peculiarities of character. But what we want is some constitutive truth, some truth *of fact*; something to decide which of the two practical views is *true*, not which is most desirable. We want an argument applicable in the present, not an assurance that A or B will prevail in the long-run. In short, the question is, whether or not there is *constitutive truth* attainable in this case.

Another school of scientific men take a different view of Uniformity. Not resting the assumption of it on moral grounds, they simply say that it alone gives verifiable truth, and is therefore a safe guide where verification is no longer possible, as in the case of supposed miraculous occurrences, and of remote historical events. Here it appears as a law or general fact, of the very highest degree of probability; still not a necessary but a contingent fact, and therefore liable to be set aside or contradicted by occurrences (if any) of a supernatural character, occurrences which might conceivably happen,

<sup>1</sup> “Aids to Reflection,” Vol. I., p. 105, Sixth Edition, 1848. ‘Elements of Religious Philosophy.’

and which would in that case negative the uniformity of natural events. Mr. J. S. Mill may be taken as a chief representative of this view.<sup>1</sup> It is against this kind of uniformity that the argument drawn from Mr. Babbage's calculating-machine is directed. I will call this school "Section C."

We have, then, three views concerning the Uniformity of Nature :—

1. A moral obligation to assume it absolutely,—Section A.
2. A moral obligation to assume it capable of infringement,—Section B.
3. A constitutive truth of the highest degree of probability, but not absolutely incapable of infringement,—Section C.

Observe the logical inconsistency between constitutive and regulative truth introduced by Sections A and C. Section A assumes implicitly (but not the less really on that account) the very opposite of what it professes itself bound to assume. For to profess a moral obligation to do anything supposes that you *could* avoid doing it. And then Section C enforces this implicit assumption by simply stating the axiom of uniformity as a contingent truth. Section B, however, is open to no such logical objection. The law is assumed as capable of infringement, and a moral obligation is professed to suppose it infringed in certain cases. It is true that without an uniformity there can be no moral obligation, but this may be an uniformity in the moral order, or in the relations of that order with the supernatural world, and not affected necessarily by an infringement of uniformity in the physical world. Uniformity may be infringed, without being infringed in every department of nature.

And now where lies the truth? So long as the question is judged of solely from a scientific point of view, the rule in favour of uniformity cannot (so to speak) be made absolute. It must be regarded as capable of infringement, and therefore as *sometimes* actually infringed. For if *never*, that would be the same as non-capability. I have, indeed, for my part, the fullest confidence in the "long result of Time," the "*securus judicat orbis terrarum*:"—

"In vain,  
Opinions, those or these,  
Unalter'd to retain  
The obstinate mind decrees.  
Experience, like a sea, soaks all-effacing in."

<sup>1</sup> "System of Logic," Vol. I., p. 344, Sixth Edition. And see Mr. Venn's remarks in his "Consistency and Real Inference," in *Mind*, No. I., p. 51.

I believe that we shall all of us come to hold the incapability of infringement of the axiom of uniformity. But this is because I think I see philosophical, though not scientific, grounds for believing that it is an universal and necessary truth. What these grounds are I will briefly attempt to indicate, thus bringing the question before its true tribunal, that of philosophy, and not that of science.

It is common to both sides in this dispute, to Sections A and C on the one side, and Section B on the other, to assume *existence* as an *absolute*, as something wholly independent of our consciousness, something at which we look, and about which we reason, instead of being our consciousness, only with its phenomena in a different combination. And so long as we mentally occupy this position, the position of direct instead of reflective perception, we cannot possibly regard the axiom of uniformity as more than a contingent though very general truth. This would be quite sufficient for scientific uses, and if it were not for the Churches, it might suffice for all the uses of life. But when the question is raised whether it is *capable* of infringement, we have to look closer into the matter. For while no one pretends that for ordinary purposes we should quit common-sense language and common-sense thoughts, which, to use Mr. Carlyle's famous image, are our Ready-reckoners, yet, when any of the deeper problems are to be solved, it is but reasonable to have recourse to those principles upon which our Ready-reckoners themselves have been constructed. And a question concerning possibility cannot be *answered* except by the discovery of a necessity, either for the one alternative or for the other.

What, then, after all, *is* existence? That is the first philosophical, as distinct from scientific, question. There is but one answer. Existence means whatever is felt, or perceived, or inferred,—all that comes up into consciousness in any way whatever. In giving ourselves this answer to our own question we have *reasoned*, and we find that the laws of reasoning are involved in our notion of existence. An existence *totally* beyond our knowledge is a contradiction in terms. And existence *in any respect* within our knowledge is subject to the laws of our thought, the lines upon which our thinking moves, or else we could not have it in our knowledge.

This leads to what I regard as the solution of the present question. The axiom of uniformity has two senses, in one of which it means the obverse and objective aspect of the abstract laws of thinking,

which are the three Postulates of Logic (Identity, Contradiction, Excluded Middle). There is no holding those postulates without holding them valid for the phenomena through which they move, in which they are immersed, the concrete imagery of thought. For, if it be possible, let anything whatever, which we will call X, have different characteristics to-morrow from what it has to-day; it would not then be identical with itself, it would not be true to say  $X$  is  $X$ , which is the postulate of identity.  $X$ , however, means anything whatever. We can include *everything* in the formula. It enables, and in analytical processes compels, us to narrow the room for possible change down to vanishing-point. The postulates of logic are to general thought what the principle of the Calculus is to mathematic, a principle which, in application, sweeps the entire area of the object-matter.

The postulates are no assumptions. The term "assumption," standing alone, implies a liberty not to make it. Add the necessity of making it, and the assumption becomes a postulate. A "postulate," again, is a term signifying action, describing action in the doing, *a parte agentis*. The action described in its result, as a thing done, is an axiom, the thing postulated. And a postulate or axiom is no less a fact, because it is a fact inherent in action. Its belonging to action does not prevent its being a constitutive truth as well as a regulative one. It is constitutive of that action by which all reasoning is carried on. In this sense the axiom of uniformity is absolutely incapable of infringement. We cannot think of a power able to subvert it, any more than we can think of a power able to make the done undone,—

"τὸ γὰρ  
φανθὲν τίς ἀν δύναιτ' ἀν ἀγένητον ποιῆν."

It is primarily a constitutive, secondarily a regulative truth.

The other sense of the axiom is much narrower and more specialised, but it is usually covered by very large and loose language, as it is in the statement of Section A, "the assumption that what we do not know is like what we do know." This language might mean just what the axiom means in the first sense. But it is usually taken to mean *specifically* like what we have actual experience of. And this is the sense in which it is taken by Section B. In this sense they reject, and the other two sections affirm, the axiom. The question between them then becomes, whether, admit-

ting an universal and philosophical uniformity, the general facts of Nature which are capable of being exhibited as cases of *Conservation of Energy* are all that exist ; whether there are not other facts, whose nature is unknown to us, which may work an interruption, of which we could give no account, in the sequence of facts which we can know.

In this position of the question, unless the scientists are prepared to maintain that the world accessible to our faculties of feeling is the whole of existence, they must admit that there is an unseen world which may conceivably work abnormal effects in the seen world. A law of nature is a constant sequence of antecedent and consequent. If, then, while the consequents are visible, the antecedents are invisible, then, in that case, the consequents will be phenomena which are not reducible to law.

Practically, as well as logically, it is upon the question, first, of the existence of an unseen world ; secondly, of its relations to the seen world of actual and possible experience, that the controversy as to Miracles turns.

It is clear that the imagination of an unseen world, unseen to us from the limitation of our faculties, either in point of the degree of their power, or in point of their number and kind, is an imagination which in no way contravenes the philosophical axiom of uniformity. The continuity of the unseen world with the seen may well be included in our imagination of it. In this case, occurrences taking place in the unseen world might carry with them changes in the seen world which would interrupt the known order of our experience, yet without being violations of the axiom. In short, a larger ground is covered by the philosophical axiom of uniformity than by the doctrine of the inviolability of those laws of Nature which are, I do not merely say now discovered, but which are capable of discovery by our actual faculties. We cannot make our actual set of faculties into a "measure of all things," but we can make the philosophical axiom of uniformity into such a measure, because it is already included in the meaning of the term "all things."

But now another conclusion must be drawn from this conception. Instead of the distinction between Nature and the Supernatural, we have now distinguished between the seen and the unseen worlds, both of them belonging to nature, both of them subject to the axiom of uniformity. And since the unseen world is natural, and subject to that axiom, therefore any conclusions drawn concerning it can be drawn

only by consciously proceeding from what we know of the seen world, with which it is continuous, as being subject to the same axiom of uniformity.

Here lies the practical benefit of this conception, for the unseen world belongs to philosophy, while the supposed supernatural world belonged to theology. The continuity of the seen and unseen worlds compels us to criticise and to connect with known human nature the alleged facts, persons, and events of the unseen world. The conceptions of creation and creator, revealer and revelation, can no longer be taken up as *per se nota*. There must be a theory of what they mean and how they are possible. It will no longer do to go on rationalising the myths handed down from the infancy of mankind. A positive and philosophical theory of the unseen world must be framed, founded on what we know of the seen world, and constituting what I will venture to call the *Constructive branch of philosophy*. In two directions this may be possible,—first, by building upon physical and physiological, secondly, upon ethical phenomena. For just as the sensible qualities of the material world, its light and colours, its sounds, its odours, and all that we immediately see and feel it to be, spring into consciousness and are disclosed to us by the contact and collision of physical forces with the forces of nerve in our organs of sense—neither of which kinds of force is by itself more than matter in motion—so the emotional world is disclosed to us by the interaction of nerve-forces in the cerebral organs, and the spiritual qualities, of which that emotional world consists, are to us a second disclosure, and bring to light a deeper nature, of that same world which otherwise we should know only by its sensible qualities. The sensible and emotional qualities together constitute our seen world, and with this seen world the unseen is continuous, by being subject to the axiom of uniformity. Of these two directions the ethical is certainly not the least important, and it is in this direction, in the systematic analysis of the moral nature of man, that theologians may most efficiently take part, as having been most familiar with the moral side of human nature.

Supposing, however, it were attempted to establish the possibility of miracles in the sense of a supernatural interference, it would still be necessary to examine the two conceptions of creation and revelation. A miracle in this sense requires both conceptions, and requires no more; they are its necessary and sufficient constituents; creation its condition *secundum fieri*, revelation *secundum cognitum fieri*. There

are these two essential features, and these only, in a miracle; it is a *new beginning* in some already existing order of events, a repetition of the creative power by which the first beginning is supposed to have been made; and it is a *manifestation* of this to some spectator or spectators to whom, from whatever cause, it appears self-evident, and as having an immediate and incommunicable certainty. This seems to me, at least, the *logic* of the miraculous, and its connotative definition would accordingly be: The revelation of an originating power. Whether an originating power is conceivable at all is a question in respect to which the constructive branch of philosophy is wholly dependent upon the results of the analytical branch.

To resume. All the three Sections stand on the lower and partial ground of separating the observing mind from the existence observed. This is why a failure of the axiom of uniformity appears to all three to be possible; this is what enables them to suggest different courses of action in view of that possibility. From this point of view Section B alone is fully logical and consistent. The other two Sections admit the possibility of a failure of uniformity, and then put it away from them as practically impossible. But the admission of the impossibility of its failure, from the philosophical point of view, supplies the logical justification needed for the practical procedure of Sections A and C, and at the same time shows the assumption logically required by Section B to be an impossible hypothesis.

The only source of probability which can eke out the evidence for the fact of miracles, where evidence of an ordinary kind is deficient, lies in a philosophical theory of the unseen world, and its connection with the seen world, based on the facts of the seen. Until such a theory is established, there is no ground of antecedent probability in favour of any alleged miracle, but we are left to judge as to the fact of its occurrence solely by the rules of evidence which we apply to the non-miraculous. For the existence of the unseen world, and much more therefore its attributes, upon which the miraculous is dependent, can themselves be established in no other way.

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Prof. Clifford

## THE ETHICS OF BELIEF.

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A SHIPOWNER was about to send to sea an emigrant-ship. He knew that she was old, and not over-well built at the first; that she had seen many seas and climes, and often had needed repairs. Doubts had been suggested to him that possibly she was not seaworthy. These doubts preyed upon his mind, and made him unhappy; he thought that perhaps he ought to have her thoroughly overhauled and refitted, even though this should put him to great expense. Before the ship sailed, however, he succeeded in overcoming these melancholy reflections. He said to himself that she had gone safely through so many voyages and weathered so many storms, that it was idle to suppose she would not come safely home from this trip also. He would put his trust in Providence, which could hardly fail to protect all these unhappy families that were leaving their fatherland to seek for better times elsewhere. He would dismiss from his mind all ungenerous suspicions about the honesty of builders and contractors. In such ways he acquired a sincere and comfortable conviction that his vessel was thoroughly safe and seaworthy; he watched her departure with a light heart, and benevolent wishes for the success of the exiles in their strange new home that was to be; and he got his insurance-money when she went down in mid-ocean and told no tales.

What shall we say of him? Surely this, that he was verily guilty of the death of those men. It is admitted that he did sincerely believe in the soundness of his ship; but the sincerity of his conviction can in nowise help him, because *he had no right to believe on such evidence as was before him*. He had acquired his belief not by honestly earning it in patient investigation, but by stifling his doubts. And although in the end he may have felt so sure about it that he could not think otherwise, yet inasmuch as he had knowingly and willingly worked himself into that frame of mind, he must be held responsible for it.

[NO. LX.]

Let us alter the case a little, and suppose that the ship was not unsound after all ; that she made her voyage safely, and many others after it. Will that diminish the guilt of her owner ? Not one jot. When an action is once done, it is right or wrong for ever ; no accidental failure of its good or evil fruits can possibly alter that. The man would not have been innocent, he would only have been not found out. The question of right or wrong has to do with the origin of his belief, not the matter of it ; not what it was, but how he got it ; not whether it turned out to be true or false, but whether he had a right to believe on such evidence as was before him.

There was once an island in which some of the inhabitants professed a religion teaching neither the doctrine of original sin nor that of eternal punishment. A suspicion got abroad that the professors of this religion had made use of unfair means to get their doctrines taught to children. They were accused of wresting the laws of their country in such a way as to remove children from the care of their natural and legal guardians ; and even of stealing them away and keeping them concealed from their friends and relations. A certain number of men formed themselves into a society for the purpose of agitating the public about this matter. They published grave accusations against individual citizens of the highest position and character, and did all in their power to injure these citizens in the exercise of their professions. So great was the noise they made, that a Commission was appointed to investigate the facts ; but after the Commission had carefully inquired into all the evidence that could be got, it appeared that the accused were innocent. Not only had they been accused on insufficient evidence, but the evidence of their innocence was such as the agitators might easily have obtained, if they had attempted a fair inquiry. After these disclosures, the inhabitants of that country looked upon the members of the agitating society, not only as persons whose judgment was to be distrusted, but also as no longer to be counted honourable men. For although they had sincerely and "conscientiously" believed in the charges they had made, yet *they had no right to believe on such evidence as was before them*. Their sincere convictions, instead of being honestly earned by patient inquiring, were stolen by listening to the voice of prejudice and passion.

Let us vary this case also, and suppose, other things remaining as before, that a still more accurate investigation proved the accused to

have been really guilty. Would this make any difference in the guilt of the accusers? Clearly not; the question is not whether their belief was true or false, but whether they entertained it on wrong grounds. They would no doubt say, "Now you see that we were right after all; next time, perhaps you will believe us." And they might be believed, but they would not thereby become honourable men. They would not be innocent, they would only be not found out. Every one of them, if he chose to examine himself *in foro conscientiae*, would know that he had acquired and nourished a belief, when he had no right to believe on such evidence as was before him; and therein he would know that he had done a wrong thing.

It may be said, however, that in both of these supposed cases it is not the belief which is judged to be wrong, but the action following upon it. The shipowner might say, "I am perfectly certain that my ship is sound, but still I feel it my duty to have her examined, before trusting the lives of so many people to her." And it might be said to the agitator, "However convinced you were of the justice of your cause and the truth of your convictions, you ought not to have made a public attack upon any man's character, until you had examined the evidence on both sides with the utmost patience and care."

In the first place, let us admit that, so far as it goes, this view of the case is right and necessary; right, because even when a man's belief is so fixed that he cannot think otherwise, he still has a choice in regard to the action suggested by it, and so cannot escape the duty of investigating on the ground of the strength of his convictions; and necessary, because those who are not yet capable of controlling their feelings and thoughts must have a plain rule dealing with overt acts.

But this being premised as necessary, it becomes clear that it is not sufficient, and that our previous judgment is required to supplement it. For it is not possible so to sever the belief from the action it suggests as to condemn the one without condemning the other. No man holding a strong belief on one side of a question, or even wishing to hold a belief on one side, can investigate it with such fairness and completeness as if he were really in doubt and unbiassed. So that the existence of a belief, not founded on fair inquiry, unfits a man for the performance of this necessary duty.

Nor is that truly a belief at all, which has not some influence upon the actions of him who holds it. He who truly believes that which prompts him to an action, has looked upon the action to lust after it, he has committed it already in his heart. If a belief is not realised immediately in open deeds, it is stored up for the guidance of the future. It goes to make a part of that aggregate of beliefs which is the link between sensation and action at every moment of all our lives, and which is so organised and compacted together that no part of it can be isolated from the rest, but every new addition modifies the structure of the whole. No real belief, however trifling and fragmentary it may seem, is ever truly insignificant; it prepares us to receive more of its like, confirms those which resembled it before, and weakens others; and so gradually it lays a stealthy train in our inmost thoughts, which may some day explode into overt action, and leave its stamp upon our character for ever.

And no one man's belief is in any case a private matter, which concerns himself alone. Our lives are guided by that general conception of the course of things which has been created by society for social purposes. Our words, our phrases, our forms and processes and modes of thought are common property, fashioned and perfected from age to age; an heir-loom, which every succeeding generation inherits as a precious deposit and a sacred trust, to be handed on to the next one, not unchanged, but enlarged and purified, with some clear marks of its proper handiwork. Into this, for good or ill, is woven every belief of every man who has speech of his fellows. An awful privilege, and an awful responsibility, that we should help to create the world in which posterity will live.

In the two supposed cases which have been considered, it has been judged wrong to believe on insufficient evidence, or to nourish belief by suppressing doubts and avoiding investigation. The reason of this judgment is not far to seek; it is that in both these cases the belief held by one man was of great importance to other men. But forasmuch as no belief held by one man, however seemingly trivial the belief, and however obscure the believer, is ever actually insignificant or without its effect on the fate of mankind, we have no choice but to extend our judgment to all cases of belief whatever. That sacred faculty, which prompts the decisions of our will, and knits into harmonious working all the compacted energies of our being, is ours not for ourselves but for humanity. It is rightly used

on truths which have been established by long experience and waiting toil, and which have stood in the fierce light of free and fearless questioning. Then it helps to bind men together, and to strengthen and direct their common action. It is desecrated when given to unproved and unquestioned statements, for the solace and private pleasure of the believer; to add a tinsel splendour to the plain straight road of our life, and display a bright mirage beyond it; or even to drown the common sorrows of our kind by a self-deception which allows them not only to cast down, but also to degrade us. Whoso would deserve well of his fellows in this matter will guard the purity of his belief with a very fanaticism of jealous care, lest at any time it should rest on an unworthy object, and catch a stain which can never be wiped away.

It is not only the leader of men, statesman, philosopher, or poet, that owes this bounden duty to mankind. Every rustic who delivers in the village alehouse his slow, infrequent sentences, may help to kill or keep alive the fatal superstitions which clog his race. Every hard-worked wife of an artisan may transmit to her children beliefs which shall knit society together, or rend it in pieces. No simplicity of mind, no obscurity of station, can escape the universal duty of questioning all that we believe.

There is no exemption for man or for belief; least of all for those great systems of religious belief which have made their deep marks in the history of all human races. We have been discussing during the present year certain beliefs belonging to one of these systems. It seemed to me that we were arguing at cross-purposes, so long as the supremacy of Reason was not clearly admitted; so long as it was possible for one body of combatants when hard-pressed to run away from her daylight into the cavern of Faith. And it seemed also that we could not appeal to reason in support of the supremacy of reason; that it was impossible to infer from anything else the ground of all inference, and that at bottom, this question must be treated as a moral question. Part of it I have endeavoured so to treat, and the conclusions thus arrived at may be put together as follows.

If a man, holding a belief which he was taught in childhood or persuaded of afterwards, keeps down and pushes away any doubts which arise about it in his mind, purposely avoids the reading of books and the company of men that call in question or discuss it,

and regards as impious those questions which cannot easily be asked without disturbing it; the life of that man is one long sin against mankind.

If this judgment seems harsh when applied to those simple souls who have never known better, who have been brought up from the cradle with a horror of doubt, and taught that their eternal welfare depends on *what* they believe, then it leads to the very serious question,—*Who hath made Israel to sin?*

It may be permitted me to fortify this judgment with the sentence of Milton<sup>1</sup>:—"A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy." And with this famous aphorism of Coleridge<sup>2</sup>:—"He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or Church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all."

Inquiry into the evidence of a religious system is not to be made once for all, and then taken as finally settled. It is never lawful to stifle a doubt, for either it can be honestly answered by means of the inquiry already made, or else it proves that the inquiry was not complete.

But, says one, "I am a busy man; I have no time for the long course of study which would be necessary to make me in any degree a competent judge of these questions, or even able to understand the nature of the arguments." Then he should have no time to believe.

And after all, it may be asked, is there not an element in human nature which will always plead for something more than can be really proved? Will it ever be satisfied with the offspring begot by reason upon experience, the children of healthy common-sense dealing with facts? No doubt there is such an element; the love and fascinating dread which the savage feels towards the marvellous and grotesque. No doubt the lower parts of our nature will always plead against the higher; but shall they be heard for their long pleading? Rather must we strive all the harder to escape,—

"Move upward, working out the beast,  
And let the ape and tiger die."

There is another question to ask, which shows how very little of

<sup>1</sup> *Areopagitica*.

<sup>2</sup> *Aids to Reflection*.

the ground has been here covered. What is meant by "adequate evidence?" By what method ought we to inquire?

I shall not attempt here to answer this question, which would require us to examine the origin of the two great classes of beliefs which appear to be firmly and finally established for civilised man; those, relating to the existence and necessities of society, which are embodied in moral precepts, and those relating to the laws of animate and inanimate bodies, which constitute physical science. But for our present purpose, it may suffice to remark that we learn more day by day what evidence does really justify belief; that we learn this by seeking for evidence, and being scrupulous about it; and that two men equally in earnest in trying to find out what the truth really is do not often go to work in fundamentally different ways. Moreover, it may, perhaps, sufficiently occupy one discussion, if we can establish that where it is presumption to doubt and to investigate, there it is worse than presumption to believe.

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TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, MAY 9, 1876.  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.]

[PRIVATE.]

Lord Arthur Russell

## THE PERSISTENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS FEELING.

I HAVE not been able to find any satisfactory definition of the meaning of the word "Religion." The most comprehensive appears to be this: Religion is the relation of man to God. In order to obtain a clear meaning through this definition, it would be necessary to give a distinct definition of the concept "man," and a distinct definition of the concept "God," a concept the meaning of which varies with the intellectual development of different men, and which according to many recent thinkers disappears altogether under what is called a higher analysis. If the progress of our knowledge should prove definitively that there is nothing objective in the Universe, corresponding to what is usually understood by the word "God," it is obvious that Religion would vanish from the spiritual life of man.

We have a remarkable consensus of agreement among the leading Philosophers in favour of the necessity of the hypothesis of something corresponding to what Schoolmen call "the Absolute," as a basis for our knowledge,—namely, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Spinoza, Bacon, Leibnitz, Descartes, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling. The answer to this list of high authorities is, I know, *Magis amica veritas*; but opposed to them we find only critics, no leading Philosophers, and their objections are mainly based on their inability to comprehend what is meant by the "Absolute" or the "infinite substance," &c.

It cannot be denied that at present all belief in the dogmas of Religion is very much weakened among the wealthier classes all over Europe, and it is the opinion of some able thinkers that the working classes will also, ere long, attain their intellectual maturity, and that Religion will entirely disappear, like astrology, from the spiritual interests of man. Some men think this is an end to be desired, and which should be accelerated as the aid of Religion can in future be dispensed with, though they fully admit that it has played hither-

[NO. LXI.]

to a very important part in the moral development of mankind. Others there are who hold that religious faith has been and is injurious to the progress of civilisation, as it leads men to turn their hopes away from this world, instead of devoting their whole time and attention to the improvement of things here, and induces them to bear with patience evils which they ought to fight against. This is a point of view I am quite unable to share, and the close connection which exists between the moral and the religious life of man seems to me too obvious to need proving this evening.

Nor can I share the opinion of the same school that men who believe religious dogmas are inferior in intellectual vigour to Atheists, as innumerable facts are opposed to its truth.

My own opinion inclines to the view that Religion is a permanent and integral element of our spiritual life, and that the pursuit of science and art would not suffice to supply the want the removal of Religion would create.

As far as I can make out, the religious ideas of the present generation are rather undergoing one of those transformations which they have undergone before, than decaying altogether. The feeling and passion with which religious questions are discussed in society (when they are discussed), and the excitement, uncharitable feeling, and intolerance debates on religious questions awaken in both Houses of Parliament, are far from being signs of indifference to the religious problem, and the general tone of the majority of Englishmen at least is decidedly religious.

The extraordinary tenacity with which the human race cling to and repeat what I must be allowed to call here the dictates of common-sense, strengthens my opinion. They go on repeating with unshaken conviction : there *is* a difference between right and wrong ; there *is* some rational purpose in the existence of the universe ; men *are* responsible for their deeds ; the morality of man *is* different from the instinct of animals ; there *is* a difference between mind and matter ; there *is* no effect without a cause ; and so on, quite regardless of the contrary conclusions to which scientific men of the advanced school have come to, and of the doctrines they are teaching.

We know that the Clergy, after a short resistance, have found means of conciliating with their creed, and adopting the discoveries which at first had caused them needless alarm,—first, in astronomy, then in geology, lately in ethnology and the antiquity of man ; now

we see the same process going on with the Darwinian ideas. And we know with equal certainty that the theories by which scientific men seek to explain the facts they discover and register will make way, as they have done before, for other theories. At first sight, it would appear that no doctrine could be more fatal to religious hope and faith than the doctrine now taught by the physiologists of the materialist school,—that vice and virtue are produced by the movements of molecules over which we have no control; yet this is a mere revival, expressed in different language, of the doctrine of the Calvinistic Predestinarians, and yet we know how many pious and good men of that school of divinity have found means of conciliating this gloomy conviction with the systematic worship of a cruel and relentless God.

Since history shows that it has been possible to conciliate such conflicting creeds as these, we may confidently expect that the process will continue.

If at this moment the conscience of religious men seems to stiffen itself against the teachings of Science, this is in great measure the fault of some scientific men who take a savage pleasure in presenting the conclusions of Science in a form most repulsive to religious minds, and because the Atheists who formerly diffidently regretted their incapacity of believing incredible things, have now become aggressive, dogmatic, and intolerant. But this tone of controversy need not last.

I conclude by repeating my opinion that Religion is a permanent element in human nature, belonging to man only, and that it may be periodically transformed, but that it will not be radically eliminated.

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Prof. G. George Minard

## WHAT IS THE GOOD OF TRUTH?

By the question, "What is the good of Truth?" I mean, how far and why is truth desirable, and what postulates are needed before we can affirm that truth is necessarily a good?

Some of my esteemed club-fellows, such as Professor Tyndall amongst others, who do not appear to entirely agree with me on all points, often surprise me by the great warmth with which they advocate "Truth," as if it was manifestly at all times necessarily a good. I think I have even detected a disposition to bear somewhat hardly upon sceptics like myself, who feel that, after all, something may, on their hypothesis, perhaps be said on the other side.

I therefore gladly take this opportunity of laying some of my doubts before the Club, feeling that surely here, if anywhere, I may have them resolved, to my very great contentment.

Those present will probably agree in affirming that truth is desirable. But what do we mean by "truth," and what by "desirable?"

Now, I suppose by "truth" is meant merely the "general laws of Nature," and not particular truths, as it is manifest that on no hypothesis can a knowledge of "truth," in this extreme sense, be always desirable.

The utility of informing Pitt on his death-bed of the battle of Austerlitz can, it seems to me, be apparent only to a stronger supporter of vivisection than even I can claim to be, nor probably would any one affirm that to tell a dying man with no property to dispose of that the children he loved were not really his would be a praiseworthy action. Of course, I do not suppose that my friends who are so zealous for truth would go to this extreme, and yet the language used has sometimes been so strong as almost to justify the inference that they would do so, and to imply the latent existence of a sort of superstitious awe, as if truth was something almost supernatural. Yet "truth" is but a relation of conformity between mind and

[NO. LXII.]

objective existence, and if objective existence happens to be itself undesirable, it seems to me that such conformity might sometimes be also undesirable.

But granting that by "Truth" is meant scientific truth only—a knowledge of the facts of Nature and her laws—what is meant by "desirable?" That is surely desirable which each man desires, and I suppose most men desire their own well-being and that of those they care for, and I can easily imagine cases in which the knowledge of scientific truths, such as those of toxicology, might not be thought desirable by some people, even for the sharers of their bed and board.

But it will probably be replied, that "desirable" means "desirable for the human race," and we may therefore proceed at once upon the amiable fiction that the desire of most men is the welfare of mankind, and that there are very many good enough to sympathise with our much-esteemed *confrère*, Mr. Harrison, in really caring about remote generations, existing in æons of time after they, if his philosophy is right, have faded into what Science, as opposed to Rhetoric, must, instead of "infinite azure," call "very finite mud."

According to the conscious-automaton hypothesis, a knowledge of truth or falsehood, being a state of consciousness, must be indifferent, since it can have no influence upon action, but is a mere concomitant. Can we, then, be sure that a knowledge of all the facts of Nature will necessarily be conducive to the welfare of mankind?

Now, it seems to me that to be able to affirm this, we need the theistic postulate. Without this, I find myself quite unable to acquiesce in such a dictum. Without this, we have no certain ground for affirming that the objective world and its laws are good, while there is much apparent evidence the other way. As a naturalist, I cannot but think, that apart from the postulate referred to, Nature presents many blots, or to say the least, very doubtful puzzles?

I have never yet met with even a good suggestion as to the beneficial action of the descent of the *testis* in our own frame, that fruitful source of hernia and other evils. Probably the members of the Metaphysical Club would themselves hardly have arranged that snakes should feed as they do, or designed the somewhat one-sided beneficence of the wasp *Sphex*.

As to ourselves, it is surely conceivable that it may be with the race as with the individual, and that the environment may be so conditioned as to make the extinction of the one, as of the other, merely

a question of time ; and such, I take it, would be the anticipation of most evolutionists. If, then, a complete mental conformity to the environment, a thorough knowledge of actually existing circumstances, may be prejudicial to the individual, and accelerate his extinction (and such cases might be easily imagined, had not many a suicide demonstrated the fact), I should like to be made sure that it could never be so to the race. I think that all sides must admit that certain nations seem to have been strengthened by the acceptance of a falsehood as truth. England was strengthened by the movement of the sixteenth century, and Spain by its Catholicism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and if a sanguine temperament leads us to join in the exclamation, *Magna est veritas, et prævalebit!* I think experience will not altogether refuse its sanction to the contrary proclamation, *Magnum est mendacium, et prævaluit.* If the views of my friends of the opposite school were correct, and freedom and responsibility were but unmeaning words, it seems to me a grave question, whether a general knowledge of the fact would be desirable. That degree of civilisation and social amelioration which has been attained has been attained on the supposition of their reality ; may not, then, retrogression accompany the overthrow of such belief ? Would not the universal realisation of "determinism" tend to paralyse effort on critical occasions ? My own experience convinces me that it often would. Moreover, since the belief in responsibility has been hitherto generally accepted and acted on, this fact alone constitutes a sufficient proof, for those with whom I am arguing, that the delusion *was* beneficial for the race, since they must admit that otherwise it could never have arisen through the survival of the fittest.

Now, Mr. Herbert Spencer freely allows that a nation may get free of its faith too early for its own safety. Why is it certain that it may not be the same with the whole human race ?

If the doubts here expressed are well founded, there would surely be much truth in the saying attributed to Voltaire, *Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer*, and it appears to me that the philanthropist who declines the postulate here advocated should pause before propagating what he deems to be truth.

It may, to say the least, be far more philanthropic in such a one, instead of seeking to tear down systems the congruity of which with human welfare experience has demonstrated, to select from amongst what he deems the mythologies of his day that which he considers

most calculated to promote human happiness, and to, more or less, energetically support it.

For those, however, who accept the postulate, there is, of course, no difficulty ; and they can freely affirm that however perplexing the aspect of the Universe, it must yet be good, and the most complete knowledge of its truth desirable for mankind. But I should be most glad to be made sure that we can, in no case, have anything to fear from what is deemed "truth" by the opponents of the postulate ; and I have, therefore, ventured to intrude these doubts upon the indulgent hearing of this metaphysical tribunal.

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W. G. Fitzjames Stephen

## WHAT IS A "LIE"?

It struck me at our last discussion, that the Society had never debated the subject of the true nature of Veracity, and that for want of some mutual understanding on the subject there was a good deal of confusion in our conceptions of the drift both of Dr. Mivart's meaning and of some of the commentaries on it. Especially in the distinctions drawn or not drawn between reticence, indirect support given to presumed useful falsehoods, and direct support to the same, we appeared to need a better understanding of each other's positions. The present paper is offered as a mere basis for a discussion. And as such a basis, I offer this definition of a "lie,"—a use made of the confidence which you believe to be placed in you by any one, to make that person accept what you know or suspect to be untrue. This definition makes room for lies of all degrees, but does not depend, as it ought not to depend, on the mere falseness of the words used. You can tell as bad a lie by a gesture as by word of mouth. But an untruth uttered deliberately by word of mouth, need not be a lie at all. For instance, a friend of mine once overheard a little boy, engaged to help the gardener of a private garden, gesticulating oratorically with his hand in the intervals of sweeping the walks, and saying, with eloquent accents, as he pointed at the little demesne, "All this belongs to me, belongs to me, belongs to me!" Of course, though what he said was false, and though he knew it to be false, he was telling nobody a lie, but was indulging in a delightful day-dream. However, I am not quite sure whether my definition is quite wide enough to cover the lies which we certainly tell ourselves, and by which we often impose on ourselves. I intend it to include such lies, but there is clearly sufficient difference in the conditions between such self-imposture and the deceptions practised on others, to make it a little difficult to include both kinds of falsehood in the same formula. I will even maintain that there are plenty of cases in which a

NO. LXIII.]

man is so much a problem to himself, that it takes a careful induction and a good deal of self-watching in different moods, to know exactly what the truth about himself is. But that men do sometimes deliberately tell themselves lies, and to a certain extent deceive themselves by these lies, I have no doubt. And to apply my own definition, if it hold good of such cases, you do in such cases betray the confidence placed in yourself by yourself, to make yourself believe what you suspect to be untrue. That seems a very paradoxical form of words, but I can find no form of words which better expresses to my own mind the real phenomenon of self-deception. I take it there is no better illustration of this sort of self-deception than the elaborate devices many men will adopt to prevent telling a verbal lie, when they not only deceive, but intend to deceive others by a correct form of words. I suppose the excuse is,—and it is not always wholly bad,—that the same confidence would not be placed by an experienced man in a form of words which *might* be true without conveying the information which nevertheless it is intended to convey, which would be placed in a form of words which could mean nothing else. And no doubt, when your interlocutor knows that by the rules of the game, as it were, he is bound to be on his guard,—as, for instance, when a statesman is answering a question of great moment in Parliament, during a crisis which may end in war,—this excuse is good. Under such circumstances, words are to be construed as meaning anything which may be fairly understood by them, and every one knows that the person who uses them will use them in the sense which it is most convenient to him to attach to them. But when a man uses a form of words to which his experience tells him that it is quite certain that the person he addresses will attach a meaning which he does not intend to express by them, he undoubtedly not only tells a lie to the person so deceived,—*i.e.*, uses that person's confidence in him to produce a belief which he believes to be untrue,—but to himself too,—*i.e.*, betrays the confidence which he places in his own uprightness of character, by making himself believe that he has been upright, when he has more than a shrewd suspicion that he has been false.

My definition clearly admits of all degrees of mendacity, which certainly is a recommendation, since there can be no doubt that the amount of falsehood contained in false words varies quite as much as the amount of truthfulness contained in true words. If a host

says, "I am afraid you have had a very dull visit," and I, having really felt it somewhat dull, reply, with a cordial smile, "Oh no, it has been such a pleasure to see you again!" that may be said, I think, to represent a lie of a low order of mendacity. In the first place, by changing the issue, it makes a sort of admission of partial truth in the remark, and if this admission is partly retracted again by the manner and the smile, yet no one who knows how much the friendliness of leave-taking naturally alters the manner, would be inclined to repose too much confidence in that. But if under the same circumstances I reply, 'Oh no indeed, a most delightful visit; I have not enjoyed anything so much for a long time!'—then, I take it, the lie becomes one of a much higher order, for the very simple reason that I draw much more largely on my friend's confidence in my truthfulness, and also use it for the purpose of making him believe what is much further from the truth. Again, I can see no lie in giving the answer which some people adopt when they are questioned about a secret which they do really know,—'If I did know the truth, I warn you that I should deny all knowledge of it, but I know nothing about it.' If there be a breach of confidence there at all, it is only in the little word 'but,' the negligence, and so to say, *naïveté* of which is hardly provided for by the formal notice given in the previous words. Still, any one who was deceived after so deliberate a warning that for such a purpose the speaker did not wish to inspire, and did not intend to justify confidence, could not complain that he had been betrayed. Again, the ordinary, casuistical difficulty about telling a lie to an intending murderer who asks which way his intended victim is gone, is more or less solved by this definition. It may be a lie of a low degree, because the murderer may place, we will say, the same sort of confidence in you as he places in mankind generally. But if he has no special reason for trusting you, or has even the general reason for distrusting your answer that he knows all people averse to bloody deeds would wish to foil his purpose, if they properly could, the confidence betrayed is exceedingly slight. And with regard to the soothing falsehoods told to a delirious person, it is obvious that as you address a state of mind which is not due to objective fact at all, but to the disordered condition of the nerves, the reply you give is the nearest to an impression of truth you can convey. What the delirious person frets about is some imaginary blunder or want; if you give

him the assurance that it shall be rectified, though there is no such blunder or want to rectify, you go the nearest you can to conveying the impression to that sick state of brain that there is nothing the patient need fret about. In fact, you make the best use of the confidence placed in you of which the condition of the invalid's brain admits.

Thus, without confidence betrayed, I contend that there can be no lie, so that an habitual liar who avowed to every one his habit of lying, if such a man could be, would, I think, except where he met with those who did not know him, and who accorded him the general confidence yielded to men as men, become incapable of the moral evil of lying, because he would know that no faith was ever placed in him which he could betray. At least, if the power of lying did remain to such a person, it would only be because a habitual liar loses so completely the habit of estimating the effect his words produce, that he remains credulous as to his power to deceive, long after his power to deceive has vanished. But of course, if he *expects* to deceive, he is as guilty of a lie, even though that expectation is an utterly wild and absurd one, as he would be if that expectation were justified by the result. I submit, then, that there is no lie without (1) confidence reposed, and a betrayal of that confidence; nor without (2) a use of the faith so betrayed in the very act of betraying it,—which distinguishes a lie from other breaches of faith,—to make the person deceived believe something which the deceiver regards as probably false; and I hold that the moral enormity of the lie increases as these elements increase, and diminishes as they diminish.

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to "Mr. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S. W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*

W. F. Harrison

## THE SOUL BEFORE AND AFTER DEATH.

ONE of the most eminent members of this Society was once moved to say to me in his impressive way, after a few words of mine about the human soul, "If I thought as you do on these matters, I should go and drown myself forthwith." Now, this remark of our illustrious colleague made me reflect, for, I argued, there must be others who, with him, misjudge the condition of mind in which so many of us find rest, imputing to us dreadful ideas, such as we entirely forswear; and I resolved that, whenever our indefatigable Secretary, with his remorseless caduceus, might summon me to the bar of this tribunal—" *Omnes eodem cogimur, omnium versatur urna serius ocius sors exitura*"—I would try if I could clear off a little of that gloom which seems to hang over views that so many persist in calling Materialist, and then explain why those who maintain what I prefer to call the rational and satisfying view of human life do not take refuge in the nearest pool.

Not that I am so sanguine as to think it possible, in the few minutes that the patience of this Society allows me, to *argue* such a mighty question as Man's future, or to do anything to advance the issue between the philosophy which rests on experience and that which rests on hypothesis. But I have often observed that the principal value of our discussions seems to lie in the opportunity they afford us of carefully laying antagonistic opinions side by side, of more exactly determining our own and our opponents' position, and in having it forced on us, that our friends do somehow avoid that other horn of the dilemma which to us, arguing for them, seems so truly inevitable. I shall content myself, therefore, with trying only to define our point of view, to guard it from one or two consequences with which it is credited, and to claim for it one or two corollaries which are often denied it. The utmost that can be hoped from discussions of this kind is to lead controversialists sometimes to see that there is more than the one alternative issue possible to the

NO. LXIV.]

other side, that the question is not simply *Aut Cæsar, aut nullus*, that there is something else to choose beside the Koran or Death.

I have said that I shall make no attempt to establish so big a proposition as that from which I start, that our real knowledge rests upon experience; and much less shall I attempt to disprove so big a hypothesis as that which I reject, that there are channels to knowledge of far higher value in our aspirations. I make a courteous salute to the hypotheses—*non ragioniam di lor, non guarda, ma passa*—but I declare for the philosophy of experience in all its relations, and I shall seek to show that in itself it is in this, as in other matters, morally sufficient, that it leaves no voids in human life, and that the moral and religious sequelæ which have been assigned to it have no real existence. The issue is between the method of looking on man simply as man, and the method of looking on man as man plus a heterogeneous entity. I shall not deny the existence of such heterogeneous entity, and I shall not undertake to prove that man is nothing but man. But assuming that he is so limited, and assuming that the heterogeneous entity is as perfectly extra-human as it professes to be, I say that human nature is adequately equipped on human and natural grounds without the disparate nondescript.

I am careful to describe the method I am defending as that which looks on man as man, and I repudiate the various labels, such as materialist, physical, unspiritual methods, and the like, which are used as equivalent for the rational or positive method of treating man. The method of treating man as man insists, at least as much as any other method, that man has a moral, emotional, religious life, different in kind from his material and practical life, but perfectly co-ordinate with that physical life, and to be studied on similar scientific methods. The spiritual sympathies of man are undoubtedly the highest part of human nature; and our method condemns as loudly as any system can physical explanations of spiritual life. We claim the right to use the terms "soul," "spiritual," and the like, in their natural meaning. In the same way, we think that there are theories which are justly called "Materialist," that there are physical conceptions of human nature which are truly dangerous to morality, to goodness, and religion. It is sometimes thought to be a sufficient proof of the reality of this heterogeneous entity of the soul, that otherwise we must assume the most spiritual emotions of man to be a secretion of cerebral matter, and that, whatever the difficulties of

conceiving the union of Soul and Body, it is something less difficult than the conceiving that the nerves think, or the tissues love. We repudiate such language as much as any one can, but there is another alternative. It is possible to invest with the highest dignity the spiritual life of mankind by treating it as an ultimate fact, without trying to find an explanation for it either in a perfectly unthinkable hypothesis or in an irrational and debasing physicism.

We certainly do reject, as earnestly as any school can, that which is most fairly called **Materialism**, and we will second every word of those who cry out that civilisation is in danger if the workings of the human spirit are to become questions of physiology, and if death is the end of a man, as it is the end of a sparrow. We not only assent to such protests, but we see very pressing need for making them. It is a corrupting doctrine to open a brain, and to tell us that devotion is a definite molecular change in this and that convolution of grey pulp, and that if man is the first of living animals, he passes away after a short space like the beasts that perish. And all doctrines, more or less, do tend to this, which offer physical theories as explaining moral phenomena, which deny man a spiritual in addition to a moral nature, which limit his moral life to the span of his bodily organism, and which have no place for "religion" in the proper sense of the word.

Does it seem to any one a paradox to hold such language, and yet to have nothing to say about the immaterial entity which many assume to be the *cause* behind this spiritual life? The answer is that we occupy ourselves with this spiritual life as an ultimate fact, and consistently with the whole of our philosophy, we decline to assign a *cause* at all. We argue, with the theologians, that it is ridiculous to go to the scalpel for an adequate account of a mother's love; but we do not think it is explained (any more than it is by the scalpel) by a hypothesis for which not only is there no shadow of evidence, but which cannot even be stated in philosophic language. We find the same absurdity in the notion that maternal love is a branch of the anatomy of the *mammæ*, and in the notion that the phenomena of lactation are produced by an immaterial entity. Both are forms of the same fallacy, that of trying to reach ultimate causes instead of studying laws. We certainly do find that maternal love and lactation have close correspondences, and that both are phenomena of certain female organisms. And we say that to talk of maternal love being exhibited

by an entity which not only is not a female organism, but is not an organism at all, is to use language which to us, at least, is unintelligible.

The philosophy which treats man as man simply affirms that *man* loves, thinks, acts, not that the ganglia, or the sinuses, or any organ of man, loves and thinks and acts. The thoughts, aspirations, and impulses are not secretions, and the science which teaches us about secretions will not teach us much about them; our thoughts, aspirations, and impulses are faculties of a man. Now, as a man implies a body, so we say these also imply a body. And to talk to us about a bodyless being thinking and loving is simply to talk about the thoughts and feelings of Nothing.

As I began by saying, I am not presuming to offer any argument for this fundamental position. I am well aware that each one determines it according to the whole bias of his intellectual and moral nature. I am only trying to state our side of the question, and then to suggest that, supposing it, there is ample scope for the spiritual life, for moral responsibility, for the world beyond the grave, its hopes and its duties; which remain to us perfectly real without the unintelligible hypothesis. However much men cling to the hypothesis from old association, if they reflect, they will find that they do not use it to give them any actual knowledge about man's spiritual life; that all their methodical reasoning about the moral world is exclusively based on the phenomena of this world, and not on the phenomena of any other world (if any there be). And thus the absence of the hypothesis altogether does not make the serious difference which theologians suppose.

