Nature and Deity

Frederick Meakin

Library of The Theological Seminary

PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY

BL 51 .M473 1895
Meakin, Frederick, 1848-
1923.
Nature and deity

APR 25

NATURE AND DEITY

A STUDY OF

RELIGION AS A QUEST OF THE IDEAL

BY

FREDERICK MEAKIN

How charming is divine philosophy!—*Milton*

CHICAGO
CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY
175 MONROE STREET

Copyright, 1895,
By FREDERICK MEAKIN.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE following essay is an attempt to find in the constitution of our humanity and in our general relations to nature the grounds of a religious philosophy considered as the general philosophy of life.

The point of view is that of pure naturalism. And no need arises, within the scope of this inquiry, for the discussion of the various theories of knowing and being which have vexed philosophy and shaken the foundations of religion. Ontology, epistemology, and the moot questions of metaphysics, have no direct bearing upon our conclusions in their main drift; and realist or idealist, theist, theosophist, or agnostic, who should allow that the power which gives form and force to the law of life has given us also a natural means for the interpretation of this law might, for the purposes of this inquiry, waive the consideration of ulterior problems and search with us for the natural grounds of such vital or religious law. At any rate, we look no further than nature here for the basis of religious thought. The philosophy of religion is conceived as a form of natural philosophy.

And having identified religion with the rational law of life, as disclosed in the specific character of the being with which we have been endowed by nature, we find that the sphere of religion includes the sphere

of morals as the greater includes the less. Ethical law is but a part of the law of life as a whole. In so far, therefore, we differ from those who would expand the content of ethics so as to include all conduct or conscious direction of life whatever. We have conceived the theory of ethics, distinctively, as the fundamental theory of associative life, believing that the laws commonly recognized as moral are practically limited to the requirements of organic (not necessarily primitive) social law. Such a limitation of the scope of ethics, however, though consistent with general habits of thought, as we maintain, and an aid therefore to effectiveness of treatment, is mainly a matter of classification, and of the classification of phenomena, too, which cannot be marked off by abrupt or definite lines. The vital principle fuses and unifies all the activities of life. And the philosophy of life would remain the same even if we should include the whole of life within the sphere of ethics, banishing religion to the putative sphere of the supernatural. The relations of language to thought, nevertheless, are so intimate, and conduct depends so largely upon habit, that old names, to which the theorist may as theorist properly be indifferent, ought not to be lightly discarded in matters of practice; and, unless we arbitrarily extend the scope of morals, a term more comprehensive than morality is needed to cover the entire discipline and conduct of life. Such a term we have ready to hand in the word religion. To certain extremists it may seem that the associations inseparable from the name are misleading, or even vicious, but on the

whole more will be lost, we believe, than can be gained by the excision of a word of so great breadth and inspirational power. Religion is a word which is not a mere word. It is a force.

The idealism which emerges as the result of this inquiry, and into which religion is here resolved, will hardly be confounded, after what has been said, with philosophic idealism, or the system of thought which resolves all being into forms of thought. The questions raised by idealism as a philosophical theory are beside the aim of this essay. The ideal here represents the form which rational conduct continually approximates, and is contrasted with the real, not as thought is contrasted with things, but as the perfection of the ideal is contrasted with its incomplete manifestation in the real; and the actual or real which should perfectly exemplify the type would be itself the ideal. And the law of approximation to the type, or the ideal law, is implied in the principles in which nature universal has founded the nature of our humanity, and is deeply impressed, in part at least, upon our instincts. It appears, in one of its aspects, as the moral sense, or the intuitive sense of right, which is sometimes made the ultimate ground of moral distinctions. A theory is needed, however, to give greater certainty and consistency to the suggestions of this moral sense, which is unequally developed in different minds, and, with the practical advantages, has the imperfections of an instinct, and to reduce its deliverances, if possible, to a general principle or law which shall appeal with paramount au-

thority to all rational minds. Such a general law, we submit, is to be found in the law of human happiness or well-being. The fundamental precepts of ethics derive their authority, we maintain, from the fact that their fulfillment is a condition indispensable to that complete discharge of the vital functions as a whole in which life attains its happiest consummation and most perfect form.

This most perfect life, conceived as an expression of the universal life, we have called divine; and nature in her ideal aspect generally we contemplate, in like manner, as nature in her deity or divinity. Exception may be taken to this use of a term which might be supposed to have no place in a merely naturalistic scheme. But, after Spinoza, no justification is needed. Nature and deity are not by the force of the terms mutually exclusive. It is a mere incident of theology and its skeptical counterpart, so to speak, that the divine should now be expunged from nature and relegated to the domain, knowable or unknowable, of the non-natural or the supernatural, and religious sentiment has never perhaps wholly divested nature of the divinity with which she was associated in the antique thought. Christianity itself, from Paul the Apostle down to Berkeley the philosophizing bishop, has shown distinctively pantheistic leanings. The identification of the divine with the ideal has, moreover, gone into literature, and only those who are violently theistic, or those who are as yet in the violence of their reaction from theism, will see a necessary incongruity in the recognition of deity in the

ideal aspects and tendencies discernible in the general being of nature. So at least we are persuaded. But if a man will insist that "religion" and "the divine" are but the perishable terms of an illusion which must one day be dispelled, the natural laws which govern the quest and cultus of the ideal will remain nevertheless the same, and will remain equally authoritative, with whatever terms associated, in determining the conduct of reasonable men. And these are the laws which we have attempted here to rationalize or trace to their general grounds in the natural scheme of things.

For the rest, the essay must be left to the judgment of the reader for what it is worth, with the suggestion, only, that he weigh its conclusions more considerately than its terms. Its language is general, since it is addressed to no particular class, unless such as are willing to discuss religious topics with the freedom which they assert in other directions of inquiry may be called a class. And its aim is constructive rather than critical. Criticism of old systems has already done its most effective work. It remains now, if religion shall be taken still in any vital sense, to refer its verities to the ground of the natural and the knowable, on the one hand, and to guard it from moral indifferentism, on the other. And "divine" philosophy may in fact, we are convinced, be presented in terms of a natural philosophy without loss of moral or inspirational force.

NATURE AND DEITY.

I.

The truth, it would seem, is most profitable, not for instruction alone, but in its bearing too upon life.—*Aristotle: Nichomachean Ethics.* x. 1.

Under the stars, or by the mountains or the sea, the contemplative mind, escaping the fever and constraint of its working-day aims, is conscious of a deep affinity with the power and being of the natural world. Nature then, that to our conventionalized thought is a mere mechanic mass wanting an inner original drift, is revealed as an omnipresent life, a perduring vital energy, of which man himself is but a phase and product. A common principle animates all being. But seen in Nature's vast perspective, how fleeting and contracted is man's particular being. His boldest thought is awed by her infinitudes. Nor by her vaster motions or her starry spaces only is his sense oppressed. A blade of grass, a pebble, the merest ripple that breaks the surface of a pool, lures his thought into a sea of change that baffles thought. Nay, the mind, self-conscious subject, the mind which thinks, finds in itself a world of causes, relations, laws, as objective and as deep and strange as those of any far-off world or system of worlds beyond the limit of our

natural vision. Within as without we encounter the mystery of being.

And the sense of this mystery, it may be conceded, is an element of the religious sense. The awe which fills the soul in moments of religious exaltation would fail or vanish were the universe to shrink from its infinitude to the small compass of our intelligence. But religion is not amazement merely or blind stupefaction. To acquire a religious value, feeling must assume a measure of consistency and form, for though the depth of religious feeling may obscure the formal or intellectual elements of religion, the feeling, as religious, can not be defined as the mere recoil of baffled intelligence: it must be informed by some positive idea. Religious ideas, it is true, are variable, hard to hold and define. As they are incessantly changing and expanding with the growth of the mind and the shifting of the mental horizon, it is only in their more general content or intention that they are likely to be constant. Such pervading intention, however, it seems possible to trace. A certain substance or positive content survives the long process of religious change, and constitutes, at least for such stages of man's religious development as it is our purpose to consider, what we may fairly assume to be characteristic or essential in religion—its underlying thought and its underlying aim.

If we separate religion from its mere ceremonial or uninformed habit, its vital underlying thought is the idea of power, in nature or through nature in some way made manifest, guiding from within or from

without the operations of nature, and determining also our human lot. Such a thought has its seat deep in the sources of feeling, and is found in intimate relation with the most significant acts of life. In serious minds it is interwoven with every purpose of life. Religion appears on its practical side, accordingly, as a paramount aim: an aim, that is to say, inspired by the hopes or the fears associated with our conception of overruling power, to harmonize our lives with the will or determination of such power. And this, it would seem, is religion's permanent or underlying aim.

By the rudest minds this overruling power is conceived as embodied in many forms, human in kind, and influenced by ordinary human motives: the conception of deity is polytheistic and rudely anthropomorphic. At a stage of culture relatively more advanced, these various forms, subordinated by degrees to the authority of a single will, coalesce at length in a single power, which, however, is still conceived as personal and, in the character of its motives, essentially human: religion becomes monotheistic. Later this personality is idealized. The moral obligation, at first but loosely associated with the religious, gains in time a certain ascendency among religious obligations; the arbitrary and ceremonial elements of religion are subordinated or slowly decay; and in the complete identification of the personal deity with the moral ideal we reach the consummation of the anthropomorphic conception of supreme power.

The conception of overruling power as a human or personal deity, a conception which tends to dissociate nature from her inworking life, is rarely held, however, in its simplicity. It is modified inevitably by the effect of our perpetual contact with nature, whose operations challenge all attempts to conform them to personal or human patterns, or to compress them within the scope of quasi-human ends; and we may discover all along in the later development of religious thought traces of the difficulty which has been felt, especially in moral speculation, in completely personifying nature, or deity conceived as the author and controller of nature. Theism and providential theories have felt the influence of naturalism, or the habit of dealing with nature as an original rather than a derivative power.

But under whatever name or type we seek to figure the being of deity, or the relations which we sustain to the power, natural or supernatural, which we call divine, the type is more or less blurred, the relations are more or less confused. The subject, in fact, mocks our efforts to grasp it. Infinity here embarrasses all our measurements or appreciations. The mind, passing from form to form, each in some degree intelligible, finds the forms numberless; or, tracing the power in nature through its perceptible modes, loses its way in an endless succession of modes. All pathways vanish in a shadowy land to which not even thought can climb: to us their end is mystery; and our vision of nature, and our conception of the power resident in nature or manifest through nature,

are obscured under the continual pressure of this mystery. It is the perceptible and the intelligible, nevertheless, which give to the impression its quality and distinctiveness. The merely inscrutable is to the religious sense nothing. The power which everywhere invites our scrutiny, though in the end it outruns all inquiry by its immensity and infinite complexity, impresses us primarily by that which our scrutiny reveals. The mystery of the unknown is the suggestion of that which we know. And we are still in the field of the known or knowable when we consider those elements or aspects of universal power which, giving color by induction as it were to the vague unknown into which all knowledge fades, are the natural and universal symbols of the infinite, the essential objects and media of religious thought.

And our object here is to search in this knowable realm for the basis of a religious philosophy. It is not our purpose to trace out the natural history of religion, so to speak, and prove its identity from the germ to the ripest form. Ethnologically, that is, as phases of the human mind maturing under different conditions, all the forms of religion have value, and science properly takes cognizance of even the most barbarous forms. But systems of religion embody systems of thought—theories of nature and human nature—which may be true or which may be false; and religious philosophy, great as is its debt to ethnology and the history of religions, is, as philosophy, directly interested only in determining the theory which is true. Its aim is to ascertain, not that which

men have hitherto believed or done, but, within the scope of its subject, that which in fact or in principle is true, that which as practical law is wholesome and sound. The rationalization of religion, in short, is its object. And this is our object here. And assuming that the subject-matter of religion is universal power and the method of harmonizing our lives with its laws, we shall attempt to interpret this power, in the religious sense, as natural power, and to deduce the method of the religious life from the forms of natural law.

As against the utility of such an aim, it may be urged that the truth of religious thought is of little moment as compared with the strength of religious feeling; and religion, it is said, is most fitly defined in terms of feeling. And doubtless religion, which to have any effective existence must exist as a dominant force, can scarcely be said to be present where strong emotional elements are wanting. But mere excitement or hysteria is not religion. Religious feeling is the emotional phase of some idea. Our ideas may be adopted by inheritance, by contact, by insensible absorption, without conscious submission to the tests of truth; they may be contradictory, irreconcilable under any theory; but ideas of some sort must exist, vaguely and confusedly if not in definite and harmonious relations, as necessary elements of the religious consciousness. Thought must fuse with feeling in the same conscious state. And to give definiteness and purpose to the feeling it must be inspired by some vital defining conception of the gen-

eral aim and deeper relations of life. Strength and concentration of feeling cannot proceed from confusion of thought, and religious feeling is weak to-day because it has lost its own drift. It wants the directive force of a strong and persistent idea.