To follow out this into particulars: Analysis of human nature shows us man with a great variety of faculties; his moral powers are just as distinguishable as his intellectual powers; and both are mentally separable from his physical powers. Moral and mental laws are reduced to something like system by moral and mental science, with or without the theological hypothesis. The most extreme form of materialism does not dispute that moral and mental science is for logical purposes something more than physical science. So, the most extreme form of spiritualism gets its mental and moral science by observation and argument from phenomena; it does not, or it does not any longer, build such science by abstract deduction from any proposition as to an immaterial entity. There have been,

in ages past, attempts to do this. Plato, for instance, attempted to found, not only his mental and moral philosophy, but his general philosophy of the universe, by deduction from a mere hypothesis. He imagined immaterial entities, the ideas, of things inorganic, as much as organic. He thought that a statue or a chair were what they are, by virtue of an immaterial entity which gave them form. The hypothesis did not add much to the art of statuary or to that of the carpenter; nor, to do him justice, did Plato look for much practical result in these spheres. One form of the doctrine alone survives,—that man is what he is by virtue of an immaterial entity temporarily indwelling in his body. But, though the hypothesis survives, it is in no sense any longer the basis of the science of human nature with any school. No school is now content to sit in its study and evolve its knowledge of the moral qualities of man out of abstract deductions from the conception of an immaterial entity. All without exception profess to get their knowledge of the moral qualities by observing the qualities which men actually do exhibit or have exhibited. And those who are persuaded that man has, over and above his man's nature, an immaterial entity, find themselves discussing the laws of thought and of character on a common ground with those who regard man as man,—*i.e.*, who regard man's nature as capable of being referred to a homogeneous system of law. Spiritualists and materialists, however much they may differ in their explanations of moral phenomena, describe their relations in the same language, the language of law, not of illuminism.

Those, therefore, who dispense with a transcendental explanation are just as free as those who maintain it, to handle the spiritual and religious phenomena of human nature, treating them simply as phenomena. No one has ever suggested that the former philosophy is not quite as well entitled to analyse the intellectual faculties of man as the stoutest believer in the immaterial entity. It would raise a smile now-a-days to hear it said that such an one must be incompetent to treat of the canons of inductive reasoning, because he was unorthodox as to the immortality of the Soul. And if, notwithstanding this unorthodoxy, he is thought competent to investigate the laws of thought, why not the moral laws, the sentiments, and the emotions? As a fact, every moral faculty of man is recognised by him just as much as by any transcendentalist. He does not limit himself, any more than the theologian does, to mere morality. He is fully alive

to the spiritual emotions in all their depth, purity, and beauty. He recognises in man the yearning for a power without to venerate, a love for the author of his chief good, the need for sympathy with something greater than himself. All these are positive facts which rest on observation, quite apart from any explanation of the hypothetical cause of these tendencies in man. There, at any rate, the scientific observer finds them; and he is at liberty to give them quite as high a place in his scheme of human nature as the most complete theologian. He may possibly give them a far higher place, and bind them far more truly into the entire tissue of his whole view of life, because they are built up for him on precisely the same ground of experience as all the rest of his knowledge, and have no element at all heterogeneous from the rest of life. With the language of spiritual emotion he is perfectly in unison. The spirit of devotion, of spiritual communion with an ever-present power, of sympathy and fellowship with the living world, of awe and submission towards the material world, the sense of adoration, love, resignation, mystery, are at least as potent with the one system as with the other. He can share the religious emotion of every age, and can enter into the language of every truly religious heart. For myself, I believe that this is only done on a complete as well as a real basis in the religion of Humanity, but I do not confine my present argument to that ground. I venture to believe that this spirit is truly shared by all, whatever their hypothesis about the human soul, who treat these highest emotions of man's nature as facts of primary value, and who have any intelligible theory whereby these emotions can be aroused.

All positive methods of treating man of a comprehensive kind adopt to the full all that has ever been said about the dignity of man's moral and spiritual life, and treat these phenomena as distinct from the intellectual and the physical life. These methods also recognise the unity of consciousness, the facts of conscience, the sense of identity, and the longing for perpetuation of that identity. They decline to explain these phenomena by the popular hypotheses; but they neither deny their existence, nor lessen their importance. Man, they argue, has a complex existence, made up of the phenomena of his physical organs, of his intellectual powers, of his moral faculties, crowned and harmonised ultimately by his religious sympathies,—love, gratitude, veneration, submission, towards the dominant force by which he finds himself surrounded. I use words which

are not limited to a particular philosophy or religion—I do not confine my language to the philosophy or religion of Comte—for this same conception of man is common to many philosophies and many religions. It characterises such systems as those of Spinoza or Shelley, as much as those of Confucius or Bouddha. In a word, the reality and the supremacy of the spiritual life have never been carried further than by men who have departed most widely from the popular hypotheses of the immaterial entity.

Many of these men, no doubt, have indulged in hypotheses of their own quite as arbitrary as those of theology. It is characteristic of the positive thought of our age that it stands upon a firmer basis. Though not confounding the moral facts with the physical, and establishing a moral and mental science distinct from biologic science, it will never lose sight of the correspondence and consensus between all sides of human life. Led by an enormous and complete array of evidences, it associates every fact of thought or of emotion with a fact of physiology, with molecular change in the body. Without pretending to explain the first by the second, it denies that the first can be explained without the second. Thought and emotion are simply powers of a material organism, and to talk to it of thought and emotion as powers of an immaterial entity, is to talk of the Function of Nothing. But no philosophy is so careful as is this to keep always in view the organic correspondence of man's faculties, harmonised by his finest sympathies. We call this consensus his Soul.

Nothing is more idle than a discussion about words. But when some deny the use of the word "soul" to those who mean by it this consensus, and not any immaterial entity, we may remind them that our use of the word agrees with its etymology and its history. It is the mode in which it is used in the Bible, the well-spring of our true English speech. It may, indeed, be contended that there is no instance in the Bible in which Soul does mean an immaterial entity, the idea not having been familiar to any of the writers, with the doubtful exception of St. Paul. But without entering upon Biblical philology, it may be said that for one passage in the Bible in which the word "soul" can be forced to bear the meaning of immaterial entity, there are ten texts in which it cannot possibly refer to anything but breath, life, moral sense, or spiritual emotion. When the Psalmist says, "Deliver my soul from death. Heal my soul, for I

have sinned," "My soul is cast down within me," "Return unto my rest, O my soul," he means by "soul" what we mean,—the conscious unity of our being culminating in its religious emotions; and until we find some English word that better expresses this idea, we shall continue to use the phraseology of David.

And now to turn to the great phenomenon of material organisms which we call Death. The human organism, like every other organism, ultimately loses that unstable equilibrium of its correlated forces which we name Life, and ceases to be an organism or system of organs, adjusting its internal relations to its external conditions. Thereupon the existence of the complex independent entity to which we attribute consciousness, undoubtedly—*i.e.*, for ought we know to the contrary—comes to an end. But the activities of this organism do not come to an end, except so far as these activities need fresh sensations and material organs. And a great part of these activities, and far the noblest part, only need fresh sensations and material organs in other similar organisms. Whilst there is an abundance of these in due relation, the activities go on *ad infinitum* with increasing energy. We have not the slightest reason to suppose that the consciousness of the organism continues, for we mean by consciousness the sum of sensations of a particular organism, and the particular organism being dissolved, we have nothing left whereto to attribute consciousness, and the proposal strikes us like a proposal to regard the numeral "0" as conscious. So, of course, with the sensations separately, and with them the power of accumulating knowledge, of feeling, thinking, or of modifying the existence in correspondence with the outward environment. Life, in the technical sense of the word, is at an end, but the activities of which that life is the source were never so potent. Our age is familiar enough with the truth of the persistence of energy, and no one supposes that with the dissolution of the body the forces of its material elements are lost. They only pass into new combinations and continue to work elsewhere. Far less is the energy of the activities lost. The earth, and every country, every farmstead, and every city on it, are standing witnesses that the physical activities are not lost. As century rolls after century, we see every age more potent fruits of the labour which raised the Pyramids, or won Holland from the sea, or carved the Theseus out of marble. The bodily organisms which wrought them have passed into gases and

earths, but the activity they displayed is producing the precise results designed on a far grander scale in each generation. Much more do the intellectual and moral energies work unceasingly. Not a single manifestation of thought or feeling is without some result so soon as it is communicated to a similar organism. It passes into the sum of his mental and moral being.

But there is about the persistence of the moral energies this special phenomenon. It marks the vast interval between physical and moral science. The energies of material elements, so far as we see, disperse, or for the most part disperse. The energies of an intellectual and moral kind are very largely continued in their organic unities. The consensus of the mental, of the moral, of the emotional powers may go on, working as a whole, producing precisely the same results, with the same individuality, whether the material organism, the nidus and original base of these powers, be in physical function or not. The mental and moral powers do not, it is true, increase and grow, develop or vary within themselves. Nor do they in their special individuality produce visible results, for they are no longer in direct relations with their special material organisms. But the mental and moral powers are not dispersed like gases. They retain their unity, they retain their organic character, and they retain the whole of their power of passing into, and stimulating the brains of living men; and in these they carry on their activity precisely as they did, whilst the bodies in which they were formed absorbed and exhaled material substance.

Nay, more; the individuality and true activity of these mental and moral forces is often not manifest, and sometimes is not complete, so long as the organism continues its physical functions. Newton, we may suppose, has accomplished his great researches. They are destined to transform half the philosophy of mankind. But he is old, and incapable of fresh achievements. We will say he is feeble, secluded, silent, and lives shut up in his rooms. The activity of his mighty intellectual nature is being borne over the world on the wings of Thought, and works a revolution at every stroke. But otherwise the man Newton is not essentially distinguishable from the nearest infirm pauper, and has as few and as feeble relations with mankind. At last the man Newton dies, that is, the body is dispersed into gas. But the world, which is affected enormously by his intellect, is not in the smallest degree affected by his death. His activity continues

the same ; if it were worth while to conceal the fact of his death, no one of the millions who are so greatly affected by his thoughts would perceive it or know it. If he had discovered some means of prolonging a torpid existence till this hour, he might be living now, and it would not signify to us in the slightest degree whether his body breathed in the walls of his lodging or mouldered in the vaults of the Abbey.

It may be said that if it does not signify much to us, it signifies a great deal to Isaac Newton. But is this true ? He no longer eats and sleeps, a burden to himself ; he no longer is destroying his great name by feeble theology or querulous pettiness. But if the small weaknesses and wants of the flesh are ended for him, all that makes Newton (and he had always lived for his posthumous, not his immediate fame) rises into greater activity and purer uses. We make no mystical or fanciful divinity of Death ; we do not deny its terrors or its evils. We are not responsible for it, and should welcome any reasonable prospect of eliminating or postponing this fatality that waits upon all organic nature. But it is no answer to philosophy or science to retort that Death is so terrible, therefore man must be designed to escape it. There are savages who persistently deny that men do die at all, either their bodies or their souls, asserting that the visible consequences of death are either an illusion or an artfully-contrived piece of acting on the part of their friends, who have really decamped to the happy hunting-fields. This seems on the whole a more rational theory than that of immaterial souls flying about space, as the spontaneous fancies of savages are sometimes more rational than the elaborate hypotheses of metaphysics.

But though we do not presume to apologise for death, it is easy to see that many of the greatest moral and intellectual results of life are only possible, can only begin, when the claims of the animal life are satisfied ; when the stormy, complex, and chequered career is over, and the higher tops of the intellectual or moral nature alone stand forth in the distance of time. What was the blind old harper of Scio to his contemporaries, or the querulous refugee from Florence, or even the boon-companion and retired playwright of Stratford, or the blind and stern old malignant of Bunhill Fields ? The true work of Socrates and his life only began with his resplendent death, to say nothing of yet greater religious teachers, whose names I refrain from citing ; and as to those whose lives have been cast in

conflicts,—the Cæsars, the Alfreds, the Hildebrands, the Luthers, the Cromwells, the Fredericks,—it is only after death, oftenest in ages after death, that they cease to be combatants, and become creators. It is not merely that they are only recognised in after-ages; the truth is, that their activity only begins when the surging of passion and sense ends and turmoil dies away. Great intellects and great characters are necessarily in advance of their age; the care of the father and the mother begins to tell most truly in the ripe manhood of their children, when the parents are often in the grave, and not in the infancy which they see and are confronted with. The great must always feel with Kepler,—“It is enough as yet if I have a hearer now and then in a century.” John Brown’s body lies amouldering in the grave, but his soul is marching along.

We can trace this truth best in the case of great men, but it is not confined to the great. Not a single act of thought or character ends with itself. But more: not a single nature in its entirety but leaves its influence for good or for evil. As a fact the good prevail; but all act, all continue to act indefinitely, often in ever-widening circles. Physicists amuse us by tracing for us the infinite fortunes of some wave set in motion by force, its circles and its repercussions perpetually transmitted in new complications. But the career of a single intellect and character is a far more real force when it meets with suitable intellects and characters into whose action it is incorporated. Every life more or less forms another life, and lives in another life. Civilisation, nation, city, imply this fact. There is neither mysticism nor hyperbole, but simple observation in the belief, that the career of every human being in society does not end with the death of its body. In some sort its higher activities and potency can only begin truly when change is no longer possible for it. The worthy gain in influence and in range at each generation, just as the founders of some populous race gain a greater fatherhood at each succeeding growth of their descendants. And in some infinitesimal degree, the humblest life that ever turned a sod sends a wave—no, more than a wave, a life—through the ever-growing harmony of human society. Not a soldier died at Marathon or Salamis, but did a stroke by which our thought is enlarged and our standard of duty formed to this day.

Be it remembered that this is not hypothesis, but something perfectly real,—we may fairly say undeniable. We are not inventing an

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imaginary world, and saying it must be real because it is so pleasant to think of ; we are only repeating truths on which our notion of history and society is based. The idea, no doubt, is usually limited to the famous, and to the great revolutions in civilisation. But no one who thinks it out carefully can deny that it is true of every human being in society in some lesser degree. The idea has not been, or is no longer, systematically enforced, invested with poetry and dignity, and deepened by the solemnity of religion. But why is that ? Because theological hypotheses of a new and heterogeneous existence have deadened our interest in the realities, the grandeur, and the perpetuity of our earthly life. In the best days of Rome, even without a theory of history or a science of society, it was a living faith, the true religion of that majestic race. It is the real sentiment of all societies where the theological hypothesis has disappeared. It is no doubt now in England the great motive of virtue and energy. There have been few seasons in the world's history when the sense of moral responsibility and moral survival after death was more exalted and more vigorous than with the companions of Vergniaud and Danton, to whom the dreams of theology were hardly intelligible. As we read the calm and humane words of Condorcet on the very edge of his yawning grave, we learn how the conviction of posthumous activity (not of posthumous fame), how the consciousness of a coming incorporation with the glorious future of his race, can give a patience and a happiness equal to that of any martyr of theology.

It would be an endless inquiry into the means whereby this sense of posthumous participation in the life of our fellows can be extended to the mass, as it certainly affects already the thoughtful and the refined. Without an education, a new social opinion, without a religion—I mean an organised religion, not a vague metaphysic—it is doubtless impossible that it should become universal and capable of overcoming selfishness. But make it at once the basis of philosophy, the standard of right and wrong, and the centre of a religion, and it will prove, perhaps, an easier task than that of teaching Greeks and Romans, Syrians and Moors, to look forward to a future life of ceaseless psalmody in an immaterial heaven. That astonishing feat was performed ; and, perhaps, it may be easier to fashion a new public opinion, which requires merely that an accepted truth of philosophy should be popularised, which is already the deepest hope

of some thoughtful spirits, and which does not take the suicidal course of trying to cast out the devil of selfishness by a direct appeal to the personal self.

That the doctrine of the celestial future appeals to the essence of self appears very strongly in its special rebuke to the doctrine of the social future. It repeats, "We agree with all you say about the prolonged activity of man after death, we see of course that the solid achievements of life are carried on, and we grant you that it signifies nothing to those who profit by his work that the man no longer breathes in the flesh: but what is all that to the *man*, to you, and to me? we shall not *feel* our work, we shall not have the indescribable satisfaction which our souls now have in living, in effecting our work, and profiting by others. What is the good of mankind to me, when I am mouldering unconscious?" This is the true materialism; here is the physical theory of another life; this is the inspiritual denial of the soul, the binding it down to the clay of the body. We say, "All that is great in you shall not end, but carry on its activity perpetually and in a purer way;" and you reply, "What care I for what is great in me, and its possible work in this vale of tears; I want to feel life, I want to enjoy, I want my personality,"—in other words, "I want my senses, I want my body." Keep your body and keep your senses, in any way that you know. We can only wonder, and say, with Frederic to his runaway soldiers, "*Wollt ihr immer leben?*" But we, who know that a higher form of activity is only to be reached by a subjective life in society, will continue to regard a perpetuity of sensation as the true Hell, and feel that the perpetual worth of our lives is the one thing precious to care for, and not a vacuous eternity of consciousness.

It is not merely that this eternity of the tabor is so gross, so sensual, so indolent, so selfish a creed; but its worst evil is that it paralyses practical life, and throws it into discord. A life of vanity in a vale of tears to be followed by an infinity of celestial rapture, is necessarily a life which is of infinitesimal importance. The incongruity of the attempts to connect the two, and to make the vale of tears the ante-chamber or the prison-dock of heaven, grows greater and not less as ages roll on. The more we think, and learn, and the higher rises our social philosophy, and our insight into human destiny, the more the reality and importance of the social future impresses us, whilst the fancy of the celestial future grows unreal and incongruous. As we get to know what thinking means, and

feeling means, and the more truly we understand what life means, the more completely do the promises of the celestial transcendentalism fail to interest us. We have come to see that to continue to live is to carry on a series of correlated sensations, and to set in motion a series of corresponding forces, to think is to marshal a set of observed perceptions with a view to certain observed phenomena; to feel implies something of which we have a real assurance affecting our own consensus within. But this infinite apathy to which your heaven would consign us, without objects, without relations, without change, without growth, without action, an absolute nothingness, a *nirvāna* of impotence,—this is not life; it is not consciousness; it is not happiness. In the first place, it is something which I cannot understand; and so far as I can grasp the hypothesis, it seems to me equally ludicrous and repulsive. You may call it paradise; but I call it conscious annihilation. You may long for it, if you have been so taught; just as if you had been taught to cherish such hopes, you might be now yearning for the moment when you might become the immaterial principle of a comet, or as you might tell me, that you really were the ether, and were about to take your place in Space. Or instead of having one soul, you might convince yourself that you had fifty souls—it is quite as easy—or a million, or that you were yourself the auto-soul. I can believe the one as easily as the other; the one interests me as little as the other. You might as well tell me that you would convert me into zero, and then transcendentalise me, and raise me to = 0<sup>n</sup>. To me they are all incoherences; and I will add, in the midst of practical realities and the solid duties of life, sheer impertinences. The field is full; each human life has a perfectly real and a vast future to look forward to; these hyperbolic enigmas disturb our grave duties and our solid hopes. No wonder, then, whilst they are still so rife, that men are dull to the moral responsibility which, in its awfulness, begins only at the grave; that they are so little influenced by the futurity which will judge them; that they are blind to the dignity and beauty of death, and shuffle off the dead life and the dead body with such cruel disrespect. The fumes of the celestial immortality still confuse them. It is only when an earthly future is the fulfilment of a worthy earthly life, that we can see all the majesty as well as the glory of the world beyond the grave; and then only will it fulfil its moral and religious purpose as the great guide of human conduct.

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## NOTICE.

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*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*

Cardinal  
Harrison  
Hutton  
Tyndall  
Huxley  
Martineau  
Fitzjames Stephen  
Carpenter  
Bainhill  
Shadworth Hodgson  
Clifford  
Knowles  
Self.

# Cardinal Manning

## THE SOUL BEFORE AND AFTER DEATH.

1. If I am asked for a definition of the Soul, I answer, "Est Principium per quod Homo sensitivus est, cogitat, et vult;" it is the principle by which man perceives, thinks, and acts; or again, more simply, "It is the principle of life, and of the vital acts of thought and will."

2. If I am asked for a definition of life, I say it is, "Activitas qua Ens seipsum movet." By motion in man is intended not only physical, but intellectual, moral, and mental.

3. If any one shall ask for a metaphysical definition of principle, I answer, it is "that which produces anything." "Principium est id quod rationem continet, cur illud sit, cujus dicitur Principium." The idea of Principle is that out of which anything proceeds, as a tree from a root, or a stalk from a grain of wheat. And yet the word "principle" is not a metaphor of similitude, but of proportion: as a root to a tree, so a principle to its product. A root and a principle may be dissimilar in everything but in the one point of production, yet the analogy or ratio of proportion holds good. The mistaking of analogies for metaphors or images is the source of endless confusion. It is like believing Providence to be an eye.

4. The Soul is not something superadded to man or to human nature. Man has no existence till soul and body are united in one *suppositum*.

5. A material organism is not human nature, or man. Powers and emotions without a principle do not constitute man. They are not produced by organism. The onus of proof lies on those who say so.

6. Matter is not the *principium vite*: for the greater mass of matter is without life.

7. Matter is not even organic, till an organism supervenes.

8. But organism does not give life, for large regions of organised matter exist without life. Therefore,—

NO. LXV.]

9. The union of matter and organism, neither of which gives life, does not give life.

10. No material organism therefore can be the principle or cause. Nor can it be 'the base or the nidus' of life: unless life supervene as a distinct element. The subject then is lifted above all mere material organism.

11. Organised matter, "*superveniente vita vegetativa*," becomes a plant. This supervening of another and higher element creates a new kingdom of organic being: but the vegetative life is not contained in nor produced by either matter or organism: nor by both. Life is heterogeneous to that which is lifeless, *i.e.*, to matter, but not to plant, or animal, or man.

12. Organised matter, "*superveniente vita sensitiva et animalis*," creates another and still higher kingdom of organised being, which, from its highest element, we call Animal. But organised matter has in itself neither animal life, nor sensation, nor the perceptions of sense. All these are beyond its limits.

13. Nevertheless there can be no animal life without material organism, as the condition of its manifestation and exercise, though the animal life is distinct from it.

14. This animal life is called by courtesy "*anima brutorum*;" but when the material organism is dissolved, the life ceases to live and to exist, "*conditione naturæ debita*," by a law of nature ordained by the Creator, the lower animals having no moral personality, no probation, and no judgment after death. The term of their existence is in and of this world: and their end the service and use of man. All mere animal life is therefore mortal.

15. An organism which is material, sentient, and animal, "*superveniente vita intellectiva, rationis et voluntatis*," is man: or "*natura rationalis*," or "*animal rationale*." But reason and will are no more powers or functions of matter, or organism, or vegetable or animal life, than these are of organism and matter.

16. Organism is a higher element or perfection superinduced upon matter, vegetable life is a perfection superinduced upon material organism, animal life upon all these, and the rational life upon all these again; yet it is distinct from all, and independent in its higher functions of all. And this higher element is the "*principium operationum vitalium*"—*i.e.*, of reason and will—and by these terms we understand a rational nature, or a soul.

17. This "*principium*," or Soul, is independent of external sense in many of its highest functions—*e.g.*, in the formation of abstract ideas,—as of goodness, justice, and the like—in judgments of the agreement or disagreement of terms, and in the philosophical processes of induction and deduction, in mathematical reasoning, in discernment of good and evil, in the consciousness of the facts of internal sense; in all these and many more, the rational powers of man are independent of sense, and abide in an inward world of our personal consciousness.

18. Now, the Soul does indeed perceive by the senses all objects proper to the senses; but this is a lower function of the rational nature. Its chief and higher prerogative is its independence of all matter, both in its *existence* and in its *activity*.

19. It is for those who deny the existence of the Soul after Death, or for those who make the Soul a function or a power of a material organism, to prove that matter or organisation can possess the powers of thought and will. We affirm it to be repugnant to the Divine Omnipotence to make thought a function or power of matter which is not capable in and by itself even of Sense. But no proof has ever been offered, except that the scalpel has not yet found the Soul. If you say matter we know, but Soul we do not know. I answer, not knowing disproves nothing.

20. When Horace said, "*Non omnis moriar*"—"I shall not all die"—or the whole of me will not die—he did not only mean that he would live in his "*Odes*" and "*Satires*." He meant that he was conscious of something in himself independent of the body, which would survive when the body should die. He meant to say, my poems and I will live on when this material organism, in which and by which I feel, and have cognisance of sensible things, shall be dissolved. Thus that which distinguishes me from the world of irrational animals cannot be affected by the dissolution of the material organism in which I eat and drink.

21. The denial of this would make us read, "*Omnis ominno moriar*,"—I shall altogether die, or I shall die every bit of me, and leave nothing behind but my memory, good or evil, and old clothes.

22. The dissolution of the material organism withdraws from sense the phenomena of a personal mind and agency; but it in no way proves that the personal mind has ceased to exist. It in no way proves the cessation of that which existed and acted independently

of sense. But reason and will are, and act independently of sense. Reason and will are not the phenomena of matter; they are intrinsically independent of matter, as in thought and volition; though they may also act through and upon matter, as by the eye, or by the arm. They are independent of our material organisation,—(1) in consciousness of existence; (2) in the *sensus intimus*; (3) in the perceiving of internal facts of intellectual and moral consciousness; (4) in abstract reasoning; (5) in the power of numbers; (6) in moral sense.

23. I therefore affirm that the person, the principle and radix of rational operations, and therefore the rational operations themselves, cannot be proved to cease, because the material organism which man has in common with the lower animals, with plants, and with crystals, is dissolved.

24. The *onus probandi* lies wholly on those who assert it. The personal survival is in possession, and cannot be dispossessed till it is turned out of the consciousness of mankind by evident reason.

25. But we may go further. Thought and will are not material. Therefore they are not dissoluble. The radix of thought and will which I would call Soul, if people would let me, is, like its products, not material, therefore not dissoluble. I affirm this on a self-evident law of all existences; every product is homogeneous with its root. The vital actions of the soul are immaterial, that is, simple, therefore indissoluble, and therefore, unless by the intervention of some other law, imperishable.

26. In the case of the lower animals which have a vegetative and sentient life, there is this other law: the sphere and term of their existence is in their transient state. They serve man in this earthly period. They have no moral personality, no probation, no judgment to come. The law of their creation is that their life should be terminable. When the material organism is dissolved the ox dies. "Omnis moritur." He dies every bit of him. There is no life extending beyond and independent of the material organism. Like the vine and the cedar, so the ox serves man and dies by the law of its own nature.

27. But of man none of these predicates can be made. There is that in him which lives, feels, thinks, wills independently of matter. He can both act through his material organism and independently of it: "Animus velox sine corpore currit."

28. Nay, further, there is strong presumption that the vital actions of thought and will are even extended after the dissolution of the material organism through which they acted before death. It localises, narrows, confines them. The body is measurable in quantity. The "*vita intellectiva*" has no measurable quantity in *genere continui*, that is, as bodies have. It rests, again, upon the objectors to do what has not been done yet,—I mean, to show that thought and will cease when the body dies. The presumption is not only that they live, but that they are extended in their range and their activity.

29. Such was the judgment of Aristotle, who may be taken as the highest witness of the evidence of natural reason. In the Tenth Book of the "*Ethics*" he says that happiness, *εὐδαιμονία*, after death will consist not in well-doing, or *εὐπραξία*, as in this life, because there will be none to whom we can do good, for there will be none who need it; but in *θεωρία*, or contemplation, by which he affirms the survival of the vital operations of the intellectual life; and if it be bliss, it implies the extension and perfection of the intellectual power, and therefore of the nature or radix from which they spring: or as he would say, and we may say with him, of the *ψυχῇ*, or Soul.

30. I have affirmed with all, except those who deny the existence of the Soul as an immaterial entity, that it is in its nature uncompounded, or incomposite,—that is, it is made up of no parts or elements which, as they cohere, so they may be dissolved. It is, therefore, absolute in its simplicity.

31. But what is simple cannot be dissolved.

- (1) It has no separable or soluble elements.
- (2) It is indestructible by external force.
- (3) It cannot commit Suicide. Eternal Death is Eternal Life of evil and remorse.

32. Therefore the Soul survives, that is, it lives on, *eadem numero*, in all its personal identity after death. Its state is changed: its identity is not changed. To use modern terminology, the physical Ego is changed, so far as the material organism: the psychical Ego is not changed, for extension of its sphere, energy and powers is not change, but perfection.

33. The Reliquiæ upon earth, by word, by action, by writing, survive not personally, but in the intelligence and will, in the life and

formation of other men and of nations. But this is not a survival of the Soul, but of the work wrought by the Soul. It is impersonal in itself, and exists only in the persons of other men.

34. The sum of my argument is this :—

- (1) That matter as such has no life in itself.
- (2) That organism as such has no life in itself. Therefore,—
- (3) That organised matter has no life in itself, for neither element can give what it has not.
- (4) That organised matter *plus* vegetative life becomes a plant.
- (5) That vegetative life is heterogeneous as regards matter and organism, and therefore is not contained in them, but it is the *differentia* or necessary constituent part of a plant.
- (6) That organised matter *plus* sentient and animal life becomes an animal nature.
- (7) That this sentient and animal life is heterogeneous as regards the matter and organism, but is the necessary *differentia* of an animal nature.
- (8) That a material organism *plus* vegetative, sentient, and intellectual life becomes human nature.
- (9) That this intellectual life is heterogeneous as regards the matter and organism of the body, and also the vegetative and animal life, but it is the necessary *differentia* which constitutes the human species or human nature. Without it, humanity or man does not exist.
- (10) That the dissolution of the material organism affords no proof of the cessation of the intellectual life, because the intellectual life is not material. It is heterogeneous as regards matter, and therefore not included in the same laws.
- (11) That the cessation of the vegetative life, when the material organism is dissolved, is no proof of the cessation of the intellectual life in man, which is heterogeneous as regards the vegetative life, and not subject to the same laws.
- (12) That the cessation of the animal life is no proof of the cessation of the intellectual life, because the

intellectual life is heterogeneous as regards the animal life, and is not included in the same laws and destinies.

- (13) From this I conclude that the death of the body affords no proof of the cessation of the intellectual life. But the intellectual life is the vital action of the Soul. Therefore the Soul does not die with the body, but survives when the body dies.

35. Finally, "*Non omnis moriar*" is a consciousness of my rational nature. It clings to me at every moment. It is confirmed by my hopes and by my fears, by the dictates of my reason and by the instincts of my heart, by my conscious relation to a Supreme Law-Giver, by my whole sense of moral responsibility to Him, and by a sleepless anticipation of an account, a balancing, and a completion hereafter of my moral life and state now. And this consciousness is not derived from sense, nor dependent upon sense. I am more sure of its truth than of any reports of sense, and of any syllogisms of logic. Moreover, what I find in my own consciousness I find to exist in the consciousness of others; and not of one or two here and there, but of all about me. And I read of it as having existed in all men, at all times and in all places. And this *communis sensus* of men is a certain evidence of truth, not so much by reason of the number or multitude of witnesses, as by the universal voice of human nature, which is the voice of its Maker and of its Judge.

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9  
Sir James Stephen

## AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF OPINION.

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I SUPPOSE I may safely assume that the general nature of the contents of Mr. Gladstone's paper, in the *Nineteenth Century*, upon Sir George Lewis's views as to the "Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion," are known to us all, and I therefore proceed at once to make the observations which they have suggested to me.

In the first place, I find a difficulty in agreeing with Mr. Gladstone as to Sir George Lewis's real intention. I do not think that he meant to say either that "the consent of mankind binds us in reason to acknowledge the being of God," or that "the consent of civilised mankind binds us to the acceptance of Christianity." The expressions in the fourth chapter of his book, which Mr. Gladstone quotes, may, at first sight, appear to suggest that such was his meaning. When they are compared with other parts of the book, it will, I think, be found that this is not the case.

Be this as it may, I think that if Sir George Lewis did really mean to express the opinions ascribed to him by Mr. Gladstone on these two points, the passages of his book which contain them are in direct opposition to a great number of other passages upon which he had obviously bestowed more care and thought, and which must, therefore, be taken as the expression of his most abiding and characteristic views.

These last-mentioned passages appear to me to show that Sir G. Lewis's principles favour, if they do not assert, the inference that there is and can be no such thing as a trustworthy authority, in his sense of the word, upon any religious subject whatever, and that if he says there can, he is inconsistent with himself. The result to which a study of his book has led me is as follows. He considers that in order that an authority may be trustworthy, the opinion which it asserts must be reached by a sound method. He nowhere affirms the soundness of the method by which the opinions were reached to which Mr. Gladstone says his principle ought to be ex-  
NO. LXVI.]

tended. He expressly says that some of them were reached, in part at least, by an unsound method, and his language, I think, implies that it is questionable whether any sound method of inquiry upon such subjects exists. This appears from the following passages :—

In the first place, he says (pp. 71-2 of the first edition):—"The difficulty of determining the controversies respecting the different questions to which the interpretation of the Christian records has given rise are, in great measure, owing to the fact that religion, as such, is conversant with matters which are neither the subjects of consciousness or intuition, nor within the range of the senses. This is necessarily the case with all questions concerning the nature " of the Deity and his attributes, his permanent relations with mankind, and the state of human existence after death. Upon these subjects we have no experience, derived either from internal consciousness or external sensation, to guide us; and accordingly not only the abstract reasonings of natural religion, but the interpretation of the records of revealed religion, give rise to questions for the settlement of which it is difficult to find any decisive rule of judgment." This passage seems to me to show that although Sir George Lewis did think that "in the recognition of a Divine power, superhuman and imperceptible by our senses, all nations have agreed, he did not go so far as to say that this agreement constituted trustworthy authority for the belief, and he is so far from thinking with Mr. Gladstone that belief in God implies belief in God's goodness and moral government of mankind, that he implies that questions as to the attributes and nature of the Deity are insoluble. If this is so, I think he might just as well have said the same of the questions as to the existence of the Deity. I do not think it would be possible to find a single line in the whole book which suggests the existence of any other source of knowledge than those which are here denied to exist with regard to religious belief. It would be easy to show that in every case in which Sir George Lewis ascribes any weight at all to what he defines as authority, that weight is dependent upon the existence of such sources of knowledge, and their diligent exploration by the due use of appropriate faculties. At p. 362 he says :—"With respect to public instruction (whether it be constituted by learned bodies, or Churches, or voluntary associations), the cardinal maxim is that, as all men cannot be professors of all things, the learner should be instructed in

the conclusions and results at which the most eminent authorities have arrived, and should as far as possible be furnished with an instrument for testing the soundness of the method which each original inquirer may employ." He points out elsewhere (pp. 70 and 370-1) that those parts of Christian theology to which, according to Mr. Gladstone, Sir G. Lewis's principle ought to be applied, are derived partly from the "subtle, refined, and abstruse metaphysical philosophy of the later Greeks,"—a method of inquiry which he can hardly have regarded as sound,—and partly from the "scholastic philosophy," which he describes as "a set of unsound doctrines" the unsoundness of which arose from "a defective scientific method." Tried by these tests, the agreement of theologians, as far as it extends, constitutes no trustworthy authority at all. It does not fulfil the conditions which render trustworthy authority possible. In the presence of this passage (which is only one of several to the same effect) it seems to me impossible to avoid one of two conclusions. When Sir G. Lewis said, "In the substantial recognition of a Divine power, superhuman and imperceptible, by our senses, all nations have agreed," he either meant to state a mere matter of fact, without drawing the inference that we were bound in reason by that agreement to acknowledge the truth of the opinion, or if he did mean to draw or suggest that inference, he refuted himself on the next page but one.

Similar remarks arise upon the next proposition which Mr. Gladstone extracts from Sir George Lewis,—that "the consent of civilised mankind similarly binds us to the acceptance of Christianity." I think Mr. Gladstone proves beyond all question in various parts of his article that unless it is reduced to a definite meaning, the word "Christianity" is so vague as to be in danger of becoming "a blind, which on the one hand excludes knowledge, and on the other, leaves us imbued with the notion that we possess it." I agree with him that if we construe the word historically, we must interpret it as meaning a certain set of doctrines, and a certain ethical system or temper, but I agree with Sir George Lewis's argument to show that nothing which on his principles can be regarded as a trustworthy authority for any such set of specific doctrines is to be found. Mr. Gladstone argues thus :—

Sir G. Lewis holds that Christianity lies within the true scope of the principle of Authority.

But no meaning can be attached to this proposition, unless we "develop the word 'Christianity' into its specific meanings."

"Christianity" is the name of a certain system of doctrines and morals.

Therefore, if Sir G. Lewis is right, that system of doctrines and morals "lies within the true scope of the principle of Authority."

Leaving this argument for the moment, I observe that whatever Sir George Lewis ought, according to Mr. Gladstone, to have thought, he did in fact think exactly the reverse.

The observation about the acceptance of Christianity by all nations whose agreement on a matter of opinion has any real weight or authority stands alone. It is, as I shall show immediately, in contradiction to all the rest of his book, and I believe it to have been a passing remark, upon a subject which was treated thirty years ago in a very different spirit from that in which it is treated at present. To say nothing of the passages to which I have already referred, showing that even the opinions of experts on such matters would be of little or no value, even if they agreed, Sir G. Lewis repeatedly argues at length to show that no general agreement of opinion prevails about these doctrines amongst experts. In p. 70 he ascribes the origin of Christian theology, "particularly in its more mysterious portions, such as the doctrine of the Trinity," &c., to the "subtle, refined, and abstruse metaphysical philosophy" of "the later Greeks," revised and remodelled by the scholastic philosophy, which, he says elsewhere (pp. 370-1), was "a set of unsound doctrines," the unsoundness being due to "the adoption of a defective scientific method," to "the uninquiring acceptance of first principles—false, indistinct, and unverified"—and to "reasoning deductively from propositions whose truth had not been established by proper preliminary processes." Nearly the whole of the fourth chapter is an expansion of the following remark:—"Opinions on scientific matters, although they may spring from different sources and follow for a time distinct courses, at last flow together into one main stream, whereas the distinctive tenets of the several Christian Churches not only spring from different sources, but continue to run in different channels." In short, putting aside the few lines relied upon by Mr. Gladstone, Sir G. Lewis's book suggests the view that

the dogmatic side of Christianity relates to matters on which no one has materials for any rational conviction, that the rival systems of doctrine which are held by different Christian bodies were elaborated under the influence of unsound philosophical systems, that the differences between the contending Churches cannot be compromised, and that controversy tends only to perpetuate them, inasmuch as they originate in different ways of looking at matters for the consideration of which neither our senses nor our intuitions give us any material.

To say, in the face of all this, that Sir George Lewis's principle that the acceptance of Christianity is required of us by a scientific application of the principle of Authority ought to be extended to the acceptance (*inter alia*) of the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, is to say that there is a contradiction between p. 69 and pp. 70-1. Indeed, at p. 83 there is an elaborate argument to show that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot, without a *petitio principii*, be said to rest on what Sir G. Lewis regards as trustworthy authority. I think that unless the passage in p. 69 is treated as I suggest, there is such a contradiction, and that the reasoning in pp. 70-1 and 82-3 gives the true mind of the author, and is in accordance with the general tenor of his work.

This will become apparent from comparing the passage on p. 69 with other parts of the book, which are, beyond all question, its vital parts.

The passage on p. 69 is as follows:—"All the civilised nations of the modern world . . . . . agree . . . . . in recognising some form of the Christian religion. Christendom includes the entire civilised world,—that is to say, all nations whose agreement on a matter of opinion has any real weight or authority."

I do not wish to weary the Society with quotations, but it will be found that the gist of Sir George Lewis's book is somewhat as follows:—

He understands by Authority exactly what a lawyer would call evidence of opinion. He says:—"Whenever in the course of this essay I speak of the Principle of Authority, I shall understand the principle of adopting the belief of others on a matter of opinion, without reference to the particular grounds on which that belief may rest." His object is to show, first, that men of necessity

derive most of their opinions from Authority thus understood ; and next, to show what are the marks of trustworthy authority ; who the persons are whose opinions deserve to be noticed. The greater part of the third chapter is an amplification of the thesis that in order that a person may be a competent authority on any subject,—(1) he must have devoted to it much study and thought ; (2) his mental powers must be equal to the task ; (3) he must be disinterested. As a secondary test of the value of such opinions, he proposes the following :—“ With respect to subjects of speculation and science, the existence of an agreement of the persons having the above qualifications is the most important matter. If all the able and honest men who have diligently studied the subject, or most of them, concur, and if this consent extends over several successive generations, at an enlightened period, and in all or most civilised countries, then the authority is at its greatest height.” (p. 47.)

Chapter IV. shows that, in regard to religion, the nature of the subject makes trustworthy opinion unattainable, and asserts that, as a fact, the amount of agreement is small. No one is a competent judge, and those who claim to be competent do not agree.

Chapter VI. relates to “ the number of persons competent to guide opinion on any subject.” (p. 159.) The effect of it is that “ the men of special information and experience, combined with the proper moral and intellectual qualifications, are the competent judges on each branch of knowledge ” (p. 160), and that “ the opinion of the great bulk of the people, taken as a standard of truth and rectitude, is unworthy of consideration, and destitute of weight and authority.” He adds, “ this is equally the case whether the multitude agrees in opinion with the competent judges, or disagrees with them.” (p. 170.)

Elsewhere he says :—“ So great is the influence of Authority in matters of opinion, that the extensive diffusion of any belief does not prove that numerous persons have examined the question upon its own merits, and have founded their conclusions upon an independent investigation of the evidence. An opinion may be held by a large number of persons, but they may all have been misled by some erroneous authority. They may all have mechanically followed the same blind guide, so that their number has, in fact, no weight, and they are no more entitled to reckon as independent voices than the

successive compilers who transcribe a historical error are entitled to reckon as independent witnesses."

In another part of the book (p. 73), he says :—" We may discern a certain analogy between the perpetuation of a particular form of Christianity and the perpetuation of a particular language. Both belong to a class of which the forms are various, but each variety, having once arisen, is unchanging, and when adopted by a nation, remains. Both prevail locally, and are transmitted by a faithful tradition from father to son. Moreover, it often happens that both are diffused by colonisation and conquest."

Contrasting these passages, which are only specimens, though highly characteristic specimens, of the contents of the book, with the passage relied on by Mr. Gladstone, it seems to me strange that Sir G. Lewis should ever have written it, and incredible that it should express his full and deliberate opinion. What is the meaning of ascribing to a whole nation or group of nations an opinion on a religious question, in terms which imply that their collective opinion has weight, when we are told soon afterwards that in no case has the opinion of the bulk of the people any weight whatever, and that religions are propagated like languages? How, again, can the agreement of civilised nations on Christianity in general be important, when we are told soon afterwards (p. 97) that "there is no consent of competent judges over the civilised world? Inconsistent and opposite forms of Christianity continue to exist side by side." Lastly, how came Sir George Lewis to overlook the fact that whatever consent as to Christianity now exists survives from a time when Christian nations were not specially civilised? The ages of faith were not the ages of civilisation. Increase of civilisation has produced the very opposite of agreement in religious belief. No doubt the Christian nations became civilised, but this is quite different from saying that the civilised nations became Christian. Upon these grounds, which might easily be developed to any extent, I think that Mr. Gladstone is so far from being justified in seeking to extend Sir G. Lewis's principles (as he understands them) to cases to which Sir G. Lewis would not have extended them himself, that he ought to have sought those principles not in the passages which he quotes, but in the passages of a totally different character which I have quoted or referred to.

One point has been strongly impressed on my mind in studying

Mr. Gladstone's article, and comparing it with Sir G. Lewis's book. It relates to the character of Mr. Gladstone's conclusion; his article seems to lead straight to religious scepticism, though it is obviously not meant to do so. Mr. Gladstone tells us (p. 4), "Authority is the humble but useful substitute" for inquiry. He quotes, with apparent approval, a passage in which Sir G. Lewis speaks (p. 6) of "doubt, hesitation, suspense of the judgment, inquiry before decision, balancing of apparently opposite facts, followed perhaps by a qualified and provisional opinion," as processes foreign to the mind of pretenders to philosophy, and therefore, one may suppose, characteristic of the true philosopher. He tells us (p. 11) that "the knowledge referable to action which we obtain by inquiry is altogether or commonly probable knowledge; and Authority is probable knowledge too." Near the end of the article (p. 49), he says Authority "is a crutch, rather than a leg, but the natural energy of the leg is limited, and when the leg cannot work the crutch may." I suppose this means it may be worked by the other parts of the body, for a crutch cannot work itself; and this suggests, by the way, that as much intellectual exertion is wanted to work the crutch of Authority as the leg of reason,—perhaps more.

We are told "it is safe to say that the largest part, even of civilised mankind, in the greater proportion of the subjects that pass through the mind, or touch the course of common action" (this must surely include religious belief) "have not even these" (*i.e.*, "indirect accounts or, as it were, rumours of the results which writers or students have attained"), "but have only a vague, unverified impression that the multitude or the best think so-and-so, and that they had better act and think accordingly. To some this may be an unwelcome announcement. The fact of their ignorance and its burden they have borne in patience, but it is less easy to bear equably the discovery how great that burden is." An analysis and exposition of this remark end thus:—"While the naked exhibition of the amount of guidance found for us by authority is certainly unflattering, it has a moral use in the inculcation of much humility." What does all this mean? Its natural meaning would seem to be that we are, and must be, helplessly ignorant upon all the great questions of religion; that the vast mass of mankind cannot get beyond a degree of probability so very low as not to deserve the name, for it is no more than an unverified

impression that somebody guessed something about a matter of which nobody knows anything; and that the most diligent student cannot get much further. Such a conclusion is familiar enough, but the tone of the article forbids one to suppose that it is the one which the author intended to reach. The whole of the language employed in pp. 10-16 is at variance with such a notion. The expression "unfathomable verities," on p. 16, is a single instance of what I mean. It is impossible not to ask how the passages I have quoted are to be reconciled with the language to which I have referred? How can any one have a right to speak of a doctrine unreservedly as an "unfathomable verity," when all that the really knows is that "indirect accounts, or as it were rumours," have reached him, to the effect that persons who have studied the subject regard it in that light; or that he has "a vague, unverified impression that the multitude or the best" think so, and that he had better think so accordingly?"