Or it is urged that religion is essentially a matter of conduct. The moralist, looking at religion mainly in its practical aspect, that is, as characterized by the form of the will and of the acts which it initiates, contends sometimes that there is little in religion but the discipline of the will. Conduct, he may aver, has but the remotest connection with the form of religious belief, or even with theories of conduct. Modes of faith may involve, in the rigor of logic, conclusions which the will systematically repudiates, and errors of logic, it is urged, and errors of faith are alike immaterial if one's life is in the right. And there is an element of truth in this contention. Religion on its practical side, which is mainly ethical, has adopted the results of experience. The religious life, it is now broadly conceded, must be first of all a moral life, and our moral ideals have assumed the shape in which we find them only after prolonged and varied experimental tests. But the forms of religious belief or the theories of religion, which includes the theory of morals, are commonly offered as superior to criticism and the teachings of experience alike. Theories so held have, unquestionably, no vital relation to practice. A verified theory, on the other hand, or a theory which had received such verification as a considerate view of experience may

afford, would be found in practice invaluable. Ethical distinctions are drawn for the most part instinctively, that is, in accordance with mental habits which have been organized into what is called the moral consciousness, or the conscience. But the moral instincts appear to enjoy no special immunity from error or confusion. In undeveloped tribes they share the imperfect development of the mind, and among various tribes give various and sometimes conflicting results. And even in developed communities the older instincts clash with sound but relatively feeble convictions of a later civilization. The personal obligation as intuitively apprehended conflicts with the public obligation, and often quite overpowers it. The sublime instinct of pity may fill a land with paupers. And, in general, the growing complexity of our civilization presents problems so novel and intricate that the instincts which make up the body and force of conscience are not seldom at fault and incompetent to resolve their several tendencies into resolute and harmonious action. In the emergencies thus arising an analysis of the moral situation with reference to some broad principle becomes a necessity, and if one is in possession of a well-grounded theory, to which the moot questions of morals may be referred, such a theory has the strongest possible relation to practice. Theories and modes of faith which cannot be tested, or which ask immunity from the tests of truth, are indeed irrelevant to the purpose of the teacher or disciplinarian. An attested theory, on the other hand, is his chief desideratum.

But in attempting to frame such a theory, the theoretical aspect of religion (in which morals must be included) is isolated, we should remember, only by abstraction. Distinctions in the field of view serve a useful end, of course, and are in fact indispensable to the accuracy of a general survey. But in the field of mental phenomena few, if any such distinctions, are absolute. Religion, as a form of thought, must give tone to the feeling, and, so far as the convictions it represents are genuine convictions, must bear upon the will and its acts; as feeling, it rests upon an interpretation of universal power and a certain general view of life, that is, upon a form of thought, which, where religion is a vital fact and not a mere survival of external habit, determines the form and tendency of the feeling; while in its practical aspect, that is, as it affects the determinations of the will, it stands in immediate relation to motives, in which both feeling and thought combine to express themselves in action. Thought, will, and feeling, separable in idea, are thus inseparable in fact. Our view will be distorted, therefore, if we carry the distinction, as in philosophy it has been carried, farther than is necessary for convenience of treatment. As a vital reality religion, various as are its aspects, shares the unity of the mind which is its seat.

Here, however, our immediate object being neither edification nor discipline, we must leave to the prophet and mentor the main discharge of these high functions. Our specific purpose is, as we have said, to examine the basis of religious thought and the

method and purpose of the religious life, in the hope of contributing in some degree to the rationalization of religious theory. How much the matter is in need of revision appears from the general unrest which pervades men's minds. For centuries the fundamental religious idea, though variable and on the whole progressive, has corresponded to cosmic conceptions which, in the light of our present knowledge, are felt to be defective and misleading. The changed aspect presented by the face of nature seems to require some modification of the fundamental religious idea through which we undertake to interpret nature. At any rate, doubt and disquiet are common; and as belief without evidence, or against the evidence, though sometimes paraded as a virtue, is but the vice of an indolent or a servile mind, our only course, if we really respect the truth and are anxious for a rational adjustment of the religious problem, is to examine the grounds of our convictions and of our doubts, and to reason our way, if possible, to a well-founded belief. And the end to be attained in such an inquiry is not merely intellectual assurance and repose. We have in fact, on practical grounds, the strongest of motives to attempt the resolution of our doubts or the rationalization of our beliefs, not only in the effect of religion on the particular form of the conduct, but in the tendency of religion—a tendency which strengthens with the strength of religious possession—to harmonize the dissentient impulses of the soul, enlarge and unify our aims, and give force and efficacy to the life. Compare our skeptical age with

the ages of faith. In those unreflecting ages—how vainly we sigh for their return—faith was weakened by no misgivings or reserves. It had then the force of a real conviction. And to what achievement, what sacrifice, men were borne by their faith! But the force of that conviction fails. The old tendencies in the feelings and the will yet retain a strength that is left of habit and certain remnants of belief, but the faith that sustained them is feeble or wanting, and loss of faith must betray itself in distraction of feeling and flaws of the will, unless genuine convictions make good the decay. Conviction, however, in a candid mind, comes not with the wishing: it follows the weight of evidence. There are many, it is true, who value what is taught as religion less for the evidence of its truth than for its iteration of pleasing hopes. To such fables will still be told. And the number of this kind, and the vogue which numbers give to a timorous and sensuous habit in religious thought, have driven men of virile minds and women with a passion for truth to aver that the whole fabric of religion is but the effect of illusion. Let us by all means, even in religion, divide fancy from fact, the presumptions of desire from the convictions of truth. It is time that the sense of veracity and the power to appreciate evidence should make themselves felt in religious philosophy as in science. But whatever we discard, the power operative in nature, immanent or transcendent, remains. And we remain, subject to the laws of growth and decay, of suffering and joy, of well-being and ill, as in the nature of things estab-

lished. The form of these laws, the mode of their operation, and our general relations to the power to which they owe their force, are questions of fact; and there must be some statement of such laws, if by wit or patience or good hap we may arrive at it, which is true. We must allow, therefore, unless we dogmatically deny the possibility of such a statement, or insist on a definition of religion which excludes it from the domain of nature and of rational thought, that there may be a true religious philosophy, or a resolution of the fundamental problems presented in each individual life which will command the credence and attention of the most rigorous devotee of truth. And this fundamental truth has the same vital interest for the rational mind by whatever name it be known. The aim of the present inquiry is the exploration of this truth, and religion is here understood as resting, proximately at least, on a basis of natural law.

II.

Alle Schöpfung ist werk der Natur.—*Goethe.*

Æternum namque illud et infinitum ens, quod Deum seu naturam appellamus, eadem, qua existit, necessitate agit.—*Spinoza.*

Aside from verbal revelation, which is usually regarded as without the scope of philosophical inquiry, the tendency of religious thought has been to search for its fundamental principles in the constitution, or assumed original content, of the mind itself, as known *a priori*, that is, with more than empirical certainty. It has seemed unsafe to build on sensible data, or upon experience which may be resolved into sensible elements. Descartes, accordingly, finding in the mind the idea of an infinite being of infinite perfections, maintained that such an idea could never originate in an imperfect and finite mind, and must be traced to such infinite being actually existent as its only adequate cause. And so he would prove, without other evidence than the idea of God, the actual existence of God in character and distinctiveness corresponding to the idea. Kant, again, unable to construe the mere presence of an idea in the mind as proof of the existence of a corresponding object, held that the assumption of God's existence is a necessity of the moral consciousness, an inevitable hypothesis of the practical reason, which must assume the existence of a cause adequate to the complete fulfillment

of the moral law and its complete fruition in perfect happiness. And this law, in virtue of which Kant postulates freedom and immortality also, he authenticates by reference, apparently, to a supersensuous or intelligible or noumenal source. And thus, by intuition, by inner suggestion, by deduction *a priori*, or by some purely mental necessity, the certainty which we demand for the fundamental datum of our religious systems, that is, for the existence of a being whose attributes and power are the sole and sufficient basis of religion, is believed to be secured without impairment or attainder of sense.

But the possibility of reaching such supra-sensible certainty becomes more doubtful the more we study the operations of the mind. The old philosophies borrow their premises from a premature psychology. Modern theories of cognition point to the conclusion that first principles so-called, and, in general, principles assumed *a priori*, cannot either in religion or in science be traced to a unique and mystical source absolutely dissevered from the sources of sensuous knowledge, or pretend, in virtue of their origin simply, to a certainty so absolute that it is superior to criticism and needs no verification. With much pains we have, it would seem, inverted the order of thought. It is not the general principle, we learn, but the sensible impression which is the original datum. Not the law of gravitation but the fall of the apple is first apprehended. And the process of knowledge is in all cases essentially the same: it is the same mortal and fallible mind which applies itself to

all the data of knowledge, arriving at such degree of certainty as the conditions of knowledge and the opportunities of verification permit. Even the foundations of mathematics—mathematics, the type of certainty and the envy of metaphysicians—are laid in experience. In short, experience, once despised, by reason of its dependence on sense, as infecting with a species of taint all knowledge into which it enters, appears to afford the grounds of whatever certainty attaches to principles assumed *a Priori* and exalted above experience.

Leaving out of consideration, then, theories which assume a sphere and faculty of cognition independent of experience, we find current a theory which allies itself more closely with the assumptions of common thought. It is essentially a dualistic theory. It postulates, it is true, an original, eternal, self-existent spirit from whom all things proceed, and is in so far monistic; but the creation which it assumes is a process remote from the common thought, or a mere dogma of which no exposition is attempted: virtually it recognizes a thorough-going partition of being, a material substance shaped by an immaterial force, a universal body informed by a universal mind. And these correlatives, matter and spirit, body and mind, reflect, it is obvious, the opposition conceived as existing between the human body and the human mind. The mind is regarded as a several whole, with an individuality distinct from that of the body, which it occupies as a tenant holds his tenement, and which in due time it will quit with no impairment of its or-

iginal character, but with enlargement of its freedom rather, the body being regarded, after old Heraclitus, as the prison or grave of the spirit which at death is restored to liberty and life. But the relation between body and mind is more intimate than this hypothesis implies. The mind, in its growth, modifications, and decay reflects with minute fidelity the growth, modifications, and decay of the body, and particularly of those parts of the body—the brain and nerves and the organs of sense—which are most immediately associated with our conscious life. Such concomitance seems to point to a certain dependence or interdependence, or some sort of causal connection. The relation, in fact, is so intimate that it is difficult if not impossible to isolate the sphere of mental activity by any definite boundary. No sharp line marks the threshold of consciousness. And shall we say that there is nothing corresponding to mental life below the line? Ordinarily we limit the sphere of mind to the sphere of consciousness; but all conscious action is found to rest upon a basis of unconscious activity in which, as it would seem, it were arbitrary to deny that there is something of intelligence or of the quality of mind. Starting with the dualistic theory of human personality it seems impossible to resolve away the dualism even below the threshold of consciousness and beyond the immediate organs of mental life. In every organic structure, in every cell, and even in each proximate principle, we discover functions, affinities, self-determining powers, which seem to bear to the matter in which they reside rela-

tions similar to those which the mind as a whole bears to the body as a whole. Thus in the last analysis body and mind, or their representative elements, are still undissociated, and the conclusion seems to force itself upon us that the same process which compounds the material elements into the substance of the body develops by gradation all the qualities of mind.

But the hypothesis that the body is the merely local and temporary habitation of the mind, or a machine which may be spatially distinguished from its director,the mind, has been extended, we have said, beyond the limits of our particular being to the realm of universal being. The phenomena of sensible observation are affiliated upon a kind of body known as nature, a body which, in virtue of the orderly and systematic character of its movements, is assumed to be under the control of a being who is individually and severally distinguished from this body, and whose essence is spirit or mind. Or, pushing the distinction to its extreme, we conceive of matter, the abstract of all sensible, ponderable stuff, as brute and inert, without life or direction, save as animated by that self-sustaining spirit which is conceived as the original source of life and mind in general. But closer familiarity with nature than was possible with primitive methods of investigation teaches us that matter brute and inert has no existence. Life and mind, or the activities which are believed to betray the influence of life and mind, are present in the minutest atom. There is nothing in nature which is merely passive, dependent, lifeless. Every ele-

ment has its inherent qualities, its original activity and impulse, which, however compounded or obscured, are never annulled, and the intelligence which has been conceived as centered in a separate presiding mind is found omnipresent in nature and involved in the very existence of matter. Matter and spirit, that is to say, are separable in thought but inseparable in fact. The reality, considered from without, as inert object passively determined by some guiding force or principle conceptually distinguished from the object, is body or matter: considered from within, as subject and itself the origin of determinative force, it is spirit or mind. And as this inner determinative principle, thus distinguished from matter in thought, is never dissociated from matter in fact, it would seem more reasonable to regard the directive principle of nature in general as immanent and inherent in the body of nature than to erect it, hypostatizing our abstraction, into a several, distinct and transcendent being.

Beyond this we need not go. The ultimate constitution of matter and mind it is unnecessary to discuss in the present inquiry. So far as we are now concerned, we may treat either as a function of its correlative, taking sides with the spiritualists on the one hand or the materialists on the other; or, with certain evolutionists, we may regard them as independent entities exhibiting parallel phenomena; or we may interpret them after the manner of Spinoza, in a monistic sense, as coordinate aspects of one and the same complex reality. But all theories must as-

sume the being of nature, and the action of a directive principle in the operations of nature. Here we insist only that this directive principle be interpreted, in religion as in science, through the modes of nature, that is to say, we recognize the sufficiency of natural law in the sphere of religious thought.