Mr. Gladstone most truly says that "the determination to accept as the final rule of belief all declarations by the Pope which the Pope himself may define to be *ex cathedra*, is just as much an act of private individual judgment as if the determination were to follow Luther, Wesley, or Swedenborg." The same may be said of the determination to infer from "a vague rumour" that the doctrine of the Trinity is an unfathomable verity. Can such an inference be correct? Who would say, in so many words, "There is a vague, unverified impression that the doctrine of the Trinity is an unfathomable verity, therefore it is an unfathomable verity"?

The only way out of this difficulty is by the assumption that there is some royal road to knowledge or belief in these matters. It seems to me that if there be such a road, it must be either the road of the mystic or seer, whose intuition can be of no use to any one but himself; or that of Authority, in a different sense of the word from the one used by Mr. Gladstone and Sir G. Lewis, namely, the coercive authority of an infallible Church, whose doctrines are recognised and enforced as true by the power of the State. This road, no doubt, leads to obedience and uniformity of opinion, but it has no sort of relation to truth, unless the fact that there is such a body can be proved in the common way; and Sir George Lewis's book points out, perhaps for the hundredth time, the impossibility of giving such proof.

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## NOTICE.

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to "Mr. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S.W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery *vivâ voce*.*

St. Martineau

## THE SUPPOSED CONFLICT BETWEEN EFFICIENT AND FINAL CAUSATION.

“WHAT a title!” will the modern disciple of “positive knowledge” be tempted to say,—“made up of exploded Aristotelian phrases!” These phrases, however, do not contemplate any encroachment upon his field, or ask him to alter in the least his aims and methods of research. With good right he may repudiate all quest of dynamic agencies, and be content to study objects in their collocations, and movements in their concurrence and succession, and to understand by their “causes” simply their phenomenal premonitors. Within these limits he can do all that Science requires; which has to lay out the world before us as it speaks to our most enlarged perceptive, mensurative, and reckoning faculties, and which completes its work in the formulating of laws, *i.e.*, rules of synchronous and consecutive order among phenomena. He who refuses to look further, for either “efficiency” behind or “ends” in front, is justified by the limits of the province and the tools which he has made his own.

But the perceptive faculty and its allies are not the whole of us, and the knowledge which they give us does not exhaust our theory of the world. Besides what we objectively notice, there are data supplied to thought by the very action of our own minds; and in the play of relation between ourselves and nature these will necessarily mingle. So is it with the dynamic idea. Though Power is invisible, it is not unknown: we put it forth as personal agents; we are familiar with it as the source of motion; and as action and reaction are only the same thing inversely read (on the principle that *Περί τῶν ἀντικειμένων τὴν αὐτὴν εἶναι ἐπιστήμην*), we recognise it in nature as in ourselves, and fill from it the whole meaning of causality. Among the grouped and regimented movements that are seen to march through space and time, we interfuse a force or energy, whereby one *produces* another, and is not simply *followed* by it, like moment by moment. This is what we mean by “efficient causation.”

NO. LXVII.]

In defining it as ἀρχὴ κινήσεως, Aristotle uses the word κίνησις in the sense of not merely local movement, but change of any kind, including even mental transition from one thought to another. An "efficient cause," therefore, might be found in any "beginning of change," either in the physical world or in the logical. In both cases it has the same characteristics: *necessity*, whether in the form of inevitable sequence, or in that of irresistible inference: and *consecutive advance*, a step at a time, along a determinate line, whether in outward nature or in inward thought. Whatever it either acts out, or thinks out, into what is *next*. So far, therefore, as the universe is at the disposal of "efficient causes," its condition at each moment results purely from that immediately prior, without the possibility of any new beginning. If an experienced observer could compress into a formula the law of all the simultaneous conditions, he would be able to foresee the contents of any future moment; not, however, to modify them, for his prescience depends on their being in themselves determinate, and on his calculations embracing all the elements of the problem, including the states of his own mind. This cogency of progression from a universal ἀρχή, down the diverging lines of "Extension" and "Thought," constitutes Spinoza's "*geometrical method*;" which contemplates Nature (with Man) as no less an assemblage of rigorously deduced properties than the parabola, whose diameters, abscisses, parameter, and ordinates have been reasoned out into their exact relations. This "Efficient Causality" can be denied by no one who admits the dynamic idea at all; and no phenomenon can dispense with it.

We are familiar, however, with another mode of action, in which, instead of being helplessly handed over by each moment to the next, we overleap the near, and fix our thought and desire upon some object of remote attainment. The preconception of such an end in view, operating as a motive, suggests the chain of means, first, the link in contact with the object, then the penultimate, and so on to the proximate; on the passing of which, from idea to execution, we return by progressive steps of action over the points we had traversed in regressive idea, till we realise the end at last. This power of the distant possibility to command a present activity is "final causation," — τὸ οὗ ἐνεκα, — τὸ τέλος. From some confused notion that here the energy comes from the end, while in the former case it starts at the

beginning, the two types are erroneously supposed to be at variance. But there is no operation of the future, except through the idea of it which is present; and which, in its suggestion of the means, is no less an "efficient cause" than are the means themselves in producing the end. And the preconception itself is, in its turn, the effect of prior acquaintance with the object as desirable. So that final causes, instead of deposing "efficiency," introduce more of it than there would otherwise be. What is new in them is, not that they substitute anything for efficient causation, but that they bring under it a special and complicated play of relations among single phenomena.

Is this more complicated play of relations limited to human life, or are conscious aims traceable also in external nature? This question, answered in the affirmative by Socrates, in the negative by Epicurus, again divides the modern schools. Though at present the balance inclines against teleology, the case, when submitted to logical review, appears to be by no means decided.

Bacon's witticism—"Causarum finalium inquisitio sterilis est, et tanquam virgo Deo consecrata nihil parit"<sup>1</sup>—brilliantly opens the modern attack upon the search for design in the investigation of nature, and is supported by evidence of the injury done to natural science from the neglect of physical causes in favour of final.<sup>2</sup> His complaint is that a study legitimate in metaphysics has been rendered unfruitful by misplacement in physics. This objection became hard to sustain against such facts as Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood through the obvious meaning of the valves in the veins.<sup>3</sup> And now it must altogether retire before the law of Natural Selection. If Nature, as Mr. Darwin tells us,<sup>4</sup> "improves her inhabitants" by "pre-

<sup>1</sup> "De Augmentis Scient.," Lib. iii., c. v., ab init.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., c. iv.

<sup>3</sup> The fact is thus attested by Robert Boyle:—"I remember that when I asked our famous Harvey, in the only discourse I had with him (which was but a little while before he died), what were the things which induced him to think of a circulation of the blood? He answered me, that when he took notice that the valves in the veins of so many parts of the body were so placed that they gave free passage to the blood towards the heart, but opposed the passage of the venal blood the contrary way, he was invited to think that so provident a cause as Nature had not placed so many valves without design; and no design seemed more probable than that, since the blood could not well, because of the interposing valves, be sent by the veins to the limbs, it should be sent through the arteries and return through the veins, whose valves did not oppose its course that way."—Boyle's Works, fol., Vol. IV., p. 539.

<sup>4</sup> "Origin of Species," ch. iv., pp. 82-84.

serving all profitable variations;" if she "can act on every internal organ, on every shade of constitutional difference, on the whole machinery of life," and "selects only for the good of the being which she tends;" if nature's productions are, as compared with man's, "infinitely better adapted to the most complex conditions of life, and plainly bear the stamp of far higher workmanship;" then is the advantage of the living being the true key to its characters, the moulding power of its very structure; and till the *uses* of an organism are found, its natural history remains in the dark. And so, through a happy variation, Bacon's "barren woman" is summoned by our modern science to "keep house."

Descartes dismissed the consideration of Final Causes on another ground,—that they are inscrutable. "We shall wholly reject," he says, "from our philosophy the inquiry into final causes, for we must not be so presumptuous as to think that God has chosen to take us into his counsels."<sup>1</sup> It is curious that to this objection the most effective reply comes from the great admirer and interpreter of Epicurus, Gassendi, who says, "However true this may be, if you mean to speak of ends which God has chosen to hide or to deter us from investigating, it cannot apply to those which he has exposed to every one's view, and which disclose themselves with little trouble." "How is it possible, in view of the structure of our own bodies, that all the designs of God are alike hidden in the inscrutable abyss of his wisdom?"<sup>2</sup>

The real question, I suppose, is this,—do we know enough about the two forms of causation to make a reasonable affirmation respecting their presence or absence in Nature?

We know them, and can compare them in *our own experience*. "We ourselves," says Edouard Zeller, "are the only cause of whose mode of action we have immediate knowledge through inner intuition."<sup>3</sup> And that mode is twofold. Sometimes it is intentional; sometimes it is automatic. In the former case, we stand in presence of more possibilities than one, and by a selecting vote determine what was indeterminate before; and, under guidance of the end in

<sup>1</sup> "Principes de la Philosophie," Première Partie, "Œuvres" (Cousin), III., p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> "Gassendi Opera," fol., T. III., p. 359, a. 361, a. b.

<sup>3</sup> "Über Teleologische und Mechanische Naturerklärung in ihrer Anwendung auf das Weltganze," p. 19.

view, we invoke and apply the several resources which may be concentrated on its attainment. In the latter case, there is but one direction open to our activity, and though it may not be taken at random, but be apparently traced by an idea, it is as though the act was performed for us rather than by us; for we know not what we do. When the lens changes its place and its curvatures in accommodation to shifting distances, when the two eyes concurrently turn their axes upon the same point, when a wish over-night to wake at six takes punctual effect through hours of unconsciousness, we are the subjects of what Cuvier called an "innate somnambulism," which, without arrest of "efficient causation," strongly contrasts with intentionality.

Next, we know these two forms of activity, and can compare them in our fellow-men. Not, however, at first-hand, as in our own case; the internal characters which distinguish them are a private possession, out of every observer's reach; and if we are sure of the presence of intelligent agents near us, and can tell the actions which they mean from those which they mechanically perform, it must be through some objective marks, enabling us to interpret and discriminate the facts perceived. Our belief in the existence of other minds is a mere inference from certain signs which intentionality puts forth.

*Selection*—the doing of something rather than nothing, of this rather than that, when there is no hindrance to either—is an invariable feature of intention. At first view, indeed, it seems hardly fitted to serve as a mark, seeing that it is itself a mental act, and therefore out of sight; and further, that accident can simulate it, and fling somewhere the arrow that might have gone anywhere. For a single instance this objection holds good; but if again and again the arrow hits the same spot, accident loses the game and yields the palm to Selection. If a man walks every morning along the same line of streets, we never doubt that he is aiming at his stated place of business. And so *repetition in time* of one among several possibilities secures Selection to us as a true objective mark of intentionality.

*Combination*, the simultaneous resort to several independent lines of action as factors of a single result, is a second characteristic of intention. In the ship, the hollow build, the pointed form, the

furnace that generates the steam, the paddles that obey it, the compass that shows the way, and the helm that gives it, unite a whole group of sciences—hydrostatics, mechanics, chemistry, magnetism—in one act of locomotion. In the Jacquard loom, the ravel of the warp, the shuttle of the woof, the lifting-hooks, the revolving bar, the perforated cards, the trellised paper, the punching apparatus, are so many separate partners in the production of a piece of brocade. Not one of the implements or processes has any meaning or ground of existence, except in relation to all the rest; and that it is there at all attests the dominance of a mind embracing the whole system of relations. In this ideal *co-ordination of constituents separate in space* we have a second objective mark of intention.

*Variation* in the method of doing the same thing supplies us with a third characteristic. This will be more evident if, instead of contrasting blind activity with self-conscious aims, we compare together two processes of intelligence, in one of which a purpose presides, while the other commits itself to the premisses in hand, and simply reasons on whithersoever these may carry it. The schoolboy, preparing his geometry lesson, places himself in Euclid's hands, and from the *data* of his theorem is led steadily forward to the *quæsitum*, each step being secured upon the previously known. Here, he is told beforehand at what position he is to arrive, and the way thither is marked out for him by a predecessor. He might have been desired to set out from the same starting-point, without any such intimation, and to explore for himself the direction which its consequences would take. In such case, Euclid's track is only one of several down which he may travel; and it is a doubtful chance whether he finds himself on it, and does not rather work himself forward into some different truth. This *synthetic* procedure is rationally consecutive, but it is governed by no foresight. It does not supply many paths to the same end, as all meridians lead you to the Pole, but many from the same beginning, as you may quit the Pole by any meridian. But let our schoolboy be one of half-a-dozen from whom you require demonstration of a new deducible. If he is up to his work, he will assume the unknown theorem to be true, and will trace out, step by step, the consequences that flow from it, until they land him in some position already

known. His logical chain is then complete, and he has only to invert it and take the last link first, and his answer is ready. Meanwhile, if each of his companions, on a separate line of deduction, has also alighted on some property previously proved, the papers handed in will all be adequate, but all different. The end will have been gained by six distinct tracts, and the variety will be due to the *analytic* mode of working, from *quæsitum* to data. Whether the *propositum* presents itself before several minds at once, or before one mind on several occasions, the variation of method will not fail to appear. Do we need an illustration less theoretical? In the competition for the best locomotive for the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, every engine offered effected the end, but each in a manner different from all the rest.

On sight of these and similar marks, we conclude without doubt, on the intentionality of human action. And the absence of them in mere tricks of habit, and in respiration, coughing, sneezing, laughing, wailing, betrays the automatic and involuntary life. There is no other principle on which to determine whether the figures around us are automata or men.

Do we, then, find these features elsewhere in Nature? Since nothing short of a living being can supply an *end* of action to any will, we may narrow the inquiry at once to the organic world; in relation to which the inorganic may no doubt be regarded and estimated as the *means*, but apart from which, or prior to which, it could scarcely be interrogated about its purpose. Possibly there may be selection involved in its atomic constitution, combination in its composition of forces, variation in its ways of evolving heat, light, electricity; but if so, the intention thus indicated travels on for its realisation in the world of conscious life, and will there find expression more articulate.

That the existing forms of life upon the globe, and their extinct progenitors of which we have a geological record, are but a relatively few among the many that have been and the more that might have been, is now a familiar conception. So fluid has become the old fixity of organisms, that the modern difficulty is to say, not where variation begins, but where it ends. Yet *end* it does, far short of the infinite lottery,—

“Omnimodisque coire atque omnia pertemptare  
Quæcumque inter se possent congressa creare,”

of which Lucretius (*e.g.* v., 190-1) never permits us to lose sight. Somehow or other a limit is imposed on the divergences of life, and it falls for long periods into persistent types, apparently undisturbed by new experiments. We attribute their conservation to "the law of heredity," but in doing so we only give a name to the fact of *repetition in time* of the same sample of being; the very sign, as we have shown, of true selection. Heredity is nothing but the arrest of variation, the securing again and again of one determinate form from the whole range of erratic possibilities, the hitting of a given mark as often as it is tried; and instead of dispensing with design, it is precisely the kind of fact most indelibly stamped with it. The very phrase, indeed, by which the establishment of species for survival is described,—"Natural Selection,"—admits that Nature does the same thing that human Art effects. Here, then, we have, name and all, the first objective mark of intention.

The second, viz., *Combination* of separate factors for the emergence of a joint result, is so conspicuous as to play a leading part in every description of the organic kingdom. Do we accept the reports of the modern physiologist as to the "build" of the animal body? It resembles the frontispiece of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, which, to symbolise Society, represents a gigantic man towering above the fields, and found, on close inspection, to be all made up of Lilliputian men, packed close as the links of chain-armour on the figure;—that is to say, it is not so much *one* living being as a commonwealth or cumulus of cells, each of which has its own life and its own duration. Be it so: the whole is not identical with the parts; it is a new unity constituted by their association, and is a perfect model of the joint-stock operations of Nature. Or, instead of interpreting the body by its physiological elements, do we look at it in its anatomical constituents? It presents under this aspect a system of relatively placed members, dividing among them the offices of a single life,—this organ for one work, that for another. And as there is a common presence throughout of growth, nutrition, innervation, contractility, due to the tissues which the cells construct, the two analyses have to come to an understanding with one another before the story of co-ordination is complete. The older witness of Cuvier, in establishing his law of "organic correlations," is to the same effect. "Every

organised being," he says, "forms a whole,—a peculiar system of its own, the parts of which mutually correspond in producing the same definitive action by a reciprocal reaction. None of these parts can change in form without the others also changing, and consequently, each of them, taken separately, indicates and ascertains all the rest." "The form of the tooth regulates the forms of the condyle, of the scapula, and of the claws, in the same manner as the equation of a curve regulates all its properties; and as, by taking each property separately for the base of a particular equation, we find both the ordinary equation and all the other properties whatever, so the claw, the scapula, the condyle, the femur, and all the other bones taken separately, give the tooth, or are reciprocally given by it; and thus, by commencing with any one of these bones, a person who possesses an accurate knowledge of the laws of organic economy may reconstruct the whole animal."<sup>1</sup> Is it said that these concurrent changes are not independent, and therefore supply no true case of "combination?" They are tied together by no other known relation than their common bearing upon the animal's *need*; that the physical process of modifying a tooth carries with it an alteration in the thigh and the claw cannot be affirmed. Whatever be the means employed for simultaneously effecting the changes, it is the end in view which correlates them. I am perhaps reminded that, without concurrent adaptation, the animal could not exist. Then why did it not go out? what mechanical necessity is there for its existence? The very question is,—how comes it to be here, with a nature involving the convergence of such complex conditions?

The independence of the related elements becomes more striking where some of them are within the organism and others at a distance from it. It is not under the thrill of aerial tones, but in a silent chamber, that the hearing apparatus gets together the parts of its labyrinth, fills its cavities with lymph, provides its otoliths, and stretches its fibres of Corti. It is not amid ethereal undulations, but in the dark, that the most marvellous and mobile of optical instruments is built up, as Helmholtz says, "of leather and jelly;" its cornea cleared and polished, its lens curved and set, its humours

<sup>1</sup> "Essay on the Theory of the Earth." By Baron Cuvier. With Geological Illustrations by Professor Jameson. Fifth Edition. Pp. 83-87.

poured in, its curtains hung, its sensitive tissue spread, and the very spot predestinated on which the image may best be thrown. Here is an elaborate vaticination of refraction from a blind prophet that has never even heard of light. Similar is the case where the correlated conditions are separated *in time*, as in the instinct which directs some hymenopterous insects (*e.g.*, the *Pompilus*, or spider-wasp); which themselves live on vegetable food, to provide in their nest, before laying their eggs, a store of flies, spiders, or caterpillars for the future grubs whose taste will be carnivorous. Even Schopenhauer admitted the impossibility of describing instances like these except in terms of volition like ours. "Yes," he says, "on closely regarding final causation we must not shrink, in expressing its transcendent sense, from boldly saying that the end is the *motive* of the operations performed, operating upon a being that knows it not. For assuredly the nests of the American ant supply the operative motive which has produced the ant-eater's toothless jaw, with its long, thread-like, clammy tongue; the hard egg-shell which imprisons the chick is the motive for the horny tip with which its beak is furnished in order to break through; after which it is cast off, as of no further use." "But these motives operated before they were apprehended: so it is, however contradictory it may sound."<sup>1</sup> How a motive can impel to an end, and combine the appropriate means, in the absence of any being that can think of either end or means, it is certainly not easy to conceive.

For the remaining feature of intention, *Variation* of method, we have not far to look. There is not a function of the animal life—nutrition, locomotion, respiration, vision, reproduction—which has not furnished itself with apparatus varied enough to fill a "dictionary of inventions." And the modifications strictly possess the "analytic" rather than the "synthetic" character,—*i.e.*, they are tied down to the solution of a set *propositum*, not worked out on the divergent lines of possibility from a *datum* already in hand. It is a function that wants a structure, not a structure that looks out for a function, if it can find one. This order of procedure, which assigns the organic building-power to an idea, is directly expressed by Milne-Edwards in his "Law of Economy," which is

<sup>1</sup> "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung," II., p. 379.

this:—"A physiological property, beginning to establish itself in a series of ascending animals, uses at first some part already existing in the organism, modifying the structure for the purpose. At one time, the general organism supplies the particular faculty with its first instrument: at another time, some part already devoted to special use, lends itself to the new function. And it is only after exhausting this sort of resource that the creative power sets up a new element in the more perfect organisations."<sup>1</sup> With the serpents, in the absence of extremities, the ribs are turned to unexpected account as instruments of progression; in the flying lizard and flying squirrel, as the frame of a parachute to break the fall from a height. It is impossible to conceive of the interdependent systems of circulation, secretion, and breathing, but as variously modified provisions for purifying the used-up blood; by the portal circulation, by the gills of the fish, by direct aeration in the lungs, with the corresponding grades of complication in the heart. The conversion of the anterior extremity of the vertebrates into the fin of the fish, the paddle of the seal, the wing of the bird, and the furnishing of its terminus with the hoof or toe for progression, with the claw for battle, with the hand for prehensile arts, or with great feathers elongating its phalanges for flight, can be regarded only as a solution of one problem wrought out into its several cases of shifting relation. Nor can I understand how such a problem can blindly solve itself, any more than how a mill can put itself together so as to work, as occasion may arise, by water, wind, or steam.

Nature, then, failing in none of these objective marks of intention, is no less certainly ruled by voluntary intelligence than are mankind: and the same induction which concludes the Principia to be a product of reason, determines that so, too, are the heavens which they interpret. The teleological doctrine has doubtless been often rendered ridiculous by petty applications, and provoked a merited aversion by exaggerated estimates of the human position in the universe. But in its logical structure it is not responsible for these abuses; and when they are cleared away, they will leave behind, I cannot but think, an indestructible conviction of immanent purpose,

<sup>1</sup> "Introduction à la Zoologie Générale," ch. iv., as cited by Paul Janet, "Les Causes Finales," p. 315.

moulding the structure of the world, and working itself out in the processes of life.

Of the chief objections to this view I can only select one or two for a brief notice :—

First, an *a priori* principle is affirmed, which cuts off our conclusion from human art to the genesis of natural products. Whatever cause operates within nature, as the result of its general laws, cannot, it is said, be the principle that generates nature. This maxim receives the hesitating sanction of Kant. "Our human art," he says, "applying successful violence to nature, and compelling her to work out our ends instead of pursuing her own, we conclude from the analogy of some of her products with ours (houses, ships, watches), that we may resort to a similar causality, viz., Understanding and Will, for deducing the conditions of nature's spontaneity (prior to which neither Art, nor perhaps Reason itself, can exist) from another, though superhuman Art; a mode of reasoning which will not, perhaps, bear a very keen transcendental criticism." He admits at the same time, that if we are to name a cause, we cannot do better than follow the analogy of products in which the cause and methods are completely known to us, Reason having no excuse for quitting the causality known to it in favour of obscure and unverifiable explanations.<sup>1</sup>

Am I wrong in suggesting that in the parenthesis of this passage there lies a complete *petitio principii*? If, prior to nature as it is, all art and reason were impossible, *actum est*,—nature must look out for some other origin. But was there ever a more arbitrary dictum than that *in* nature there can be nothing homogeneous with what was *prior* to nature? It stands in direct contradiction to an older assumption which, without much better claim, pervades the whole history of philosophy,—that between effect and cause there must be something homogeneous,<sup>2</sup>—a principle especially associated with the name of Empedocles, and usually favoured by kindred schools. The two opposite maxims might well be left to settle the survivorship by the struggle for existence. But two remarks regarding Kant's it may be worth while to add. (1.) ~~Either~~ *all* mundane

<sup>1</sup> "Kritik der reinen Vernunft." Rosenkranz, II, p. 487.

<sup>2</sup> Γινώσκοντες τὸ ἀμείν τὸ ἕμειν, τὰ δὲ πράγματα ἐκ τῶν ἀρχῶν εἶναι. Arist., "De Anima," I, ii, 7, quoted from Plato. Comp. I, v. 1, *ad init.*

causes must lie under disqualification for supramundane use, or *none*. The rule of exclusion must operate, not simply against *intentionality*, as the source of nature, but no less against every form of blind *automatic* drift, and all schemes of *mechanical* genesis out of matter and motion. (2.) Let Kant's rule be allowed, that we must deny the possible existence before nature of any such cause as we find *in* nature; then it follows that if there really *were* a Supreme Creative Intelligence, he could not set up a created mind except at the cost of being denied as impossible by the very faculties he gave; so that the orb of intellectual light, in the moment of kindling, is fixed in eternal eclipse.

A second *a priori* objection is rendered more familiar by the literature of our time. To see in the world the marks of Final Causation is "Anthropomorphism," a predicate which is evidently supposed to settle the question. It is to be regretted that a word, discredited by its designation of a gross and obsolete superstition,—the ascription of the human form of body to the Divine Being—should be habitually applied to all doctrine which recognises an Intellectual and Moral Ruler of the universe. The poem is well-known in which Xenophanes of Colophon complains that "Mortals believe the Gods to be begotten, and to have senses, voice, and body like their own. But if oxen or lions had hands, with which to paint and execute human works of art, the horses would draw the figures of the gods like horses, the oxen like oxen, and would give them bodies such as their own." He added, according to Clement of Alexandria, the further illustration that "the Æthiopians represent their gods as black and flat-nosed, the Thracians theirs as tawny and grey."<sup>1</sup> The Greek word had no application beyond this type of belief, and its extension by Anaxagoras, who identified the Supreme Cause with *νοῦς*, or to Socrates, who gave ascendancy to the Moral element, would have been regarded as an absurd reproach. The abusers of words, however, often carry the day against the old-fashioned precisian. So, having delivered my protest, I surrender, and will be content to ask whether the thing now denoted is one that deserves a bad name.

<sup>1</sup> "Xenophanis Carm. Rel.," 5, 6, ap. "Mullaohii Fragmenta Phil. Græc.," I, pp. 101-2.

The offence charged under the term "Anthropomorphism" is, the thinking of the Divine Nature as having so far analogy with our own that Reason and Will are referred to both. What, then, is amiss with this procedure? The presumed failure of analogy,—is it with *our own* nature in particular, or with *all* nature? If the latter, the objection is only Kant's over again, and has been considered. If the former, our only resource will be, in quitting the delusive help of our humanity as a type, to look out for some other nature which may offer a more promising model of creative procedure. There are, however, but two. We may turn to the physiology of the organic world,—the growth, the functions, the instincts of our terrestrial flora and fauna, and may assimilate the Creative power to the sap of some great tree—some Scandinavian Yggdrasil, overshadowing the earth and reaching to heaven, and shedding from it the tribes of men as its leaves; or to the constructive impulse of some industrious animal, fabricating it knows not what. The logical advantage of this *Biomorphism* is not apparent, and morally, it seems related to Anthropomorphism, at best, as brute to man. Or again, we may turn to the force of unorganised matter, and prefix it alone, with its movements, as the prelude to the world: and in this *Hylomorphism* we shall have the old mechanical theory, with all its incompetences, back upon our hands, and every moral ideal suppressed by physical necessity. Nor, after all, is there in these substitutes the slightest release from the analogy of our own nature. For of animal causality, we know nothing except as *like* our instinctive activity; and of mechanical, nothing except as the counterpart and antithesis of our personal force,—the other side of the same equation. Directly therefore, or indirectly, "anthropomorphism" is the inner life and sole possibility of all causal conceptions.

In this paper, notwithstanding its length, I have left untouched large sections of the subject, and dwelt exclusively upon its central portion. The conclusion to which the survey brings me may be summed up in Aristotle's words,—*Εἰ ἐν τῇ φύσει ἔνεστι τὸ ἐνὲνά του, καὶ ἐν φύσει.* ("Phys. Auscult.," II., 8, *sub fin.*)

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Hutton

Bucknill

Huxley

Acland

Bishop of Gloucester

C. Robertson

Dr. Carpenter

Rev. J. Martineau

Self

Prof. St. George Mivart

## MATTER AND FORCE.

HAVING been requested to read a paper before this Society, I venture to bring forward the remarks which follow. I would be permitted, however, first to say that I chose my subject as one likely to elicit an interesting discussion, and have persisted in my choice, because it has been approved by several members of our body.

But I do not present my paper as a finished essay, the result of special research and prolonged study; it has, in fact, been written in haste, and under considerable pressure from other matters. I must therefore ask indulgence for an effort the principal aim of which is to stimulate discussion amongst members of our body—largely, I confess, with a view to my own profit—seeing the favourable opportunity I have here of meeting with men exceptionally informed as to the conception “Force,” and qualified for settling doubts respecting even the most fundamental problems of philosophy.

Few conceptions have now obtained a wider acceptance amongst men interested in Physical Science than the unity and transformation of Force, and the indestructibility of Matter.

As to the idea of the metamorphosis of “Force,” Meyer, Joule, Grove, and Helmholtz are perhaps, as Mr. Herbert Spencer says, “more than any others to be credited with” its “clear enunciation;” but certainly its wide diffusion has been largely aided by the eloquent rhetoric of Professor Tyndall, and now a reverent acceptance of this belief seems to have become the *articulus stantis vel cadentis Scientiæ*.

It is by no means with writers of one general tone of philosophical or theological thought that this conception has found favour. Thus, Father Secchi,<sup>1</sup> amongst so many others, supports a belief in the unity of the physical forces.

Mr. Spencer has a chapter<sup>2</sup> on the transformation of Force, where-

<sup>1</sup> “L’Unità delle Forze Fisiche.” Roma, 1862.

<sup>2</sup> “First Principles.” 3rd Edition, chapter viii.

in he speaks of "the transformation of heat into electricity," and of this latter, again, "into other modes of force;" he refers to Mr. Grove as having shown "that each force is transformable, directly or indirectly, into the others," and he himself brings even intellect and will within the sphere of such transformations. Indeed, he not only, in reality, teaches that force is a substance, but the substance of substances. He makes the persistence of Force as "an unconditioned reality" (*l. c.*, p. 189) the most fundamental of all truths. "Deeper," he tells us (*l. c.*, p. 192), "than demonstration, deeper even than definite cognition,—deep as the very nature of mind, is the postulate at which we have arrived. . . . The sole truth which transcends experience, by underlying it, is the persistence of Force."

In the face of this consensus of scientific opinion and philosophic expression, it is only with the greatest hesitation and deference that I venture to enter a *caveat* against the danger of falling into a fallacy of simple inspection, touching the alleged unity and transformation of Force, and of even a lapse into a kind of superstition with respect to the two conceptions which form the title of this paper.

Before the Metaphysical Society, however, where every variety of incredulity and credulity is happily free to declare itself without reserve, I feel I may avow not only my scepticism as to the very existence of those *Dii majores* of the creed referred to, "Matter and Force," but even my present heretical disbelief in their reality.

But it may at once occur to some of my hearers that in denying the existence of evidence for the substantiality of Matter and Force, I am either simply repeating what has been often urged before, or of maintaining a mere truism.

But all, or almost all, the deniers of the existence of Matter and Force, such as Hume, Mill, and others, have opposed the belief in that existence from quite an opposite philosophical stand-point to that which I occupy, and it would surely be nothing less than a discourtesy to a distinguished member of our Society to call that a "truism" to which his opinions are in direct contradiction.

The opposite view to that now prevalent concerning Force, that view as to which I desire to elicit criticism, may be stated as follows:—

"Force" is an abstraction, and has no existence as force other than ideal. It is an abstraction denoting the different activities of bodies in active exercise, as "energy" is a term denoting such activities *in potentia*.

Matter is, as far as we have yet evidence, also an abstraction, and has no existence as matter other than ideal.

On the other hand, "bodies" of the most different kinds really exist objectively, and they have really and objectively active powers of different kinds.

All the physical phenomena capable of expression in terms of the hypothesis of the unity and transformation of Force seem to me to be also capable of expression in terms of the other hypothesis, though not in all cases with equal convenience.

The conception of the same or different bodies being successively affected and acting in different manners, with a quantitative equivalence between the modes of their affection and activity, seems a sufficient conception. On the other hand, to speak of Force persisting and being transformed verbally favours the conception of force, as something really passing from one thing to another and having an objective, substantial existence.

It is thus sometimes said that a coal-bed contains the heat and light of the sun of bygone ages shut up within it, like enchanted knights, and once more to be set free upon that coal's combustion. But does it really do so? Surely neither that light nor heat is in the coal, nor are they in the oxygen with which that coal may one day combine; they are activities, resulting from the rapid combination of those bodies.

It may be replied perhaps that the substantial existence of Force is not believed in or meant to be taught, that it is but a convenient way of speaking.

I willingly concede the reasonableness of making use of the conception of substantial Force as a working hypothesis, provided care be taken that its real nature be not misunderstood; but if only an abstraction be really meant, then it would surely be better not to speak of the "persistence" and, *a fortiori*, of the "transformation" of Force, since nothing can be "transformed" which does not really exist.

It may be objected to me perhaps that if we ought not to speak without qualification of Force, we ought not so to speak even of particular forces, Heat, Light, and Motion, &c., which, as such, are also abstractions; that we ought, in fact, to avoid the common phrases employed in every-day life.

To this I reply, in the first place, that according to the view proposed for criticism, the active powers of bodies really exist, and that therefore it is most reasonable, according to that same system, to apply to similar powers a common name; while, for the real existence of calorific, luminous, and motive activities we have the plainest evidence. Nor need we even object to the term "Force" as a common name for all active powers whatever, provided its substantial existence, beside the existence of the various active bodies, be not asserted or implied.

But secondly, I reply that though it is well to employ the common terms Heat, Light, Motion, &c. (meaning by such terms the objective activities to which our sensibilities become related), it is also well from time to time to make clear that such entities are abstractions (though less abstract in degree than "Force"), and have no existence other than ideal apart from warm, luminous, or moving bodies.

That it is useful so to protest seems to me plain, from such considerations as the following:—

It is often said that bodies may, by impact, communicate motion, as when one suspended ball, falling against others, ceases itself to move, while another begins to be in motion. But there is here no real evidence of any "communication," or "transference" of "motion," but only of successive and correlative motions—except evidence also, to my mind at least, of one moving body causing another one, previously at rest, to move. The language used with respect to this phenomenon shows the existence of a tendency to regard the abstract quality "motion" as a substantial entity, actually passing from one body to another.

But if Force were a substantial entity actually passing from one body to another, it would have to traverse space in so passing, and what can that be which is to make it so pass, and govern it *in transitu*? Either for that we require another force, or else force moves itself, and thus we have the conception of a substance with

active powers gratuitously introduced, in order to explain the activities of the two substances (the balls),—the moving and the moved ones.

The absurdity of such a conception as the actual transference of force seems to me to become plain, if we consider qualities of bodies, which qualities do not readily lend themselves to this illusion. Thus, let us suppose a music-master, who enters strong and well to teach a pupil, exhausted by want of nourishment; he sings to the pupil while the latter dines, and the master goes on singing till he is just as fatigued as was the pupil at starting. He then sits down to refresh himself, while the reinvigorated pupil sings. No one would say that in such a case singing-force had passed out of the master and into the pupil.

Again, let us suppose two men, A and B, meeting, with very cordial hand-shakes, prolonged and reiterated; let the friendship lead to the exhibition of alcohol, with a consequent dispute, ending in fisticuffs. We might here, if we wished to be grotesque, say that there had taken place a transformation of "hand-shaking force" into "nose-knocking force," and in a sense it would be quite true.

Those who, without scruple, speak of motion, heat, and even force as substantial entities, should not object to the use of the terms "vital" or "nervous force," and should have no word of reproach or ridicule for the "*vertu soporifique*" of the physician's opium. I confess I see no reason to object to employing such abstractions as that last mentioned, or to employing the abstraction "vital force," any more than the others, which to-day are popular; and as to the "*vertu soporifique*," heat, force, &c., have they not all (like zoological genera, &c.) a real objective basis in the powers and qualities of individual bodies, but are they not all, at the same time, devoid of any existence whatever, as force, &c., other than ideal, in some mind?

One word now as to "Matter." I have placed that term at the head of this paper, because of the constant association in man's mind of matter with force, and of the difficulty of speaking of the latter without reference to the former, but "Force" is the subject which I propose specially for consideration.

As to "Matter," then, and its indestructibility, there appears to me to be a more or less similar danger of fallacy.

In order that a thing may safely be asserted as "incapable of destruction," it must first certainly be known *to be*.

Now "Matter," as that which is supposed to underlie every form of body, and as subsisting through every apparent change, can hardly, it seems to me, itself have the very power or qualities of any of the various bodies which come and go, and which it is supposed to underlie. It is thus the *materia prima* of the older philosophy, which *materia* has been not inaptly called a "*quasi nihil*." At the least, we have, so far as I am informed, no evidence whatever of the real existence of one definite kind of matter, different combinations or modifications of which form those various elementary substances now known to us, and I, for my part, can see no reason for believing that any such kind of matter ever did exist. If I am not mistaken, then, it can have (as far as our knowledge yet extends) but an ideal existence, and to speak of its "indestructibility" is both unreasonable and misleading, though it is perfectly true that existing bodies cannot be destroyed by us without thereby giving rise to other bodies quantitatively equivalent. Beyond this, reason, I submit, does not really allow us to go.

The position here taken up, as is manifest, presupposes "realism," but it can be maintained equally by idealists. For if "bodies with active powers" be but terms for certain "ideas," so "Matter and Force" can be but other terms for other "ideas," and if we may admit the validity of the latter, we may, it seems to me, equally admit the validity of the former.

If by "Force" and its "persistence" be meant "Cause," and if I am challenged to admit the "persistence of Cause" as a necessary article of my philosophical creed, I am equally ready to deny the real existence of the abstraction "Cause," equally with the existence of the abstractions "Matter and Force." But because I deny the existence of an abstraction, I by no means deny the existence of an objectively real persistent cause. Indeed, just as my reason seems to tell me that bodies with active powers exist—concrete existences, with very real and very special powers—so my reason seems to tell me that one concrete Cause exists, the most real of realities, the most powerful of powers—God.

Of late, we have had the conception "Force" again and again put

before us, with great solemnity, notably by Mr. Herbert Spencer, as the one great Being, the producer and sustainer of all that lives or is. In so far as this mode of speaking is an oblique and obscure assertion of the existence of God, all Theists will, of course, accept and regret it.

On the part of those, however, who decline to assert Theism, I cannot but regard as extremely unreasonable such calls upon our deepest reverence for what seems to me to be but a mere figment of the intellect and an abstraction of abstractions.

Nevertheless, as this paper is not intended to be theological, I do not wish to bring the question of Theism into present discussion.

The views here tentatively put forward are thought to repose simply upon ordinary evidence, and they are in no way based upon any theological preferences.

Once more, to prevent possible misconception, I repeat that if I deny the existence of "Matter and Force," I do not, of course, deny their existence as abstractions from really existing sensible concretes which exert real activities, just as "Society" and "the State" are abstracts of really existing human beings. But just as a misuse of these latter terms (especially the State) seems to me often to tend to political evils, and to the sacrifice of concrete realities (individual men and women) for the sake of a mere abstraction, so a misuse of the abstract terms "Matter and Force" seems to me to tend to serious intellectual evils.

My contention, then, is that care should be taken not so to speak of Force so as to lead to belief in its substantial existence as Force, and that the propriety of the phrases the "unity" and "transformation of Force" is fairly open to objection, as in reality irrational, and even as profoundly misleading; and the question I submit for discussion therefore is whether or not it is desirable to speak of the unity, communication, and transformation of Force, without qualification, in the mode which has now become so widely adopted and employed?

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Mr. Leslie Stephen

## BELIEF AND EVIDENCE.

DR. NEWMAN, in his "Grammar of Assent," quotes a passage from Locke, and proceeds to show cause against the doctrine which it enunciates. Locke says that there is "one unerring mark of" the love of truth for truth's sake,—namely, "the not entertaining any proposition with greater assurance than the proofs it is built on will warrant." Locke goes on to argue that if a man believes more strongly in a proposition than the evidence warrants, all the "surplusage of assurance" must be due to some other affection than the love of truth. Dr. Newman's criticism of Locke's doctrine brings out the cardinal point of the theory expounded in the "Grammar of Assent." This circumstance gives additional interest to Locke's statement, and illustrates its bearing upon some modern controversies. I do not propose, however, to discuss what may be called the personal question between Locke and Newman, to inquire whether Locke has stated his own view with complete accuracy, or been rightly understood or adequately answered by Dr. Newman. I will briefly examine the substantial merits of the question, simply observing that I agree with the view supported by Locke and impugned by Dr. Newman.

The theorem which I have thus to support is, that our belief in any proposition should be proportioned to the evidence upon which it rests. By this, it must of course be understood that each individual should proportion his belief to the evidence which is accessible to himself. I am bound, for example, to believe that the sun contains certain materials, because their existence in it is now proved by spectrum analysis. A generation ago, I should have been bound to have no opinion, because there was no evidence upon the subject. It is now reasonable to believe in the Copernican, as it was once reasonable to believe in the Ptolemaic system. A love of truth must, that is, often lead to error, because we are without the evidence which alone can establish the truth. But if we acted upon Locke's principle, and modified our views as the evidence demanded

NO. LXIX.]

a change, the race would continually approximate towards a larger body of definitively established truths.

### I.

I ought to believe a proposition which is proved to be true. That, I presume, may be taken for granted. It would, indeed, be a superfluous truism, but for the fact that there are other affections beside the love of truth which constantly lead to at least the unconscious breach of the rule. The rule is not the less stringent if the proposition proved is expressible in this form: "The chances that a certain proposition is true are so-and-so." Chance, in this phrase, implies a certain mixture of knowledge and ignorance. I know that one side of a dice must turn up; I know that there are six sides which on an average turn up equally often; I do not in the least know which of the sides will turn up next time. The formula, "it is 5 to 1 against the next throw being an ace," is a compendious mode of asserting these propositions. If, then, I deny the chances to be 5 to 1, I virtually deny a proposition which is proved to be true. I assert that I have knowledge when I have it not, or deny the established truth that the six sides turn up equally often. In either case, I tell a lie, or disbelieve a proposition which I know to be true. That is, I lie to others or to myself; and lying is immoral.

A large proportion of the beliefs to which we refer in daily life are of this type. I know that there are a thousand men in a given place, and I know, say, that one of them is blind. When I meet a man in the given place, my belief that he can see ought to be represented accurately by the formula,—It is 999 to one that he can see. Otherwise I believe what I know to be false,—viz., that the numbers of seeing and blind men are different from what they are, or that I have some knowledge in the particular case when, *ex hypothesi*, I have it not.

The burden of proof must therefore lie upon any one who asserts that my degree of belief should vary from the standard thus laid down. For I should clearly have to ask him the question,—If my belief ought to vary from the degree thus prescribed, in what way, and according to what laws, ought it to vary? And what do you mean by "ought?" If by "ought" you mean that such a variation is morally right, although not producing conformity of belief to

facts, you maintain the paradox that it is morally right to believe a falsehood. If (as seems more likely) you mean that the variation is right, because it will secure greater conformity of belief to facts, you are then virtually asserting that there is an extra-logical faculty for arriving at the truth. Now, as I should be inclined to describe reason as the faculty or faculties by which we arrive at the truth, this would, in my sense of the words, be a contradiction in terms. But at any rate, the question is entirely shifted. We are really invited to inquire not whether we ought to believe a proved proposition, but what are the faculties by which propositions are proved. Is there, for example, some super-sensuous faculty which presents us with intuitive truths, differing in kind from the faculties by which we discover the truths of mathematics or of the natural sciences? That is an interesting question but obviously irrelevant to Locke's theorem. If I have such a faculty, of course I am bound to use it; if not, not. In the first case, there will be another method of proof, but we must still demand proof.

## II.

I will now ask what are the objections to which the doctrine is liable.

In the first place, there is the general ground of scepticism in regard to all empirical truths. If we admit the validity of the distinction between necessary and contingent truths, it may be urged that there is an impassable gulf between the propositions susceptible of demonstrative evidence and those capable only of proofs resting upon experience. Thus the belief that  $2 + 2 = 4$  is said to be a necessary truth. The belief that all men die is an empirical truth. Yet we appear to believe the two propositions with equal intensity. Are we justified in such belief, and if not, are we forced to admit that, as a matter of fact, the certitude outruns the evidence in the latter case, and therefore that we have a case of Locke's "surplusage" of belief? This, I may remark in passing, is part of Dr. Newman's contention, and may, therefore, deserve notice.

The belief in such an empirical truth as the mortality of all men implies, in the first place, a belief in what is called the uniformity of Nature. How that proposition is to be logically established, or whether it can be logically established at all, is a question needless

to be discussed. In any case, the belief is assumed in every step of every argument about matters of fact. To deny it is to fall into absolute scepticism, for it is to cut out the very nerve of proof in every proposition drawn from experience. It is virtually admitted even in Dr. Newman's or Paley's argument for miracles. They defend miracles by denying them to be miraculous. The intervention of powerful invisible beings is as much a part of that regular stated order which Butler properly identifies with Nature as the action of electricity. It is rare with Paley, comparatively common with Dr. Newman, but not properly abnormal. If Elias was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire, and so escaped death, we may also count upon a chariot of fire, whenever precisely similar circumstances occur—unless, indeed, God is identified with the arbitrary; or in other words, the non-existent. We cannot stir a step in any kind of reasoning about facts without implying the universal postulate. To reason in such matters is to assume the uniformity of Nature.

Granting this uniformity, indeed, we may still say that no statement about facts is necessarily true. My perceptions are admittedly fallible. I may have made a mistake in any particular observation, and therefore in every particular observation. I may be under a permanent hallucination; the world, or my world, may be a dream, and the ultimate realities hidden from me or from every one. The objection, indeed, applies to necessary, as well as to contingent truths in all fruitful applications. Two and two make four, but I may always be mistaken in my counting. I may be seeing double. The supposed two things may be really one or three. If I add up a larger sum, the liability to error increases at every step. The process may be potentially infallible, each particular step may be self-evident, but I cannot be certain, when the whole chain of reasoning is not actually present to my mind, that an error may not have intruded somewhere. Such arguments tell against all belief equally, except against that which expresses the immediate testimony of consciousness, and therefore are either nugatory or tend to universal scepticism.

It is, however, clear, without following out such refinements, that we can in fact attain to a high degree of certainty in matters of fact. The process (which, I should add, is fully admitted by Dr. Newman)

rests upon the convergence of innumerable probabilities. Admit the fundamental postulate of uniformity, and the evidence in behalf of particular facts becomes indefinitely strong. We believe, for example, in human mortality, not only because A, B, and C have died, where A, B, and C stand for uncounted millions, but because the experiment of living has been tried under such an enormous variety of conditions, that the probability of death being the expression of some law implied in the constitution of all living beings, and not the result of an accidental condition, becomes indefinitely great. The physiologist may confirm our belief by explaining the vital processes, but can hardly render it more peremptory and intense.