But in the criticism of men's beliefs we have always to remember the preoccupations and the happy inconsequence of the human mind. Even philosophers will illogically reach conclusions that are true from premises that are false, and few theories are in practice pressed strictly to their full sequence of error. It is inevitable too that general theories adopted without much examination to explain a complex assemblage of facts, which are themselves indistinctly apprehended, should be conceived with more or less looseness, and that theories mutually exclusive should be found maintaining a certain footing side by side in the same hospitable mind. We find, accordingly, that the conception of spirit as pure activity, and of body as purely passive, is really lost sight of in the ordinary view. The human body is conceived as having a certain life of its own, independent of the indwelling mind; and nature, in like manner, is accorded undefined limits within which she is vaguely supposed to exercise a certain initiative, and to be capable on her own motion of orderly and harmonious action. The elemental activities, the growth of plants, the instinct of animals, may be included in the limits thus assigned to nature, limits, however, which each man extends or contracts ac-

cording to his point of view or the general tendency of his thought; while the presiding mind is conceived as combining the more or less dissociated activities of nature to general ends, and particularly in the human interest and to moral ends. And this is the compromising view of the matter most generally taken, perhaps, among ourselves to-day. The immanent life of nature forces recognition by the universality of its manifestation; while the sphere of deity, as the external, governing mind, is restricted, barring sporadic cases of divine interposition, to the realization of high and ulterior ends, and, in general, to such facts or phenomena as cannot be explained on "natural" grounds. Hence every great acquisition of science seems, by extending the bounds of nature, to shrink the domain of deity. But the field of nature, the sphere of natural law, still widens. And each such extension strengthens our latent conviction of the universality of natural law, so that we trace with increasing confidence the broadest tendencies and the highest results discoverable in the activity of nature not to a purpose imposed upon her from without, but to principles recognized as proceeding from within, and germane to her proper sphere. There seems, at length, to be no room or requirement for the activity of a several, individual, and presiding mind dominating from afar the activity of nature. The unknown as fast as it becomes known is found to be natural; the abstract and general, once assumed as the pure product of mind, or as an emanation from a purely mental or "intelligible" world,

appear but to note our discrimination and summation of certain particulars perceived in the concreteness of the natural world; and the conclusion seems inevitable that the intelligence which we had set over against nature, as the readiest explanation of her order and harmonies, is inherent in the constitution of nature.

But is not this conclusion over-bold as yet? Are the methods of nature so patent and familiar that we can deny the intervention of any occult or non-natural principle whatever in the operations of nature? Development theories are rife—and plausible. They explain much, perhaps; but there is much more which they are but assumed to explain. Have they as yet made intelligible, for instance, the process by which life in the specific sense is evolved from inanimate matter, or from matter which is alive only in the broader or, if you please, metaphorical sense? Or if it be allowed that the physiologist has discovered in the affinity of protoplasm for oxygen the inorganic reason for organic movement—or the chemical explanation of a biological fact and the transitional stage between animate and inanimate being—what shall we say of the transition from the unconscious to the conscious, from physiological life to psychic life? Is not the wit of savant and philosopher baffled in every attempt to figure in imagination even a possible mode of such transition? In excluding the supernatural and affirming the sufficiency of natural causes we are, it would seem, but substituting one hypothesis for another. And we may admit that

this is true. But the hypothesis on which we are proceeding seems the more reasonable of the two, seeing that the hypothesis of the supernatural is not supported by what we know and understand, but rests upon a putative basis in the unintelligible and the unknown. We might even contend that there is no operation of the mind by which the supernatural can be known. But it is not our purpose to discuss the theory of knowledge. The hypothesis, if such we must still call it, of the universality and sufficiency of natural law is a postulate of this inquiry. Nature, as contrasted with humanity and the human mind is assumed so far at least as the present investigation is concerned, as coextensive with being, and our problem is to outline the philosophy of religion, if such a thing may be done, upon principles not assumed to transcend the sphere of the simply natural.

III.

All the vast bodies that compose this mighty frame, how distant and remote soever, are by some secret mechanism, some divine art and force, linked in a mutual dependence and intercourse with each other.—*Berkeley*

TAKING the ground, then, that nature is in religion as in science the proper field of knowledge, we identify, generally, the power which is the theme of religious thought with nature's universal energy.

But nature touches us in every mood and appeals to us in every sense. Environed and sustained by nature, we cannot for an instant escape her influence, or survive out of relation with her in any element of our being. All is nature. According to the theory upon which we are proceeding, all is natural. Good and evil, fair and foul, man's wretchedness and wrong no less than his noblest virtues and greatest good fortune, are all alike the issue of the processes of nature. It is not enough, therefore, simply to identify the power to which religious feeling appeals and responds with natural power. How may we conceive of this power, which in its universality impresses us in every form of being, and through every sense, as appealing to us distinctively in the religious sense?

If we note the habit of the religious mind we find it most impressible to nature apprehended in the large, in such general motions and broader phases as

efface the sense of the individual, the particular, and the personal. The specific thing, its color and line and curious detail, are searched by the intellect, as it searches everywhere, in the mere zeal to know; but the religious sense, ignoring the egoism and contentions of particular being, searches for an all-embracing unity in virtue of which the particular and the individual exist, and from which they borrow such religious interest as they awaken. It tends continually to grasp nature as its object under the form of a single idea.

This tendency may be compared with the philosophical impulse to unify our knowledge, or to reduce all nature as the general object of knowledge to a single principle, type, or form. But the mere unification of knowledge will not in itself content the religious impulse. The unity of the natural world is sometimes conceived, for instance, as unity of composition, and the chemist would determine, in hydrogen, say, or in some element perhaps as yet undissociated, the ultimate form of matter, and thus reduce all nature to a primal substratum or stuff. But atomic units are of as little service to religion as atomic weights. There is nothing necessarily hostile to the religious interest in the idea of a universe compounded of similar elements, which yield by their permutations and combinations the infinite diversity so grateful to our human sense. A rational religion must find means to accommodate itself to any fact, if it be indeed a fact. But religion has its peculiar interests, and interprets the universe only as it seems to be related to such in-

terests; and though the minute investigation of nature has given us a truer conception of natural processes and natural power, the religious interest attaches to being as compounded rather than to the elemental points or pulses of being, to nature alive and whole, rather than—to recall the sneer of Mephistopheles in Faust—to nature broken and disintegrated and stripped of her vital charm.

And yet the finer analysis to which nature has been subjected by the science of our time does but confirm and extend the view which the general life of nature might at any time suggest. Polytheism, pantheism, and all the forms of worship which simply deify the power of nature, are evidence of a native tendency in man to conceive the action of nature, as it was apprehended by the Ionic founders of philosophy, under the form of vital action. A closer study of the facts corrects, of course, the extravagance and crudity of many primitive notions. But closer study discloses everywhere in nature interaction, interdependence, correspondence. The light of the stars finds an answering sensibility in the eye; the ponderous earth thrills with maiden delicacy to the varying moods of the sun; and the same elemental forces which sustain the planetary masses centre in a drop of dew. And in this universal reciprocity and communion, comparable with the nexus which correlates and unifies the parts of a living being, we see all things bound to all in vital union. A common principle animates and conserves in perfect solidarity the general mass of nature. *Mens agitat*

molem. The wide expanse of being, with its bewildering activities and endless diversity of form, we conceive and rationalize as a process of growth, resolution, and regeneration, in accordance with an immanent law. Its unity or solidarity is an organic unity.