Now, where is the "surplusage" of belief in this case? If it were only proved, say, that nine men in ten, or 999 in 1,000 died, it would surely be wrong to say absolutely that all men die. I venture to say that all men die, because to my mind the bare theoretical possibility of error in such a theorem is measured by a fraction so infinitesimal that my mind is unable to conceive it. It is like a fraction of which the numerator should represent a standard yard, and the denominator a line from here to the most distant fixed stars. We are justified in rejecting such possibilities, as the mathematician is justified in rejecting those infinitesimals which, as he says, are smaller than any assignable quantity. Once admit that there is any probability,—that is, any admixture of real knowledge in such cases, and this conclusion follows. You must be a complete sceptic, or you must admit the possibility of an indefinite approximation to certainty. I call the Atlantic pure salt water; I call it so not the less if you empty into it a tea-cupful of milk or the thousandth part of a tea-cupful. You may say that in the former case it is a thousand times purer than in the latter, and it actually is so, if purity is measured by the proportion between the whole and the intrusive element. But in both cases it is practically pure. The error cannot affect any conceivable proposition upon the subject. Impartial truth approaches to absolute and necessary truth as the curve approaches its asymptote. It will go on getting nearer to all eternity, but after a finite distance it is so near that no human eyes, however aided, can discover the difference. If it be necessary to modify Locke's proposition at all in virtue of such criticism, I should add to the proposition that we ought to believe what is proved, the proposition that

as the mind's eye is not one of Weller's extra-double-million-magnifying microscopes, we must be content to overlook the existence of doubts so infinitesimal as to be imperceptible. All language must be approximate, as all knowledge includes a certain element of inaccuracy. In speculative discussions we may say that such doubts exist, in the business of life they must be left out of account. I say that Mont Blanc is 15,760 feet high, without meaning that microscopic examination would not add some fraction of an inch to the account.

Secondly, it may be admitted that in conduct we have constantly to make assumptions resting upon much smaller evidence, and that such assumptions tend to pass into beliefs. I assume on evidence, far from demonstrative, and of course not comparable to the evidence which establishes general empirical truths, that I shall live for an hour, that this house will not fall to-night, that a given man is guilty of murder. In such cases (which are innumerable) I so far dismiss from my mind probabilities which are quite susceptible of being appreciated, that I refuse to allow them to influence my conduct. I know for a fact that I may be killed in any given railway journey; I know that my conviction of the guilt of Palmer rested upon fallible evidence; the chance of the contrary truth may be, perhaps, one millionth or one billionth. But I act as if it were absolutely non-existent; I take my ticket without an atom of fear, and hang Palmer without remorse. Moreover, such action undoubtedly tends to convince me of the truth of the assumption on which it proceeds. It requires a man of unusual candour, for example, to listen to any evidence which will upset his conviction of a supposed murderer's guilt. Ought I, therefore, not to act, lest acting should induce error?

In all cases but one the answer is given unhesitatingly. You must act, or life would come to a stop. You must resist the tendency which action has to convince you of the truth of the implied belief, because that tendency is illogical. "All men," says Young, "think all men mortal but themselves,"—that is, the interests of life tend to blind us to the constant possibility and the ultimate certainty of death. The moral is, that we should act as if we were to live the average time; but impress forcibly upon our minds that this is an assumption for practical purposes, not a dogma to be

entertained as a certainty. The single exception is in the case of religious truth. We are told to act as if the truth of a religion were demonstrated. That is a sound, practical piece of advice, if its truth is, in fact, probable. We are told, further, that by so acting we shall come to believe. That, again, is true; but according to all analogy, it indicates not an end to be sought, but a danger to be avoided. We ought carefully to impress upon our minds the possibility that we may be wrong, or else we shall be in danger of peremptorily rejecting evidence which ought to be admitted. We hang a criminal, but we ought to be ready to accept evidence of his innocence; and should, therefore, carefully remember that we are acting on presumption, not on proof. We act as if there were a Hell, but till its existence be actually demonstrated, we should keep our minds open to the admitted possibility that it may be a delusion, otherwise we transgress Locke's canon, and admit some other passion than the love of truth to guide our conclusions.

Thirdly, there is another confusion which perplexes the discussion. Amongst the evidences of a belief, we must reckon the beliefs of our neighbours. This is, in fact, the chief, or even the sole evidence for many beliefs. When Protestants attacked the authority of the Church, they often overlooked or implicitly denied this obvious truth. They spoke as though every cobbler were to judge for himself of the evidence as to the authenticity and authority of the Bible, and so far to place himself on a par with Bentley or Scaliger. It requires little argument to show the futility of such an assumption. By far the greater part of all our beliefs rests upon authority in the sense of evidence. Thus, I believe England to be an island. Why? Not because I have been round it myself, but simply on evidence, and especially upon this consideration, that it is impossible to account for the existence of the belief on any other hypothesis than the hypothesis of its truth. It could not have grown up and be so deeply interwoven with innumerable practical assumptions, unless it were true. I believe in the Newtonian doctrine for a similar reason. Not simply because honest men tell me it is true, but because of the convergence of opinion of all qualified experts; because of the intimate connection of this belief with the whole body of scientific beliefs; and because proofs are given every day that the assumption of its truth leads to accurate conclusions. The

measure of my certainty is the improbability that a false belief could have grown up under such conditions. Beliefs of this kind may often have stronger grounds than any belief resting on personal inference. I believe that there are 365 days in a year, not because I have counted them, but because the computation has been verified millions of times, and any mistake must have been detected.

It is more important to observe that the existence of a belief taken *simpliciter* is not a proof, nor always a presumption of its accuracy. It may be the very contrary. Since error exists, and lasts for centuries amongst many millions, the fact that a belief is widely spread is not sufficient. It is easy to imagine cases in which an increase of such evidence should diminish our belief. A man is declared by a presumably competent witness to have a bad character. That is, so far, a reason for believing his character to be bad. But now a dozen more witnesses come forward, who have no means of personal knowledge, and who are equally convinced of his wickedness. That is a presumption that the belief in his badness did not, even in the case of the competent observer, rest upon personal observation, but upon preconceived prejudice. If it should turn out that all the witnesses share some common ground of dislike, that they represent some hostile creed or interest, their hostilities may be explainable. It becomes evident, that is, that the belief is illogical; it is an expression of antipathy, not based upon evidence of facts. The belief being one of the relevant phenomena to be explained, I observe that its existence in cases where no evidence is obtainable diminishes the value in the case where evidence might be attainable. It demonstrates that another explanation of the belief is possible besides the explanation that it is true.

I see a remarkable chasm in a mountainous country,—and a native tells me a story, from which it has gained the name of “Lover’s Leap.” I believe him, for there is no improbability in the fact. But when I find the same or an analogous story connected with similar chasms in every mountainous region, I see that the probability of the story being created by the imaginative faculty is far greater than the probability of a similar series of incidents having occurred in every country. The same remark applies to innumerable stories of the same kind, and proves that the wide diffusion of a belief may be a sound reason for doubting its validity.

It follows, then, that the beliefs which have to be taken into account in determining our own should be weighed as well as counted. That intellectual contagion which leads us to accept the beliefs current around us without examination represents, again, a dangerous, not a logical process. It explains the cause of belief, and may thereby show the cause to be unreasonable. The more belief rests upon such illogical influences, the less its authority is regarded as testimony.

Thus, I should say that the evidence to which, by Locke's rule, our belief must be proportionate, should include the evidence derived from the beliefs of others, but with certain distinctions. In all causes whatever, the belief of other men is a relevant phenomenon. We have to account for its existence. But we must further ask whether the easiest mode of accounting for it is the assumption that it is a true belief. We may, perhaps, for this purpose, arrange beliefs in three classes.

First, there are many beliefs, *e.g.*, the belief of Englishmen that England is an island, which the believers are forced to verify constantly. They are compelled to test the accuracy of the belief daily, and in the most stringent way. If it were false, they could not help finding it out. In such cases the existence of a belief possesses an evidential authority which may be indistinguishable from the authority of demonstration.

Secondly, we have beliefs which admit of, but do not require verification. Such is the belief of Englishmen that part of the shore of Smith's Sound is an island. Some Englishmen may have tested the truth of the belief, but the verification is not so absolutely forced upon them. Such, again, are many beliefs of a sanitary kind. In every country people believe that temperance is good for health, but they also hold with equal confidence beliefs which are questionable or altogether unsound. An Italian believes that it is dangerous to go out at sunset, and his belief probably rests upon experience; but perhaps he also believes that the danger of malaria may be repelled by magic or by a relic, and in this case his belief is generated by fancy, instead of experience. From the bare fact of the existence of the belief we cannot be sure whether it has or has not been tested. It affords, therefore, a presumption of varying force, but no conclusive evidence

of its truth. Many such beliefs rest upon experience; others are dictated by fancy, that is, arbitrary or illogical associations of ideas. They survive, although actual experiment would have demonstrated their fallacy, and we must therefore regard the testimony as ambiguous.

Finally, we have a number of beliefs, including all superstitions, which do not admit of verification at all, or at most, of a sham verification. A savage believes in the powers of a rainmaker; that is a belief capable of verification, but which he has not, in fact, verified; a familiarity with other superstitions of a similar character enables us at once to set it down in a class of erroneous beliefs. This is a case in which the very prevalence of the belief shows that it cannot be true, for we see that it or its analogues flourish altogether independently of any verifiable observation. Or they are, perhaps, deductions from another set of beliefs, which are manifestly the work of the imaginative, not of the observing faculty. They record men's dreams, not their actual experiences. As they have been generated independently of experience, they survive without requiring its confirmation, and thus, except as they may include some little nucleus of observation, they have no claim whatever upon our belief. Belief has a tendency to generate belief, but that tendency is only logical where the original belief is known to be a verifiable and a verified belief; in other cases it represents a tendency contrary to logic, and, therefore, to be resisted by lovers of truth.

### III.

A remark or two may be added as to the application of these principles. The obvious and undeniable fact that we find men of equal ability holding diametrically opposite principles, shows that certitude is no test of objective truth. Does it follow that nobody ought to be certain, and that we should endeavour to preserve our minds in a position of neutral equilibrium, or that we ought arbitrarily to select one certitude, and put doubt peremptorily out of our minds? Neither conclusion is satisfactory, either from a moral or a logical point of view.

Morally speaking, our plain duty is candour; that is, we are bound to entertain freely all relevant evidence, including, of course, the evidence of the beliefs entertained by others, and especially by qualified

experts. But that process must often lead minds, differing in capacity and acquired knowledge to different conclusions. The most candid Tyrolese peasant will be a Catholic; the most candid Scotch peasant a Calvinist; and the most candid philosopher will be something else. Candour does not secure the individual from error, though it secures the progress of the race towards an ever closer approximation to truth. There is much truth probably in the worst religions, and the errors may be gradually eliminated. The moral duty which results is the duty of toleration and modesty. The fact that we are all fallible clearly involves the duty of looking without irritation upon those with whom we disagree and of speaking modestly ourselves. Dr. Newman says that a witness who has erroneously sworn to the identity of a prisoner, may, nevertheless, be equally confident when the right man is produced. Yet I should fancy that his first error would suggest the propriety of caution to himself, and would certainly cause bystanders to diminish their confidence in his word.

The fact, however, that I am fallible cannot make me doubt my own opinions. If I have acted rightly, I have already taken my fallibility into account when forming them. Knowing that I am often illogical and inaccurate, I have made allowance for my weakness before I reached a conclusion. When the conclusion is formed, I do not destroy its force by remembering once more that I am fallible. The general fact of my liability to error, the certainty that my opinions are somewhat wrong or, at least, inadequate, is an excellent reason for not pressing them dogmatically upon others, but not a reason for doubting doctrines reached with due caution and regard to my own weakness.

I, for example, may be peremptorily certain of the falsity of the Catholic theology. I do not mean certain that it includes no truth, or is not an approximation to the truth suitable to a certain stage of mental development. I merely mean that I reject whatever part of it comes into conflict with modern scientific beliefs, resting, as it seems to me, not only upon reasons which I have tested or devised, but upon an incomparably greater weight of rational authority. The fact that many men of greater ability than my own accept the system need not give me pause. Taken by itself, and supposing that evidence is to be counted, not weighed, it would be a relevant fact. If all that I know of a given belief were the fact that ten men of a

certain capacity believed it and nine of equal capacity disbelieved it, the fact would afford a certain small presumption of its truth. But when I go further, the presumption may disappear or be supplanted by a contrary conviction. If, for example, the belief of the ten is avowedly founded on an illogical process, and always vanishes under the free application of logic, it goes for nothing. It proves at most the existence of an instinct, not a reasoned belief. And if, again, the principle of arbitrary authority be admitted, if nine of the men believe simply because one believes, and that one has given no proofs of his knowledge, the effective evidence is simply the evidence of the one. The spread of a belief by blind contagion is a fact which so far deprives the phenomenon of any logical significance. The evidence of the multitude of believers is reduced to the evidence of the few who have accepted their creed on reasonable grounds. The value of the evidence varies inversely with the acceptance of the principle of authority.

The fact that a creed has prevailed widely and for long periods has, indeed, a certain value. It implies a kind of verifying process. It shows that the belief cannot include errors so great as to be incompatible with the standard of civilisation actually obtained; an argument, however, which applies to the whole body of genuine beliefs current in a case, and not to the ostensible creed or any special part of it, which may be, more or less, neutralised by the remainder. It shows further that the belief enables men to find a sufficient expression for their personal and social emotions during the period of its vitality. It has a poetical if not a scientific value. To analyse the relations of the two would be a task of extreme complexity. This only may be assumed briefly, that the charm of a given creed for the imagination and the emotions affords a presumption that it contains much truth; for a system which entirely misrepresented the relations between men and the world, could hardly enable them to express their deepest feelings. The logical error would be represented by emotional discord. On the other hand, the tendency of men to put their emotions in place of their feelings, to believe what is pleasant rather than what is true, shows the necessity of rigidly verifying every creed, especially if it is the product of a time when erroneous conceptions of the universe were notoriously prevalent. Inversely, the disappearance of any creed

in a progressive society, its failure to provide for emotional utterance or to satisfy intellectual demands, is a strong presumption that it contained an erroneous element. When the demand for verification is met, not by urging and stimulating the fullest possible application of every means of investigation, but by making belief prior to investigation a moral duty, the significance of such advice, however dexterously wrapped up, is sufficiently obvious. The fact that men who believe in a creed come to find it satisfactory, is not of much importance in a religious, though it might be in a scientific inquiry. To assume the truth of a doctrine and then to act upon it is often the only way of testing it. It is an excellent way, if it is certain—as it is certain in many scientific inquiries—that action based on an erroneous belief will make the error manifest. But no such result can be expected in many religious beliefs, inasmuch as in any hypothesis, false beliefs satisfy those who act upon them as well as true. Believe and act on the belief that paper is not inflammable, and you will soon find out your mistake. Believe and act on the belief that hell can be avoided by obeying the prescriptions of a priest, and you will never discover your mistake in this world. The impossibility of verification is illogically evaded by converting assumption into a dogmatic belief, and preaching it as a duty. The defect of proof is supplied by deliberately inculcating unreasonable intensity of belief, and declaring that assent ought to outrun evidence. Such beliefs may be satisfactory to those who hold them, but can be no evidence to outsiders.

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## NOTICE.

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to "Mr. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S.W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*

Lord Arthur Russell

## ON IDEAS AS A FORCE.

THE modern doctrine of the Persistence of Force, also called the Conservation of Energy, is now universally adopted by scientific men. It teaches that in Nature nothing can be lost, that one variety of force may pass into another, but that the ultimate fund of force remains for ever the same. The forces of Nature consist solely in transformations of dynamic into potential, and of potential into dynamic energy, and the sum of the potential and dynamic energies of the material universe is a constant quantity.

Force is the name we give to the unknown cause which makes matter move, or stops it from moving, when it is in motion. The materialist hypothesis teaches that there exists nothing but matter but that matter may, by moving from place to place, by undulating and vibrating, become conscious of its own existence, in some manner which has not yet been satisfactorily explained. But mere consciousness of the existence of matter cannot become a force which could possibly cause matter to move, because then the movement of matter would originate in something which is not matter, and which stands in no calculable relation to matter, and this would be an exception to the Persistence of Force, which is impossible. Every physical movement produces an equivalent amount of physical movement, and the passage from the subjective fact of consciousness into the objective fact of molecular motion is not conceivable, because each physical consequent is caused by a physical antecedent. No train of states of consciousness can be conceived to strike upon a train of physical movements and alter their direction, or all Nature would be chaos.

Yet, as Lord Amberley says, in his "Analysis of Belief," the conviction that we are "reservoirs of force," the sense of independent power to produce physical events in accordance with mental conceptions, is too deeply rooted in our human nature to be removed. The chemist in his laboratory who compels matter to answer his questions,

NO. LXX.]

the artist who arranges matter in accordance with his ideas of beauty, harmony, and symmetry, will not easily give up his conviction that he is exercising the independent power of mind over matter.

At a former meeting of this Society (January, 1873), I pointed out how Mr. Darwin himself assumes, among the forces which have been at work in modifying and transforming the physical world, a pure Idea, in the Platonic sense of the word,—namely, the preference of female birds for the Beautiful (“Descent of Man,” I., 64), and I believe that his hypothesis has received the assent of all the leading physiologists of our day.

Here is a difficulty which I would gladly hear more fully discussed and more precisely determined.

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Mr. Hutton

## ON THE RELATION OF EVIDENCE TO CONVICTION.

I UNDERSTAND Mr. Leslie Stephen's paper read before this Society to maintain that conviction should always be proportioned to evidence. Now I desire to give reasons for thinking that 'evidence' is only *one* legitimate ground for conviction, and that the sanest and soberest minds would suffer in sanity and sobriety if they endeavoured to clear their minds of all conviction not founded on evidence, and of all degrees of conviction not proportioned to the amount of evidence.

I mean by 'evidence' for a conviction, any consideration which, consciously grasped, tends to incline a fair judgment in the direction of that conviction; and I mean by conviction, that absolute inability to doubt a conclusion, that 'conquest' of the judgment by a particular belief, which may be due either to evidence, or to erroneous prejudice and prepossession, or to other causes, such, for example, as that 'pre-established harmony' between the nature of man and the external universe which, whether you ascribe it to intellectual, or moral, or spiritual instincts, or to 'natural selection,' or to other causes, is, I believe, as potent a source of conviction, and of the kind of conviction that leads to wise action, as evidence itself.

Now I do not understand Mr. Leslie Stephen to think that the position of the lower animals would be improved by their ceasing to assume the truth, if we may so speak, of anything answering in them to conviction, for which they have no evidence. I do not suppose that he would wish the pointer-puppies, for instance, on their first initiation into sport, to expostulate with themselves on the gross superstition which inclined them, on the perception of a particular odour, to point in the direction from which the source of the odour proceeded. Yet that "untaught ability" (as Mr. Bain defines 'instinct') to indicate a particular locality on nothing that could be called evidence, since they can have no experience teaching them to connect the subjective feeling of smell with the inference as to direction which

NO. LXXI.]

they draw, and help others to draw, from it, is probably accompanied in the dog by something as near to conviction that there is something in the direction indicated, which it is his function to point out, as a dog is capable of approaching to conviction at all. It is perfectly manifest, I suppose, that a sceptical chicken (if we could imagine one) which, feeling a strong inclination to chip the shell at the proper time for hatching, were to repel that inclination as entirely destitute of good evidence, would, like some human philosophers in like plight, perish of inanition, in the world to which its scepticism had needlessly confined it. Mr. Leslie Stephen, if I understand his paper aright, wishes to confine this duty of reducing our convictions, so far as may be possible, to the measure and proportions of the evidence we can find for them, to men alone; but in the case of mature men at least, I understand him to think it a universal duty, and that he is supported in that opinion by many of the ablest and most accomplished members of our Society. True, Mr. Stephen admits some qualifications to this duty. He admits, I think, that you are often right in acting on evidence which you have once had before you, have held to be satisfactory, and have forgotten, but the drift of which you distinctly remember; and you may act on the evidence which others have examined, and which you have never examined yourself at all, so long as you take as much pains as is in your power to convince yourself that they are the best-informed and most candid judges to be found. But in all these cases, you should diminish your confidence just in proportion to the danger that the evidence you once thought sufficient might now, if re-examined by new lights, seem to you insufficient; or that the authority you now deem the best might turn out to be far from the best, or even though the best, very insufficient for intellectual guidance. These qualifications are obviously just, and I mention them only to show in how extremely doubtful a condition of judgment we ought on this theory always to be on almost all truths.

For consider, first, that all attestation depends upon memory, and that without an *unevidenced* belief in the infallibility of at least a good many acts of memory, most evidence itself would become worthless. Dr. Ward has worked this out before our Society in a paper of great force contributed now many years ago. Hardly one

man in a thousand has before his mind's eye at the moment the mathematical evidence for the truth of the multiplication-table. For the ordinary purposes of life, my confidence that  $6 \times 9 = 54$ , is my confidence in the infallibility of my own memory that so it is. Of course, a minute's reflection will show me that six nines are more by four units than five tens; but I have not usually time for so much reflection, and if I had, I should not be a bit surer of it after working out the demonstration than I was before. But if I do not misunderstand the drift of Mr. Stephen's paper, I have no right to this belief in the infallibility of my own memory, and ought to be decidedly more certain after I receive the full evidence, than I was before on the mere strength of that flash of the mind which assured me that I was remembering rightly. So when, after a fruitless search for a familiar word or name, I light upon it, and say with absolute certainty,—That's it,—a certainty for which I can produce no evidence outside the positive asseveration of my own memory,—I ought, if I understand Mr. Stephen aright, to take myself to task for my unevincenced confidence, and deduct something even from my general self-confidence on account of this grossly unreasonable certainty. And as, of course, all mere testimony depends on such acts of memory, one of the chief evidences of our human predisposition to insanity, ought to be the general confidence of ordinary memories.

Still more, of course, in instances of exceptional calculating-power, like Zerah Colburn's, who found the cube root of 268,336,165, almost instantaneously,—and indeed, did many calculations much more wonderful,—but who, “when interrogated as to the method by which he obtained these results,” “constantly declared that he did not know *how* the answers came into his mind,” the lad's belief in his own estimates was—at all events, till they had been repeatedly verified by the usual calculations—on Mr. Stephen's theory of belief, a pure superstition. Yet his case must have been very unlike that of most other remarkable arithmeticians if he were not quite as certain of his results before any one had taken the trouble to test his accuracy, as he was after long experience proved him to be an accurate calculator. Clearly, in the sense in which I have been using the word, Colburn had no evidence at first that his process was calculation at all, and in common reason ought, if Mr. Stephen be right,

to have acquired only very slowly indeed a certain provisional belief in his own *aperçus* of the answers to arithmetical questions.

Now, what I maintain, in opposition to Mr. Stephen, is, that in all spheres of human life, beginning with memory and ascending to the highest departments of human duty and feeling, there are trustworthy as well as untrustworthy sources of conviction which are not founded on "evidence," though many of them are more or less verifiable by evidence, and that no greater calamity could happen to human beings than to discard all such sources of conviction, even though, as of course would be the case, in rejecting the trustworthy they would reject also a great many thoroughly untrustworthy convictions at the same time.

Take, first, the case of moral conviction. Does any one suppose for a moment that a child ought to have 'evidence' in the sense in which I have used the word (*i.e.*, a clear grasp of considerations tending to incline a fair judgment in the direction of that conviction) of the evil of impure thoughts, before yielding to the conviction that they are evil? On the contrary, I maintain that the less a child (or a man) weighs arguments against yielding to impure thoughts, the sounder his conviction on the subject will be, and the better he will be. Explain it how you will,—whether from the Darwinian point of view of the storage of past experience till it takes the form of a new instinct, an explanation which does not, I think, cover all the facts, or from the intuitional point of view, or any other,—nothing is more certain than that a human being who begins life on a moral platform in which he assumes, as fixed data, from the earliest dawn of conscience, principles which formulate the best lessons of the unhappy and happy experience of others, has a vast moral advantage over his fellow-creatures, the extent of which it is hard to exaggerate. But what I want to point out is that such a child and man receive without evidence at all, as part of the data of life, convictions which Mr. Stephen tells us should never be firmer than the amount of evidence which goes to support them. Perhaps he will say that the evidence exists, though not in the breast of the individual who uses it, for such primary moral truths as the evil of impurity of thought. Well, but if the evidence does not exist in his breast, for him it does not exist at all. He has taken it on trust. He has not inquired. He believes, from the earliest dawn of con-

science, that the injunction 'Resist impure thoughts' carried its own authority with it. He wanted no reason. Indeed he would not listen to reason. Reason on such a subject was itself a disloyalty to an authority higher than reason. And just as in relation to mathematical perceptions, though all men have unreasoned axioms from which they start, some men, like Zerah Colburn, have much higher and more complex unreasoned insights than others, so in moral issues, while all of us have unreasoned axioms to start from, some start from so high a platform of complex moral truth as to become the teachers and leaders of their race.

Again, on æsthetic subjects, I cannot conceive any one saying that conviction should be strictly proportioned to evidence. The poet or artist is so by virtue of seeing, without evidence, and by virtue of the glance of his own higher faculty, what it takes ordinary men much labour, even with such help, to discern. Can we imagine a "conviction founded on evidence" that the higher flights of imaginative genius will take the human spirit by storm? When Shakespeare makes Cleopatra say over the corpse of Antony what probably no woman in real grief ever did or would say, that "there is nothing left remarkable beneath the visiting moon," doubtless he had the strongest conviction that it would go right home to the imagination of men, and somehow paint for them that scene of regal passion and despair as nothing which woman's lips ever uttered could have painted it. And when Wordsworth said to the girl who had climbed Helvellyn:—

"Potent was the spell that bound thee,  
Not unwilling to obey,  
For blue Æther's arms flung round thee  
Stilled the pantings of dismay,"

he had, I am quite sure, the deepest conviction that that very bold metaphor went to the heart of the feeling poured into the soul by the blue air on a mountain-top, and would recall that feeling to thousands of minds from which it had half vanished. But assuredly neither of these convictions either were or could have been founded on evidence at all. They were founded on the *aperçu* of an in-born faculty. And though, of course, convictions of this kind are of no importance in relation to the formation of character or opinion, they illustrate none the less on that account how much all con-

victions, in the case of a being of complex nature like man, depend on that fine adjustment of his nature to the external universe which summarises, as it were, in brief, those infinite accumulations of the 'evidence' of past events, on which alone, if you conceive the same structure built up through conscious intellectual processes, the same results could be arrived at.

Now, of course I do not mean to deny,—on the contrary, strongly to assert,—that very many of our customary starting-points in life are false and vicious unreasoned assumptions, as well as true and salutary unreasoned assumptions, and that so far as the former can be refuted by evidence, they ought to be. But even in relation to the false convictions which go on no evidence, but which are often caught up in the network of some imperious affection, I think it will be found to be true that it is quite as often not by intellectual evidence, but rather by the displacing influence of some larger and wider affection, that they are undermined and removed. Take the false view that unbelievers in Christianity are usually bad men,—in which so many grow up. Is that prejudice oftenest displaced by an array of evidence to prove the proposition false, or by some sudden glimpse of the self-denial and refined sadness of a sceptic in whose countenance you read, as in a book, that

“The intellectual power through words and things  
Goes sounding on its dim and perilous way,”

—a countenance on which you find stamped the self-denial needed to weigh and ponder and compare and suffer, and from the study of which, in a word, you jump, by the most illegitimate reasoning process imaginable, to an assumption widely divergent from that from which you have hitherto started in thought?

My own belief—and one founded, I think, on large evidence—is, that in almost every sphere of human nature, we start from unevidenced convictions which are as much part of the very moral stock-in-trade and capital of such a race as ours, as the pecuniary savings of one generation are of the pecuniary capital of the next; that it would be the greatest possible calamity if there were suddenly such a shrinkage in human conviction as would conform the strength of all our convictions to the evidence which was or ever had been in the possession of those who hold them; that amongst these convictions are of course many false ones, as well as many true ones, and that

evidence is very useful in unsettling the false ones, though by no means the only, hardly, perhaps, the most potent, force at our service for that work; and that there is at all events a great amount of fair presumption against the attempt to weaken the foundations of human society by requiring men to hold their ultimate moral convictions in exact proportion to evidence alone, if for no other reason, still for this, that the effect of ages of belief surely ought to be to generate belief indefinitely stronger than any evidence the individual can command.

The only reply I can conceive to this argument is that 'evidence' does not cease to be evidence when it has been ingrained by centuries of experience into the very form and structure of human life. But then that reply assumes that the individual should not hold his opinion in proportion to the evidence which he himself has weighed, but in proportion to something indefinitely stronger,—the impulse which has come down to him to believe in full what his fathers only learned inch by inch to believe. And next, it is far from likely that the theory of hereditary accumulation of tendency, represents anything like the whole explanation of ultimate human beliefs, though it probably represents a part of it. Indeed, when once you have admitted that it is quite legitimate to believe with a strength in proportion to no evidence that is or ever has been in your own possession, you have no means at all of saying how much of that certainty of belief really belongs to the evidence which your ancestors had previously accumulated, and how much may be due merely to new faculty, or new intuition, or new inspiration, or to that new inpouring of spiritual life into our race which, whatever its origin,—and I hold it, of course, to be divine,—does at all events flow in periodic tides, so far as human judgment is competent to pronounce.

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Huxley, Hutton

Bishop of Gloucester

Ruskin,

Ward, Shadworth Hodgson

Misart.

Tyndall. Carpenter

Self.



W. John Morley

## VARIOUS DEFINITIONS OF "MATERIALISM."

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As "Materialism" is a word of such constant recurrence in modern controversies, metaphysical, ethical, and even political, it may perhaps be useful to recall in a short way one or two of the various theories to which the word has been attached. What, to begin with, are the questions to which Materialism, however we may agree to define it, is one way of giving an answer? These questions may be variously stated, and definition or modification of Materialism depends on the side from which a thinker approaches such a group of questions. How ought we to think of the relation between two sets or classes of events into which language divides human experience? One class of these events, we are accustomed to call mental or subjective; the other, material, physical, or objective. One constitutes an inner, the other an outer world. Is there a relation of cause and effect between these two great groups of phenomena? Or do the inner events form one chain of linked experiences, and the outer events another and an independent chain? Or are our apprehensions, thoughts, feelings, volitions, and all the other events that we classify as mental, derived from the events that we arrange as material or physical? With a slight difference of position, we may put the questions into another form, as follows:—Does life result from the action of a power external to matter and different from matter, or is it the natural consequence of the very existence of matter in an organised state? Does the machine hold a mechanist imprisoned within it, or does it work because its construction is such that it must work? Once more and finally, we may define the sphere of the controversy thus:—Does Matter suffice for all the phenomena, or is there evidence of an immaterial Entity.

The earliest of the modifications of Materialism was in some sense the most comprehensive; it did not reduce the controversy to one of human psychology, but sought a complete philosophy of Nature.

NO. LXXII.]

Whether as Atomists, Hylopathians, or whatever else, its professors agreed in thinking that they had found not merely a theory of the mental operations of mankind, but a theory of the activity of the universe as a whole, and a key to the entire range of natural phenomena. Their hypothesis was not merely an answer to a question about the nature of Thought and Knowledge, but an explanation of the method of Creation. In its original forms only a theory of the physical constitution of matter, it grew into a system covering both Existence and Thought, and reducing all that the mind can know or feel, along with the mind itself, into a single unity, namely, atoms of matter moving in space. There is no division between inner and outer world, so far as source and constitution go; the soul or spirit is as much composed of atoms as the other elements of the living body, though the atoms that compose the soul are more infinitesimally small and more mobile than those which compose the organs and members. They are of the nature of the atoms that compose the vanishing fragrance of wine or a flower. The motions of the body are due to material changes, and so are those of the soul,—those of the soul following the conditions of its own matter, which is, however, one in nature and composition with the ingredients of the rest of the universe.

This is, in some respects, a crude conception enough, but it has the great mark of the most thorough-going modern Materialism,—it associates mind with the stream of cosmic agents, and identifies it as one of them.

The advance of philosophy in this direction was peremptorily checked by the new religion, which, so far as it can be expressed in terms of philosophy, rested entirely on the assumption of two occult forces, independent of matter and superior to it, namely, an omnipotent creative Spirit governing the material universe as a whole, and a small controlling Spirit existing within the material structure of each individual man. The old question was not again answered by a Materialist scheme for many centuries. A singular approach to such a scheme was made by the great thinker who is vulgarly known only as the originator of philosophies of Spiritualism. Yet the biological automatism of Descartes was the most decisive and

systematic Materialistic speculation between Lucretius and the little group of French Materialists in the eighteenth century. Descartes, no doubt, worked out a spiritualistic theory of Mind and a God, but he did this on its own lines and within its own sphere. In the physical sphere, his doctrine really involved the self-evolution of the planets, of water and earth, and the necessity, by its conditions, of all the properties and activities of matter. If the animal kingdom had stopped with the apes, and man had been left out, Descartes might have been counted a Materialist in the region of organised, as of unorganised matter.

In what sense were Hartley and Priestley Materialists? Certainly not in the sense in which Lucretius was a Materialist, or Holbach, or Büchner. They did not ask the question as a whole, but dealt only with the method of mental phenomena. Their doctrine, as every one knows, was that sensations which are the source of ideas are due to vibrations; mental phenomena are vibrations perceived; and the faculty of perception, whether in brute or man, is the product of bodily perception. How little this theory was connected with a Materialistic conception of the universe, how little it sprang from any search for a great synthetic unity—a mark of consistent and systematic Materialism, as of Pantheism, Subjective Idealism, &c.—may be seen from the fact that Priestley not only believed in a God existing apart from matter, but that God will in due time awake the dead and miraculously plant souls in them. It is worth remarking, as against those who contend that to trace mental phenomena to material sources will destroy pure psychology, or the study of the relations of mental phenomena among themselves, that Hartley was the first person to make the psychological law of the Association of Ideas into the powerful instrument that we know. In any case, whatever be the relation between mental and nervous activities, there will have to be a direct observation of the one, parallel with the observation of the other, and also an analysis and arrangement of the mental activities apart from their physical conditions.

It was the fashion during the eighteenth century to throw the problem of Materialism into the famous questions,—Does Matter think?

And how can mind be the cause of motion in matter? Of course, nothing fruitful came of a question stated in this form. The great scheme—the one definite, comprehensive, unfaltering exposition of Materialism in literature since Lucretius, was that of Holbach's "System of Nature." Instead of chopping verbal logic on the abstract dispute whether matter can think and how it can think, he approached the universe as a concrete whole, and his survey landed him in the central position that the relations between our organs and the world outside of theory are due to motion. Motion is a spontaneous energy of matter, one of its inherent qualities. This incessant motion leads to the combination among one another of analogous and similar molecules in an immense variety of forms, and from this variety of combination comes a corresponding diversity in ways of existing and acting. There is no break in the great chain of being, whether organic or inorganic. There is no freedom and no disorder. All phenomena are necessary, and all follow constant laws. Man is as much a link forged into this vast chain as any other portion of matter. All that he feels or does is an effect of energies that are common to him with the other beings known to us. The invention of Mind as a hypothetical substance, explaining the operations of matter—explaining the unknown by something more unknown,—is like the belief of the Red Indians that it was Spirits who exploded gunpowder. Matter existing from all eternity, and possessing the quality of motion,—that is the universe in which man is a transitory combination of elementary ingredients. This is Materialism in its most naked expression.

Comte has imposed a sense of his own upon the word "Materialism." He describes it as a tendency to degrade the higher subjects of thought by confounding them with the lower; as the error of importing into a more complex science the ideas and methods that belong to the simpler and less complex; as the mistake of explaining phenomena that have more special and particular laws of their own by the aid of laws connecting phenomena of greater generality. "To a philosophic eye," he says, "there is Materialism in the common tendency of mathematicians to absorb geometry or mechanics into the calculus, as well as in the more evident encroachments of mathematics upon physics, of physics upon chemistry, of chemistry

upon biology, or lastly, in the tendency of biologists to look on sociology as a mere corollary of their own science." I need not inquire how far all these alleged encroachments are illegitimate, nor how far they are really taking place in modern science. The fallacy may be extremely important, and may need to be called by a name of its own. All that I have to point out is that Comte takes away, for the purpose of describing an error in Logic or Method, a term which has been hitherto used, and which can now less than ever be spared, to describe a System, a Doctrine, the products of a method. There is an obvious inconvenience in limiting the name of a definite group of dogmatic and substantial propositions to the process by which you suppose them to have been reached. Spiritualism is a name for one set of answers to certain questions; we must have a name for the contradictories of these answers in their substance, and apart from their logic. This is a philosophical necessity, and both use and propriety have settled that the name for the opposite of Spiritualism, as a great philosophy of nature, is Materialism, a rival philosophy of nature.

The most modern way of stating the propositions of Materialism brings us round again, though with a very different interpretation, to the system of Cosmic Unity with which the philosophers of the old world had started. The rapid scientific advance of the present generation, whether in physics, chemistry, or biology, has all tended in an amazing degree to the establishment of a doctrine about matter and force which supplies what many think an inexpugnable, and all must think a very plausible, basis for a philosophy which with Lucretius rested on arbitrary physical assumptions, and with Holbach sprang rather from analogy and inference than from any attempt at direct demonstration. The modern propositions I venture to borrow from an eminent member of this Society:—"All states of consciousness are immediately caused by molecular changes of the brain-substance. . . . There is no proof that any state of consciousness is the cause of change in the motion of the matter of the organism. . . . Our mental conditions are simply the symbols in consciousness of the changes which take place automatically in the organism. . . . The feeling we call volition is not the cause of a voluntary act, but the symbol of that state of the brain which is the immediate cause

of the act. We are conscious automata, endowed with free-will in the only intelligible sense of that much-abused term, inasmuch as in many respects we are able to do as we like,—but none the less parts of the great series of causes and effects which, in unbroken continuity, comprises that which is, and has been, and shall be—the sum of existence."

The little clause about Free-will is not, I think, quite consistent either with the company into which it has intruded its old-fashioned presence, or with true cast-iron Materialism. For my own part, for instance, I do not believe that I am in the least able, in any respect whatever, great or small, or at any moment of my life, to do what I like. If that little clause, however, be dropped out, these clear sentences seem to me to contain the modern definition of Materialism. Yet I must not fail to add that the author disclaims a place among Materialistic philosophers, because, he says, he is "utterly incapable of conceiving the existence of matter, if there is no mind in which to picture that existence." But the denial that there is mind is not of the essence of Materialism; that essence is the assertion that mind is an energy of matter. Of course, the Materialist denies Mind as an entity, as an occult force, as a *Noumenon*, as vital spirits, or animal spirits, or anything else capable of existing separate from Matter, or capable of being infused into another form without; but not even the author of "*L'Homme Machine*" himself denies that there are manifestations and faculties of matter which are not themselves matter, any more than music is itself a grand piano. The controversy has never turned, so far as I can discover, on the existence of consciousness, with all its modes and laws, but on its source and connections.

Another member of this Society has propounded, with great point and vigour, a difficulty as against Materialism, to which I shall refer, not for the purpose of disputing it on its merits, but only as illustrating with precision what is the true scope of the Materialist answer to the given questions. "What is the causal connection, if any," Professor Tyndall asks, "between the objective and the subjective, between molecular motions and states of consciousness? It is no explanation to say that the objective and subjective effects are two sides of one and the same phenomenon.

Why should the phenomenon have two sides? There is the core of the difficulty. There are plenty of molecular motions which do not exhibit this two-sidedness. Why should the molecular motion of the brain be yoked to this mysterious companion,—consciousness?"

Of the scientific interest of this question there can be no doubt, but philosophic Materialism may rest on the fact as it is,—assuming it to be a fact—that molecular motions and states of consciousness are related as invariable antecedents and consequents. Philosophically, I am not bound to go behind that fact in order to find a base for a Materialistic theory of the universe, though scientifically I may be curious as to whether we shall be able some day to penetrate one step further into the relations between mental and material phenomena. Nobody says that it is a difficulty in the way of gravitation that we cannot explain the mechanism of the process, cannot tell why nor how (qualitatively) bodies attract one another. There have been a score of hypotheses in answer to the question, but I believe that those who are competent judges—which I have unfortunately no pretension to be—admit that the explanation of the cause of gravitation is not to be found in any of them. The importance of gravitation as a quantitative law is wholly unaffected by this, and so is its influence on men's conceptions of Nature. I have no quarrel with the position that "the value of the efforts to answer an old-standing question is not to be measured by the prospect they afford us of ultimately obtaining a solution, but by their effect in stimulating men to a thorough investigation of nature." And of course I fully concede the right of the physicist to ask the question,—How and why molecular changes accompany states of consciousness? The answer may prove to be the most interesting in the history of science. But meanwhile, Materialism, as a philosophic system, for the present stands independent of any more piercing analysis of the fixed relations between bodily and mental phenomena than we already have.

It is needless here to point out that Materialism, as a theory of the relations between an inner and an outer world, has been associated with the most widely divergent creeds of morality, from the noble exaltation of Lucretius to the dissoluteness of La Mettrie. And again, even in its most mechanical and thorough-going form, it seems not to

be logically incompatible with a theistic hypothesis of the universe. For who can affirm that it might not please a nameless Power of unknowable attributes to ordain one kind of fabric as readily as any other? If the universe be the product of matter self-evolved in the process of spontaneous motion, at least that does not prove that there is not a Power that might have prevented such an interruption of the repose of Chaos. It would, however, be admitted that the existence or non-existence of a remote and inscrutable First Cause, active or permissive, would be a question without serious interest to the Materialist, either speculatively or practically, though it might be kept alive on Mr. Mill's principle of edifying and stimulating the imagination. It could not interest the Materialist speculatively, first, because he believes himself able to explain all the phenomena without recourse to such a hypothesis, and its adoption would be gratuitous and superfluous; second, because he is bound to regard it as a question beyond the reach of human faculty. Next, it would not interest him practically, because if those mental manifestations which are called the Soul, or the Mind, or Consciousness, are only energies of Matter specifically organised, and therefore come to a stop with the dissolution and transformation of that specific organism, then it can in no way affect conduct, or the hopes, aims, aspirations, that are the springs of conduct, whether or not I leave behind me in infinite space a mysterious Shadow, formless, sombre, a gigantic Something, an immeasurable Nothing.

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TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 1878,  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.]

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[PRIVATE.]

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W. Sidgwick

## THE RELATION OF PSYCHOLOGY TO METAPHYSICS AND ETHICS.

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THE question of the origin and primitive condition of the Mind, the "innateness" or derivedness of its ideas or faculties, has occupied a considerable space in modern European philosophy; and it has been commonly supposed that its solution, one way or another, has an important bearing on the fundamental problems of metaphysics and ethics. It is in this latter relation that I propose to consider the question this evening. I am disposed to deny that "Psychogony"<sup>1</sup>—so far as it admits of being scientifically investigated—has anything like the fundamental importance that has commonly been attributed to it. I do not mean to say that it has not very considerable interest, both speculative and practical; the history of Mind should, no doubt, be studied as much as, or more than, any other history, and the art of education and the important branch of Ethics which relates to self-culture must be to a great extent based upon it; but it belongs rather to Psychology regarded as a special science, than to the supreme, architectonic science which we call Philosophy. Nor, again, do I mean to assert that there is no conceivable psychogonical knowledge which would have profound philosophical importance. I quite think that if we could prove that minds were directly created at or before birth, or had existed during eternity *a parte ante*, and if we could ascertain *what* it was that had had this eternal existence or transcendental origin, our metaphysics and ethics would take an entirely new start. I only deny that any such result is likely to be produced by any conclusions as to the origin of mind or mental attributes that we can reasonably suppose to be scientifically attainable.

Metaphysical study (as the word is commonly used) has two divisions or aspects, an ontological and a logical one; accordingly

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<sup>1</sup> The word is borrowed from Mr. G. H. Lewes.

we may distinguish two fundamental metaphysical questions upon which psychogonical investigations have been thought to bear,—(1) the ontological question as to the relation of Mind to Matter; and (2) the logical question of the validity of axioms, or universal truths intuitively apprehended. It may be observed that this second question, at the present time, is most generally interesting, on account of its relation to the first. In an earlier stage of physical science, the issue between the *a priori* and “empirical” views of the evidence of axioms was, or seemed to be, practically important for the determination of scientific method. Men were really not agreed as to how they should go about to acquire knowledge of physical laws. But this importance is now evanescent, at least as regards the established and dignified sciences that have professors, manuals, &c. The interest taken (*e.g.*) in discussing the grounds of our belief in the laws of motion, depends on the light which the discussion is expected to throw on the general constitution of the mind that somehow has come to know these general facts of the material world. We may almost say, that whatever may be the special arena selected for single combat between Idealism and Sensationalism or Empiricism, the important issue at stake is commonly thought to be the degree of the dependence of mind on matter. Whatever a philosopher may mean by Idealism, common-sense means by it the systematic establishment of the popular conviction that a man is something more than his body.

Let us ask, then,—What is the bearing of the inquiry into the origin of mind (as a whole or in part) on the question of the connection between Mind and Matter?

We must first observe that this connection is *primâ facie* of two quite distinct kinds:—(1) Physiology leads us to conclude that movements of particles of organised matter are causes or universal concomitants of all mental processes; while (2) all matter is the object of the mental process which we call cognition, and so regarded, admits of being logically analysed into a number of distinct qualities, related in a complex way to the mental phenomena which we call sensations. Though these two relations appear to be inextricably confounded in some theories of perception, they are obviously easy to distinguish; *e.g.*, in any act of perception the matter that is percept or object is commonly outside the organism of the per-

ipient, and is in any case quite distinct from the nerve-matter whose movements immediately precede or accompany the mental perception. It is with the second of these two relations, the relation of mind to matter as cognising subject to cognised object, that the most difficult and perhaps the most important branch of metaphysics is concerned; but it need not, I think, occupy our attention at present. For granted that the Idealist is right in holding that Matter, *quâ* object, is capable of being analysed into mental elements, or at least is inconceivable apart from mind; still even he does not maintain that it is his particular mind, or that of any other individual, which is thus inseparably connected with the whole physical universe, and it is with the origin of individual minds that scientific psychogony attempts to deal.

Let us, then, confine ourselves to the connection of individual minds with organised matter. Here the fundamental question, of course, is,—Does the individual mind result from a certain organisation of an individual organism, and terminate when the organisation is destroyed? It is on this point that, in the view of common-sense, almost the whole interest of metaphysics is concentrated; it is the metaphysician's "Yes," or "No," or "Not proven," in answer to this question, which is, for the plain man, "*der langen Rede kurzer Sinn.*"

In order to ascertain how far psychogony throws any light on this question, let us briefly survey the chief considerations that incline us to answer it in the affirmative or the negative. On the latter side we have (1) probability amounting to moral certainty, that whenever any embodied mind has experienced a change, a certain material change has preceded; (2) absence of any satisfactory evidence of the existence of minds not embodied; (3) the establishment of a vast and complex, though incomplete, correspondence between particular kinds or qualities of mental processes and particular organic actions or conditions. On the former side we have the disparity of physical and psychical phenomena, and the apparent arbitrariness of the connection between the two. We do not in the least see *why* movements of nerve-particles should produce feelings, and can quite easily conceive the whole series of states which compose our consciousness continuing without these physical antecedents or concomitants; hence it is

inferred that the latter cannot be the real causes of the former. The force of this argument, such as it is, is perhaps somewhat strengthened by the occultness of the connection. We have no means of observing or definitely inferring the kind of motions of matter that immediately precede mental phenomena. The ethical arguments drawn from the need of a future state to realise justice or to establish the required connection between virtue and happiness, and the vaguer reasoning based on the desires and expectations of continued existence commonly found among men, do not necessarily tend to prove that this existence will be independent of a corporeal organism; but probably with all persons who allow them any weight they operate in favour of this conclusion.

How far, then, are these arguments affected by any psychogonical theories that can be brought to the test of experience? Let us grant all, or more than all, that any confirmed psychogonist can possibly demand. Let us suppose that we have ascertained approximately the order in which each species of mental phenomena normally makes its appearance in the development, that we have fixed the historical place of sensations of each kind, of the different grades of volition, of the varying phases of emotion from the coarsest to the most refined, and of all the fundamental notions or elementary judgments of thought, and that we can state in each case the important psychical and physical antecedents. I cannot perceive that the force either of the argument from the actual closeness and universality of the connection between psychical and physical fact, and the modifying influence exercised by the body on the mind, or of the opposite argument from the arbitrariness, occultness, and conceivable dissolubility of the connection, will be affected to any extent worth considering. If, however, we suppose the process of change thus traced to be perfectly gradual and continuous, another argument emerges when we carry the process back until mind vanishes altogether, which we may call the argument from continuity. It is held that if the highest, most mental phenomena of organised beings are connected by an unbroken series of infinitesimal differences with the lowest (to which we should commonly not apply the term "mental" or "psychical" at all), and even with the phenomena of inorganic matter, there is no point at which the existence of mind, as an independent entity, can be conceived to begin. Probably much of the

alarm caused to anti-materialists by the zoological theories of Evolution and Natural Selection has been due to the supposed force of this argument. It has been thought that mind could not be independent of matter, if man was gradually developed out of a monkey, and the monkey out of a polyp, and so on. I may, perhaps, remark parenthetically that this particular alarm seems unfounded, as the force of the argument, such as it is, seems sufficiently constituted by the undeniable fact that each individual man has been gradually developed out of a portion of his parent's frame, of which the manner of existence was not more psychical than the polyp's; it cannot, therefore, matter much whether or not his race has gone through a similar course of change. But the whole argument from continuity against the independence of mind appears to me unsound,—that is, I can see no particular difficulty in believing a new thing to have come into existence gradually. It is generally admitted that any mind,—meaning merely mind as empirically cognisable, a stream of thoughts, emotions, and volitions,—is a new fact, *i.e.*, that it is totally unlike whatever physical facts antecede or accompany it, and that it is not composed of pre-existent thoughts, emotions, &c., rearranged in new relations. If, then, the beginning in time of this new fact has to be accepted, I do not see that a perfectly gradual beginning is harder to accept than an abrupt one; indeed, I should rather say it was easier. There is no doubt a certain difficulty in imaginatively tracing a thing to its origin, if that has to be reached through an infinite series of indefinitely small changes; but this is only Zeno's old puzzle as to Achilles catching the tortoise, turned round and applied to the beginning instead of the end of a finite quantity of infinitesimally-divisible change; and we have long agreed not to trouble ourselves about this ancient paradox.

I have spoken so far of mind considered as a whole (or of mental phenomena taken generally); I find, however, that some persons consider it fundamentally important in reference to this question to distinguish between different kinds of mental fact. They are prepared to admit that the kind of fact, what we distinguish as feelings, or sensations, or sense-perceptions, may have been completely caused by movements of organic matter; but to maintain that this cannot be the case with other parts of our psychical experience, such as the cognition of the unity, permanence, identity of the conscious self, or the

axioms of arithmetic or geometry, or perhaps abstract notions generally, &c. Much controversy has been carried on about these distinctions, and many persons still seem rather concerned to maintain that "ideas," "primitive judgments," and so forth, cannot be derived from sensations, than that sensations cannot be derived from processes of organic matter. This is surely straining at the gnat, while allowing the camel free entrance. Whatever unlikeness may exist between different species of mental phenomena, it sinks into insignificance when compared with the disparity between psychical fact generally and physical fact: therefore, if we once admit that the movement of particles of matter is an adequate cause of the most elementary feeling, I see no ground on which we can argue that it cannot be an adequate cause of the most refined and complicated thought.

A special case, in which a good deal has been made of this distinction, is furnished by the question noticed before, as to the comparative validity of universal and individual judgments, especially such as relate to the external world. It is frequently thought that valid universal judgments, such as the axioms of geometry, cannot be derived from experience, that is, from the movements of our bodies in space, on account of their universality. Indeed, this is used in opposite ways as an argument on either side of the famous controversy about such axioms: on the one hand, it is maintained that these judgments cannot have had an empirical origin, because of the universal validity which mathematicians agree in attributing to them; and on the other hand, it is argued that since we can show how they have come from experience, they cannot have a universal validity; we can only affirm them in respect of our space, not of space generally. Either reasoning seems to involve the assumption that we know *a priori* that a physical fact, the movement of our bodies in space, is qualified to cause one psychical fact, viz., true belief about the nature of the particular space in which it moves, and is *not* qualified to cause another psychical fact, viz., true belief about the nature of space generally. And this assumption seems to me quite ungrounded. I quite admit my inability to explain how the movements of particular parts of matter in particular space should cause in my mind a belief that no two straight lines can ever enclose a space; and further that, supposing the causal connection

established, it affords no evidence of the truth of the belief. But then I am equally unable to understand the manner of production, or accept the warrant of validity, in the case of the particular belief that these two straight lines do not enclose a space. In neither case does it seem that any connection can be made out between the investigation of the origin of the belief and the establishment of its validity.

Similarly, when we pass to consider the premises of ethical reasoning, or the cognitive faculty conversant with them, it does not appear that the 'authority of conscience' can be in any way affected by examinations of its origin. I am supposing that we admit the empirical fact of the existence of Conscience, *i.e.*, of immediate judgments that some actions are right and others wrong, without reference to their pleasurable or painful consequences to the agents; since if this be denied, the psychogonical investigation assumes a quite different character; it is not Conscience at all—in the ordinary sense of the term—of which the origin is investigated, but some other mental phenomenon. It is important to point this out, because "conscience" is sometimes used to denote blind emotional or habitual impulses to or from action, which do not, when we reflect on them, appear to possess any intrinsic authority; and it may, no doubt, be important to ascertain how these impulses have originated, in order that we may see how far they are likely to tend to the realisation of ends which we judge to be good. But then, in this case it is only the intuitive judgment "that such and such ends are good" which should be regarded as the valid expression of Conscience. It is in relation to intuitions, not mere instincts, that a mistaken importance has been attached to the investigation of origin; since no such investigation can establish more than the antecedence of certain physical or psychical states, different from this intuition, and such antecedence cannot be made an argument for or against its truth or falsehood. If conscience could be shown to be original,—*i.e.*, unrelated to psychical or physical antecedents,—I do not see why its enunciations should therefore be true. I certainly cannot conceive such a demonstration effected, but if it was effected, I do not see that it would lead to any ethical results. And similarly, the history of my moral intuitions, whatever it may be, seems to me no ground for distrusting their validity, except

on the assumption that the tendency of mental development is to increase the mind's liability to error,—a conclusion which does not seem to be anywhere explicitly maintained.

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Mr. Sidgwick

Mr. Knowles

Mr. C. Robertson

Prof. Clifford

Rector of Lincoln

Dr. Martineau

S. M.

W<sup>r</sup> Matthew Bolton

HAS A METAPHYSICAL SOCIETY ANY  
*RAISON D'ÊTRE?*

KANT tells us that the three principal topics of Metaphysical inquiry are,—the Existence of God, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Freedom of the Will. But at the last meeting of our Society, his language in this matter was impugned. Lord Selborne and Professor Huxley both stated their opinion that the question concerning the Existence of the Deity, or the nature of the Cause of the Universe, is *not* a Metaphysical question.

Professor Huxley further stated his opinion that this question does not lie outside the limits of experience; here, again, using language very differently from Kant.

Professor Huxley urged that the questions named by Kant concern *φύσις*, or Nature, and that therefore they are physical. In this I agree with him; it seems to me that this use of language is correct. The term "Physics," in the wide sense, includes everything that really exists.

For the same reason, these questions may correctly be termed "Physiological." Physiology is often opposed to Psychology, as if bodily phenomena pertained to *φύσις*, while mental phenomena did not. Of course, if *φύσις* is taken in the wide sense, rational speculation about really existent things of every kind comes under the title of "Physiology."

From such premises it might seem to follow (and the inference has, in fact, been drawn) that a Metaphysical Society has no *raison d'être*. But before coming to this conclusion, and breaking up our Society, let us consider the matter a little further.

Another definition of Metaphysics was propounded by Mr. Grant Duff, which ran as follows:—"Ingenious speculations concerning matters not yet fully cognisable."

I fear we must not here lay much stress on the complimentary word "ingenious." Surely it is possible to write in a dull manner

[NO. LXXV.]

on every kind of topic. Schopenhauer was continually attacking the *Universitäts-Philosophie* of his day as abominably dull, and yet he regarded it as *Metaphysical*. I apprehend that Mr. Grant Duff will not insist on the retention of the word "ingenious," and will allow me to consider his definition with that epithet omitted.

If this definition be accepted, most people will admit that the topics named by Kant are correctly termed *Metaphysical*. Professor Huxley tells us, indeed, that these questions all lie within the limits of experience, and can therefore be treated empirically; nevertheless few persons would contend that the objects which they concern are fully cognisable. Consider, for a moment, the first of them,—the nature of the cause of the Universe. Spinoza tells us that this cause or Being, which he calls God, cannot love; Christ teaches very differently. Spinoza teaches that though this Being cannot love, it ought to be loved and revered by us. Schopenhauer asserts that it is unwise and irrational, producer of a vast amount of misery, and that love and reverence in relation to it are utterly misplaced.

Such divergences go far to show that however much the cause of the Universe may be called a phenomenon, it has certainly a capacity of hiding itself.

However, if we accept the definition which we are now considering, the term "*Metaphysical*" will apply not only to the three questions mentioned by Kant, but to many others. Speculations about matters not yet fully cognisable meet us in every direction.

It is well known that ordinary persons often make assertions about matters respecting which they do not possess full or complete knowledge, and by so doing they expose themselves to the censure of scientific persons. I may instance this by my own case. There are portions of the Atlantic which I have never seen, and yet I believe that there are fish in them. I believe that there are flies in Lithuania and fleas in Bosnia; yet I have never visited those countries, nor heard from any traveller nor read in any book that flies or fleas exist in them.

I also agree with those who consider it probable that the earth is not the only spot in the Universe where animated beings exist; though I have never seen any animated being except within the precincts of this planet.

If we give expression to a belief or conjecture of this character, we are liable to reproof; we may be told (and the rebuke sounds

very sage) that where positive knowledge is lacking, it is wise to be silent. From censure or advice of this kind we might infer that truly scientific persons never open their mouths except to express certain truth. The fact, however, is much otherwise; works called "scientific" abundantly deal with subjects not fully cognisable.

The science of Cosmogony, or speculation about the evolution of the Universe, is much cultivated in the present day. It is obvious that our knowledge of this matter is very far from a full one.

There is also in the present day a great deal of speculation concerning the Origin of Species. Certainly this is a matter not at present fully cognisable, for we do not know whether the existing species of animals are traceable up to one act of Biogenesis, or to a great number of such acts. Nay, we do not even know whether Biogenesis takes place in the present day, or whether it ceased millions of years ago.

Comte denounced inquiries or speculations of this nature as unscientific,—as lacking positivity. Unless we are very tolerant of Metaphysics, in Mr. Grant Duff's sense of the word, we should have to do the same. For my own part, I agree with Comte that theories on these subjects fall far short of certainty, yet I should by no means agree with him in desiring to see them silenced. It seems to me that conjectures have different degrees of value, and that in some cases the degree is high. If we tolerate only what is absolutely certain, and entirely banish the probable and conjectural, how much of our so-called "science" will remain?

What I have said above might be illustrated at great length from other sciences, claiming a more certain and positive character than the speculations just mentioned. But the limits of a paper read to this Society do not permit amplitude of illustration. I will therefore confine myself to a few examples.

One example is afforded by the doctrine concerning Force and conservation of Energy, to which our attention was directed last year by a paper of Mr. Mivart's. This doctrine eminently claims to be scientific; it is looked upon as one of the principal achievements of modern science. It teaches us that gravitation, *vis viva*, heat, light, electricity, magnetism, &c., are all due to one force, manifesting itself in various modes; and that however the phenomenal modes change, the energy (taking actual and potential into account) remains constant.

When, however, we ask a teacher of this doctrine to explain to us what he means by Force, he at once falls into perplexity. He can tell us nothing of its colour, or sound, or smell; he can assign to it no form or dimension, no quality of a sensible kind. He is fain to talk of it as a sort of *nisus*, or effort; yet all the while he feels that to talk of a brick or a stone as making an effort—as struggling, or striving, or labouring—is not language of scientific accuracy.

Perhaps, in reply to our questions, we may be told that Force is a *virtus motiva*, an ἐνεργητικὸν τι, a *nescio quid agens* or *activum*. Surely in one who instructs us thus, we may hail a fellow,—

Bene, bene, bene,  
Bene respondere;  
Dignus, dignus est intrare  
In nostro docto Corpore.

A doctrine which claims to be eminently positive is the doctrine of Dynamics, or Mechanics. But a word which plays an essential part in this doctrine is that of Mass, and when we come to probe this, we find that it involves the idea of Force, not merely *vis motiva*, but also *vis inertiae*,—i.e., force which resists motion or anti-kinetic Force. So that here we are baffled by difficulties fully as great as in the case of the previous doctrine.

Again, we are taught that the movement of molecules produces thoughts, emotions, &c. But we are obliged to assign some mass to these molecules; to suppose that they act by movement alone without mass would be contrary to all science. In order, then, to understand the subject, we must understand the nature of mass; and here, as above observed, our powers fail us.

Sometimes we are taught that thoughts, emotions, &c., are modes of matter, that nothing exists which is not material. But if everything is material, matter is merely an *alias* of our old friend Substance, a noumenon or phenomenon of very unphenomenal kind, a *nescio quid substans*.

Sometimes a doctrine is broached that our material organism is causal or active, but that thoughts are not so. Changes in our organism cause thoughts, but thoughts cannot act on our organism.

But what is the nature of the causal power or activity which this doctrine ascribes to one sort or class of phenomena, while it denies it to others? If the speculator is asked this question, he loses his positivity, and becomes embarrassed, just as when asked to give an

account of Force. It is needless to insist on the difficulties of this question ; it suffices to refer to Hume.

We do not obtain more light by having recourse to the word Law. If we are told that an apple moves towards the earth, or a comet towards the sun, in virtue of the law of attraction, or because its movements are governed by that law, we obtain no more insight into the nature of things than when we are informed that these movements take place in virtue of the *force* of attraction.

If, then, Mr. Grant Duff's definition be correct, we find that we encounter Metaphysics at every turn,—that we can no more escape from Metaphysics than we can get out of our skins, or jump over our shadows.

Naturally, I may now be asked whether I agree with Mr. Grant Duff's definition. I do not regard it as at all sufficient. Speculations conducted in the usual way concerning the place where Cæsar crossed the Channel or Hannibal the Alps are not, in my opinion, metaphysical, although their subject-matter is not fully cognisable. And though these speculations might be very ingenious, that would not suffice to alter the case.

But I consider that the difficulties which I have above noticed concerning Force, Activity, Law, Cause, Matter, Substance, are rightly called Metaphysical. And the examination or discussion of such matters pertains to Metaphysics. Such a discussion concerns Φύσις, or Nature ; but it is carried on by an exercise of the speculative faculty, which is not needed nor brought into play in Physics of the more practical and ordinary kind.

I think that the word acquired its meaning in the following way :—Aristotle wrote numerous works on physical science, occupied principally with a description of Phenomena, and entering but sparingly on speculative matters, which works he collectively styled Τὰ Φυσικά. He followed this up by a second work, in which, as he tells us, he seeks to obtain knowledge of a more difficult and higher kind,—such knowledge as deserves the name of σοφία ; which is not content with that knowledge of natural facts which suffices for practical and technical purposes, but aspires to know their causes, their principles, and elements,—αἰτίαι, ἀρχαί, and στοιχεῖα. Naturally, he placed this work *after* the less speculative treatises ; he could not in reason have placed it before them.

This work became known by the title Τὰ μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά, and

hence arose the word "Metaphysical." The word, therefore, when rightly used, is applicable to speculations and questions cognate in character to those which are presented and discussed in this work or treatise of Aristotle.

It is waste of time to propound definitions of Metaphysic which do not in the least suit the character of Aristotle's treatise. Yet this is often done ; for instance, when Metaphysics are defined as a science merely of abstract notions. Still worse is it when we are told that Metaphysics are a science of non-entities, of things out of φύσις, or out of *rerum natura*. Aristotle's work is clearly a physical one. The Ionic, Eleatic, and Italian philosophers, whose speculations he presents and discusses, were emphatically called *Οἱ Φυσικοί*. He speaks in a somewhat disparaging tone of the Socratic disputations, because they did not concern themselves with knowledge of the physical Universe ; and he tells us in the clearest way that what he desires to attain is knowledge of the causes of Nature, and most especially of the *πρώτη αἰτία*.

The idea that an approach to the First Cause tends to take us out of Nature was wholly alien to the Greek mind. Plutarch uses the words *τὰ πρῶτα καὶ φυσικώτατα*, showing that in his belief the nearer a thing was to the First Cause the *more* it was *φυσικός*, not the *less* so. So that Aristotle's metaphysical work would actually in its scope be more physical than his earlier ones, though doubtless it may be thought that he has not successfully achieved his aim.

I apprehend that the error above signalised has arisen from an erroneous view of the etymology of the word Metaphysic. It has been thought that *μετά* signified "beyond," and *τὰ φυσικά*, Nature, or natural things ; whereas really *μετά* signifies "after," and *τὰ φυσικά* signify the first-placed works of Aristotle, those of the more descriptive and less speculative kind.

There is a well-known portion of Aristotle's later (metaphysical) work, in which he gives a brief account of the views of earlier philosophers about the first cause or origin of things. Thales took it to be water ; Anaximenes, air ; Heraclitus, fire ; Empedocles, adding earth to the above, held these to be the four *στοιχεῖα*, or Elements. Aristotle expresses disapproval of all these views, and goes on to say that the first speculator who discerned that there was a *νοῦς* in Nature, as in animals, and that this was the cause of the *κόσμος* and *τάξις* displayed in Nature, was the first who spoke sensibly ;

compared with his predecessors, he was as a sober man; they talkers at random,—*οἷον νήφων ἐφάνη παρ' ἐκῇ λέγοντας τοὺς πρότερον*.

Can any one think that all this relates merely to abstract notions, or to non-entities?

It is true that Aristotle in his speculative work occupies himself a good deal with definitions of terms, but so also does Locke, in his well-known "Essay." Locke and Aristotle had both a strongly physical bent, both keenly desired the advancement of natural science; but they knew that this could not be attained without the use of *λόγος*, and they knew that this instrument could not be efficient unless it were rendered precise and accurate.

Let us for a moment consider Locke's celebrated work. Sense and Understanding and their various modes are a part of Nature, and certainly not its least important part. Locke's work is therefore Physical. But it is also Metaphysical,—it speculates on subjects of a deep kind, like those treated of in *Τὰ μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά*. And this is consonant to usage. The best philosophers call Locke a metaphysician; the people do so too.

Taking the view I have thus explained, I hold that Kant was quite right when he applied the term "Metaphysical" to the three questions previously mentioned,—viz., those which concern God, future life, and freedom. When it is argued that he has erred herein, because these questions are about *Φύσις*, and therefore are physical, and therefore cannot be metaphysical, the reasoning appears to me utterly mistaken.

I consider, then, that a Metaphysical Society has good *raison d'être*, and ample choice of subjects of discussion, these being presented to it by all the Sciences. There is no question, however apparently non-metaphysical, which may not be pursued till we come to the Metaphysical. The question whether Tarquin lived, and whether Lucretia committed suicide, is about as non-metaphysical as any question can be; yet disputants engaged in its discussion may persist till they open up the general question of the credibility of testimony; and this may open up that of the credibility of memory, the nature of belief, what grounds we have for believing the existence of other persons, and an external world. The question of the composition of water, as usually discussed, would be called non-metaphysical; but it may be discussed so as to open up the question whether our ordinary ideas about the composition of bodies

are correct; whether internal movements of molecules ought not to be taken into account; whether water can rightly be called the same substance or body as steam, seeing that their phenomenal character is completely different. Or again, the question may be raised whether the course of Nature is absolutely uniform; whether oxygen and hydrogen will always behave as in the experiments hitherto examined; whether experiment can ever establish perfect certainty about the future; whether our sciences give us so much knowledge as is usually supposed; what is science or knowledge; what is truth.

Whenever we try to *bottom* a question or subject, to use Locke's word (the French word would be "approfondir"), then Metaphysics come in sight. The sentences, "God bless me," or "Upon my soul," as currently used, are not metaphysical; but if we turn our attention to the words used, and probe them, we are in full Metaphysics.

Every sentence involves, in some shape or other, the verb "to be," and this, if pursued far enough, leads to the heart of Metaphysics.

Scientific persons often speak of Metaphysics with scorn, calling them an Asylum Ignorantiæ, useful enough to the vulgar, but in no way needed by themselves. They imagine their science to be perfectly luminous, far above the lower regions where Metaphysical mists prevail. But in reality, they share the common lot; the ideas of Force, Law, Cause, Substance, Causal or Active Matter, all dwell in the region of metaphysical twilight, not in the luminous ether. Our wisdom in these matters is a σοφία ψελλιζομένη: the philosopher does not know the intrinsic nature of cause much more than the peasant, the peasant does not know it much more than the philosopher. And as the knowledge which we principally seek and wish for is the knowledge of cause, for a mere knowledge of customary sequence does not content us, our science, owing to such an imperfection, is impaired in a very serious manner.

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Christone  
Grant Duff

Martineau  
Harrison . .

Knowles

Hutton

Greg

Misak

Sidgwick

S. Hodgson

Self.

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 1878,  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.]

[PRIVATE.]

Bishop of Peterborough

## THE ETHICS OF PERSECUTION.

"To persecute" is, according to Dr. Johnson, "To harass with penalties; to pursue with malignity. It is generally used of penalties inflicted for opinion." Of the two elements in this definition of Persecution, viz.,—infliction of penalties for opinion, and malignity of motive for so doing, the latter is clearly evil, and as clearly accidental. No one will deny that malignity is an immoral motive, and that any action tainted by it is so far immoral. On the other hand, no one will deny that the infliction of penalty for opinion might be, and in many cases has been, entirely free from this motive, the person inflicting it acting as judicially, and with as much freedom from any personal motive of vindictiveness or hate, as the Judge or executioner in any other case of offence against law; or as the legislator who, purely on public grounds, makes any particular act a capital offence. There have doubtless been many cases, and it is certainly conceivable that there may have been many, in which the persecutor has suffered as much pain in the infliction of penalty for opinion as his victim in enduring it, and while the motive on either side may have been at once equally pure and equally mistaken.

Setting aside, then, this confessedly evil, but clearly accidental element of malignity in Persecution, there remains the question whether the other and the constant element in it, namely, the infliction of penalties for opinion, is or is not immoral.

Most persons now-a-days would unhesitatingly answer this question in the affirmative, and on the ground of the wrong and injustice done to the person persecuted. "Of course," it would be generally said, "of course all persecution is grossly immoral, because it is grossly unjust that any man should be made to suffer for his opinions. Such infliction of suffering is a violation of the sacred and inalienable right of free thought. It is not merely unwise, inexpedient, injurious in the long-run to the interests of truth, tending to produce hypocrisy, falsehood, cowardice, and a low moral tone of feeling generally, but

[NO. LXXVI.]

it is *per se*, and apart from all these consequences, an injustice and a wrong."

Popular and universal, however, as such an opinion is, I venture to ask how far it is well grounded, and also how far, if it be well grounded, its consequences will be found to extend.

And in the first place, let us consider what is really meant by the expressions "free thought" and "penalty for opinion." Thought is certainly free, so long as it is thought, pure and simple; and opinion not only ought to be, but is absolutely and completely free from penalty; for this simple reason, that a man's thoughts and opinions—so long as they are only thoughts and opinions—can be known to no human being but himself. Every man is undoubtedly free to think what he pleases, so long as he keeps his thoughts to himself, and neither speaks nor acts upon them. But what men are punished for is, and must always be, not their opinions, but the expression of their opinions, by word or deed. But obviously this is a very different thing from thought pure and simple; it is thought plus the overt act of publication of that thought. But this added fact of outward manifestation of thought in speech or act manifestly is one which may seriously affect and ~~may seriously~~ injure the interests of the thinker's fellow-citizens, or of the State of which he is a member.

As such, it cannot be free, for as such, this right of free thought becomes at once limited and restrained by the rights and interests of those whom it may unjustly affect. Morally, it is limited by the principle that we are not free to injure other men. Legally and socially, it comes into collision with the great principle, *Salus populi suprema lex*. Society has the right, quite as old as freedom of opinion, to restrain whatever threatens its existence, or even its security and well-being, and therefore the plea for absolute freedom of speech and action on the ground of the rights of free thought and conscience is at once seen to be inconsistent with the very idea of society. If I may say what I please, on the ground that I think it, libel and treason should be free from penalty. If I may do what I think right, on the ground that I believe it to be right, the bigamist who is sentenced to penal servitude is an unjustly persecuted man.

Obviously, therefore, the doctrine of absolute freedom of opinion is either a mere truism or a practical untruth. It is universally true, if it means that we are all free to think as we please. It is not

universally true, it is very largely untrue, if it means that we are all free to speak and act out our opinions.

But if we admit, as I think we must admit, this principle of *Salus populi suprema lex*, as against the right, or supposed right, of freedom of opinion, where can we stop in its application? Can we stop short of the entire denial of any freedom of opinion to the individual, as against the interests or supposed interests of the State? I say the "supposed interests," for on the question of right or wrong, as distinguished from expedient or inexpedient, it is clear that it is the same thing, whether the ruler is really promoting, or only believes that he is promoting, the interests of the State in punishing the expression of opinion.

The principle in either case is the same, namely, that the rights, whatever they may be, of the individual must give way to the interests of the State; and therefore, that the ruler is justified in—nay, is morally bound—to repress those rights, or rather, to deny their existence, whenever he believes those interests endangered by their assertion. Whether they really are so or not is a question of disputable fact, not like the other, of indisputable principle.

But this principle will cover most, if not all cases, of what is commonly called Persecution. It will cover, for instance, all cases of religious persecution, when the institutions of the State are based in whole or in part upon religion. To attack the Established Religion in all such cases is to attack the basis, or one of the bases, of the existing order of things; and such an attack may as justly and as reasonably be punished on the ground of *salus populi*, as an attack upon the authority of the Sovereign or on the supremacy of the Law, these attacks being all alike punishable on the ground, and only on the ground, that they are injurious to society. For instance, there are States in which it is a crime to have more wives than one, and no crime to deny the truth of the National Religion. There are other States in which it is no crime to deny the truth of the National Religion, and a crime to have more wives than one. Why should the penalty for one of these crimes be called Persecution, and the other not? It cannot be alleged that either of these crimes is *malum per se*. Each is only *malum prohibitum*, but only prohibited, in the one case, because Monogamy, in the other case because the maintenance of a National Religion, are held conducive to the interests

of the State; in both, on the ground, and solely on the ground, of that *salus populi* which, as we have seen, is to be paramount to any claim of right on the part of the individual. And if it be alleged that the cases here cited are not *in pari materia*, because Polygamy is an overt act, and an attack upon Religion is only the utterance of opinion, the answer is obvious,—that the utterance of an opinion is an overt act, and an act which in other cases, as in that of libellous or seditious speech, or obscene writing, is punishable, and is held to be justly punishable, by law.

What is the difference *in principle* between a law against an obscene publication, and a law against an anti-religious publication? In the one case, the writer has offended, we may assume conscientiously—at any rate, in the exercise of his free thought—against what the Society that forbids obscene publications regards as the vital interest of morality; in the other case, he has as conscientiously offended against what the Society which forbids anti-religious publications regards as a vital interest,—namely, Religion. Yet we call the former a just and righteous, and the latter an unjust and unrighteous one. Is this for any other or better reason than that we now have come to regard the latter as not really advantageous to the interests of Religion or of Society, and therefore really not justified by the plea of *salus populi*; or is it because we hold that the individual has really any inherit right, as against the claim of the State to defend itself against what it holds for the time being to be injurious to its interests?

If the former, then, we are really condemning, not the injustice in principle, but the inexpediency in fact, of punishment for religious opinion. If the latter, then we must admit that punishment of an anti-religious opinion is as much or as little persecution as punishment of immoral opinion. Or, to pass from questions of opinion merely, let us take the case of the clearly overt acts, done each of them as an expression of opinion. Certain fanatics, as Dr. Johnson reminds us, on one occasion rode into the town of Lichfield, in a state of nudity, exclaiming, “We are the naked truth!” Whereupon the Doctor asks, “Would not the magistrate have the right to flog them into their doublets?” Undoubtedly he would. But only because their act, however conscientious, was offensive to all but themselves, and injurious to the interests of what society preferred to their conscience,—namely, morality.

Certain other fanatics, let us suppose, at that time carried the Host in procession through the same town. Would not the magistrates have had the right to flog them to their homes, on the same grounds, namely, that what they were doing was offensive to all but themselves, as it probably would have been, and that it was injurious to what society then preferred to their conscience, namely, the interests of religion ; and if they could only have had this right, why not ?

Does not this question, then, of the right and wrong of Persecution really resolve itself into the larger question whether the individual can have any *rights*, as against the interests of society ; and if so, on what grounds ?

The question will be diversely answered, according to the diverse theories entertained as to the origin of human society and the nature of man.

Those who hold what may be described as the purely mechanical theory of human thought and action will doubtless remain in a state of absolute suspense upon this question. For while, on the one hand, it may be alleged that man, being a mere machine, is as irresponsible for the utterance of his belief as a steam-engine for its whistling, it may with equal force be alleged that the other machines which are irresistibly impelled to brave him for such utterances are equally irresponsible.

Those, if there be any such, who still hold the doctrine of the Contrat Social, must endeavour to ascertain whether this right of the opinion is one of those which the individual barter with society in return for those advantages which society bestows on him.

Those who hold that there is no higher power and no other right than that of the State will doubtless consistently maintain the right of the State, on the ground of its own safety, to deal as it pleases with any individual member of it, and will, therefore, decide this question solely on the grounds of State expediency.

Those who hold that the State and the Individual are both the creatures and the subjects of a higher Power, from which the individual claims those sacred and inalienable rights which make him a person, and not a thing, will hold strongly to the sacred and inalienable right of individual conscience, arising out of individual responsibility ; and will hold that the presumption, therefore, always lies in favour

*Superior* of this right, and that the onus of proof lies with those who attempt to restrain it within narrower limits than is absolutely essential to the existence and well-being of society, which is also divine; and they will hold that whatever of restraint on opinion or conscience goes beyond this is a wrong and a crime,—a wrong to the individual,—a crime against the common/selfism of the individual and the State; and they, too, will be the first to admit and to deplore that the sacred principle of religious responsibility—underlying, as it really does, the claim of religious liberty—has been too often sadly and shamefully wrested to sanction Persecution in the worst sense of that word, as implying infliction of penalty for opinion, coupled with malignity of feeling.

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Dr. Bucknill

Leslie Stephen

James Knowles

Prof. Miawart

Dr. Carpenter

Prof. Huxley

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, JULY 9, 1878,  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.]

[PRIVATE.]

Dr. Bucknill

## THE LIMITS OF PHILANTHROPY.

WILLING to justify myself, may I not only ask,—Who is my neighbour? but also,—How I am to love him? For it might be that to love him as myself would be the reverse of love, or that loving myself after a fashion, the greatest mischief I could do to my neighbour would be to behave to him as I do to myself. Taught to love the Samaritan, who is truly our fellow-man in active sympathy, may we infer that we are not bound to love the priest and the levite, who are indifferent to our misery?

Or can we love individuals without reference to their qualities, as when we are told to hate the sin and love the sinner, by a practical separation of the subject from its attributes which may possibly be intelligible to metaphysicians, but as a rule of life must be incomprehensible to common men.

Philanthropy would appear to be the extension of the love of one's neighbour to classes of men, or to the whole of mankind; and in this wider sphere we may again ask whether we are bound to love men who are not lovable; the false, cruel, dirty savage, or the more repulsive *residuum* of civilisation steeped in vulgar debasement? If there be any mental freedom, it must be in affection, and the freedom to love would seem to imply freedom not to love. And this, which would leave us at large, will perhaps lead us to consider that the diffused benevolence which we call Philanthropy must be mainly founded in the sense of duty, which by exercise becomes transformed into affection, the duty of doing good to others thus becoming easy and pleasurable to ourselves, and activities originally painful developing by exercise into the enthusiasm of humanity. We tend to love those beings towards whom we are beneficent, and thus action, transformed into affection, may become the fullest source of Philanthropy. But the influence of compassion for the sufferings of others must not be left out of account, nor the simple bent or bias of the mind to love our fellow-creatures, which in these later years of

[NO. LXXVII.]

human progress has become an intuitive quality of civilised man, his rich and increasing inheritance of organisation from a peaceful and civilised ancestry.

Compassion and hereditary disposition to benevolence may be considered purely emotional, but in so far as Philanthropy is derived from the sense of duty to do good to one's fellow-men transformed into affection, it is originally an intellectual state, which necessitates the formation of a judgment of what is good; and therefore it may be conceded that Philanthropy must be limited by a rational consideration of the probable results of our conduct towards others. But the wise egotist may also very justly form the judgment that the general good of his fellow-men tends to his own advantage, and this consideration indicates that the nature of our subject, no less than the derivation and meaning of the term employed, makes the love of men essential to its character.

May not the term "Philanthropy" be defined as meaning,—*The love of numbers of living men, carried into action for their good?*

The amiable or friendly man loving individuals is scarcely the philanthropist, who may be neither amicable nor friendly, an inconsistency in human character which seems to have puzzled Dugald Stewart, who declares that neither men of public spirit, who affect an habitual rudeness in the common intercourse of society, nor such as are possessed of strong private attachments and humanity to objects in distress, but who have no idea of public spirit, "can possibly arise from genuine benevolence. Otherwise, the same principle of action would extend to every different part of conduct by which the comfort of other men is affected."<sup>1</sup>

If the source of diffused benevolence, in duty giving rise to affection, to which I have referred be correct, the preponderance of one or the other in different men may explain this apparent inconsistency. For the man of public spirit, striving from sense of duty for the good of his fellow-men, is likely to be rugged in his earnest endeavour, and the man of tender and gentle sympathies is not quite of the metal of which public benefactors are cast. The Society of Friends is not remarkable for courtesy, and certainly there was some harshness

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<sup>1</sup> "Active and Moral Powers," p. 242.

in Howard. Of the two extremes of character, I think it is the earnest man of public spirit, whom we shall be disposed to call a philanthropist, one whose striving is towards the good of numbers of men, of classes, nationalities, races of men, and in theory—for the practice is impossible—towards the good of the whole human race.

The term of my definition which, I think, will be most disputed is that which restricts the object of Philanthropy to *living* men.

Is the honoured title to be given to a man who organises a soup-kitchen, and refused to him who leaves his estate to found a hospital? I think it must; because love, an essential element of Philanthropy, can only be felt towards those who are present to us, or who can be represented as present to us. We cannot love beings who have no existence. We cannot even love our children before they are born. We cannot therefore take action for the good of the future generations of men on account of, and impelled by, the love we bear to them; and this consideration seems to be at the bottom of the wide and important distinction which must be drawn between Philanthropy and benevolent Policy. Of course, there are policies which do not merit this attribute, such as policies of national or of class predominance; but the policy of civilised nations in modern times, whether it be international or social, does at least affect to regard and claim to promote the general good of men. Modern domestic or social policy especially is more or less directed to the increase of good and the repression of evil in the community, but between it and philanthropy there seems to be, first, the difference or divergence already pointed out,—namely, that the main purpose of the former may rightly be directed to a postponed harvest of good results, whereas the latter aims at the immediate attainment of its object in the diminished suffering or the increased happiness of men; and secondly, that policy does or ought to comprehend the general good of the community, whereas philanthropy may fairly be excused for restricting its activity to a class or a section thereof. In other words, philanthropy is distinguished from policy, in that the one strives to augment the present happiness of men, without much regard to remote consequences; while the other has, or ought to have, the most lively care and prudent forethought of the postponed influences which present acts may have upon the well-being of the whole community.

The enlightened politician cannot be too painfully attentive, first, to the struggle for existence which all life implies; and secondly, to the enormous value which some apparently trifling social act may acquire in the future,—the high sum to which small action put into the Bank of Time may develop, at compound interest.

Perhaps a third difference may be mooted, namely, that whereas the right purpose of Policy is the general good or well-being of the community, now and hereafter, the usual intention of Philanthropy is the alleviation of class-suffering, which may even be politically wholesome to the commonweal. May it not, therefore, be said that, so far as philanthropy recognises the good which often underlies suffering, the interests of the future, as compared with the present, and the welfare of the community, as preferable to the happiness of any portion thereof, its characteristics are merged into those of uncompassionate, social policy, thus becoming divergent, and even antagonistic, to its own proper nature? The rôle of Philanthropy would, therefore, seem more or less to exclude the forecasting of remote consequences and the general bearing of wise political conduct, and yet the term is boldly used to designate these characteristics of policy in their fullest extension; as when Dr. Chalmers, in his tractate on the Poor Laws, says that the views of philanthropists are directed towards moral and political speculation, "the purpose of which is to ameliorate the condition of humanity, and to rear the permanent and substantial fabric of a better society than that which now encompasses our globe." This, I maintain, is exactly what Philanthropy is not, and exactly that which Social Policy is, or ought to be.

That Philanthropy may be tinged with political wisdom, and politics guided by benevolence, no one will deny; but no advantage can be gained by confusing such distinct phases of human action; and that they are distinct phases, any number of examples may, I think, be cited in proof. In the amendment of great social wrongs, such as slavery, the philanthropist would jump to the restitution of freedom, while the politician would, I think, prefer gradually to prepare a degraded race for the newly-adjusted burthen of life. In the maintenance of the Poor Law, which in its original intention of suppressing vagabondage was surely not dictated by benevolence to the weak, the philanthropic and the political aim would be divergent,

the one directed to the relief of suffering, the other to restraining the mischief of idleness and unthrift in the masses of the people, and of breeding the worst at the expense of the best.

Philanthropy might, I think, look with favouring eyes upon Robert Owen's or Mrs. Besant's project for lightening the burthen of family life, and thus mitigating the struggle for existence; while Policy would see in it the imminent danger of national decay, which could scarcely be averted from a society whose wealth and strength and vigour had been arrested by the sterility of its women.

Philanthropy, in its mundane aspect, to which I restrict myself, might permit the suicide of the wretched, if it did not legalise the poison cup of Marsailles. Policy would adhere to the theory of self-murder. Philanthropy could not object to the euthanasia of useless and miserable men, suffering from incurable and agonising disease; while Policy would be very short-sighted, if it did not maintain with the heaviest penalties of the law the security of human life under all circumstances. On a wider field, Philanthropy would maintain the existence of races of men which had become useless and miserable—the Red Indian, for instance, for whose sustenance the buffalo prairies must be undisturbed—while Policy, seeing that “the substantial fabric of a better society” cannot be reared among men only fit for hunting and theft and war, would scarcely interfere to protect them from that extinction which practically comes upon them, in the use of the earth's dormant fertility by a more versatile and plastic race.

In a thousand ways, the present happiness of man is opposed to the future welfare either of his rivals or of his successors, so that present pain is often only to be assuaged at the cost of greater suffering to come. While the Philanthropist might give narcotics, the Politician would prefer constitutional remedies. There is much to be said for either course of treatment. The relief afforded to neuralgia by opium may be certain, while that expected from steel may be doubtful, and contingent upon circumstances not under control. To some minds, the duty of relieving human suffering may appear so imperative and so absolute a good in itself, that it ought never to be postponed, as the one thing to do at the time, and because the future is not ours to deal with. I think, however, it will gradually come to be admitted, with increasing knowledge of the social history

of mankind, that interfering action cannot safely or properly be taken in regard to any class or section of society without reference to the welfare of the whole of society, both at the time being and in the future, and that although the value of a present good may seem to outweigh that of a greater good postponed, some careful balance must be held in the estimate; and that however harsh and even cruel the doctrine may sound, the Survival of the Fittest, which implies the elimination of the unfittest, and the Greatest Good of the Best Many, is the highest purpose of human activity.

Philanthropy, therefore, must meet with a strong barrier in the direction of Policy based upon the Reign of Social Law.

But also within its own sphere it ought to be subject to limitations which cannot rightly be disregarded. Philanthropy must be entirely disinterested, and in so much as it fails in this essential, it becomes that very different thing,—Philauty, of which so much less is heard and so much more observed. Yet at least in what may be called professional Philanthropy, how vast is the adulteration with self-interest. The vanity which seeks the glorification of its own goodness—the lust for power, a great emotion for which we have no better name than ambition, which does not define it—even the desire for payment in the gross form of pecuniary gain—all these and other philautic motives are easy enough to detect in many of the philanthropic activities of our day. The Bill now before Parliament for the care and cure of habitual drunkards is an example of philanthropic enterprise in which self-interest has had an abounding share, for if we look into the history of what is called the movement, we shall see that the angel wings of Philanthropy are not long enough to conceal the cloven foot of self-interest, some of the most energetic and persistent promoters of the agitation being men who have avowed their anxiety to obtain legal powers to keep profitable prisons for wealthy drunkards. But Philanthropy, to merit its name and character, must not only be free from self-seeking; it should abolish self to the extent of rising above considerations of mere justice, for there is no benevolence in giving a man that which is simply his due, and the rights which men may claim from us are distinct from the favours which, as fellow-mortals, they may hope to receive.

And this eager benevolence must not be allowed to run away with the judgment, as passions so constantly do. They are both mental acts and must work together, and if it was needful to ordain that

"thou shall not plow with an ox and an ass together," how careful should we be with such unequal yoke-fellows as that high-mettled steed of emotion and the slow drudge, judgment.

It is the most ennobling of emotions, this active and diffused love of one's fellow-men, which cannot easily slide into unworthiness as love bestowed upon individuals is apt to do. That its exercise is far more general in these later days than aforesaid seems to be due to the greater need for it, in the more painful differentiation of mankind, as society becomes more complicated, and to the larger supply of fit agents and craving recipients which such differentiation affords. In the scorn of ignorance it has been reviled, in the confusion of stupidity it has been misapprehended, in the service of selfishness it has been degraded, but in its own proper place and function, and in due subjection to reason, Philanthropy does and must remain the most blessed sphere of activity in which man can employ his energies. Its quality may be strained, but like mercy, "it is twice blessed.

"It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes."

Checked by Policy, it will not tend to the propagation of the objects of its bounty; while by the force of heredity its agents will multiply, and thus through the ages its influence will grow until, despite the shriek of struggling Nature, it may be found that,—

"Love is Creation's final Law."

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*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing Paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery vivâ voce.*



TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, NOV. 12, 1878,  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.]

[PRIVATE.]

W. Shadworth Hodgson

## IS MONISM TENABLE?

THE question which I wish to raise in this paper, whether any form of Monism is tenable as a philosophical system, owes its peculiar importance to the perennial desire of seeking unity and simplicity in all theories. Hence almost all the great philosophical systems have been Monisms; and it is the prevailing tendency at the present day; for, not to mention Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Von Hartmann, even Materialism, as philosophy, is a Monism.

By a Monism, I mean a philosophical theory maintaining that some single existent or super-existent, existing absolutely and *a se*, and different from the universe as a whole, is the source of existence to everything else in the universe. The characteristic of such a system will be to furnish an explanation or ground of all the main opposites that exist in the universe, such as those of Feeling, Action, and Thought; Matter and Mind; Consciousness and Object of consciousness; into which, or some of which, all lesser differences may be resolved. A Monism is an answer to the question,—In what single existent are such opposites as these found united, or from what single source do they flow?

But there is reason to think that this tendency to unity and simplicity, so necessary and valuable everywhere else, is misleading in the one case of speculation on the universe as a whole, there being a radical difference between this case and others, namely, that every other group of phenomena is a *part* of a larger whole, while the universe is the *whole* of which everything else is a part. It may be right to seek the single unity of idea predominating in a group of phenomena which is a *part*, in order to trace its harmony with its whole; but wrong to do the same thing with regard to the *whole*, because that whole may be too vast for any human thought to compass. In this case, the harmony of all the parts known to us would be the true unity to be sought for, and not a single existent

as the source of all the rest. A Harmony, not a Monism, would then be the legitimate satisfaction of our craving for unity.