And in contemplation of this pervading life we seem to come nearer to the unifying principle which in the religious interest we seek. Unity of organization, however, is not to be confounded here with numerical unity. The synthesis in virtue of which we attempt to conceive of nature as an organic unit is never completed; though all forms of being coalesce in relations of organic union, this union is never presented as an organic whole. Nature discloses no ultimate limit. None of our individualizing terms, therefore, which define by comparison as from without are in strictness applicable to nature universal, whom we know only from within, and interpret only by progressive application of laws originally learned as in relation to the particular and finite. And this progressive expansion of our knowledge of nature is never finished. The organic nexus which binds the elements and forces of nature never completes itself to our apprehension in a perfected organism, in the sum of all being rounded off as a unit of being. Nature, that is to say, is infinite.

But the term infinite is itself misinterpreted. Whatever is distinguished as an object of thought so far as to receive a distinctive name, tends by analogy to dissociate itself from other named objects of thought

with more or less definite, not to say spatial, completeness. We objectify our own concepts or ideas. And thus the term infinite (or endless), which is properly a disclaimer of bounds and terminals, is itself conceived as implying, even when applied to universal being, a certain completed and bounded individuality; whereas its true significance is that the particulars through which, in accordance with the laws of thought, we seek in any given case to represent to ourselves the universal object of thought are never exhausted. Infinite being is not an object definitely presented to our apprehension and differing in kind from the beings we call finite. It includes all being, and, in the degree to which the finite in any case extends, is coincident with the finite. The idea of the infinite has thus both positive and negative elements—a positive content, but vanishing limits. While we yet regard being through its oppositions and repulsions, in its exterior relations, its boundaries and individuality and form, it is finite; and all defining thought, all thought which rests in contemplation of a definite relation or particular content in its object, must, by the force of the terms, be the thought of an object as finite. But as thought transcends particular lines and removes each successive limit, resting at no limitation, it passes from the finite to the infinite. The substance of the finite remains to give content and meaning to the infinite, or the infinite were but a name; but the process which carries the mind from limit to limit is never finished; the finite runs into infinite series, the progression is endless.

While therefore we see all the elements of being subsisting in living organic union, the fact that being is infinite, transcending all limits and exhausting all modes, should deter us from any attempt to conclude under the form of a unitary conception, as whole or all, as object or person, or even as organism, the characters of being universally. Infinite being can be reduced to, or defined by, no assignable form of being. It appears in thought only representatively, through the finite, and no particlar form of being, as the human or personal, can serve as such a definition of being universal that we may deduce from it particular conclusions as to the course of nature, for instance, or the destiny of man. Our knowledge of nature is attained by a study of the particulars of nature. We consider her in certain relations, and what we learn of her is valid in such relations. We approach her from a different aspect and add to our knowledge. Continuing our observations, we extend our view, subsuming under a few brief principles perhaps, like the laws of motion, a vast assemblage of facts. And we may reach at length a point so remote from the actual objects of sensible experience that our thought, forgetting the data of its knowledge and objectifying the product of its own abstraction, leaps to the conclusion that it has attained, without the intervention of sense, to a conception or idea by which we may define the Infinite, and from which we may extend our knowledge deductively, without consideration of the facts, and even in the teeth of the facts. So Plato defined and objectified the orig-

inal creative principle as The Good, which he referred to a noetic world, a world of the mind; and so our theologians still objectify the Moral Ideal, or identify it with an individual yet infinite spirit—the conception has never been cleared of its contradictions—dwelling apart in the spiritual world. And from the character assigned to such infinite spirit it is assumed that we may draw various conclusions as to the facts of life. But the process is illicit. A principle, or concept, or idea, by whatever effort of abstraction or imagination it is reached, is still, so far as it is legitimate and intelligible, but an abstract or re-combination of certain data of experience, with no higher warrant than the warrant of such experience, and neither takes us quite out of the world of sensible observation nor acquires such comprehensiveness and breadth that it may serve as an exhaustive definition of the infinite or the *a priori* ground of a complete religious philosophy. We cannot compress the infinite and universal into a premiss. We have no such premiss or key furnished in advance for the general interpretation of nature—the dream of mediæval science—and we have no sufficient clew in the assumed general character or aims of the infinite for the anticipation of our human destiny—the illusion still of theological science. Man and nature must be studied through the particulars of human history and natural events, and in religion as in science the deductions of thought must start from the inductions of experience.

Our knowledge is not restricted, it is true, to the bare fact or actuality observed. Experience has bred

in us the assurance—an assurance which logically antedates our logic whether of induction or deduction, that nature's methods are uniform, that when the conditions, particularly the conditions distinguished as causal, are the same the behavior of nature will be the same. In dealing with the elemental forms and relations of matter we thus arrive at principles of broad and very general application. The law of gravitation, for instance, is applied to all matter; the principles of mathematics are extended to all space; and the physicist turns his spectroscope with absolute confidence in the revelations of color and light to the remotest point which glows in the heavens. Experience, therefore, when its results are sifted and verified, is not coterminous with history, but guides us with equal security through the "dark backward and abysm of time" and the dim reaches of the future. The book of nature is both a record and a prophecy. And the increase of our familiarity with nature may continue indefinitely. No single mind, in fact, can contain what now is known. Yet however broad we make the sphere of the known, our knowledge is conditioned by the experience of which it is the abstract. We know that the particular fact will recur if only the observed conditions recur. As to the presence of the conditions (which really represent an infinity of causes) we must be mainly in the dark. Even the principles of "pure" science, in which our knowledge reaches its maximum of clearness and certainty, cannot escape the uncertainties of misapplication and unsuspected con-

ditions, and it is with astonishment that we find the computations of a Leverrier or a Fresnel tallying with the facts. And where the conditions, known and unknown, are highly complex, as in pathology, history, juridical procedure, social economy, we must content ourselves in the main with a mere probability. But when, abandoning principles known and verified (*veræ causæ*), and fields of knowledge with which we are more or less familiar, we assume such knowledge of the modes, methods, or ends of universal being as to infer with a confidence which asks for no verification that righteousness must necessarily triumph, or that this terrestrial life will be supplemented by a life in which all inequalities will be adjusted, and all suffering compensated, we abandon the field of science and legitimate inference and assume little less than omniscience. Such conclusions are to be reached, if at all, not by direct inference from the general character of the universal life, but by mediate conclusion based on a study of the particular conditions of our particular human life. No deductions may be made from infinity. It is the unexplored deep to which all knowledge leads, but in which all knowledge fades and characterization fails. We may symbolize the infinite by the more impressive of its finite phases. We may put the known for both the known and the vast unknown in which all knowledge merges, but the universal reality, or that which we represent by the phrase, must be conceived, from the very wealth of its attributes, as in its uninversality undetermined and undefined—a premiss transcending all

definite knowledge, and from which no definite inference can be drawn. The unencompassed reality becomes indeed, representatively or symbolically, an object of thought, but the being of the object still overmasters or transcends our thought; thought never traverses this reality. And we mark our sense of this transcendence by such terms as the Infinite, the Universal, the Absolute. Somewhere our thought must pause. Beginning with the finite, it reaches no terminal, and notes by a symbol, as it were in despair, both its own exhaustion and the reality which it must leave untraversed.

But a more definite symbolism is demanded by the processes of religious thought and the needs of religious feeling. As the submersion of all determinations in the indeterminate extinguishes thought, infinite being, to maintain a place in our thoughts, must be represented by some more or less determinate and interesting aspect of being. Undiscriminated being —to refer to the Hegelian dialectic—is undistinguishable in thought from no-thing. Some type or symbol drawn from the finite manifestations of the infinite is therefore a necessity of thought, and religious thought, following the religious interest, conceives or symbolizes the infinite as infinite power or intelligence or wisdom or goodness. And so long as the mind moves freely among the special associations which we cannot wholly disengage from the typical thought, here necessarily borrowed from the human type, we need not be betrayed into the metaphysical vice of incarnating our symbols, or assume that the

sign is a sufficient exposition of the thing signified. Unfortunately, with the special term we commonly carry over the special sense. Conceiving of universal power as personal, for instance, we tend continually to limit its action to the scope of human aims and to weigh all nature in the partial scales of human interest. Or, if we deny personality, and conceive of nature as a vast and complex machine, we interpret her activity as at the level of ordinary mechanical action, and miss the inner vivifying principle which energizes matter apparently the most inert. Thus we come to the study of nature with a bias. The symbol is treated as a definition, a premiss from which all that is involved in the term in its original and particular application may be deduced and applied to universal being. But if we remember that universal being cannot be apprehended or defined as a whole, that in the idea of the infinite we should look for the vanishing-point rather than the starting point of thought, we may use such symbols as the nature of our thought or the method of our approach to the infinite suggests. Here, seeking for a basis in the known or knowable as the only basis upon which we can build a rational theory of religion, we conceive the motions of the infinite, or of such aspects of the infinite as are offered to human apprehension and interpretable through law, under the type of vital or organic action. The present utility, at least, of such a symbol, is indisputable. It avoids, on the one hand, the perplexing implications which it seems impossible to disentangle from the more specific idea

of personality as applied to being in general; and it precludes the assumption, on the other hand, that nature in the vast realm of the so-called inorganic and inanimate world is without inner deterimination or even the suggestion of life. And its fitness is already recognized. From the time of Xenophanes the continuity and solidarity of universal being is a theme which has never been abandoned in philosophical thought.

But we are not restricted, let it be said, to this or to any particular symbol. As no given symbol may be taken as an adequate expression of the reality, we are free to choose such form of expression as in any case is truest to our thought. And in religion, we should remember, the instinct of language obeys mainly the suggestion of the emotions, and philosophy may not assume to chide religion for giving expression to the feelings inspired by the infinite reality in such terms as it is constrained to employ. But philosophy indeed, by showing the incommensurability of language or thought with the universal object of thought, helps to maintain this freedom. It teaches us that no name or phrase by which we seek to express the ineffable may be assumed to be sufficient or final. It makes for religious freedom, therefore, as against those advocates of religion who, clinging to the names and forms and transient phases of religion, miss its substance; against the Christian who forgets that the spirit of Christ may dwell in men who do not take on the name of Christ; against the worshiper of Jahveh for whom Ormuzd, Allah, Tao,

Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Zeus, are all false gods. For the infinite as for the finite the form of expression is indeed not indifferent. Feeling, however deep or subtle, is related to language by certain laws. But these are inner, not external or conventional laws; and philosophy, in exposing the vice or futility of the arbitrary law, does but aid religion in attaining to a freer and therefore more prefect expression of the essential matter of religion. At different periods and with the varying attitudes of the soul the symbol will change. But for the present needs of religious philosophy, which suffers on the one hand from the habit of compressing all natural action to the measure of human standards or the scope of human aims, and from a tendency on the other hand to harden our interpretation of nature into some mechanical theory, it would seem that no symbol of the universal energy, as it offers itself to our apprehension and consideration, is truer or more fitting, so far as it goes, than that of a universal life.

IV.

The great Idea baffles wit,
Language falters under it,
It leaves the learned in the lurch;
Nor art, nor power, nor toil can find
The measure of the eternal Mind,
Nor hymn, nor prayer, nor church.

—*Emerson.*

We have found, now, a form or type of being under which, as under a natural symbol, we may represent to ourselves the form of being generally. In the diversity of nature we apprehend a living unity. That is to say, the interrelation of parts and the interplay of forces which we find specifically exemplified in animal and plant, or in the modes of being called in the specific sense organic, may be observed, in a more general sense, in nature at large. Nothing is isolated. Each particular thing is related to all and exchanges influence with the universe of things. Nature coheres by an immanent or inherent vital law.

This fundamental idea of nature as an organic unity is yet too general, however, to satisfy the demands of religious feeling or religious thought. It offers a means, a rational symbol, by which to represent the general being of nature as an object of thought, and is more or less consciously present, no doubt, in the sympathetic thrill which runs through the soul in

contemplation of nature. But religion deals with relations more specific than the general relation of all things to all. So far, we have arrived at no more than the vaguest pantheism, with which the religious sense refuses to be content because of its vagueness, because of its insufficience to account for the moral and other ideal aims from which we feel that religion hereafter can never be divorced. The life of nature, if it may be religiously interpreted, must be interpreted as in some special relation to the fundamental laws of the inner human life, which cannot be religious unless it is first of all a moral life. Nature cannot be construed in the religious sense unless she be construed as in some necessary relation to the moral sense.