Monisms are all of them too small and limited for explaining the universe. They take as an explanation some phenomenon or group of phenomena, and assume it as self-existing. This is to assume the meaning of the term *existence* as already known. But it is not already known; on the contrary, the first question in philosophy is what this term means. And in assuming it as known, the self-existent is subsumed under that supposed meaning. Take the two meanings of the term, which have ruled, I believe, from the scholastic times to our own,—one in which it means an attribute, or perfection; the other, in which it means a positing. To understand existence as an attribute or perfection is suicidal, for it assumes the existence of the subject of that attribute or perfection; and what is *this* existence of the subject? This sense of the term is that employed in the so-called ontological argument for the existence of God. Nor, again, is existence a positing, *positio*, or *Setzung*, as Kant called it; Kant, who was the first to expose the hollowness of the attribute theory. For positing, too, assumes what it professes to explain,—that is, it assumes the existence of a positor, even though it may be veiled by not being distinguished from the act of positing.

The true meaning of the term *existence* can be no other than this: whatever can be an object to any consciousness. The name for perception of existence is Kant's term *apperception*, or in ordinary English, *reflection*. You do not posit existence, but you perceive it, in perceiving that you have a feeling.

The boundaries of our notion of existence are, on this view of the meaning of the term, perpetually enlarging, growing with the growth not only of our knowledge, but of our capacities of imagination; and consequently outgrowing the conceptions which we form from time to time of the nature of what we are pleased to call the primal source and fount of existence. The universe, which it is the purpose of Monism to explain, must therefore be conceived as consisting not only of the visible and material world known to man, but of this together with whatever worlds may be perceived by other intelligences. It is impossible to imagine that our senses are the only modes of sense that may or do exist, and with other senses there are necessarily other objects,—that is, other worlds. There is an indefinite Unseen World

for Monism to account for, as well as our seen world. It is plain, then, that no single object of thought, selected from our conceptions of the seen world, can be an adequate explanation of the unseen as well as of the seen. The true conception of existence, therefore, shows that any Monistic theory of the source of existence must be too small for its purpose.

But, it may be said, if the universe of existence is whatever may be perceived by any intelligence; or (what is the same thing) if whatever is *now* embraced by our reflective perception as a possible object of some intelligence, is the universe of existence; then we have only to include reflection in our notion of the universe as our object, and we get an existent which is at once infinite and self-existent. And we may, in fact, conceive the infinite universe as itself a reflecting being; this, its own reflection, constituting its existence; so that it neither exists before perceiving, nor perceives before existing. True, we may conceive it so; but such a theory is not a Monism, at least as above defined, because the reflection in the universe is not different from the universe itself, as a whole. It is an essential and all-pervading feature of the universe itself,—a characteristic of it. If, however, this feature of reflection was singled out as being, by itself, the essence of the universe, then the theory would be a Monism; but at the same time it would become untenable as an explanation of the remainder of the universe, because there would be no means of deducing the remaining content of the universe from it, no link between it and the remainder, no account of creation as we see it, or why there should be a creation at all.

Reflection is a real explanation in philosophy,—that is, an explanation of the nature and order of our thoughts, just because, *there*, a content of feelings and perceptions is given, and a movement of them is given, in which reflection arises, and the order of which it modifies. But it is no explanation at all in Cosmology, when transplanted, as it were, into the objective universe, and considered as unconditioned and self-existent. The universe, then, may well be held to be a conscious and reflecting being; and likewise there may be other conscious and reflecting beings in the universe, and greater than ourselves; but these facts, if they be facts, are characters or attributes of the universe, which we should be glad indeed to learn, but they are not the one fact which is the source of existence of all the rest. We

cannot take reflection, which we know only as a mode of perception, and transform it into a mode of creative power, simply by transplanting it into the objective universe.

But again it may be said,—Is it not of great utility to frame hypotheses of the constitution of the universe, which, even if they turn out to be untenable, at the least serve to co-ordinate the phenomena, and to stimulate and guide speculation? I certainly admit this, and allow that Monistic hypotheses have been of the greatest utility. But the time for that kind of hypothesis has gone by. The meaning of the term *existence* shows that a Monistic hypothesis is too small for its purpose. The universe is larger and more various than we thought.

But apart from such considerations as these, there are reasons for coming to a similar conclusion with regard to the *absolute* character of Monism, drawn from the method and attitude of the mind in exercising reflection. The act of reflection consists in distinguishing what is subjective and what is objective in perception. The object of reflection, therefore, is double, consisting of a subjective and an objective aspect, and the reflection itself is the subjective aspect of this double object of reflection. There is in reflection, to speak figuratively, a perpetual regress into subjectivity, and a perpetual projection of objectivity, from the same point, and corresponding to the regress. If we adopt reflection as the mode of thought proper to philosophy, we must be constantly *distinguishing* Subject from Object, and cannot *rest* in their union. If we rest in their union, we rest in what is an *object* to reflection, and not object and reflection together. We must, in other words, be constantly distinguishing *ourselves* from the universe, even though we include reflective consciousness in the universe itself. It is still only an *object* to our reflection. Our centre of subjectivity does not and cannot coincide with that of the universe. Every Monism, therefore, which professes to unify or identify Subject and Object, is, in reality, whatever it may profess, a theory relating to the object of reflection alone, and not to reflection and its object together; that is to say, it is a theory of objective, but not of *absolute* existence. Monistic systems may, as systems, be more sublime and magnificent than systems which are purely reflective; but these last it is which place us in presence of the larger world.

It must be admitted that to run up everything as far as possible to unity is a great intellectual satisfaction ; and doubly so to run up the end of all *action*, the free-play of all the higher *emotions*, and the root-conceptions of all *thought*, into one sole source and end of all. And in fact, to identify the source of Religion and Speculation has been the chief aim and motive power in throwing up Monisms.

But it may be asked,—Supposing a sound philosophy shows this to be impossible, what is it that a sound philosophy has to offer in its place ? If it be not this, what *is* the true aim of philosophical speculation ? I answer,—So to examine human nature in these three branches—action, emotion, and thought—as to discover their true relations to each other. It does not follow, because they cannot be harmonised by a Monism, that they cannot be harmonised at all. It does not follow, because we cannot deduce the laws of the universe from a single Existent, that speculation must lead to theories which cut the ground from under the feet of religion, or that religion demands theories which speculation must declare untenable.

The root of religion is in emotion, the root of speculation is in thought. These are already in harmony, to some extent, by the mere fact of their belonging to a single person. But they are not identical ; and to endeavour to frame a theory of the universe showing them to come from an identical root, is really not to harmonise but rather to denaturalise them, speculation by changing it into religion, religion by changing it into speculation.

Philosophy ought to be content (the facts being as they are) if it can frame a theory of the universe which shall give free scope to the religious emotions ; and this the facts of the case allow it to do, for they point, by the mere enlargement of the definition of existence given by reflection, to the existence of a non-material or unseen world, which is within the range of reflection but beyond the range of science. But the facts do not permit, and perhaps it is fortunate that they do not, any definite theory of a Monistic kind to be erected on the unseen territory.

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[See next page.]

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## NOTICE.

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Shedworth H. 3/20  
Kew  
Harrison  
Martineau

Shadworth H. Lyon

Kinder

Harrison

Martineau

17 Great Quebec St.

26 Nov. 8. 30. Gm. n. l. t. t. e.

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, DEC. 17, 1878,  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.

[PRIVATE.]

W. E. Hutton

## IS "LAPSED INTELLIGENCE" A PROBABLE ORIGIN FOR COMPLEX ANIMAL INSTINCTS?

IN the very interesting lecture on "Animal Intelligence" delivered by Mr. G. J. Romanes, at the British Association in Dublin, and afterwards published in the *Nineteenth Century* for October, he lays down, briefly and somewhat dogmatically, a proposition which seems to me to need a great deal of illustration, as well as proof. It is this,—that "the more complicated among animal instincts" are to be explained as cases of "lapsed intelligence;" in other words, the creatures in which the instinct was first germinated performed, consciously and intelligently, the actions which its posterity now perform automatically. But, says Mr. Romanes, "a great many of the more simple instincts were probably evolved in a more simple way; that is to say, they have probably never been of an intelligent character, but have begun as merely accidental adjustments of the organism to its surroundings, and have then been laid hold of by natural selection and developed into automatic reflexes." Mr. Romanes gave a single example of each kind of instinct. He seems to have no doubt that the instinct which is displayed by new-born chickens in raking with their feet in the gravel or soil beneath them for seed, is a case of "lapsed intelligence;" while he lays it down without hesitation, that the instinct of "shamming death" displayed by certain insects and other animals when in the presence of danger, is not a case either of intelligence, or of "lapsed intelligence," but is a mere result, if I understand him rightly, of hereditary apathy or pocomuranteism, which, by accidentally deceiving its enemies into supposing that the creature which displayed it was dead, has proved beneficial to it, and therefore been strengthened by "natural selection" into a well-marked habit. But it seems to me that Mr. Romanes gives extraordinarily inadequate reasons for either of these conjectures, and leaves them mere conjectures,—not even hypotheses with any clear

[NO. LXXIX.]

presumption in their favour. I am anxious, therefore, to elicit from some of the scientific naturalists and biologists in our Society, their view as to the best criterion, if there be any such criterion, by which we may identify an instinct which is the *débris* of an intelligent and deliberate habit; and by which we may distinguish an instinct of this kind from one which began as a "mere accidental adjustment of the organism to its surroundings," and which was only confirmed and ingrained by the operation of "natural selection" in preserving those specimens in which it was well developed, at the cost of those in which it was absent, or only faintly marked. In my own ill-instructed mind, there still lingers a profound doubt whether "lapsed intelligence" be a true explanation at all of any complicated instinct in the animal world. The intelligence of the higher ants does not seem to be lapsed, but conscious still. The elaborate instincts of some insects in supplying their unborn and unseen offspring with precisely the kind and quantity of food essential to them, can hardly ever have been due to intelligence at all. However, I need hardly say that the considerations I am about to suggest are purely tentative,—put forward rather to elicit from other members of our Society corrections and supplements, than for any value of their own. But with this explanation, I will suggest two criteria by which I should suppose it probable that an instinct representing "lapsed intelligence" would be characterised, wherever it is really of that nature; and will discuss briefly a few illustrations.

May we not say that an instinct which is the remains of former intelligent adaptation, would, as a rule, be found only in creatures that are intelligent still in something like the same degree, though they do not use their intelligence in the now instinctive act? My reason for this suggestion is that it seems very unlikely that a characteristic so enormously important to any creature's welfare as intelligence itself, should "lapse," while one particular result of that intelligence,—and a result, moreover, which it must take many intelligent generations to fix,—is accumulated and preserved. The favourite illustrations which biologists press upon us of lapsed intelligence, are the instincts which man laboriously forms for himself, and by which, when so formed, he walks, balances himself, writes, plays the piano, repeats by rote, and threads his way through crowded streets while entirely unconscious of the out-

ward world; and so forth. And no doubt these illustrations are very much to the point indeed, on one condition,—namely, that the intelligence no longer needed to form the habit, does not disappear when the habit is formed, but passes into other pursuits. For the analogy from the habits of our own race would not in the least justify the notion that, while the habit formed by our intelligence is inherited from one generation to another, the intelligence itself vanishes. On the contrary, the intelligence is generally or often inherited, while the reflex habit is not. I do not mean of course that a certain *aptitude* for these reflex habits is not inherited. Of course the children of agile parents, of musical parents, of parents with a certain physical grace, of mathematical parents, of literary parents, very often inherit a great part of their father's and mother's *aptitudes*. But still every child has to learn to walk for itself; every child has to learn the musical notes and the manipulation of the notes for itself; every child has to learn grace of motion for itself; almost every child has to learn counting and geometry for itself; and there is no such thing known to us as the mere inheritance of a full-grown and complex intellectual habit, without the child's being taught slowly to tread in the path which its parents had previously learned to traverse instinctively, and with the greatest rapidity and certainty. Hence, as far as our own race goes, the general intellect is far more uniformly inherited than the special power; while the instinct itself,—the reflex process by which the nervous system does rapidly and well that which the consciousness taught it to do only gradually and ill—is never inherited full-grown at all. There are well verified cases, I believe, of inherited bodily tricks,—cases where a posthumous son, who has never heard of his father's demeanour, exhibits the very peculiarities of gait or gesture which distinguished him. But that is pretty nearly all. Habits originating in intelligence, but representing, as they often do, in their perfected state, a “lapsed” intelligence, are never inherited, though the aptitude for acquiring them easily may be. On the other hand, nothing is commoner than to find a kindred form of ability in the child of able parents, though usually, perhaps, it is ability with a difference, ability flowing in other directions than that of the parents. If this be so, is it not reasonable to expect that if the lower animals ever do inherit highly elaborate instincts from ancestors which formed those in-

instincts by the force of their own intelligence, they will at least be found to inherit the general intelligence in conjunction *with* the habits which that intelligence engendered? Is it likely that a species now exhibiting little or no intelligence, should inherit its habits from ancestors which had formed highly intelligent habits, without inheriting any substantial amount of the intelligence to which those habits were due? Mr. Darwin somewhere says that the dog's habit of turning round two or three times on its mat before settling itself is a case of "lapsed intelligence," derived from the habit of the wild dog, which was accustomed by this means to scoop out in the prairie-grass a hole suitable for its bed. Well, that is very like the inheritance of a father's trick of gesture by a posthumous child. Certainly it does not take very high original intelligence to engender such a habit as that, and unquestionably the domestic dog has inherited a vast deal more general intelligence, even from its wild ancestor, than would be amply sufficient to account for the origination of such a habit as this. But is there the least reason to suppose that a highly complicated instinct, like that which teaches the swallows, for instance, to migrate in given directions at given seasons, could be inherited from ancestors intelligent enough to have established the habit deliberately and rationally, without inheriting any of the adapting and organising power to which so remarkable an arrangement was due? I gather that Mr. Romanes regards all the more complicated habits to which we give the name of "instincts" as cases of "lapsed intelligence," and amongst them, I suppose, such a one as the swallow's. Is that credible, unless, indeed, it can be shown that modern swallows have also inherited a very considerable share of that intelligence,—enough to mark the species as still capable of originating and organising so great an institution? Is it credible that the particular habit which was the result of such intelligence could have survived, while the intelligence itself had disappeared?

(2.) I venture to suggest a second criterion of an instinct due to "lapsed intelligence" as at least highly probable, namely, that it would usually show traces of adaptation to conditions now more or less obsolete. It is hardly possible for the external conditions to remain absolutely unchanged; so that if the intelligence be really "lapsed," and not continually at work to modify and revise the habit, as the external situation changes, we shall be almost sure

to find in such instincts fragments of testimony to conditions of the past, rather than of the present. Mr. Romanes gives us a very good instance of such an instinct, one speedily formed, though probably not deeply rooted enough to be transmissible to descendants, in the story of Professor Möbius's pike :—"Many of you will probably remember the experiment of Professor Möbius which proves that a pike requires three months to establish an association of ideas between particular kinds of prey, and the fact of their being protected by an invisible wall. This fact was proved by the pike repeatedly dashing its nose against a glass partition in its tank, in fruitless efforts to catch minnows which were confined on the other side of the partition. At the end of three months, however, the requisite association was established, and the pike having learned that its efforts were of no use, ceased to continue them. The sheet of glass was then removed, but the now firmly-established association of ideas never seems to have become disestablished, for the pike never afterwards attacked the minnows, though it fed voraciously on all other kinds of fish. From which we see that a pike is very slow in forming his ideas, and no less slow in again unforming them, thus resembling many respectable members of a higher community, who spend one-half of their lives in assimilating the obsolete ideas of their forefathers, and through the other half of their lives stick to these ideas as to the only possible truths ; they can never learn when the hand of Science has removed a glass partition."

I feel the greatest possible sympathy with Professor Möbius's pike. It is, I believe, fully three months since the hand of Science removed, not precisely a glass partition, but a toll-bar at Waterloo Bridge ; but to this day I can never approach it without thrusting my hand into my pocket, to excavate the coppers which my contemporaries and forefathers were accustomed to require from me, as the essential condition of passing that barrier. Here is a clear case of "lapsed intelligence ;" my habit, at one time intelligently formed, endeavours to provide for circumstances which have ceased to be. And so, too, with the dog, if it be true that his rotatory motion in lying down on the mats of civilisation, really bears a silent and unconscious witness to the deep prairie-grass of his wild ancestor's home. So, too, if the story be true of a beaver confined in a dwelling-

house setting to work to erect an elaborate dam out of the furniture of the room,—here was implicit testimony in his act to the circumstances of his forefathers, without any intelligent adaptation of present means to present ends. One of the favourite orators of the present House of Commons does the same sort of thing as this beaver,—though with words. Falling resonant from a rich and musical voice, and containing here and there those key-notes of party sarcasm and patriotic pride to which a popular assembly, not very particular as to drift, awakens by a kind of instinct, his orations have just this advantage over the beaver's drawing-room dam,—that they gratify the "lapsed intelligence" of others, as well as his own. But scanned with a view to real meaning, two sentences out of three will be found to be the mere vestiges of a "lapsed intelligence," and not to admit of intelligent construing by any one who wishes to find in them a definite predication of any kind, however humble. But I have no doubt that, like the beaver, this orator inherited from a previous Parliamentary generation the art of skilfully constructing effective and resonant periods,—of constructing speeches which want nothing but specific meaning to be perfect models of Parliamentary ability.

Now, judged by the two tests I have suggested, are there many, or any, *complex* animal instincts which look like the results of "lapsed intelligence?" Nothing seems more certain, in the case of Man, than that complex instincts, once intelligently engendered, are no longer inherited in a complete form; though the mind, and the preparatory mental conditions for forming them easily, may be so inherited. No child ever yet developed the habit of walking, much less of writing, without elaborate teaching, as a dog sometimes inherits the habit of begging and of pointing, and a beaver of building, without education. As far as I see, the greater the apparatus of intelligence, the less seems to be the chance of inheriting a specific art which is the product of intelligence. Well, if that be so, is it likely that animals clever enough to have initiated complex habits of great utility to their species, should have handed down to them the full-grown habit in all its perfection and complexity, with hardly any, if any, of the intelligence which made it. I confess to a very profound doubt about the new theory that the *higher* instincts are due to "lapsed intelligence." I should have said that a few cases of comparatively insignificant habit are so; but that the more

complex habits and instincts of animals may be ascribed to almost any hypothesis more reasonably than to this,—some of them to what Mr. Romanes calls “accidental” variation, taken up and fixed by natural selection ; some of them, like the instincts of sex, which are clearly assumed as the basis of the theory of heredity and natural selection, to some much deeper principle of creative purpose ; some of them to the happy blending of different non-intelligent instincts ; but hardly any, I should think, of the more elaborate instincts to the talents of a remote regeneration of the species, happy enough to ingrain a highly co-ordinated system of practice into the actions of their descendants, but not happy enough to transmit to them the raw material of intelligence, from which that legislation was derived.

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to “MR. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S.W.”*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery, vivâ voce.*



TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, JAN. 14, 1879,  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.]

[PRIVATE.]

Mr. Sidgwick

## INCOHERENCE OF EMPIRICAL PHILOSOPHY.

By Empirical Philosophy, I do not mean particularly the philosophy of J. S. Mill, or of Professor Bain, or of any other individual thinker; I mean a broader and simpler view of the world of knowledge, which these writers have in common, but which they share with many others who have not worked out their views in detail. I mean, in fact, the philosophy which students of Natural Science generally have, or tend to have; and also other persons who cannot be called students of Natural Science, but whose minds are impressed and dominated by the triumphant march of modern physical investigation. And in order that my point of view in criticising may be understood, I should like to add that I count myself among these latter persons. I have a general, unanalysed conviction, independent of close reasoning of any kind, that the continually extending conquests of the human intellect over the material world constitute at the present time the most important fact for one who wishes to philosophise,—that is, to think rightly about the universe, or about knowledge in general. Any philosophy that is not thoroughly competent to deal with this fact has thereby a presumption against it that it is behind its age. Just as at the outset of modern philosophy in the age of Descartes (as well as earlier still, in the age of Plato), Mathematics naturally presented itself as the type of solid and definite knowledge, so, it seems to me, the type is now furnished by the sciences that rest on experience; to which mathematics—in the natural *primâ facie* view—stands in the subordinate relation of an instrument.

I am therefore as much disposed as any one can be to go to experience for a test of truth, and to accept the conditions that experience imposes as guarantees of credibility. Only I find myself unable, even with the aid of the eminent thinkers above mentioned, to work out  
[No. 80.]

a coherent system of philosophy on this basis. Hence the title and scope of my paper.

I will first state briefly the cardinal positions of Empirical Philosophy, as I conceive it.

I. That the ideas, concepts, &c., which are the materials of knowledge, come from experience; *i.e.*, from presentation to the mind of the realities which the ideas represent.

I give this doctrine first, because of the important place which it seems to have held in the view of the founder of English Empiricism, Locke; and which it has consequently occupied in most expositions of the philosophy since his time. I shall not, however, discuss its validity in the present paper; because however interesting it may be from a purely psychological point of view, it does not appear to me to have any fundamental philosophical importance.

For, in the first place, we may fully grant that all ideas are derived from experience; and yet hold that universal and immutable relations among these ideas admit of being intuitively known by abstract reflection, and that it is the apprehension of such relations that constitutes knowledge, in the highest sense of the term. In fact, this is just Locke's view, as all readers of the Fourth Book of his "Essay" are aware,—though it is commonly overlooked in the references popularly made to "Locke and Bacon" as co-origimators of the Philosophy of Experience. For such a view, though "empirical" as regards the materials out of which knowledge is constructed, is essentially "intuitional" or "a priori" as regards the mode of constructing them into knowledge; and this latter is the point philosophically most important.

But secondly, even as regards the materials of knowledge, it does not appear that the ascertainment of the origin of ideas can have any decisive effect; on account of the great changes which ideas frequently undergo, in the course of their use as instruments of scientific reasoning. We may find instances of such change in the nomenclature and terminology of almost any science. To begin with mathematics: I have no doubt myself that the ideas of "straight line," "circle," "square" are derived from experience; that is, from seeing and moving among things that appeared straight, round, and square. But it is now admitted by all schools, that in the degree of refinement in which these notions are now used in mathematical

reasonings, it is impossible to produce any objects of experience which perfectly exemplify them. In physical sciences, however, this change of meaning is often more marked. Take the notion "Force." This seems indubitably derived from experience of muscular exercise, and hence its original significance must have included, at least, some vague representation of the movements of muscles, or of the limbs moved by muscles, and also some of the specific feeling of muscular effort. But by "Force," as used in physical reasonings, we mean merely a cause which we conceive obscurely through its relation to its effect, motion; which motion, again, may be merely possible, not actual. Hence, whatever be the conditions within which our knowledge of forces is confined, it does not appear that the origin or original content of the notion can have much to do with these conditions. Similarly in chemistry, the ideas of "acid" and "salt" must have originally represented merely the flavours experienced by tasting the things so called; but now we regard such flavours as mere accidents of the relation of the things we call "acids" and "salts" to our palate, and not even universally inseparable accidents. In psychology, again, the difference between the original character of the ideas by means of which we think about mental processes, and the character they ultimately acquire when our reasoning has become scientifically precise, is still more striking. For almost all our terms originally represented physical, not psychical, facts; and the physical significance often clings to the idea in such a way as to confuse our psychological reasonings, unless we take pains to get rid of it; while at the same time, thinkers of all schools would agree that we *have* to get rid of it. Thus, "impression" meant the physical fact of stamping or pressing, "apprehension" meant "grasping with the hand," "intention" and "emotion" suggested physical "straining" and "stirring up." But we all put these physical meanings out of our view, when we are trying to think clearly and precisely about psychical phenomena; however interesting it may be to note them when we are studying the history of thought. Hence, I conclude that the settlement of the time-honoured question of the "origin of our ideas"—so far as it admits of being settled by received scientific methods—will not really determine anything, either as regards the *materials* of knowledge, or as regards the mode of constructing knowledge out of them.

I pass on, then, to consider the second fundamental doctrine of Empiricism.

II. That all kinds of knowledge, all true judgments or propositions, are founded on experience: not necessarily, I understand, upon sensible experience—that would be Sensationalism, rather than Empiricism—but upon experience of some kind: that is, upon immediate cognitions of some individual facts. By the phrase “founded on experience” must be meant that all true judgments are either such immediate cognitions, or capable of being proved by these. This must be meant, as otherwise the proposition does not characterize Empiricism with sufficient distinctness. For modern transcendentalism claims, in a certain sense, to be “founded on experience;” it claims that the universal truths which it regards as the principles of knowledge are implied in particular experiences, though they do not require to be proved by them. Again, some theological creeds which we commonly regard as superstitious are, in a manner, “founded” on specific religious experiences; but we consider them superstitious, because they include propositions which we do not think capable of being proved by such experiences.

Now, friends and foes alike regard it as a negative characteristic of popular Empirical Philosophy that it aims at clearing away transcendentalism and superstition, metaphysical chimeras and theological dreams, what is falsely taken for knowledge by the credulity of the speculative and the credulity of the sentimental.

Let us examine, then, how the proposition so defined is to be established as a cardinal doctrine of philosophy.

Now here we must first ask what it is that philosophy offers or attempts to do for us in respect of knowledge. Obviously, it does not only tell us that certain propositions are true, certain things known; it aims at establishing a general theory of what *can* be known, at giving us a general criterion, by which we may distinguish real from apparent knowledge. Now, such a general criterion, as established by empirical philosophy, must obviously be empirical, otherwise the philosophy would be inconsistent with itself: that is, it must be founded on experience, on particular cognitions that this, that, and the other thing not merely appear to be, but really *are* known. Now, how are these particular knowledges respecting knowledge to be obtained? They must either be proved or assumed;

and it does not much matter which we say, because if we say that they are proved, this proof can only be given by assuming similar particulars, since it would obviously be inconsistent with the criterion to be established if we allowed any part of its proof to rest on universal propositions as an ultimate basis.

What, then, are these particulars which Empirical Philosophy must assume at the outset of its procedure, and which, therefore, cannot require to be guaranteed by the criterion which this procedure is supposed ultimately to establish? Popular Empiricism seems to me to give at different times two different answers to this question; and by shifting about from the one to the other, and sometimes mixing the two, its argument, I think, gains in plausibility what it loses in clearness.

1. Sometimes the answer is, explicitly or implicitly, that we start with what is generally admitted to be solid knowledge,—that is, not the disputed and controverted matter which is found to some extent in all departments of study, and of which Metaphysics and Theology entirely consist; but the undoubted facts of history, natural and civil, and the generalisations of positive science. Such knowledge, we see, is commonly supposed to be based upon experience, and hence the examination of it naturally leads us to the empirical criterion. Mathematics, no doubt, constitutes a *prima facie* exception to the generalisation that “all solid knowledge is based on particular experiences,” since mathematicians commonly hold that their conclusions are attained by *a priori* reasoning from universal truths intuitively known. But let us suppose that this exception can be explained away, in Mill’s or some other manner; and let us grant that being “founded on experience” is a characteristic which we find, on examination, to belong to all beliefs which are commonly admitted as constituting solid knowledge. It must still be clear that Empiricism cannot give the presence of this characteristic, as a reason for philosophically taking this generally admitted knowledge to be really and certainly what it seems; otherwise it would argue in a manifest circle, as it would start with assuming those beliefs to be knowledge which possess a certain characteristic, and then infer that this characteristic is the true criterion of sound knowledge. Hence it must give some other reason for accepting these beliefs, and this reason can only be that they are generally admitted to be knowledge; that is, it must

start with accepting the criterion of General Consent; the acceptance of which, we may observe, is commonly thought to be a distinctive mark of an antagonistic school,—that of “Intuitive” or “Common Sense” philosophy. This, however, is not in itself an objection,—*fas est et ab hoste doceri*. It is more important to note that if Empiricism accepts this criterion at the outset of its procedure, it cannot shake it off, as it seems inclined to do, at the end. For even if we find that all that is commonly admitted to be knowledge has also the characteristic of being founded on experience, this can give us no ground for ultimately regarding Experience, rather than General Consent, as the true criterion of knowledge. Hence this line of reasoning cannot justify us in rejecting any beliefs that may be equally guaranteed by general consent, even when they are not founded on experience; it cannot, therefore, establish the Empirical theory of “what we *can* know.”

This seems so plain, that I need not enter into further difficulties involved in the acceptance of the criterion of General Consent,—as that the consent of the majority to science and history is ignorantly given, or not really given at all; while if we mean “consent of experts,” we have to decide arbitrarily who are experts; that the consent of one age differs from that of another, and that in past ages the criterion would have certified many doctrines that we now reject as erroneous and superstitious, &c.—especially since these considerations have been forcibly urged by more than one empirical philosopher. Suppose, then, that we give up the criterion of General Consent, so far as our philosophical procedure is concerned. Only, mind that we must give it up in earnest, and must not afterwards, in philosophising, introduce propositions because “no sensible man,” or “no one with the slightest knowledge of physical science,” doubts them. We must pass, then, to consider the second answer that Empiricists give to our question,—What particulars of knowledge have we to start with, in order to establish the Empiricist theory of knowledge?

2. The answer that Mill and others generally give to the question, when formally put is, that they start, as philosophers, with what is immediately known, without inference of any kind, and establish all other truths by canons of inference based upon experience.

The question then arises,—How are we to know philosophically what is immediately known? Are we to take the general agreement

of mankind as evidence of this? That would bring us round again to all the difficulties already discussed. Are we to accept each man's own view of what he immediately knows? This certainly seems in accordance with empirical principles, as all experience must be primarily the experience of individual minds. But if we take, unsifted and uncriticised, what any human being is satisfied that he or she immediately knows, we open the door to all sorts of mal-observation in material matters, and to all sorts of superstition in spiritual matters,—as superstitious beliefs commonly rest, in a great measure, upon what certain persons believe themselves to have seen, heard, or otherwise personally experienced. And in fact, no empiricist adopts this alternative; there is no point upon which empirical philosophers are more agreed than on the incapacity of ordinary persons to distinguish their immediate from their mediate knowledge. Shall we, then, say that we take each man's experience so far as it commends itself to other men? But if we mean "other men generally," this is only our old criterion of General Consent, in a negative instead of a positive aspect. Why should any man's experience be submitted to the judgment of men in general. It seems plausible to talk of one man's experience being confirmed by that of others. But I do not see what right we have to assume that one man's immediate cognitions *ought* to coincide with the immediate cognitions of others; still less, why they ought to coincide with their inferences.

In short, it seems clear that if Empiricists do not trust common men's judgment as to their own immediate knowledge, they can hardly put them forward as trustworthy judges of the immediate knowledge of others. Thus the only course remaining seems to be that we should accept the experience of individuals after it has passed the scrutiny of experts.

But thus we are forced to face the question,—Who are experts in discriminating different kinds of knowledge? I ask this rather anxiously, because I see a serious danger threatening us; that, namely, of having to admit among experts the Transcendental or Intuitional Metaphysicians, who say that they immediately know universal truths. If we once admit them, I do not see how we can hope to establish the cardinal doctrine of Empiricism. Yet how can we exclude them, except by assuming the empirical philosophers to be the only real

experts? which will hardly do in an argument that aims at proving the empirical philosophy to be true.

Well, I do not wish to take my stand on this difficulty. I have no love for the transcendental metaphysicians; and perhaps there may be some way of excluding them which I do not at present see. Let them be excluded; and let us only recognise, as experts in discriminating immediate knowledge, persons who will not allow anything to be immediately known except particular facts. Still, serious difficulties remain; because even these experts disagree profoundly among themselves. I am not now referring to any minor divergences, but to the fundamental disagreement between two lines of empirical thought which—if I may coin a word for clearness' sake—I will call respectively *materialistic* and *mentalistic*. When a Materialistic Empiricist affirms that physical science is based upon experience he means that it is based on immediate knowledge of particular portions of something solid and extended, definitely shaped and sized, moving about in space of three dimensions. Whether he regards this matter as also coloured, resonant and odorous, is a more doubtful question; but probably he would say that colour, sound, and odour are effects on the mind—or perhaps on the brain?—of the molecular movements of material particles. I cannot profess to make his views on this point even apparently consistent, if he is a thorough-going materialist, without making him say what seems extravagantly absurd; but it is enough for our present purposes that he at any rate believes himself to know immediately—through touch, if in no other way—matter with the qualities first mentioned.

The Mentalistic Empiricist, on the other hand, maintains that nothing can be immediately known except mental facts, consciousness or feeling of some kind; and that if we are right in assuming a non-mental cause of these mental facts—which he is generally inclined to doubt—we must at any rate regard this cause as unknown in every respect except its mere existence, and this last as only known by inference.

These two views seem to me mutually exclusive. It is true that there are some persons of comprehensive intellect, like Mr. Herbert Spencer, who appear to combine the two; but the simpler sort of empirical philosophers, who take either one view or the other, but

not both together, are, I think, clearly a majority. And we may observe that the main line of English empirical philosophy, from Locke downwards, is definitely Mentalistic.

How, then, is Empiricism to deal with this disagreement?—for it cannot be denied to be rather serious. The more thoughtful Materialists, like Dr. Maudsley, do not exactly say that there are no mental facts which we may contemplate introspectively. But they hold that no scientific results have ever been reached by such contemplation; and they say very truly that physical science has always progressed by taking the materialistic point of view, and that there is no admitted progressive science of psychology, proceeding by the introspective method, which can be set beside the physical sciences. Hence, they boldly infer that there never will be such a science; and in fact, they are inclined to lump the Mentalists along with Transcendentalists and others, under the common notion of Metaphysicians (used as a term of abuse), and to charge them all together with using the Subjective Method, condemned as fruitless by experience. The Mentalists do not quite reply in the same strain; indeed, they have rather a tenderness for the Materialists, whose aid, as against Transcendentalism and Superstition, is not to be despised. But they say that the Materialists are inexpert in psychological analysis, and that what they call “matter” is really, when analysed, a complex mental fact, of which some elements are immediately known and others added by unconscious inference.

Well, let us suppose this controversy somehow settled. Let us grant, as the supposition most favourable to Empiricism, that we immediately know the external world, so far as it is necessary to know it for the purpose of constructing physical science. But now who are the “we” who have this knowledge? Each one of us can only have experience of a very small portion of this world; and if we abstract what is known through memory, and therefore mediately, the portion becomes small indeed. In order to get to what “we” conceive “ourselves” to know as “matter of fact” respecting the world, as extended in space and time—to such merely historical knowledge as we commonly regard not as “resting” on experience, but as constituting the experience on which science rests—we must assume the general trustworthiness of memory, and the general trust-

worthiness of testimony under proper limitations and conditions. I do not for a moment say that we have no right to make these assumptions; I only do not see how we can prove that we have such a right, from what we immediately know. Empiricists sometimes reply that these and similar assumptions are continually "verified" by experience. But what does "verified" exactly mean? If it means "proved true," I defy any one to construct the proof, or even to advance a step in it, without assuming one or more of the propositions that are to be verified. What is really meant, I conceive, by "verification" in this case is that these assumptions are accompanied by anticipations of feelings or perceptions which are continually found to resemble or agree with the more vivid feelings or perceptions which constitute the main stream of experience. Now, granting that such resemblance or agreement may be immediately known, I yet cannot see that anything is gained towards the establishment of the cardinal doctrine of Empiricism. For there is a similar agreement between actual experience and the anticipations accompanying all the general propositions—mathematical, logical, or physical—which philosophers of a different school affirm themselves to know immediately; so that this "verification" can hardly justify one set of assumptions, as against the other.

Similar difficulties occur when we examine how Empirical Philosophy passes from particular facts to general laws of nature; and especially to the "law of causation," which Mill and others use deductively for the philosophical establishment of other laws. But I could not dwell on these difficulties, without saying over again what has been more than once better said by others; and perhaps the above points may suffice for an evening's debate. After all that I have said, a man of sense will doubtless conclude that he will go on trusting experience and the empirical sciences. Here I shall quite agree with him. We cannot get along without the empirical sciences. But we might perhaps make a shift to dispense with Empirical Philosophy.

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## NOTICE.

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*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery, vivâ voce.*

J. Knowles

Dr James Stephen

Leslie Stephen

Huxley

Sidgwick

Mark Pattison

Mivart

Self.

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TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, FEB. 11, 1879,  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.]

[PRIVATE.]

Mr Justice Stephen

## ON THE UTILITY OF TRUTH.

OUR Secretary having asked me to get him out of a difficulty, by writing something which the Society could discuss, I have tried to do so, at very short notice indeed. This must be my excuse for the imperfection and want of system which I fear will be found in these remarks.

A paper called, "Force, Energy, and Will," by Mr. Mivart, published in the *Nineteenth Century* for May last, contains the following passages. I do not think their detachment from their context does their author injustice:—

"It seems to me demonstrable that without Theism, we have no certain ground for affirming the necessary universal goodness of Truth, for without Theism we have no certain ground for affirming that the objective world and its laws are good, whilst there is much apparent evidence the other way." (p. 946.)

"If the doubts here expressed are well founded, there would surely be much wisdom in the saying attributed to Voltaire,—'Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer;' and it appears to me that the philanthropist who declines the postulate" (I understand this to mean the postulate that there is a God) "here advocated, should pause before propagating his negative convictions. It may, to say the least, be far more philanthropic in such a one, instead of seeking to tear down systems the congruity of which with human welfare experience has demonstrated, to select from amongst what he deems the mythologies of his day that which he considers the most calculated to promote human happiness, and to more or less energetically support it." (p. 947.) After quoting passages in which Mr. Bain and Mr. Mill speak of Truth as being valuable on the ground of its utility, Mr. Mivart adds:—"As to the general utility of Truth, there can, of course, be no question, any more than that the love of it ought to be an all-powerful sentiment. But I go further [No. 81.]

than this, and in common with all those who accept the Theistic postulate, can *logically* as well as heartily affirm that however perplexing the aspect of the Universe, it must yet be good, and the most complete knowledge of its truth desirable for mankind."

I propose to make a few observations on these views. In a part of Mr. Mivart's paper which precedes the passages quoted (p. 945), he argues that on no hypothesis can a knowledge of Truth, in the extreme sense of a knowledge of all facts whatever, be desirable. No one (whether he believed in God or not) would think it necessary to pain the feelings of a dying man by telling him bad news, or to instruct a murderer in the properties of poisons. The question, then, is confined to Truth in a wider sense, to what Mr. Mivart calls "the general laws of Nature." I dislike the phrase, but let it pass. Practically, his view appears to me to come to this:—A true general conception of the universe, as far as it is known to us, is advantageous if we assume the existence of God, but not otherwise. The reason given is that "without Theism, we have no certain ground for affirming that the objective world and its laws are good." This appears to involve the notion that no knowledge can be good, unless the thing known is good. Surely this is a mistake. It is quite as important to know things bad in themselves, as to know things good in themselves,—nay, it is generally more important. The knowledge of evil, may enable you to avoid it. The knowledge of good may, under circumstances, be superfluous. If we were all in perfect health during our whole lives, the most pressing reason for the study of human physiology would be removed. The knowledge of disease is valuable, not although, but because disease is an evil. The knowledge of our physical constitution would be mere matter of curiosity, if we all had absolutely perfect health, and were exempt from injury. Be this as it may, however, what difference can "the Theistic postulate" make in the matter? Mr. Mivart's view on the subject must be gathered from the juxtaposition of two passages in his article:—"Truth is but a relation of conformity between mind and objective existence, and if objective existence happens to be itself undesirable, can moral conformity to it be always the reverse?" (The conformity, by the way, is not moral, but intellectual; a man who studies the Plague in order to cure it, surely is not in any

relation of "moral conformity" to it.) "Those who accept the Theistic postulate can logically, as well as heartily, affirm that however perplexing the aspect of the universe, it must yet be good, and the most complete knowledge of its truth desirable for mankind."

I am quite unable to understand this. The knowledge of the manner in which cholera is propagated is bad *primâ facie*, because cholera is bad, but believe in God (or if Mr. Mivart prefers it, accept the Theistic hypothesis), and then both the cholera, and the knowledge of its mode of procedure, become good. I would propose the following questions to Mr. Mivart:—1. Is the knowledge of the manner in which cholera is propagated of any other use to a believer in God, than that it enables him to avoid or cure, and teach others to avoid or cure, the cholera? 2. Is not this knowledge equally beneficial for these purposes to Atheists? 3. If so, how can the value of truth in this matter be affected by a belief in God; and if not in this matter, why in any other matter? 4. If a belief in God "makes objective existence desirable," does it make the cholera desirable? If Yes, why is knowledge of the means by which cholera may be avoided desirable? If No, how does "the Theistic postulate" make any truth desirable which would not be desirable on the Atheistic postulate?

One very strong case occurs to my mind as to the importance of the knowledge of an alleged "objective existence in itself undesirable." The Roman Catholic Catechism says that the wicked will live for ever in the flames of hell. This can hardly be called objectively desirable, upon any hypothesis or postulate, but surely it is important to be known, if it is true; and this, I presume, Mr. Mivart would hardly deny. But if it is important that the truth of the doctrine should be known, assuming it to be true, how can it be otherwise than important that its falsehood should be known, if it is false, or its doubtfulness, if it is doubtful? Mr. Mivart's view seems to lead to the strange result that unless you believe in God, you have no interest in knowing the truth about Hell. To me, the converse doctrine that unless you believe in hell, it is a matter of comparative indifference whether or not the world was made by God, appears much more plausible. I must, however, fairly confess that I am, for the reasons already given, so completely puzzled by Mr. Mivart's logic, that I do not propose to attempt to follow it any further.

I must, however, make a few remarks upon his suggestion that an Atheist ought to select from what he deems the "mythologies of his day that which he considers the most calculated to support human happiness, and more or less energetically support it." How, he asks, can any one who regards such conduct as grossly immoral reconcile that opinion with the belief that morals are based upon utility? "If that is moral which 'tends to increase the happiness of men,' how can that be 'immoral' which, *ex hypothesi*, has that very tendency?"

In order to answer this question fairly, we must assume that a man is convinced that the progress of knowledge has made the existence of God highly improbable; that physical science shows no traces of the existence of such a Being; that history explains the steps by which a belief in his existence grew up; and that it also discloses a state of things, past and present, which it is hardly possible to reconcile, without the most violent and unproved assumptions, with the belief that the state of things in which we live was designed and is overruled by a Conscious Being, of Supreme Intelligence and Goodness.

A man who seriously and deliberately holds this view ought, says, Mr. Mivart, to choose what he regards as the most beneficent of the existing mythologies, and support it, because such conduct will promote human happiness. In what manner—assuming, for the sake of the argument, the truth of Atheism—would this enormous falsehood promote human happiness? In the first place, it is a plain matter of fact that no one can play fast and loose with truth. To accustom yourself to lying on one subject, is like accustoming yourself to indulging any other vice, under some special restriction. It is morally impossible to maintain that restriction. A man who deliberately, systematically, and "more or less energetically" lied on subjects of this transcendent importance, would inevitably become false in everything. I should not trust such a man's word on any common matter. I am sure Mr. Mivart himself would feel that any one offered him a deadly insult who said, "I believe you have taken your own advice. I don't suppose you are foolish enough really to believe the religion you profess. I have no doubt you are a sensible Atheist, selecting from amongst what you deem the mythologies of the day that which you consider the most calculated to promote

human happiness. I understand and applaud you." But though such would, of course, be Mr. Mivart's feelings in the case supposed, they would be inconsistent with his theory ; at least, his indignation ought to be limited to being suspected of Atheism. He ought to feel complimented rather than otherwise by the suggestion that, being an Atheist, he had at least the sense and modesty to be besides a systematic liar.

The supposed Atheist, however, would not only immolate his own moral character on the shrine of general benevolence. It is difficult to see what object he would gain by it for others. If there is no God and no future state, what good do mankind at large get by believing in them ? Which of the "mythologies of the day" is so obviously beneficial, apart from its truth, that a man ought to convert his whole life into one huge lie, and try to make his neighbours see history, science, political economy, politics, law, morals, literature—every subject which interests men as such—in a false light, for the sake of bolstering it up ? If the doctrine that "the wicked shall live for ever in the flames of hell" is false, if it is false that any real advantage is to be obtained by confession to a priest, if all the spiritual authority as to faith and morals claimed by the Pope and his clergy is a mere fiction, can any one assert that they are, nevertheless, so pre-eminently beneficent, that in order to believe them it is worth while to make nearly everything else more or less incredible ? Not to insist on this, take the cardinal doctrines of all doctrines more or less common to all Christians, the doctrine of a good God,—the doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount. If these doctrines are false, are they useful ? To me, it appears that the utility of each depends on its truth. If the world in which we live was made by a good God, the way in which we ought to look at it, and take its good and evil, will be different from that in which we ought to look at it if we have no reason to hold that opinion. If all men are brothers, and if another life is to redress the defects of this life, much may be endured and many things may be undertaken which it would be weak to endure and foolish to undertake, if the world has come to be what it is by the operation of a prolonged struggle for existence in which the weakest goes to the wall. If Jesus Christ was mistaken in saying that we are all the children of one Father, it seems to me that he cannot have been right in saying,

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,” “Blessed are the meek,” “Blessed are they that mourn,” and the like. And how mankind are to be benefited by keeping up one fundamental error for the sake of the minor errors which spring from it, I do not understand.

The falsehood which Mr. Mivart thinks a benevolent Atheist ought to tell might, perhaps, be beneficial to those who have got the good things of life, because it might tend to keep the poor and wretched quiet, in the hope that Lazarus would in time change places with Dives, but this possible accidental advantage to the rich ought not to be described as a tendency to increase the happiness of mankind at large.

It is to me matter of surprise to find Christians, and especially Roman Catholics, taking the view put forward by Mr. Mivart. There is hardly any topic on which eminent writers have been so fond of insisting as the antithesis between the Christian and the worldly point of view. That Christianity imposes restraints on human nature; that it exalts much which the world despises, and abases much which the world exalts; that it treats as splendid vices many things which would by common standards be regarded as virtues, and as supernatural virtues much which would otherwise be looked upon as morbid, are the common-places of preachers of all Churches. Asceticism in all its forms is one broad illustration of this side of Christianity. How can it be regarded as useful, if Christianity is altogether false? and how can a man who believes it to be false, suppose that he is benefiting the world by supporting an unnatural state of mind founded on a delusion? What should we think of a man who falsely pretended to believe in Confucius, for fear the women of China should let their feet grow to their natural size?

I cannot, however, think that even if a person did believe that Christianity was both beneficial and false, he ought to support it. I quite agree in the doctrine that Truth is valuable, not as an end in itself, but as a means to ends; but I think that it is an indispensable means to all the ends which collectively make up human happiness, and the supposition that it can ever be advantageous to mankind on a large scale, and in the long-run, to believe in a falsehood which affects important parts of their conduct, appears to me as unlikely as that the relations of space or number will alter.

Mr. Mivart himself admits, as every one must, that as to the general utility of Truth there can be no question. I believe that the alleged exceptions to the general rule are not really exceptions. Most of them are cases in which it would be more correct to say that an imperfect statement of truth is better than none. For instance, language corresponds very imperfectly with facts. Truth, in particular cases, can only be hinted at or conveyed by metaphors or parables. In some instances, exaggerated statements must be made, in order to attract attention ; but in all these cases it is more correct to say that truth, imperfectly expressed, is beneficial, than to say that falsehood is beneficial. I do not know that any one has ever maintained that deliberate, intentional falsehood, on a subject of general interest and great importance, is, or can be, beneficial, except in regard to religion ; and this has usually been maintained by unbelievers. It is an entirely new experience to me to meet with a man who at once affirms his creed to be true, and says that people who conscientiously reject it ought to pretend to believe it.

One remark in conclusion. Mr. Mivart speaks with something like a sneer of "our friends who are so zealous for Truth." He says, "The language used has sometimes been so strong as . . . . . to imply the existence of a sort of superstitious awe, as if Truth was something almost supernatural." I must own that I do not think any language can be too strong upon this subject. I think that people ought to feel an awe, deep and genuine, and not in the least superstitious, upon the subject of Truth. I think that the temptation to lie, and that the temptation to believe that a falsehood is a short cut to some desirable end, is the strongest, the most subtle, the most universal of all temptations. It is the temptation to which every cheat, and thief, and forger, and coiner gives way, and it is quite as strong in other shapes amongst people far too respectable to steal or forge. To see the truth and to speak the truth are operations of the greatest difficulty. They can be performed only by constant care, and a persevering determination to shun neither danger, nor labour, nor discredit. The doctrine that this is the path to all that is worth having, and that apparent exceptions to it are temptations to be withstood, is a hard one to learn, and like other moral doctrines resting on expediency, it requires faith ; and it is the consciousness of the difficulty of keeping it steadily in view, and of

acting upon it under all circumstances, that makes me look with indignation on attempts to weaken it, by appropriating it to theological ends.

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write to that effect to "MR. JAMES KNOWLES, The Hollies, Clapham Common, S.W."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery, vivâ voce.*

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 1879,  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.]

[PRIVATE.]

Mr Leslie Stephen

## THE UNIFORMITY OF NATURE.

I MUST begin by an apology which is not, I fear, unprecedented in this Society, for the roughness of the following remarks. I have been unexpectedly called upon to honour a bill, before I have provided the necessary funds. I am forced to put down a few crude thoughts upon a difficult problem, without taking time for further reflection; and I can offer them as nothing more than a text for discussion.

Mr. Lewes maintained, in the *Problems of Life and Mind*, that the so-called postulate or axiom which asserts the Uniformity of Nature is an identical proposition. The point was debated in the early numbers of *Mind* by Professor Bain, Mr. Pollock, and Mr. Roden Noel, and has recently been discussed with great subtlety by Mr. Shadworth Hodgson, in his *Philosophy of Reflection*. I have, unfortunately, not had the time to read this last contribution to the subject with the attention which it demands; and I am not certain that I quite appreciate Mr. Hodgson's position. It seems, however, that he would accept Mr. Lewes's statement as at least an approximation to the truth; and I incline to the same view, though not without a sense of difficulties which I would gladly see cleared up.

I will begin by asking what is the proposition which we do, as a matter of fact, believe to be true, though we have so much difficulty in saying *why* we believe it? The shortest method, for purposes of discussion, is to answer by an example, and I take a familiar one. I believe that fire burns certain materials, that it will do so everywhere and always, and in expressing this belief I clearly assume the truth of the axiom in question. But what is it that the axiom enables me precisely to say? Will it justify me in denying that the Three Children passed with clothes unburnt through the furnace? Not by itself; for upon the assumptions made by believers in the story, the divine power is a natural force; and therefore a new con-

[No. 82.]

dition was introduced, which might render the fire harmless. The conditions not being identical, the axiom asserts that the result will not be identical, and so far, is not affected by this or other so-called miraculous stories.

Again, does the statement "fire burns paper" justify me in being absolutely certain that this candle, for example, will burn this bit of paper? No, for the paper now in my hand may differ chemically from other material called paper, and be unflammable; or again, the flame may be of a different nature. My expectation should be proportioned to the confidence with which I identify this paper and this flame with the class paper and flame whose properties are previously known. In short, whatever view we take, we must admit that there is an element of uncertainty, however small, in regard to any prediction of a future event. We cannot say with absolute certainty that the roof will not fall in and crush us the next minute. It may be full of dry-rot. We can hardly say with absolute certainty that the sun will rise to-morrow. We do not know that there may not be some cosmical forces in operation which have hitherto escaped our notice, but which may suddenly manifest themselves to-night, and alter the rotation of the earth. In short, to be absolutely confident of any prediction, we must be omniscient; we must be certain that we have taken into account all the relevant conditions.

I observe, in passing, for it may have some bearing upon the argument, that a bare assertion of such possibilities has little or no influence upon our belief, for it can have none upon our practice. If any fact is made more intelligible in the slightest degree by a hypothesis, however improbable, we may assign some weight to that hypothesis in estimating future probabilities. But the sense of the general uncertainty of things can have no more force than a general principle of scepticism. It cannot affect relative probabilities, and therefore cannot affect our choice. We may, therefore, neglect it, as having no conceivable application to events. A hypothesis is absolutely valueless, till it has some sort of peg to hang itself to.

So far, then, it appears that the axiom of uniformity entitles me to predict an event only upon the assumption that precisely the same conditions are operative. The fire will burn the paper, *if* that is fire, *if* this is paper, *if* no previously unnoticed conditions intrude. But

to say this is, according to Mr. Lewes, to reduce the axiom to an identical proposition. We have only said that the same event will be,—the same event.

It is possible, however, to vary our hypothesis, so as to bring out another view of the discussion. That candle is lighted. I do not, therefore, assume that all candles are lighted, though I do assume that all lighted candles burn paper. The difference is, according to one view of causation, simply that I have never seen a fire which did not burn, whilst I have seen unlighted candles. Had the association been equally constant in one case as the other, the expectation would be equally confident. I should have said that candles were always lighted as certainly as that fire burnt paper. To this it is replied, that the expectation is, in many cases, not generated in fact. All observed swans have been white; but I see no impossibility in a black swan. A magnet attracts steel. I see two other objects, which to my senses are identical with the magnet and the steel of a previous experiment. Yet I am not certain that attraction will follow when they are brought together; for one may not be a magnet and the other may not be steel; or a hitherto unknown law of magnetic attraction may be revealed by the new conditions; are then the whiteness of swans, the attractive powers of magnets, the lighting of candles, simply cases of association, more or less permanent, of two independent objects, and in each case is my expectation of a recurrence of the phenomenon to be proportioned to the frequency of the observed association?

I feel myself here to be on the brink of a boundless controversy; but I must try to indicate an opinion, though I am not confident of its coherence or truth. When I assert that in one case the observed connection is casual and in the other causal, I clearly draw an important distinction, even if I only assert one connection to be variable and the other invariable. But how, if at all, is the axiom concerned in the distinction? It is clearly fulfilled in both cases. In the case of the candle, it forces me to declare not that all candles are alight, or that all swans are white, but that the series of events which culminates in a lighted candle or a white swan cannot be the same with that which culminates in an extinguished candle and a black swan. Somebody—as I infer unhesitatingly—must have lighted the candle, or the swan must have had (say) different

food. To deny this would be (on Mr. Lewes's theory) to deny an identical proposition. It merely amounts to assuming, according to him, that if two processes differ anywhere, they cannot be all along identical. When I say that all magnets attract steel, I am, of course, making an identical proposition, if the definition of a magnet includes the attraction of steel; and so it would be an identical proposition to say that swans are white and candles lighted, if swan and candle include whiteness and lighting. But this mode of statement seems to reduce Mr. Lewes's theory to a mere verbal puzzle; and I confess that it seemed to me, when I first read it, to be little better. Subsequent reflection has brought me to accept it more nearly, though I do not know that I can put the conclusion quite clearly.

The assumption of a uniformity in Nature is involved, I have said, in all cases, although it operates differently, and it is very difficult in either case to distinguish it from an identical proposition. To explain an event fully, is to show how it follows from some previous data. The assumption necessarily involved in the case of the candle is that the data from which a lighted candle are inferred are different from those implied by the unlighted candle. But I make the same assumption in regard to the fire which does burn, and the fire (if there be such a fire) which does not burn. They must be the products of different processes. If I could go no further, if the two flames were non-distinguishable by any other characteristic, I should call the burning power of some flames *accidental*—meaning simply that its presence or absence in a given body would be due to some undiscovered difference in an antecedent state. When I assert the connection to be causal, I seem to be going further. Thus, to take a rather different case, I see water pouring into one hole, and out of another. If the two currents are due to two separate pumps, worked independently, there is no causal connection. If I find that the two holes are connected by a pipe, the connection is causal; for then I cannot suppose the water not to flow out, so long as it is flowing in, without the contradiction of supposing that the pipe and water have not the properties which I assume them to have. In the so-called accidental case, the observed coincidence when traced back, leads to an indefinite multiplication of conditions. I could foretell either coincidence, if I had a complete section (so to

speak) of the universe at a preceding period, and could trace out all the intervening processes leading to the simultaneous action of two pumps. But in the last, the coincidence must follow, so long as certain simple laws are observed,—which means, so long as certain general facts are true. If the water and the pipes which I see have the properties of other water and pipes, the inflow implies the outflow. When I assert that the lighting of the candle is accidental, the burning by fire causal, I am really only asserting that the particular process which results in lighted candles is the sum of an indefinite variety of conditions, which I cannot assign, but which are certainly not involved in the simple phenomenon, candle. The combination of the burning with the other properties of the fire depends upon some conditions also unknown in their completeness, but which *may* be reducible to some simple law. I might, for example, be able to see that the same molecular movements which imply the evolving of light imply also the process of combustion. I suppose, therefore, that the bare association implies something more, or, in other words, that the phenomenon is a particular case of much simpler and more general facts. But a mere observation cannot tell me what more. There is somewhere a pipe connecting the two holes, but I cannot see it. So I may observe a uniformity in the results of arithmetical processes which I afterwards find to be implied in simpler conditions. I might convince myself by experiment that if any number is divisible by nine, the sum of its digits is divisible by nine. I afterwards see this to be already involved in simple arithmetical principles. I imagine that to call a connection causal is to make an analogous assertion. The empirical rule in arithmetic becomes a demonstrated truth, as the observed uniformity might be converted into a proved case of causation. If I merely guessed from many experiments that the observed rule in arithmetic corresponded to so some demonstrable equality, I should be in the analogous position to that which I occupy in regard to an empirical sequence in nature. It is probably a case of causation, means, therefore, that it is probably a case of some more general rule. Whether such a case or not, I assume the axiom of uniformity; but in one it leads me back to an infinite ramification of conditions, which cannot be summed up in a single rule; in others, it leads me to infer that the observed coincidence is merely a particular expression

of some one general rule, which may or may not be discoverable. In the latter case, a "law of Nature" shows itself, as it were, on the surface, disentangled from other conditions. I can infer, with every degree of probability, that a given coincidence reveals the existence of some such law, though it does not reveal what it is.

In the limiting case, the coincidence may become a necessity. The statement that two properties cohere may be an identical proposition, in the same sense as to say that if a stick is continuous, the movement of one end implies the movement of the other. If we were omniscient, we might see this to be true in all cases of causation; as it is, the coincidence can rarely prove more than that such a connection is possible. Since fire burns, it is certain that fire *may* burn, and possible that not-burning fire involves a contradiction in terms.

Thus to either observation, the candle is alight or the fire burns, I may apply the same axiom,—viz., that the same fact will occur under the same conditions. But in saying "candle," I have certainly not said "lighted," and therefore the resulting proposition is of little use. In saying "fire," on the other hand, I *may* have said, and if it is a true case of causation, I *must* have said, "burning;" just as in saying "circle," I have asserted all the geometrical properties belonging to a circle. Here I have a fertile proposition, but I have still only applied the same axiom, which is the identical proposition that the same process involves the same relations.

The light which I see may not be a fire, and fire *may* have unsuspected properties. But if it is a fire, it will burn paper. This last statement, and this alone, seems to be the axiom of Uniformity, and though I may apply it erroneously, it is the essential act of thought. The alternative is not thinking of things as otherwise than uniform, but not thinking of them as real. To reason about phenomena, is to try to classify the kaleidoscopic variety of Nature. I fancy that I can get rid of the axiom, because I can frame arbitrary aggregates in my imagination. I can draw pictures—mental and material—of centaurs and chimeras, black swans and blue boars. I cannot imagine a contradictory picture, as swans at once black and white, or a beast which is, in the same sense, man and horse. I can also vary this picture in the most arbitrary way, and I can mistake this process for imagining a chaotic universe. But so soon as I try to

think of things as real, I am fitting them into a framework, and have to imagine them as in some way related. To convert my centaur from a picture to a reality, I must provide him with an anatomy. To fancy is only to think of phenomena, without thinking of them as existing and I can only think of them as existing by thinking of them as caused; for I imply at once that they have definite relations to the other facts of the universe. I can draw a picture of the Devil coming into this room and carrying off a guest, as easily as I picture a waiter bringing in the bill. But to believe in the Devil is to think of him as somehow in time and space, and with such a place in the system of things as makes his presence possible without contradiction.

The chief difficulty in the argument seems to turn upon the possibility of identifying those phenomena which differ in time and space. There is no reason for saying, according to Mr. Bain, that the boiling-point of water may not be raised to a temperature of  $250^{\circ}$  a million of years hence. I am not quite sure that I understand the reply to this argument made by Mr. Lewes himself, or by Mr. Roden Noel and Mr. Hodgson. I have, however, an equal difficulty in catching Mr. Bain's meaning precisely. Of course, in a popular sense, such a change might happen. The dispersion of heat alters all conditions of this planet, and some collateral result of that change may be an alteration in the constitution of what we call water. But this would be denied by nobody, and is of course quite consistent with the axiom. If all conditions are changed water will be changed. But the question seems to be, whether, if the water of 1,000, 1879 A.D., be in every respect identical with the water of 1879 A.D., except in point of date, the boiling-point could be different. To assert that it could, seems to me very like denying an identical proportion. The boiling is given when all the other data are given, and though I need not (and indeed never do) think about the water of that period, I can only think of it, if I must think of it, as of the water of the present day. Otherwise, it is not water at all. To assume any other sense would be, as Mr. Hodgson says, to assume that something may come of nothing; and that pure chance actually exists; propositions which I may put into words, because I can shift the kaleidoscope of the universe, but which I cannot render intelligible, when I think of the world as existing; for to think

of existence is already to deny them. To suppose that every other quality which may be predicated of an object, except that it exists at a particular moment, and yet that its quality is changed, is to me impossible. To imagine such a change in a million years is as easy as to imagine it next second, and the boiling-point may be as easily raised to  $2,500^{\circ}$  as to  $250^{\circ}$ . If anything can come without cause, everything can. Mont Blanc may suddenly rise in Trafalgar Square, or the moon change into a green cheese. One change is easier to picture than the other, but each is equally incapable of being interpreted into clear thought.

Finally, then, I might say that I believe in the uniformity of Nature, because I am quite unable to conceive of any alternative, or any alternative except a negation of all thought. If I reason at all, I must employ this axiom. Indeed, if the axiom be true, I, as part of nature, must draw the same inferences from the same premisses. The reasoning process is only, on this view, a particular case of the more general rule. But it seems to me more accurate to say that the so-called axiom is an attempt to isolate the essential process of all thinking about facts, and represent it as a distinct thought; and so treated it must appear either as an unproveable but inevitable assumption, or an *a priori* intuition. I rather consider it as so much a part of the structure of thought that the mind would have to get outside of itself to contemplate it distinctly. But I am well aware that I have not been able even to state my own view distinctly, and must conclude by once more apologising for this hasty attempt at expressing myself.

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Autton      present

Knowles

Leslie Stephen

Dr Bucknill

Shadworth Hodgson

Lubbock

Self

Huxley

after dinner

Tyndall

Martineau

Dr. Acland.

TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 1879,  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.

[PRIVATE.]

Prof. 8<sup>th</sup> George Minart

## THE RELIGION OF EMOTION.

WE are sometimes told that Religion is a matter of Feeling, not of Reason; that it concerns not the Intellect, but the Emotions, and that it is independent of Dogma. Thus, for example, Professor Huxley has, amongst other utterances of a similar character, declared\* that "the engagement of the affections in favour of that particular kind of conduct we call good, . . . . together with awe and reverence, which have no kinship with base fear, but arise whenever one tries to pierce below the surface of things, whether they be material or spiritual, constitutes all that has any unchangeable reality in religion." Professor Tyndall has also remarked,† with respect to existing forms of Religion,—“It will be wise to recognise them as the forms of a force, mischievous if permitted to intrude on the region of objective knowledge, over which it holds no command, but capable of adding, in the region of poetry and emotion, inward completeness and dignity to man.”

Now, I must myself confess, after many efforts, quite unable to understand (and there are many far abler men in the same case) what the religion which these writers favour can really be. Religion appears to me to be necessarily an affair of reason and conduct, and to consist of certain definite propositions or dogmas, the acceptance of which should regulate action, just as a knowledge of the laws concerning physics and navigation should regulate the conduct of a ship's captain. Whether the captain is or is not an emotional man seems to me of little consequence, so long as he guides his ship

\* See *Critiques and Addresses*, p. 48.

† See *Belfast Address*, p. 61.

rationally according to the laws referred to; and similarly, whether a man with respect to his religion be glowing and emotional, or cold and dry, seems to me of little consequence, so long as he guides his conduct rationally, according to the dictates of that religion. Let us imagine a man who believes in a holy God, and who throughout his life is scrupulous in performing his public and private worship, and acts with justice and good-will to his fellows. Let us also suppose him to be devoid of emotional excitement, and to feel very little pleasure in any of his good deeds, many of which are done against the grain, but are none the less punctually done. I do not suppose that either of the writers quoted would deny that such a man was a religious man on account of his deficiency of emotion.

Emotion is a pleasurable or painful affection accompanying either, —(1) something felt (actually or in imagination); or (2) something thought. Now, surely no one would call a pleasurable or painful affection accompanying a mere sensation “a religious emotion.” “Religious” emotions, therefore, must be the more or less frequent accompaniments of certain ideas. They must also (as I suppose every one will admit) be the accompaniments of ideas of a high order. Let us, then, consider some such ideas, selecting such as do not explicitly concern a God, and see whether they can be maintained without upholding certain definite propositions or dogmas. We may take as examples the religious emotions brought forward in the first passage cited, *i.e.*, affection for good conduct, together with awe and reverence. To these we may, perhaps, be permitted to add feelings of admiration for things beautiful or true. Now, it appears to me that the deliberate and conscious indulgence in admiration of, say, a good act, as such, implies two judgments:—(1) There is such a thing as Virtue; (2), Virtue is very admirable. These judgments, again, imply the dogma,—“There is an objective standard of virtue, which does not depend upon my taste.” Against this it may be perhaps urged:—(1) That such an objective standard exists in public opinion which favours conduct useful to the community. (2) That when we say there is such a thing as virtue, we simply mean that there is a course of conduct which is useful to the community. (3) That, therefore, when we say such conduct is to be admired, we really mean that, if we do not admire it, we shall be out of harmony with our

fellows,—“doing what we ought to do” meaning only being in harmony with the community which desires its own welfare.

But our reason tells us that in certain cases we “ought” to be out of harmony with the community, and thus this interpretation of the meaning of the term “good conduct” would be equivalent to saying, “*By being out of harmony with the community, we shall be in harmony with the community.*” But it may be again objected that the real, ultimate meaning of virtuous conduct is conduct useful in the long-run to the individual who acts, and that the word “ought” therefore really means, “If we don’t act in some given way, we shall smart for it.”

But reason tells us that, in certain cases, we ought to be ready to smart for it; and so, again, this interpretation of the term “good conduct” would be equivalent to saying, “*By smarting for it, we shall not smart for it.*”

Therefore, admiration of “good conduct” as “good” implies that “ought to” has reference to something more than, however coincident with, utility to us, or to the community. It implies the existence of an objective “not ourselves,” which has somehow given rise to the subjective categorical imperative. If this is not so, we may indeed say that this or that action is useful to *me* or to *us*, but we cannot say that it is “good,” as men use that term. In that case, there can be for us no such thing as virtue, and we therefore cannot affirm it to be admirable, and no rational mind could permit itself to continue to feel “religious emotion” about what it was thoroughly convinced was a mere non-entity.

In the same way, a deliberate, self-approving indulgence in reverent emotion at the “beauty” of an object or act seems to me to imply the two judgments—(1) There is such a thing as beauty; and (2), beauty is a thing to be reverently admired. These judgments, again, imply the dogma, “There is an objective standard of beauty, which does not depend upon my taste.” We know that we may become dull to the beauty of an object by familiarity, or through some temporary or permanent physical infirmity, or otherwise. We also know that such dulness is a certain temporary or permanent defect in us.

It can hardly be again replied that the objective standard is the feeling of the community, and that our sense of defect is our feeling

of want of harmony with our fellows, for it is but too evident that the community may have a taste which is undeveloped or debased, and that, therefore, to agree with it would be a defect in us. Thus, it appears to me that the appreciation of beautiful things "as beautiful" implies the existence of an objective "not ourselves," which has somehow given rise in us to a distinct idea, "beauty," which is not to be resolved into any other ideas, and also to a power of perceiving its existence as a quality of certain objects or actions. Without this, no reasonable man (who has fully considered the matter and convinced himself) can, with self-approbation, continue to feel a "religious emotion" about beauty. He may say of anything, "I like it," or, "We like it," but he cannot continue to affirm, "It is beautiful," as men reverently employ that term.

Again, men feel, and justly feel, an awe and reverence for "truth;" but in so doing, they implicitly affirm that there is such a thing as truth, and that it is something more than what I or we "trow or believe." When we say of a man he believes what is not true, we mean more than that he believes what we do not believe. We assert, in addition to divergence in opinion, positive error as to fact. This implies that there is a real objective quality attending certain beliefs or judgments, the presence of which makes them "true judgments," and this quality is a relation of conformity between such judgments and real objective existence.

An awe or reverence for truth, then, implies for its justification to our reason, the recognition of the existence of an objective "not-ourselves," which has somehow given rise in us to a perception of objective existence (including other minds) and subjective modification,—to a real conformity between them, and to our perception of such conformity. Otherwise, we must say there is no such thing as "truth" for us, and no rational mind would continue to feel "religious emotion" about "truth," if once he was intimately and thoroughly convinced of this.

Thus religious emotion, of the kind as yet referred to, needs for its persistence in a rational mind the acceptance of the dogma that an objective "not-ourselves" exists which, somehow, gives rise in us to the perceptions of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. But an affirmation of the objective existence of the foundation of these qualities is the

implicit affirmation of our highest ideal,—that is, of God, whose existence, I believe, may be thence deduced.

Denial or doubt as to such objective existence necessarily induces, I am convinced, the destruction or paralysis of religious emotion ; while the conviction which is the basis of religious emotion is “religious” in precisely the same sense as is the emotion itself. Such emotion, no doubt, often exists without the perception of its reasonable source. Such emotion may, indeed (in less logical minds), survive for a longer or shorter time after its rational basis has been cut away. But no one but a fool could continue in a state of rapture over mere dreams, and still less over recognised non-entities. Religious emotion must thus become extinct. Men may still say, “I believe many things with pleasure, I like many things, and many things are agreeably useful to me, but a sense of mere credulity, a feeling of relish, and a chuckling satisfaction at advantages secured, do not constitute “religious emotion.”

To feel “awe” and “reverence” for a volcano, a whirlwind, or the rising Sun, may be expected of a savage, because he may, more or less indistinctly, reverence and fear in such phenomena some mysterious, superhuman personality. But let a man be thoroughly convinced that such phenomena are merely physical, that they are in no way related to a higher intelligence than his own, and then, however much he may admire and wonder, any real “reverence” he may feel must serve as an index of his mental feebleness.

But if religious emotion thus depends upon religious conviction, and therefore upon the affirmation of distinct propositions, does it always necessarily play an important part in Religion at all ?

According to the teaching which I receive, it frequently plays a very subordinate part indeed. Though admirable and excellent in itself, yet on account of its association with other and lower feelings, it often needs repressing, and its action has always to be guarded against. Pious emotion, or as it is technically called, “sensible devotion,” is a thing which (when it spontaneously occurs) is to be utilised, in so far as it may aid good conduct, but is not to be sought after as an end, or deemed meritorious.

No doubt a perfect man would be rich in good feelings, as well as in good desires and actions ; but a full development in all directions is necessarily rare, and comparative atrophy of emotion is con-

sidered immeasurably preferable to defect of good-will. Thus various saintly men have gone on persevering in virtue for years, uncheered by a gleam of religious emotion, their merit being increased by the greater arduousness of their path thus occasioned, while at the same time such absence of feeling was a defect.

On the other hand, the presence of religious emotion may, under certain abnormal circumstances, be a positive demerit. As, for example, if it be due to abuse of alcohol, and I think no one who had not some eccentric theory to maintain would call a maudlin drunkard, with vicious habits and sentimental piety, a religious man.

Before concluding, I would revert to Professor Tyndall's declaration that existing religions (and Christianity is, of course, referred to) are a force mischievous as "knowledge," but beneficial as "emotion." I should be very grateful if he would state in a few plain sentences what he means by this. A Christian may glow with love to God as his Creator, his Incarnate Lord; but such emotion must stand or fall with his belief that God did as a fact create him, and did truly become incarnate for him. This will not, I suppose, be contested. It may, however, be replied that though the particular emotions referred to would be destroyed with the destruction of such beliefs, yet that other analogous emotions would still persist. And so they would, as long as other analogous dogmas were retained, but no longer. If any one denies this, let him try and explain a religious emotion, without any corresponding intellectual conviction. As it undeniably is with the doctrines cited, so I believe it will be with every doctrine of Natural Religion. Destroy the belief, and with it perishes, sooner or later, the emotion; and with the destruction of every religious doctrine, every religious emotion must finally disappear.

I should be very sorry, however, to be understood as expressing any disesteem for our higher emotions, for I have a very great reverence for them. I should also be very sorry to be understood as expressing contempt for the religious emotions of men who are not consciously Theists. On the contrary, I would wish such emotions to be cherished, however irrationally held, because I believe them to be profoundly rational in themselves, and likely to be the means of revealing to those who have them truths of which they may not be

at present conscious. Nevertheless, it seems to me that to talk of religious emotion continuing to exist independently of religious conviction is to talk mere nonsense and unmeaning verbiage, and that the religion of emotion can be but an inane nervous tremor,—the religion of folly.



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TO BE READ ON TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 1879,  
AT THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, AT 8.30 P.M.]

[PRIVATE.]

Mr. F. Harrison

## THE SOCIAL FACTOR IN PSYCHOLOGY.

In a very recent work we read as follows:—"Who that had ever looked upon the pulpy mass of brain-substance, and the nervous cords connecting it with the organs, could resist the shock of incredulity on hearing that all he knew of passion, intellect, and will was nothing more than molecular change in this pulpy mass? Who that had ever seen a nerve-cell, could be patient on being told that Thought was a property of such cells, as Gravitation was a property of Matter?"

This remark does not sound like anything original. We have often heard, and we continually read protests to the like effect. I quote it, however, solely for the connection in which it occurs, and for the author from whom it comes. The passage is not from the writings of either a theologian or a spiritualist, of a metaphysician of the intuitionist or idealist school. It is from the latest work of George Lewes, "The Study of Psychology," and it is in complete accord with all that he has written on these questions.

It is certain that he regards Psychology as the study of material organisms, not as the study of an immaterial substance. He says:—"In this work, the science will be regarded as a branch of Biology, and its Method as that which is pursued in the physical sciences." He calls Psychology "the science of the facts of Sentience." And, still, he uses (and most consistently uses) an argument which is frequently thought to prove that the knowledge of the human Soul is not *in pari materia* with our knowledge of organic life, and that it must be based on some other foundation.

What he means is, that our study of individual organic life, though giving us the basis and ground-plan of our study of psychology, cannot give us all we want; we need, as a complement, the

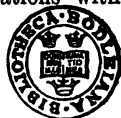
[No. 84.]

study of social life. In other words, the knowledge of Mind and Feeling cannot be complete without the study of Society, without history in its widest sense. True psychology is, therefore, a very mixed kind of inquiry. It cannot be reduced to the study of detached organs in individual bodies. It embraces elements partly biologic and partly sociologic; and Psychology cannot be limited to Biology, properly speaking, unless we give to Biology the extravagant extension of meaning by which it would include History.

This insistence on a social factor in Psychology is not new. It was first urged, as Mr. Lewes shows, by Auguste Comte. It has since, from a different point of view, been expounded by Mr. Herbert Spencer, and some others. Mr. Lewes has now given it a fresh emphasis. It seems to me to offer some hope of a solution, that may ultimately close the secular battle between Materialism and Spiritualism.

Shortly stated, the importance of the Social Factor in Psychology is this:—Thought and Feeling are undoubtedly functions of the Organism; they can only be treated rationally by starting from the same data, and with the same methods that we use in treating other functions of organic life; and lastly, mental state and organic state are always correlative: we have no data for detaching them. So far, we are using almost the language of the older Materialists. But we now know that the rational study of the Organism, Man, is not identical with the special study of the organs; of all the organs, or of any particular organ. The true study of the human organism—it has long ago been seen by all intelligent biologists—rests on the comparative study of animal organisation generally, *i.e.*, on general biology; and also upon the relations of animal and human organisation to the external environment in which life is placed, and on which life depends.

Thus, whilst still holding on to the central doctrine that mental and moral phenomena are functions of the organism, rational Psychology passed out of the crude platitude that “the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile,” and it enlarged itself in several ways. First, whilst earnest in the analysis and special study of organs, it kept the Organism, as a whole, in view as the key of the position; next, it was vigilant to observe the relations with the external environment, whether of organ or of



organism ; then it worked out all the consequences of the truth that the human organism must be studied by the light of animal organisation generally. Finally, it enriched and corrected the direct study of organisation by the study of the development of organisation, by Embryology and Evolution. This was, in fact, to call in the aid of the History of Organisation, individual or general.

All this was clearly within the province of Biology, strictly so called. The whole of the data and methods lay within the study of the living Organism. This, however, was not enough. Biology, pure and simple, could not, under these conditions, vindicate its claim to an exclusive bearing on Psychology. Theologians, metaphysicians, common-sense, and the public instinct maintained a continual protest, in all kinds of ways, and with every variety or theory. Amidst wild assumptions and self-contradictory declamation, what they all said in the main came to this :—"A science which has not one word to say about the profoundest movements that have ever affected mankind (and, *ex hypothesi*, Biology has nothing to say about the origin of Christianity, the Crusades, the Reformation, or the French Revolution), cannot have an exclusive right to instruct us on the mental and moral phenomena of human nature."

This objection could not be met. Biology, indeed, in that crude form, suffered a rebuff. In vain it cried that an enlarged knowledge of molecular physics and organic processes, a more elaborate analysis of cerebral phenomena, would ultimately enable it to tabulate the conditions of the rise of Christianity. The world only laughed ; and Biology—which all the while was right, as far as it went—grievously injured Science and Philosophy, by claiming a field larger than it could defend or control.

A most important point, in truth, had been overlooked. It was not enough to treat the Organism in relation to the external environment, and to study the human organism by the light of animal organisation generally,—to compare man with animals, to trace the development of the human organism, and of the human species. All this Biology had done, and had well done ; but this was not enough. It was not sufficiently remembered that man was not only an animal, but an animal of a unique kind, and that he had functions and faculties that, for the purpose in hand, were, practically speaking, not found in other animals. Man, in fact, had powers of mental and

moral development, so special to man, and of such immense importance to his nature, that man was, literally speaking, not man at all, unless regarded in connection with his whole social environment. Just as it was idle to study animal organisation apart from the inorganic conditions of organisation, or to study human organisation apart from the biological conditions of animal organisation—and these truths had been long felt by all rational biologists—so at last it came to be seen that it was equally idle to study the human organism apart from the social organism. The mental and moral functions of the individual exist so completely in society, and are so enormously affected by society, that the study of of the facts of society, and of the history of society, is the only field where the full bearing of mental and moral functions can be traced. The continuous and traditional life of the human race, its power of growth and mental and moral development, constitute, in fact, the characteristic quality of the human organism. The human organism would not be what we call "Man," if there had never been on the earth any such phenomenon of human society. He would at most be an anthropoid brute. Consequently, they were wrong who thought they could (psychologically) study the human organism, as an organism, apart from the human society in which and by which its psychological functions operate. To do this was precisely the same error as it would be to study the phenomena of organic movement by inspecting tissues no longer capable of vital action, to study the functions of organs by inspecting the organs without observing them in functional relation to the external world, to construct a theory of respiration without any reference to the chemical constituents of the atmosphere, or to expound the function of hearing by analysing the auditory organ, apart from the phenomena of external sound.

A rational Psychology, therefore, has to supplement its study of animal organisation, and of the human organism, and of the relations of this organism to the inorganic world, by a study of the social organism, and of the relations of the human organism to the social world in which alone, mentally and morally speaking, it lives and operates. That is to say, no study of the organism, simply as such, can found a complete Psychology. It must rest on the double study, first, of the organism as such, then, of the organism as a unit of the social organism. But this is equivalent to saying that

Biology, in the natural meaning of that term, cannot embrace the whole of the elements of Psychology. For it would be a violent abuse of language to call Biology the science of the facts of the social organism. This is the province of Sociology,—for linguistic purists will have to admit that indispensable hybrid, and not the only hybrid, in scientific nomenclature. The result of this is that a national Psychology can only be completed by the aid of sociologic reasoning and data.

It is hardly necessary to add that, in extending the field of study of the mental and moral phenomena to the study of human society, there is no break with the scientific data and methods which form the biologic study of the simple organism. Sociology is just as much a science as Biology, and is equally rigid in its canons of verification, and equally abhorrent of assuming hypotheses for evidence. There is nothing new in this demand for a social element in the study of Mind and Feeling, nor is it in the least idealist or spiritualist. Comte, Spencer, Lewes, and many others have worked it out in different ways, and on various lines. Perhaps Lewes, in his last work, has given special emphasis to it, and his definition of Psychology appears to me the most complete we have.\*

I have ventured to ask the attention of the Society to this view of Psychology, not because it is at all new, much less because I can hope to argue, or even state, so big and complex a doctrine in the few minutes that I trespass on your good nature; but I do it for this reason. We often have remarked the deep and burning feelings which these problems of the mental and moral nature of men call out. And outside, as we know, they are not always approached with that calmness, candour, and sympathetic gentleness towards opponents which are our happy privilege. We all know the storms of moral and intellectual indignation which agitate some of the best and wisest of our men, when they are told that every part of human Thought and Feeling must be treated, by strict scientific law, as a state of the organism, and must be interpreted by the laws of the organic functions. "What!" they cry, "is the enthusiasm of St.

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\* "Psychology is the analysis and classification of the *sentient functions and faculties*, revealed to observation and induction, completed by the reduction of them to their *conditions of existence*, biological and sociological."

Paul and the meditation of Descartes to be made clearer by the study of animal organisation?"

And their indignation and their heat were most just, so long as the laws of the human organism were offered them on the narrow basis of simple Biology. But a larger basis is now unfolded. Men who could not be dragged one step from the field of scientific law, who held that every mental and moral fact was in necessary relation with a physiological fact, still went on to insist that the laws of the human organism are bound up with, and can only be read by, the laws of the social organism. But this new factor let in at once the direct study of the whole range of human emotion, intelligence, and will, of all the movements, moral, affective, religious, imaginative, that have ever ennobled mankind; of all history, of the whole range of tradition, poetry, art, heroism, and devotion. In a word, we say that the knowledge of man's mental and moral nature, Psychology, as a subject, if it have its continual roots in the analysis of nerves and brain-matter, and its body in the science of organic function, has its top in the record of all that is lofty in man's spiritual nature.

To draw my conclusion from this teaching. Our view of such a subject as Psychology will depend, of course, for each of us, upon the set of his whole mental current, on his knowledge, and partly on his temperament and life. A man will not accept the theory of organic functions in lieu of his life-long spiritualism, simply because the theory of organic functions may have ceased to disgust him, to rank him with the brutes that perish, to ask him to abandon all the profound spiritual connotations of the science of the Heart and of the Mind. Yet withal, when we see how profoundly these questions of Spirit and Matter in thought and feeling run into the summits of religion, and in places less illuminated with the dry light that ever burns amidst us, how often they are decided under the influence of disgust or enthusiasm, may we not hope to behold more agreement and mutual approach, if we can eliminate this element of disgust and terror? And why should the most devotional and spiritual nature, the most ideal and the most sympathetic of men, feel anything of terror or disgust towards a theory of human nature which takes for its data every spiritual and emotional fact in human story along with all the other facts human, animal, or cosmical? *We* do not say

that the grey-matter thinks and feels ; we say that the organism thinks and feels, and in order to understand the laws of its thinking and feeling, we say that you must study (along with much else) all that is beautiful and heroic in the record of Humanity. You may not adopt our theory of the organism ; but does it disgust you or terrify you ? You may not accept our interpretation of the facts ; but every one of the facts of mental and moral life are as much the data of our interpretation, as of yours.

And thus it comes about, as we who view these things from the religious point of view unceasingly declare, that the paramount and ever-present conception of Humanity explains, while it co-ordinates, all Science ; and that as man lives only in Humanity, so by Humanity alone can man understand himself, and the divisions of men be hereafter reconciled in one Feeling and in one Faith.

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# Cardinal Manning

## WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

PHILOSOPHY may be defined,—the Science which treats of things in their ultimate principles, or ultimate causes cognisable by the reason.

Or, again, the science of things in their ultimate causes, as known by the light of Nature.

Or, again, the simplest conception of philosophy may be stated thus,—it is the systematic knowledge of the truths and their causes which are known by the light of Nature, respecting God, man, and the world.

Or, finally, it is the intellectual system of truth known to man by the light of Nature, apart from the light of divine revelation.

The truths contained in this philosophy are, in chief, as follows :—

1. As to God : his Existence, his Eternity, his Divinity, his Perfections as Maker, Legislator, Preserver, Judge, and Rewarder of Men.

2. As to man : the existence and immortality of the soul ; its intellectual and moral nature ; the discernment and dictates of conscience ; the power and freedom of the will ; the probation and responsibility of man ; and retribution after death.

3. As to the world : the facts and laws of the physical universe. Progressive inquiry and experience have given to this the form and title of science, in its second intention. Physics have been for the last centuries commonly excluded from the domain of metaphysical philosophy, which reserves to itself the truths of the moral order of the world, as distinct from physical science.

This Philosophy of the Order of Nature affirms :—

1. That our senses in a normal state,—that is, if there be no hindrance in the organs, or in the medium of our perceptions,—cannot be deceived in their perception of the proper objects of sense.

[No. 84.]

2. That reason in its normal state cannot be deceived in its judgments, when the adequate evidence of truth is before it.

3. That scepticism, or doubt of the certainty of the senses, or of the reason, except in abnormal subjects, is a chimæra, and an irrational state of a rational being.

4. That there is adequate evidence in the things which were made, *per ea quæ facta sunt*, of the existence of God.

5. That our consciousness, as even Hume admits, cannot deceive us.

6. That our consciousness testifies infallibly to the existence of our own Soul, of our personal identity, of our intellectual and moral nature : to the eternal and intrinsic distinctions of truth and falsehood, good and evil.

7. That the concurrent and simultaneous action of sense and reason affirms the real existence of external objects, and of spirit and of substance of the nature of which we have no further knowledge or idea, except that of "being" or "existence."

8. That by the same action of sense and reason, we know the existence of others like ourselves.

9. That we owe to them and to ourselves the same obligations of morality.

These truths are of the light of Nature.

Hume said of Berkeley "that all his arguments, though otherwise intended, are in reality merely sceptical," and that, because "they admit of no answer, and produce no conviction."

Mr. Lewes, who may be taken as the representative of Modern Philosophers, in his "History of Ancient and Modern Philosophy," says that "Berkeley paved the way to that scepticism which is the terminal morass of all consistent metaphysics."—Vol. II., p. 304.

Again, summing up the results of modern philosophy, he says :—"Modern Philosophy, opens with a Method—Bacon ; and ends with a method—Comte : and in each case their method sets metaphysics aside. Within these limits, we have witnessed various efforts to solve the problems of Philosophy : and all these efforts have ended in Scepticism."—(Lewes, Vol. IV., p. 268.)

And here we may sum up the result of this Modern Philosophy :—

1. The senses are fallible in their report of external objects which exist only as perceptions in ourselves.

2. The intellect is fallible in its interpretation of sense.
3. Neither senses nor intellect can afford a basis of certainty.
4. The existence of God cannot be proved by reason.
5. There is no idea of causation, except constant succession.
6. All our knowledge is based on experience, and our experience rests on fallible intellect and fallible senses.

The normal state of Man is therefore Scepticism. He can be certain only of the physical and mathematical sciences, that is, of the world. Of God and himself he can have no certainty, therefore no science. Therefore, Philosophy has no existence. Between this and the Philosophy of the Order of Nature, there is no point of rest.

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to be one of primary importance in philosophy. I believe that we may regard it as one of the critical points on which the comparative merits of the philosophy which trusts the mind,—that is, which accepts the mind as an adequate witness to all to which it gives a consistent, continuous, and unfaltering testimony,—and the philosophy which regards the mind as one of the most fertile and permanent sources of illusion, turns. But it is, I think, important to point out that the belief in causation, the belief in power as passing from cause into effect, in the world outside us, is not matter of observation, is not, using the term strictly, matter of experience, but is  
[No. 85.]

a matter resulting from our *interpretation* of observation and experience,—the real issue being whether that interpretation which disciples of the sceptical philosophy, no less than of the philosophy which trusts “the light of Nature,” inevitably put upon the phenomena of the external world, though they are always trying (in vain) to recant their own involuntary confessions, is trustworthy or not. But that causation is not observed,—that (except in the control of our own thoughts by our own will) it is not *directly* experienced, I should frankly admit, with Hume and Huxley. Let us hear the former, as quoted by the latter:—

“When any natural object or event is presented, it is impossible for us, by any sagacity or penetration, to discover, or even conjecture, without experience, what event will result from it, or to carry our foresight beyond that object, which is immediately present to the memory and senses. Even after one instance or experiment, where we have observed a particular event to follow upon another, we are not entitled to form a general rule, or foretell what will happen in like cases; it being justly esteemed an unpardonable temerity to judge of the whole course of nature from one single experiment, however accurate or certain. But when one particular species of events has always, in all instances, been conjoined with another, we make no longer any scruple of foretelling one upon the appearance of the other, and of employing that reasoning which can alone assure us of any matter of fact or existence. We then call the one object *Cause*, the other *Effect*. We suppose that there is some connection between them: some power in the one, by which it infallibly produces the other, and operates with the greatest certainty and strongest necessity. . . . But there is nothing in a number of instances, different from every single instance, which is supposed to be exactly similar; except only, that after a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist. . . . The first time a man saw the communication of motion by impulse, as by the shock of two billiard-balls, he could not pronounce that the one event was *connected*, but only that it was *conjoined*, with the other. After he has observed several instances of this nature, he then pronounces them to be *connected*. What alteration has happened to give rise to this new idea of *connection*? Nothing but that he now *feels* these events to be *connected* in his imagination, and can readily foresee the existence of the one from the appearance of the other. When we say, therefore, that one object is connected with another we mean only that they have acquired a connection in our thought, and give rise to this inference, by which they become proofs of each other's existence; a conclusion which is somewhat extraordinary, but which seems founded on sufficient evidence.”—(IV., pp. 87-89.)

Of course, Hume really means “founded on no sufficient evidence,” but his mode of saying a thing was generally ironical. And now hear Professor Huxley himself, arguing that this mental impression of causation is in our minds, and that it is a delusion:—

“In addition to the bare notion of necessary connection between the cause and its effect, we undoubtedly find in our minds the idea of something

resident in the cause which, as we say, produces the effect, and we call this something Force, Power, or Energy. Hume explains Force and Power as results of the association with inanimate causes of the feelings of endeavour or resistance which we experience, when our bodies give rise to, or resist, motion. If I throw a ball, I have a sense of effort which ends when the ball leaves my hand; and, if I catch a ball, I have a sense of resistance which comes to an end with the quiescence of the ball. In the former case, there is a strong suggestion of something having gone from myself into the ball; in the latter, of something having been received from the ball. Let any one hold a piece of iron near a strong magnet, and the feeling that the magnet endeavours to pull the iron one way in the same manner as he endeavours to pull it in the opposite direction, is very strong. As Hume says:—‘No animal can put external bodies in motion without the sentiment of a *nisus*, or endeavour; and every animal has a sentiment or feeling from the stroke or blow of an external object that is in motion. These sensations, which are merely animal, and from which we can, *a priori*, draw no inference, we are apt to transfer to inanimate objects, and to suppose that they have some such feelings whenever they transfer or receive motion.’—(IV., p. 91, note.) It is obviously, however, an absurdity not less gross than that of supposing the sensation of warmth to exist in a fire, to imagine that the subjective sensation of effort or resistance in ourselves can be present in external objects, when they stand in the relation of causes to other objects. To the argument, that we have a right to suppose the relation of cause and effect to contain something more than invariable succession, because, when we ourselves act as causes, or in volition, we are conscious of exerting power, Hume replies, that we know nothing of the feeling we call power, except as effort or resistance; and that we have not the slightest means of knowing whether it has anything to do with the production of bodily motion or mental changes. And he points out, as Descartes and Spinoza had done before him, that when voluntary motion takes place, that which we will is not the immediate consequence of the act of volition, but something which is separated from it by a long chain of causes and effects. If the will is the cause of the movement of a limb, it can be so only in the sense that the guard who gives the order to go on, is the cause of the transport of a train from one station to another. ‘We learn from anatomy, that the immediate object of power in voluntary motion is not the member itself which is moved, but certain muscles and nerves and animal spirits, and perhaps something still more minute and unknown, through which the motion is successively propagated, ere it reach the member itself, whose motion is the immediate object of volition. Can there be a more certain proof that the power by which the whole operation is performed, so far from being directly and fully known by an inward sentiment or consciousness, is to the last degree mysterious and unintelligible? Here the mind wills a certain event: Immediately another event, unknown to ourselves, and totally different from the one intended, is produced: This event produces another equally unknown: Till at last, through a long succession, the desired event is produced.’—(IV., p. 78.) A still stronger argument against ascribing an objective existence to force or power, on the strength of our supposed direct intuition of power in voluntary acts, may be urged from the unquestionable fact that we do not know, and cannot know, that volition does cause corporeal motion; while there is a great deal to be said in favour of the view that it is no cause, but merely a concomitant of that motion.”

Now, what I propose to the Society to discuss is, first, whether

Hume and Professor Huxley are not right on the point that the relation of cause and effect existing outside the mind, as distinguished from that of uniform sequence, is imputed by the mind, not observed by the senses. In this I hold entirely with Hume and Professor Huxley, and need add nothing to their arguments, as I see no answer to them.

Next, I propose to the Society to discuss whether or not we ought to accept this testimony of the mind to the existence of power,—of effectual causation,—both in and outside the sphere of the mind's own operations. And as I hold that we ought, and the thinkers I am quoting hold that we ought not, I must give, much more meagrely than I could wish, a few reasons for my position:—

1. Hume and Professor Huxley appear to admit that, whether illusion or not, the imputation of real power to external nature is spontaneous and involuntary, and that they can no more root it out of their own minds, though they reject it, than we can out of ours.

2. I have never been able to see why, if it be mere illusion, it should ever have arisen, or why, if it is false, it should even be a *useful* illusion. No doubt, when I throw a ball there is a strong sense of something having gone from me into the ball; and when I catch a ball, there is a strong sense that I put forth a resistance to something in the ball, which is *ejusdem generis* with what I put forth. But neither of these imputations is matter of observation. All I perceive in the first case is a number of movements in myself, accompanied by muscular effort of an obscure kind, and followed by a motion of the ball. All else is imputed by my mind, and testifies that the mind cannot but believe itself to be a really effective factor in the operations of the universe. And all I perceive in the second case is a series of almost inverted, at all events very different, movements and efforts. And here, again, the imputation of the relation of cause and effect to the momentum of the ball and that feeling of resistance with which I meet its impact, is, of course, not a matter of observation. I cannot see how the illusion should have grown up, why the mind should have invented this figment, if it be a figment,—that there is such a thing at all as cause and effect. Why would not uniform antecedence and consequence do? It is the only thing that can be *observed*. Why should the mind impute gratuitously to external events that which has, according to Hume, probably no

existence at all in any world inward or outward,—for he and Professor Huxley would say that even the sense of effort which precedes the act of attention, is only a universal antecedent, not a cause at all.

3. I never heard of any one who did impute a sense of effort to a moving ball striking against other balls, or a flowing river turning a mill-wheel, or to any other physical cause in nature. What I suppose to be meant by actual power or energy is not a sense of effort,—for, even in our own consciousness, effort is only characteristic of power when it is not quite adequate, or not more than adequate, to its work,—nor a *sense* of anything,—but only a constant and continuous *source* of change, as distinguished from a mere perpetual series of changes,—a change-producer,—instead of a mere antecedent sign of change. The real issue, I take it, between the two schools of philosophy is whether the idea of *production*, as distinguished from that of invariable antecedence, is not a delusion altogether. But of course, the notion of productiveness is not in any way limited to the notion either of consciousness or of effort.

4. I do not see that the number of links interposed between a real cause and a remote effect, affect the issue. The question is not what it is which takes up and transmits power, but whether there be such a thing as power at all, either within us or without us; for I think if we find it within us, we shall not easily doubt that it is also without us, and as universal as are phenomena—*i.e.*, perceivable changes—themselves. But I do admit that without the knowledge of energy within, we should not impute energy to the scene without. But is it or is it not true that we have the *knowledge* of energy within us, of the changes it produces, and of the transformations it undergoes? I think it is true. I think that when I fix my attention on one of many subjects hovering before my mind, I am aware of putting forth an energy, and of its immediate effect. I think that when resentment sends out a sudden flash in the direction of a thought of retaliation, I am aware that a certain energy within me is passing into new forms of life. I think even that when I wake out of sleep refreshed, I am conscious of a physical and mental energy within me awaking to new fields of exertion. I think that it is from these glimpses of the flowing currents of the life within us, that we learn to attribute energy to the forms of the

life outside us, even when we do not regard that energy as conscious. I think the issue important, because it is really one of the simplest and most fundamental test-questions on which to discuss the general question of the trustworthiness of our deepest mental convictions. For instance, I hold that if once we come to believe that there is such a thing as *power*, or *change-producing*, as distinct from mere signs of change, we shall take a step further, and ascribe all power to something deeper than itself,—conscious mind,—just as we have ascribed all phenomena,—or perceivable change,—to something deeper than itself,—namely, power. But this is a later step. The only point I raise for discussion is whether the tendency to impute change to power, or something change-producing which underlies change, is a sound tendency or a delusive propensity of the human mind?

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*Members intending to join the Dinner (at 7 o'clock) are requested to write, by return of post, to that effect to "DR. MARTINEAU, 5 Gordon Street, Gordon Square."*

*Any Member unavoidably absent from the Meeting can, if he think proper, make written remarks on the foregoing paper, and forward them to the Secretary. No such remarks should exceed ten minutes in length of delivery, vivâ voce.*

[PRIVATE.]

To be read on TUESDAY, February 10th, 1880, at

The GROSVENOR GALLERY RESTAURANT,

New Bond Street, W.

At 8.30 p.m.

Mr Sidgwick

## THE SCOPE OF METAPHYSICS.

SOME time ago, an attempt was made to introduce somewhat more regular progress into the discussions of our Society, by providing definitions of the principal terms used in Metaphysics. I had much sympathy with this attempt, but it seemed to me a matter of considerably more labour and difficulty than Mr. Knowles, who started it, appeared to think; since complete agreement in definitions cannot, I conceive, be expected until we have also reached complete agreement as to doctrines. At the same time, I am quite of opinion that we might gain a good deal from a serious endeavour to agree, as far as we can, on the meaning of our cardinal terms; and it seems natural to begin with the term that denotes the whole subject of our discussion, that is, with a definition of "Metaphysics."

In searching for this definition, I wish, (1), to obtain a clear and precise result; (2), to keep as close as possible to common usage,—this second wish, cannot, however, be perfectly realised, since common usage in such matters is vague and fluctuating—(3), to provide a definition which may be equally available for Metaphysicians of different schools. This third point may, perhaps, seem no less difficult of attainment than the second; but I do not think that it ought to be so, as I merely wish to mark out a certain region of questions which the human mind is actually disposed to ask, without deciding either how these questions ought to be answered, or even whether it is wise or profitable to ask them at all.

In defining the *boundaries* of a subject, we naturally begin by surveying its *confines*,—the other subjects with which it is liable to be partially confounded, but from which, in common usage, it is more or less vaguely distinguished. (1.) Metaphysics must be something different from Physics, in the wider and nearly obsolete sense of this latter term, in which it includes the whole group of

[No. 87.]

the Physical or Natural Sciences. On this point there will be no doubt. (2.) It has, on the other hand, to be distinguished in some way from Philosophy. This distinction is obscurer in ordinary thought; probably many of the persons who distinguish Philosophy from Science would identify it with Metaphysics. I think, however, that there is a preponderance of usage in favour of including Metaphysics within Philosophy, as a part or kind of philosophy; as it is generally understood that there is a manner of philosophising which claims to be "Positive," in contrast to "Metaphysical." So, again (3), the difference between Metaphysics and Psychology is now pretty widely recognised. We must allow, I think, a considerable amount of common ground to the two subjects; but the English empirical psychologists and psychophysicists have made it plain that there is a kind of psychology which is not metaphysical, and more recently, the revival of Kantism has diffused intelligence of a kind of metaphysics which repudiates connection with psychology. (4.) Finally, a line has to be drawn between Metaphysics and Logic. Readers of Mill's "Logic" must be aware that the latter subject continually takes them up to the borders of the former; indeed, they must be aware, too, that Mill often takes them over the borders, and therefore that the line is rather difficult to draw.

Let us, then, endeavour to make these four distinctions as precise as possible.

To begin with the first and most obvious,—How shall we draw the line between Metaphysics and Physics? We cannot say without qualification that they are not concerned about the same things, since it is evident that Metaphysics aims at knowledge of some kind about the material world. The vulgar are aware that the Metaphysician asks, "What is matter?" as well as, "What is mind?" Nor can we exactly say that Physics deals with matter, so far as it is an object of external perception, while Metaphysics considers it in some other way; since theoretical mechanics does not exactly treat of matter as it is perceived, but of such matter ideally simplified for the convenience of abstract reasoning. Probably the most generally accepted formula of distinction is that given by Lewes; viz., that the propositions of Physics are always such as are capable of "empirical verification," or "reduction to sensible experience,"—that is, such as admit of being proved or disproved, directly or indirectly, by sense-percep-

tion ; while all propositions about matter that do not admit of being thus proved or disproved are metaphysical.

And I suppose that most of the questions that are now continually raised and settled in the progress of physical science are determined ultimately by observations of sensible facts. I propose, therefore, provisionally to accept this distinction, subject to additions or qualifications hereafter. It must be observed, however, to avoid an obvious objection, that many Metaphysical doctrines—as, *e.g.*, those of the Critical or Transcendental Philosophy—relate, and in a manner appeal, to sense-perception ; but they are not capable of being proved or disproved by any simple sense-perception or combination of such perceptions, but by reflection on sense-perception,—a different and easily distinguishable act of the mind.

And this suggests another distinction of which we are in search,—that between Metaphysics, and Philosophy that is not metaphysical. Accepting provisionally Mr. Spencer's definition of Philosophy, that Philosophy, carrying the scientific process a stage further, comprehends and consolidates the generalisations of special sciences in still wider generalisations ; we may say that so far as this synthesis of the knowable is still within the limits of Physics as just defined, *i.e.*, is capable of being proved or disproved directly or indirectly by sense-perception, it is *philosophical*, but not *metaphysical*. I should say this, *e.g.*, of the Newtonian identification of terrestrial and celestial mechanics, and of any similar attempt—whether successful or not—to unite sciences hitherto distinct by reducing their principles and method to common principles and a common method. For instance, the doctrine that the phenomena of life are ultimately explicable by the laws of theoretical physics is philosophical, but not metaphysical ; since if it ever passes from the stage of hypothesis to that of established theory, it will be by means of some experiments or observations in which sense-perception has been exercised. Similarly, as I said before, Comte's great effort to co-ordinate the Sciences belongs to non-metaphysical philosophy ; except so far as its positive construction is combined with the limiting and negative statement that the sciences deal only with “phenomena ;” for this, according to the line we have drawn, is *primâ facie* a metaphysical doctrine.

Besides Matter, Metaphysics is of course concerned with Mind. Indeed, many would say that it is primarily a study of mind ; but, as before said, the better opinion distinguishes from Metaphysics the

empirical study of mind (Psychology); which proceeds by methods of observation, experiment, induction, analogous to those used in physics. Hence it would seem that Metaphysics may be distinguished from Empirical Psychology, just as it was from Physics, as being "metempirical,"—*i.e.*, it investigates whatever can be known of Mind by other than empirical methods, if there be any such knowledge.

And here I may observe that though Philosophy in its widest reach,—*i.e.*, when it attempts a synthesis of our knowledge of mind with our knowledge of matter—*generally* becomes metaphysical, still this need not necessarily be the case. A co-ordination of the results of empirical psychology with the results of the physical sciences, which shall not involve any propositions incapable of being tested, either by introspection or sense-perception, is not only conceivable, but is actually exemplified in Mr. Spencer's synthetic philosophy; which, so far as it deals merely with the "knowable" (so called), is, to a great extent, philosophical, without being metaphysical. In fact, Mr. Spencer's system seems to me a good illustration of the difference between philosophy and metaphysics, for, according to the line above drawn, I should say that his non-metaphysical philosophy had had a great influence on the thought of the age, and won many disciples; while his metaphysical doctrines, so far as I know, have found no adherents.

It must be admitted, however, that the distinction between empirical and non-empirical methods is harder to draw in this case than in the former, from the difficulty of distinguishing the kind of reflection on knowledge or experience to which appeal is made in metaphysical discussions, from the reflection or introspection by which we cognise the objects of empirical psychology. I am hardly prepared to overcome this difficulty completely; indeed, it seems to me that there is a large margin of inquiry which may be considered to belong indifferently to Metaphysics and to Psychology; but perhaps we may say that Psychological introspection contemplates mind primarily as particular and variable—the changing states of this or that individual mind—whereas Metaphysical reflection contemplates primarily the universal and permanent elements or characteristics of mind and its operations.

And this leads me to another region of inquiry commonly included in Metaphysics—*viz.*, Rational Theology. For God, con-

sidered as the object of Metaphysical inquiry, is the one absolutely universal and permanent mind. Here, however, the line that we are called upon to draw in defining Metaphysics is of a somewhat different kind from those already discussed. For theologians generally do not hold that it is possible to attain knowledge of God by anything that corresponds to observation and experiment; hence, Rational Theology has to be distinguished not from Empirical, but from Revelational Theology.

This distinction, however, I do not propose to examine further at present. But, returning to the consideration of finite minds and finite matter, we observe that the definition of Metaphysics so far obtained is purely negative. Can we, then, complete it by adding any positive characteristic? Many would supply this by saying that Metaphysics investigates what may be known of Absolute existence, as distinct from the merely relative and phenomenal existence with which the physical sciences and empirical psychology deal. This statement need not imply that the absolute can be known; it may be equally accepted, whether the method of Metaphysics is held to be dogmatic and positive, leading us to knowledge of the absolute; or merely limitative or critical, showing that we can only know the relative or phenomenal, and perhaps explaining further the origin of the impulse towards knowledge of the absolute, and even guiding this impulse to some profitable result. This view, at any rate, deserves careful examination.

The term "absolute," however, seems to me too ambiguous for use. Sometimes what "exists absolutely" is taken to mean that which cannot exist in relation to anything else. But this cannot be object of knowledge, since knowledge is a relation; and it would be absurd for us to define Metaphysics as the study (from any point of view) of what is *ex vi termini* unknowable. Sometimes, again, the Absolute = that which exists independently of anything else; but to take this as the object of Metaphysics would limit its scope too much,—would, in fact, reduce it to little more than the third branch above indicated, Rational Theology. But the term "absolute existence" or "absolute reality" is, I think, frequently used in a third and looser sense, to denote that which exists independently of its being perceived or apprehended by the mind. In this sense, however, we can hardly take it as undisputed that physical science is not concerned with absolute reality. Physical Science certainly con-

siders its objects to have the characteristics scientifically attributed to them, independently of their perception by any mind. It is true that physicists are ready to admit, verbally, that they are merely concerned with "phenomena;" but that is because, (so far as they are not metaphysicians), they commonly mean by "phenomenon" not merely "something that is perceived," but "something that happens, and is perceived to happen." As an accepted handbook (Deschenel and Everett) artlessly says, "A phenomenon is any change that takes place in the condition of a body," and we cannot advance a step in the explanation of such changes, without conceiving bodies to possess permanently certain definite qualities, whether perceived or not.

Here, it may be said that Physics is not concerned with the question whether "matter in itself" really has these qualities, provided it will always consistently appear to have them, as apprehended through the senses; that in fact, Physics need not trouble itself about the distinction between Reality and Appearance. And certainly this view is *prima facie* in accordance with the line before drawn between Physics and Metaphysics; since we cannot verify by a sense-perception either the proposition that the object perceived is a mere phenomenon, or the contradictory proposition. On the other hand, it would seem that Physics cannot do without this antithesis of reality and appearance; it has continually to explain to uninstructed common-sense that what really happens is something quite different from what appears to happen. How, then, are its statements in such cases empirically verified? It seems evident that the popular view of verification which I gave at first is inadequate; and that, so far as Physics distinguishes reality and appearance, its criterion is not sense-perception, but consistency with an elaborate and complex system of represented fact, in which the results of perception and inference are combined according to certain laws. An apparent perception that is inconsistent with this system is declared to be merely apparent; as, *e.g.*, when a man "sees a ghost," and is afterwards persuaded that he was hallucinated. And thus, in another way, we see that the criterion of "agreement with sense-perception" is inadequate, for it assumes us always to know what is sense-perception, whereas scientific reasoning leads us to conclude that in many cases where we thought we perceived, we really inferred. If, then, dispute arises as to the correctness of such physical reasonings by

which reality is distinguished from appearance, it certainly does not seem to belong to Physics to settle it, since it cannot be determined by observation, or experiment, or any recognised mode of "appealing to facts."

Shall we, then, refer the determination of such controversies to Metaphysics? This question leads us to the fourth and last of the lines that I originally proposed to draw,—viz., that between our study, and Logic or Methodology. Here the distinction, as Mill states it, seems simple enough. "The grand question," he says, "of what is called 'Metaphysics' is, 'What are the propositions which may reasonably be received without proof?'" (Log. V., c. iii., sec. 1.) That is, just as Logic gives the criteria of true inferences, or truths mediately known, so Metaphysics gives the criteria of true perceptions or intuitions, truths immediately known, so that the two together make up a complete investigation of the general characteristics or criteria of truth. But on closer inspection, the distinction becomes somewhat obscure; because a process by which we show that a (so called) perception or intuition "may reasonably be received," must be a process of rational inference; and it is at least a subtle and delicate matter to distinguish such a process from Proof. And, in fact, I am not disposed to treat the line, as Mill has drawn it, as a deep one; it seems to me that general Logic, or Methodology, and Metaphysics (as conceived by him) are two closely connected departments of a general theory of evidence or certitude; and if an example were wanted of the difficulty of separating them, I think, as I before hinted, that Mill's treatise would furnish such an example.

The question rather is, how far such a theory of evidence—including self-evidence—is properly connected with Metaphysics, as previously (though but negatively) defined; that is, with the investigation of mind, matter, and their relations, by other methods than those of physical science and empirical psychology. My view is that, provisionally at least—so long as the procedure of Metaphysics is as uncertain and controverted as it is at present—this connection is convenient. If ultimately Metaphysics should come to have as fixed and accepted a method as the physical sciences have, it may perhaps be thought more proper to separate Methodology from Metaphysics, no less than from Physics. But at present, it seems best that the general investigation of the grounds of our belief in such conclusions as are held to be based on experience, should be combined with the study of what may be known, or has been thought to be known,

about the universe otherwise than empirically ; especially since, as we have seen, the notion of "verification by experience" appears to be inadequately analysed and defined in ordinary thought.

I do not, of course, mean to bring within the scope of Metaphysics all that is now included under the head of Logic or Methodology. I should exclude, in the first place, all that part of ordinary Logic—sometimes called Formal Logic—which is concerned rather with the verbal expression of Thought or Reasoning than with Thought or Reasoning itself. I should exclude also discussions of such particulars of scientific procedure as are due to special characteristics of the matter investigated, and its relations, natural and artificial, to our physical organs of sense-perception. But, further, it seems to me important to distinguish from the Metaphysical view of scientific procedure that which belongs to a study which I may call Empirical Methodology. Metaphysics, as I define it, has to investigate generally the rational grounds for accepting any propositions as certain ; while Empirical Methodology, assuming as certain the commonly accepted conclusions of the Sciences, merely endeavours to give a generalised view of the steps by which the human mind has actually arrived at these conclusions. This latter study will naturally proceed by reflective observation and induction, just as Empirical Psychology does,—of which, indeed, it might be treated as a development. I cannot but think that some confusion has been caused in the discussion raised by Mill's "Logic," for want of some such distinction between the Metaphysical and the Empirical modes of studying Method. But to develop this point fully would require a separate paper.

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## NOTICE.

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*Members are reminded that the Place of Meeting will henceforth be the*

**GROSVENOR GALLERY RESTAURANT,**

**New Bond Street, W.**

*Those who intend to join the Dinner on February 10th, at 7 o'clock, are requested to signify their intention, if they have not already done so, to F. POLLOCK, 24 Bryanston Street, Portman Square, W., not later than Saturday, the 7th.*

[PRIVATE.]

To be read on TUESDAY, March 9th, 1880, at

The GROSVENOR GALLERY RESTAURANT,

New Bond Street, W.

At 8.30 p.m.

Mr J Pollock

## GENERIC AND SYMBOLIC IMAGES.

WHEN we think of an object of sense not present, we have in our consciousness an *image* or faint reproduction of the sensation. The word *image* is not the best that might be used. Indeed, I know, as a fact, that a better has been invented, but as it is not yet made public, I am not at liberty to use it. *Image*, meanwhile, is sufficiently stamped as current by the usage of M. Taine and Mr. F. Galton. When we think of a class or genus, there is also, at least if we dwell upon the thought, some sort of image; what sort, has been made a great question. Some philosophers have maintained that it is nothing but the image of an individual taken as a representative of the class, others that it is something more. Both sides, unfortunately, have attended too much to the intellectual act of calling up the image, and too little to the image itself, as is shown by the current terms Nominalist and Conceptualist. It hardly occurred to any one that the essential character of an image—namely, that it is a faint repetition of sensation or components of sensation—made it amenable to direct observation. The matter has at length been taken up from this side by Mr. F. Galton, who has, to my mind, conclusively shown that *generic images* are not figments, but really exist. In fact, he has made them, by his ingenious arrangement of composite pictures, the subject of ocular demonstration. (See his paper in the *Nineteenth Century*, July, 1879. Compare also M. Taine's chapter on "Images" in *De l'Intelligence*.) To that extent I take it as a proved fact that the Conceptualists were right, and the extreme Nominalism, of which Berkeley was the first and perhaps the most illustrious English representative, is wrong. I make bold, also, to say that this is a case of distinct advance and elucidation in psychology by the aid of experimental and statistical method; and I believe that we are only at the beginning of such

[No. 88.]

advances. I will also note, as a matter of historical interest (though otherwise not relevant to the subject of this paper), that Spinoza (*Eth.*, 2, 40, Schol.) comes very near to the view resulting from Mr. Galton's work. He distinctly recognizes the formation of a generic image by the overlaying and overlapping of many individual impressions; the clear and prominent features of it being those in which the several impressions agree. And he further notes that one man's generic images or general ideas are not the same as another's, but differ according to the diversity of the two sets of experiences from which the images have been formed. I will also note, once for all, to save further explanation, that I follow Mr. Galton's example in choosing visual representation as the most conspicuous and easily followed type of sensible imagery, but without by any means excluding the other senses.

The first point I want to make is an extension of the generic image. A generic image, we have seen, is a composite mental picture, in which a number of distinct experiences are summed up, with the effect of giving prominence to their common elements and slurring peculiarities. Now I have spoken hitherto as if there could be really individual images or reproductions of sensible impressions, in which no such process has place. But a little reflection will show that it is not so, or, in other words,—

*Every sensible image is generic.*

For, if no two individuals of a kind are exactly alike, so no two experiences or impressions of the same individual thing are exactly alike; and our image of an individual thing is the result of many impressions. I say this without exception, for reasons to be immediately given. If I think of *stick* in general, the image called up is a confused resultant of many sticks which I have possessed, or handled, or seen in other people's possession or hands. I think I cannot farther define my generic "stick" than to say it is long, roundish, and of no fixed colour. But if I think of the particular stick I walked with on such a day, say, last Sunday, what then? My image is more definite, but it is not the reconstruction of any one impression. I have seen my stick in many positions, at various distances from the eye, under many lights. As the general image of "stick" is a compromise between many impressions of many sticks, the more particular image of "my stick" is a compromise between many impressions of *my* stick.

But cannot we, then, obtain a really individual image, by taking an object observed only once, as when we recall, for example, a view or a face seen on only one occasion? I say that the image is still generic, because however far we go in reducing the time of observation, no sensible experience is in truth ever single or simple. Let us use the word "moment" for the shortest time required for the formation of a distinct impression; then we shall find that the experience cannot remain exactly similar to itself for two successive moments. First, there is a probability, amounting to practical certainty, that the external conditions are all the time varying more or less; as, in the case of a view, by changes of illumination and atmospheric effects. That we may not at the time be distinctly conscious of these minor variations is nothing to the purpose. Next, the internal conditions incessantly vary, for the action of the stimulus upon the organ of sense produces a variation which modifies the capacity of sensation. What is more, there is great reason to suspect, if it be not already more than a suspicion, that all sensation is really discontinuous; in which case not only all sensible images are generic, but what we regard as our actual sensation is itself in the nature of a generic image. The persistent light is made out of a series of interrupted flashes, in the same way as (to take a palpable and indisputable case) we wink without knowing it, until we direct our attention to the fact.

It would seem, then, that we live even more completely in a world of generic images than any one has yet ventured to say. But, now, is there no truth in the opposite conception of particular images being taken as representative? We may still say that there is a great deal. For although no image is particular absolutely, there is nothing to prevent any image from being particular with reference to a larger class which agree with it in some features, but not in all. And it may be taken as representative of the class as regards these features of agreement. An image thus used I shall call a *symbolic* image, that is to say, a symbolic image is an image agreeing with other images in certain qualities or relations, so as to form with them a class, and taken as representative of the class for the purpose of considering those qualities or relations.

Thus a generic image may be symbolic of a much larger class; and in fact it is not hard to show that most of our thinking (so far as images occur in it) is in practice carried on by means of generic images used symbolically. Not that there is any great use or con-

venience in this, but rather the contrary; only we cannot help it. Consider some common example, such as the image that is called up when we think of *man*. I find that my own generic image of *man* is a kind of average European type, indeed I might so far specify as to say north-European, of competent middle stature, with so-called Caucasian features, and fair rather than dark. I can vary it of set purpose, if I call to mind what I have seen or learnt of the form and features of other races. But otherwise this first image will stand in a general way for the much larger class which includes Mongolians, Red Indians, Negroes, and so forth. And in all these cases a difficulty arises which may be a fruitful source of error,—namely, that great care is required to keep steadily in view the distinction between that part of the image which is really symbolic—in other words, characteristic of the whole class which it symbolizes—and that which is peculiar to the smaller class from which the image has, in fact, been formed, and therefore, for the purpose in hand, accidental. For example, an Englishman whose conversation has mostly been with honest Englishmen associates the image or concept of *man* with a certain practical standard of veracity, and it costs him an intellectual effort to bear in mind that the Asiatic standard of veracity is something quite different. Or, to take a grosser case of this kind of illusion, a beginner in geometry may hastily assume as true of all triangles a property which belongs only to a determined class, say, equilateral or right-angled. The “triangle” with which we work is a symbolic-generic image, and I think that, as a rule, we purposely make it unequal-sided (scalene), to avoid confusion. I say that we work with an image; for, as has often been pointed out, the coarse and inaccurate impression given by even the best-drawn geometrical diagram is only a symbol twice removed, suggesting the image which is the real object of attention. In geometry we can, with moderate vigilance, secure the symbolic character of the images from admixture of accidental features; and thus we can safely extend to the symbolized class the results obtained with the symbol. What is true of *this* triangle (so far as I take care not to assume in it any property of a special class of triangles) will be true of *any* triangle,—that is, of *all* triangles. This is the legitimate use of symbolic imagery, but it appears to be limited to a few subject-matters capable of very clear and simple intuition, unless we can find some artificial way of extending it.

Let us see how far such means are provided by the use of words. A word, as we think of it, is a sensible image, mostly of articulate sound, but not always, for some persons tell us that they habitually think not in spoken, but in written or printed words. The imagined word is, for the most part, generic in an obvious sense, being a composite repetition of many experiences of hearing or sight. Now, this image is the symbol of another image (namely, the corresponding concept, regarded as image), which is itself, except in the case of proper names, used symbolically. The letters *m a n* are a symbol of my concept or image of man, which in turn is a representative symbol, as explained above. The substitution of the sign for the thing signified, the word for the image, enables us to free the mind from the multitude of accidental and distracting features that would otherwise be called up, and to symbolize with comparative impunity generic images of any degree of complexity. On the other hand, the use of words has dangers of its own. It is a long time before men recognize that the word is only a symbol; they assume that there is an intimate and mysterious connection between the name and the thing named. The playing on words and names, which is common in all archaic literature, and persists in the classics to a much greater extent than most people know, was in its own time regarded as a very serious matter. This is a peculiar but very instructive case of what may be called the illusion of accidental characters.

The function of the papers laid before this Society, as I conceive it, is to throw out ideas for future elaboration, rather than to elaborate them; and I have knowingly passed over several questions which arise out of the matter in hand. I will specify one point on which I should like to hear something from members who have paid more attention to Logic than I have, namely, the relation of the *generic image* of the psychologist to the *concept* of the logician.

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## NOTICE.

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*Members are reminded that the Place of Meeting is now the*

**GROSVENOR GALLERY RESTAURANT,**

**New Bond Street, W.**

*Those who intend to join the Dinner on March 9th, at 7 o'clock, are requested to signify their intention, if they have not already done so, to F. POLLOCK, 24 Bryanston Street, Portman Square, W., not later than Saturday, the 6th.*

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[PRIVATE.]

To be read on TUESDAY, April 13th, 1880, at

The GROSVENOR GALLERY RESTAURANT,

New Bond Street, W.

At 8.30 p.m.

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Dr. Gasquet

## THE RELATION OF METAPHYSICS TO THE REST OF PHILOSOPHY.

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MR. SIDGWICK'S paper on "The Scope of Metaphysics" made me realise that the first thing I, as a new member, had to do was to form a definite idea of the objects of our study, and the means to be taken for attaining them. It is in order to test the accuracy of my opinions, and not with a hope of saying anything new on so well-worn a subject, that I propose the following remarks for discussion by the Society:—

And first, as to Logic. We were all, I think, agreed that the part which is concerned with inference or proof has only the same relation to Metaphysics as to every other science,—namely, supplying tests for the validity of our reasoning. But this Formal Logic is intimately connected with the material or greater Logic of the old writers, now very suitably divided into "Critic" and "Noëtic," according as it deals either with the criteria of our primary perceptions and intuitions, or with the extent to which we may be assured of their correspondence with reality. This inquiry, though sketched in a few pregnant passages by Aristotle, owes its development to Kant, and the very title of his "Prolegomena to every future System of Metaphysics" implies that he, at least, clearly distinguished it from this latter science. The relation between them seems to me best stated in the words of Aristotle,—that they deal with the same subject-matter, but differ in their cogency (*τῷ τρόπῳ τῆς δυναμέως*), *ἐστὶ γὰρ ἡ διαλεκτικὴ πειραστικὴ περὶ ὧν ἡ φιλοσοφία γνωριστικὴ*. On this view, supposing our tentative inquiry to justify a dogmatic science, Critic and Noëtic would be distinguished from Metaphysics by all save the absolute idealist, who would only be consistent in using Hegel's name of "Objective Logic" for this science.

No. 89.]

Next, as to Physics. It seems to me one of the most disastrous consequences of the abandonment of Scholasticism, that the natural sciences should have been so long divorced from the rest of philosophy; and the general tendency to connect them again, is one of the most hopeful signs of the present day. Here I take the relation to be twofold. In the first place, all physical science presupposes certain ideas, such as force, motion, matter, and the like; and if these are defined without a knowledge of the pitfalls which surround the unwary, the result will be confusion. In mathematics also, such questions as the nature of the primary statements of arithmetic are metaphysical, whether, with Kant, we consider these to be synthetical judgments, or, with the Schoolmen and many recent philosophers, to be analytical.

Secondly, some of the results of physical science have an important bearing on metaphysical questions, either by way of enlarging our views of the possibilities of being, or by checking our abstract reasoning with conclusions arrived at in a different manner. I mean, for instance, the indications of some act of creation or "discontinuity of existence," in the past; the finite duration, or extent, of the forces at work in Nature; or the possibility of exceptions to physical laws,—all of which questions (whatever way we answer them) must trench on the province of Metaphysics.

The other great science of observation, Psychology, is also connected with Metaphysics, both by its principles and its conclusions. Here the relation is even more intimate and obvious; and I need not dwell on it further than to remark, with Mr. Spencer, that the inquiries of the psychologist do not reveal the ultimate nature of mind, any more than those of the chemist do the ultimate nature of matter.

As to Rational Theology, Mr. Sidgwick showed that it is clearly a part of Metaphysics; but, as it depends upon the conclusions we arrive at respecting the nature and conditions of being in general, it is a second and separate branch of the science.

Finally, Ethics appear to me posterior to Metaphysics, starting from the conclusions of this science, and for the following reasons:—Firstly, it is obvious that our views in the details of almost every department of Ethics will be affected, if we hold there is a higher

Being who stands in any moral relation to ourselves. Secondly, if we hold the immortality of the soul, we shall see that the different ethical theories—hedonistic, utilitarian, intuitional—may converge towards a point beyond this life, and we shall have a higher standard for estimating the amount of truth each contains.

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**NOTICE.**

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**GROSVENOR GALLERY RESTAURANT,  
New Bond Street, W.**

*Those who intend to join the Dinner on April 13th, at 7 o'clock, are requested to signify their intention, if they have not already done so, to F. POLLOCK, 24 Bryanston Street, Portman Square, W., not later than Saturday, the 10th inst.*



[PRIVATE.]

*To be read on TUESDAY, May 11th, 1880, at*

The GROSVENOR GALLERY RESTAURANT,

New Bond Street, W.

*At 8.30 p.m.*

Prof. Lupton

THE RECENT PHASE OF THE FREE-WILL  
CONTROVERSY.

THE Libertarian view of man's moral nature and moral responsibility is now being hard pressed by each of the two schools of philosophical thought which at present divide between them the greater part of the little interest which the British mind can spare for discussions concerning fundamental truths. On the one hand, Sensational Idealists see that if the Ego possesses any faculty of free self-determination, their account of the Ego, as an aggregate of states of consciousness, becomes unintelligible; and, on the other hand, Agnostic Evolutionists find that their theory cannot be harmonised with the doctrine that Man, whom they regard as a part and product of Nature, should in any portion of his activity violate that principle of uniform phenomenal sequence which is elsewhere observed to obtain. Hence the Free-will Controversy is being vigorously revived, and seems to have lost none of its interest and vitality.

1. One noteworthy feature in its recent phase is the position occupied by Mr. Sidgwick that, in respect to Ethics, at all events, the side taken on this question by the philosophical teacher is of little practical importance. I am unable to see the conclusiveness of the reasons on which Mr. Sidgwick bases this opinion. He considers "that it would be quite possible to compose a treatise on Ethics which should completely ignore the Free-will Controversy," yet he admits "that, on the Determinist theory, 'ought,' 'responsibility,' 'desert,' and similar terms, have to be used, if at all, in new significations." I cannot understand how it would be possible to write an ethical treatise without using these or similar terms, and the defining of such terms would necessarily prejudice the settlement of this dispute. And not only so, but in deciding what sentiments we

[No. 90.]

are justified in entertaining towards sinners and criminals, the ethical teacher must give radically different decisions, according as he accepts the Determinist or the Libertarian view. Whether Mr. Sidgwick is right or wrong in saying that the Determinist's view of human nature affords "a practically sufficient basis for criminal law," he must admit, I think, that it does not afford a sufficient basis for that sentiment of moral indignation at meanness and guilt which is often expressed from the judicial Bench, and which probably no Utilitarian would wish to see extirpated or silenced, either in Courts of law or in social life. In a complete ethical treatise from a Determinist point of view, the question would have to be considered whether a censor or a judge would be justified, for the sake of moral effect, in addressing wrong-doers as though they had been free in the commission of the offence, while he himself believes that the action has been the necessary outcome of their motives and their character. Wrong-doers (or at all events those of them who are still in the Libertarian stage of culture) are wont to sit in judgment upon themselves, and it is when the sentiment and sentence of the Judge echo and confirm their own inner verdict, that condemnation and punishment produce their most beneficial results. Shall the Judge, then, lead criminals to believe that they are under an illusion in supposing themselves blameworthy for what is past, and that the new meaning of "responsibility" is simply that they are amenable to the action of motive in the future, which necessary motive the so-called punishment is intended to supply? Surely this is a practical question, and will become of no small importance when the first principles of scientific morality are taught in elementary schools.

It may be said with truth that the Determinist is not precluded from feeling and expressing a strong sense of distaste in reference to the ethical ugliness or harmfulness which he discerns in himself and others. If, with Dr. Priestley, he considers the "motives" to be the most important causal element in the determination of the moral choice, he may intensely dislike them, when he sees the mischief which they have brought about; or if with Mr. Shadworth H. Hodgson, he regards the previously formed "character" as playing the chief part in producing the evil act, he may, no doubt, feel disgusted with those features of his character, and also with those past

volitions of his which have helped to fashion those features; but in neither case, I think, can the Determinist consistently regard the motives and the character of himself and others with that special sentiment of moral approval or disapproval which implies the reality of personal merit or demerit, and therefore the conviction that the agent was in some measure free to choose between the alternatives which his motives presented. *Æsthetical* and ethical emotions are felt to be radically distinct, and though some Determinists are endeavouring to evade the issue by slurring over this distinction, the bolder and more consistent thinkers of this school are taking the bull by the horns, and advocating the eradication of the ethical sentiment proper, as being a sentiment incompatible with the present state of knowledge.

There is another practical result of the Determinist theory of Ethics which seems worth mentioning. Among the motives which influence men to abstain from sin and crime, is the conviction that they will afterwards have to encounter the persistent condemnation of their Conscience. If, however, a man can be persuaded that the words "personal merit and demerit" answer to no facts, and that philosophical reflection will enable him in the future to discern that he is no way responsible (in the ordinary sense of this word) for any moral deformity which his character may then present, will he not, in moments of temptation, miss an inducement which would have made it easier for him to take the right course? Hence, I cannot but think that Determinism, in removing all rational ground for reproving ourselves and others, involves immediate and remote practical consequences of considerable importance.

2. Has, then, the progress of physical and mental science at length furnished us with such cogent reasons for distrusting the common belief in man's freedom to choose between competing motives of different moral rank, that we may fairly look forward to the gradual relinquishment of the Free-will doctrine by all competent inquirers?

The same two arguments as heretofore are still put forward as the main bulwarks of Determinism. The one is that the unbroken uniformity of sequence observed in all physical and in a large section of mental phenomena, affords a very strong presumption in favour of the doctrine that all mental phenomena succeed each other in a like uniform way. This argument appears to be the favourite one in

England, and it is urged, not only by those who follow Hume in rejecting an objective causal *nexus* between phenomena, but also by many of those who refer phenomena and the relations among phenomena to a permanent power in Nature. The force of such an argument as this can never amount to demonstration; for in the first place, the uniformity of sequence in phenomenal change is a matter of observation merely, and a violation of that uniformity would contravene no necessary law of thought; and in the second place it is by no means clear that the human will and its self-determinations can fitly be classed with phenomenal events. By the Libertarian Theist, who regards no phenomenon as the cause of another phenomenon, but looks upon all natural phenomena as owing their existence and their mutual relations to the action of one eternal spiritual Cause, the uniformity of Nature is accepted as a fact of observation, which seems to him to be in complete harmony with his idea of the nature and character of the Eternal. But while the Theist sees good reason for accepting and expecting uniformity in Nature, he sees equally good ground for not accepting and expecting it in the case of those moral phenomena which are the expression of his own free personality. Not only does he feel that in his moral relations he is in some measure a free cause, and therefore essentially differenced from the phenomena of Nature, but he also feels that if this seeming moral freedom of his should prove to be unreal, and the formation of his character be shown to be wholly due to the influence of outward impression and necessary inner development of some of his most ennobling and inspiring sentiments and convictions would surely fade away, and the Determinist reality would seem to him less perfect and precious than the Libertarian illusions. Hence the argument drawn from the prevalence of uniformity in physical nature, and in the larger part of human nature, is only formidable to those who accept the phenomenal theory of Causation, and reject the Theistic theory regarding God, Nature, and Man,—a theory which seems to those who hold it to furnish the simplest and most satisfactory *rationale* of the facts given in perception and in self-consciousness.

3. Far more formidable to my mind is the other argument adduced by Determinists, namely, that free self-determination violates the principle of Sufficient Reason, in that it implies

that the Ego, in deciding to resist or not to resist a strong impulse felt to be relatively low, is free to take either of the two alternatives, and is not necessitated in its act of choice either by the force of the motives which appeal to it, or by the intrinsic drift of its previously formed character. In regard to the great bulk of our actions, the Libertarian may well admit that our self-determinations are in accordance with our motives and with our character, and could be predicted by one who had thorough insight into our mental state. It is only in relation to acts which are performed under temptation to do what is felt to be wrong, that the past character and the present motives afford no sufficient ground for a certain anticipation of the ensuing moral decision. In other words, though the Ego is constantly performing acts which are expressions of its formed character, it is only in acts where a *change of moral character*, for good or ill, is taking place—in acts, that is, where the motives affecting us are felt to be of different moral worth—that the self-determinations of the Ego pass out of the sphere of all intelligible prevision. In such acts as these the Libertarian believes that he is truly depicting his consciousness when he says that the Ego feels the force of the present impulses and desires, and feels also the influence of its previously formed character; and, over and above both of these experiences, feels that it is also the seat of a free causality, which enables it, by what Dr. Ward calls “an anti-impulsive effort,” to repress the importunity of violent, but degrading impulses, and by that effort to preserve or elevate its moral character. If this account of our consciousness in moments of temptation be correct, it follows that while the Ego is the cause of this critical decision, it is not itself necessitated to take one alternative rather than the other, either by pressure from without, or by its own inherent character. The motives and the character determine the nature of the rival claimants for the Ego’s causality, but in the Libertarian’s opinion, they do not determine the side on which this causality shall be exercised. “Why, then,” the Determinist asks, “does the Ego decide this way, rather than that?” The answer I should give is, that to ask why a cause acts in this way rather than in that, is to forget that it is a cause, and to treat it rather as a vehicle of causation. A *cause* which is wholly *caused* is, I think, a contradiction in terms. But here I may be asked how I explain the fact that so many of

the Ego's actions admit of being foreseen. In cases of conduct involving no ethical difference, I should be inclined to say that the Ego cannot be justly said to choose; it merely compares the various possible ways of attaining some desired end, and having discovered what seems to it the most desirable way, it inevitably adopts it; for though motives do not, in my opinion, determine the Ego, the Ego cannot act in the absence of motive, and so, where there is virtually but one motive present, there is but one possible course open to the Ego, and therefore its conduct under such circumstances admits of prediction. Hence, it is only when the Ego is appealed to by influences felt to be of different ethical rank, that the conditions are present for the exercise of its causality in the way of free choice, and therefore under these conditions only do its acts pass beyond the range of possible prevision, and at the same time become the fitting objects of moral approbation or condemnation. It seems to me futile for the Determinist to urge, in opposition to this, that every other cause in the universe appears to be followed by one invariable effect. The Libertarian is entitled to reply that he knows of no other causes save the wills of men, and that Supreme Cause of whose causality the phenomena of Nature are the determined effects. Unless, then, we can pass behind that supreme causality, and assure ourselves that it can only act in one determinate way, we are not justified in claiming to argue from analogy that a cause has no freedom of choice as to which of two or more possibilities it shall convert into an actuality.

4. In what I have said, I have assumed, on what I take to be the evidence of consciousness, that the Ego is a substance, and not a mere aggregate of properties, with no proprietor; and I have also assumed that in seasons of temptation, and at other times, we are conscious of an activity of the Ego quite distinct from the activity of the impulses and associations of which the Ego is the seat. Both these assumptions are called in question by some Determinists, and on this matter there is nothing for it but an appeal to each thinker's personal consciousness. It seems to me as intuitively certain that there is a Self which thinks and chooses, as that there are the states of consciousness called thinking and choice. And if it be said (as by Spinoza) that we believe ourselves to be free because we are conscious of the act of choice, but are not conscious of the in-

fluences which determine the character of that choice, I should reply that there are many changes in our inner life which we attribute to influences which do not emerge into consciousness, and that such cases are felt to be totally unlike the cases in which the Ego recognises in itself a true first cause, and approves or disapproves itself on the ground of this felt free causation.

Mr. Shadworth H. Hodgson writes, in the current number of *Mind*:—"We are morally responsible for our acts of choice, because conscience, which is reflection on such acts, has that sense of moral responsibility, and a deeper and keener sense of it the more it reflects upon them." If Mr. Hodgson means by "responsibility" only what Professor Huxley and Miss Bevington mean by that word, this language seems quite consistent with Mr. Hodgson's Determinist theory; but if (as the context seems to indicate) "responsibility" is used in its ordinary sense, I do not see how to reconcile this language with Mr. Hodgson's doctrine, that all acts flow necessarily from the character of the agent at the time of the action.

5. From what has gone before, it will be evident that I regard but a comparatively small portion of human actions as wholly beyond the range of calculation and prevision. Very many of our actions are spontaneous or automatic, and many of those actions which are due to the Ego's real causality are yet, owing to the circumstance that they involve no immediate moral choice, in complete accordance with what would be expected from the antecedent motive and character. I am all but absolutely certain how I and many of my acquaintances would act in a great variety of supposable cases. Still, there is a limit, differing very much in different persons, and slowly altering in each individual, beyond which temptation becomes a possibility, and prevision, therefore, an impossibility. But even in these cases *motives* are of the utmost importance, for though they do not decide the moral problem, they may alter the character of the problem to be decided; and furthermore, their presence may lessen the vehemence of the impulse which the will is called upon to resist, and may sometimes wholly remove the case out of the sphere of temptation, and bring it within the sphere of possible prediction. Hence it seems to me that the statement of the late Professor Clifford and others that Free-will renders morality impossible, implies a misapprehension of the true character and limitations of the Libertarian doctrine.

The impression, then, which I derive from studying the present phase of the Free-will controversy is, that recent physical and mental science has furnished no universally recognised facts of a character to render untenable the Libertarian position; and that the Determinists' arguments now, as heretofore, finally turn upon readings of consciousness and assumed philosophical theories which do not necessarily approve themselves to all equally competent thinkers, and for which the Libertarian feels that he is justified in substituting other readings of consciousness and other theories. The discoveries of Science and the evidence of statistics do not seem to him to be incompatible with the view that our nature is so constituted as to afford rational ground for the ascription of personal merit and demerit, and that at the same time our actions are sufficiently correlated to character and open to prediction to furnish a solid basis for moral discipline and ethical science.



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