In the theories generally current the relation of our inner life to the life of nature is but little studied, nature being regarded as but the secondary manifestation of a Power whom we know more directly through the soul, and whc alone, to the exclusion of all merely natural being, is the inspiration of the religious life. Room is thus given for the play of every arbitrary tendency of thought, and the fundamental religious idea is delivered over to a riot of instincts, emotions, and unrestrained fancies. Protest from the point of view of the facts is treated as irrelevant. Nature, it is argued, is not all. She is but a by-product of the divine activity, and the great Artificer may have attributes of which we see no hint in his art. And if aught is lacking in nature it argues no defect in her Original. We have subjective evidence

which outweighs a whole universe of external fact. Nature may be cold, but God is pitiful; man may be inhuman, but God is humane; life may be full of injury, but the life of God hereafter will wipe out the memory of injustice. Nature, in short, is fragmentary and transient. Or she is a specious illusion. The intercourse of the spirit is with the eternal invisible Spirit, the universal Creator. And this spiritual relation, it is averred, is in an eminent sense a personal relation.

But this habit of referring the life of nature to an extraneous spiritual and personal life seems really to be but a later phase of an ancient tendency to personify nature herself. And in childhood, in poetry, and in that natural religious feeling which has its seat deeper than the schematism of the intellect, we tend yet to read into nature's lineaments the lines of our own personality. But the diction of poetry, fine as are its discriminations, is governed mainly by emotional and æsthetic considerations; the poet's interest in matters of fact is determined by the artistic value of the fact. Religion, too, it may be said is idealistic and emotional; its language is the language of feeling. And yet, unless the feeling, whether poetical or religious, is determined wholly by subjective considerations, unless it is a mere process of make-believe in which the critical habit is quenched because we are constitutionally disposed to a certain form of self-delusion, it implies certain objective relations of fact: there is in nature that which inspires this feeling. And if, unconvinced that religion has

no more than such merely subjective basis, we allow that there must be some natural and objective source of religious inspiration, the intimate relations which we thus sustain towards nature need interpretation, and become a subject of philosophical inquiry.

Is there, then, any intelligible sense in which these relations, as conceived in the religious sense, may be construed as personal, and by consequence moral? If nature is to be regarded as her own original, and the continent of all that is, in what manner, if at all, may personal or moral attributes be ascribed to the life or power of nature conceived as an object of religious contemplation?

In personality we must include, it would seem, consciousness, and the question becomes more definite, and brings us perhaps nearer to the heart of the matter, if we ask ourselves, Is nature conscious? The question is not, let it be noted, whether nature is as truly conscious in the forms which we ordinarily consider inorganic, inanimate, and unconscious as in the forms of being called, distinctively, conscious—in the attraction of the magnet, for instance, as in the affinities of the human mind. But, conceiving of nature generally and comprehensively—so far, that is, as nature in general is apprehended by ourselves—is it a conscious process, we ask, by which what we have called the general organic activity of nature, in which the special activities of mind and matter are all included, produces the special modes of being, organic (in the specific sense) and inorganic, conscious and unconscious? Is the general life of nature, in other words, a conscious life?

Consciousness, in the strict sense, is a highly specialized state of being arising under special conditions. It may be roughly defined, perhaps, as organized sensibility. Its raw material, at least, consists largely, if not wholly, of sensuous impressions, and it presupposes therefore the peculiar mechanism of the senses. To ascribe consciousness in this sense to nature, accordingly, is as if we should endow her with sight, or hearing, or any special form of sensuous impressibility. But for aught we know, it may be said, there is a form of consciousness wholly independent of the conditions which determine it for ourselves, and a consciousness superior to our own for the very reason that it is free from the limitations of our sensibility. And so there might be anything whatever. Nothing can be inferred from a mere abstract possibility of this sort. Our hypotheses should at least start from the ground of experience, or, reasoning from the unknown to the unknown, we fall into that speculative abyss of "neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire," to which religious philosophy too generally tends, and in which all guesses, all possibilities are on the same indifferent footing. And consciousness is a term too specific, it would seem, to be applied without relaxation of its strict significance to the general impressibility of nature. Analogies or "correspondences" there are indubitably between this impressibility and the impressibility of sense. But the unity of the life which pervades the universal reality is so complete that a lively fancy may detect such correspondences wherever it alights, and

so overwork its analogies as to reduce all differences to a fundamental identity, or characterless unity like that of the Eleatic One. This underlying unity does not efface the qualities and individuality of specific things; nor does it convert their specific characters on the other hand, into attributes of the general being as such. Each particular thing, human or non-human, though rooted in eternal being, is what it is; its attributes, though a process or creation of the eternal life, are in their specific distinctness its own. And there appears to be no ground for identifying our human consciousness with anything that we can call an attribute of nature in general, that is, of nature so far as we may legitimately generalize her illimitable being. Or if we cannot escape the conviction that there is in nature that which in ourselves, though with a difference, is conscious thought, or that which corresponds to our conscious thought, the human attribute must be regarded, it should seem, as specific and in a real sense unique, or as a peculiar and singular case of an attribute which only in a broadly generalized sense can be considered as an attribute of nature in general. Nevertheless, assuming, as we have assumed, that the human mind is developed within the sphere and from the source of nature, there is justification for the tendency to see in nature the reflection, as it were, of the attributes of our own personality. Each natural thing, or quality of a thing, being a special effect of nature in general as the cause, must be contained, in a sense, or accounted for in the cause; and yet, for the reasons assigned,

it must be distinguished from the cause. And the special characters which constitute the human consciousness that which it is are so highly specialized that to insist in any rigorous sense on the presence of the human attribute in the general being of nature would invite confusion rather than assist our thought. Humanity, though springing from nature, cannot, any more than any other natural effect, be qualitatively identified with nature the universal cause. We are a differentiated product of nature.

And if we hold ourselves to anything like the strictness of language which is indispensable to scientific procedure, what is here said of consciousness generally may be said also of the particular forms, sensitive or active, of conscious life. The mind, as characteristic of man or of the animals to which we are willing to allow a mental life, is associated with specific organs, and varies in complexity or power with the variations in the structure of such organs. And where such special organs are wanting, the phenomena of mind, in their special significance, are wanting. It were as reasonable therefore, following the observed analogies of physical structure and mental life, to search universal nature for an eye or a brain as to ascribe to nature generally the specific characters of the human mind.

But the stream, it may be said, cannot rise higher than its source. And if we assume no substratum of mind in the activity of nature, how may we see divinity in nature, or any attribute which constrains the thinking soul to a religious attitude, or inspires us with awe? She is degraded, it would seem, to a

level below the human and even below the brutish plane. The endless reaches of being before which the soul surrenders its last vestige of pride offer us, on this assumption, one may say, but the multiplication of senseless atoms, and man, sensitive and conscious, is superior to universal nature, impersonal and unconscious. Though the product of nature, he has bettered his origin. Apparently the stream *is* higher than its source.

The error here lies in ignoring the solidarity of nature and confounding the general being of nature with certain specific objects which we mentally dissociate from her pervasive energy. On the graduated scale by which we mark off the forms of being as "higher" or lower" the comparison is restricted to individuals, or to particular types of being, and, as the series is arranged with reference to man as the standard, the further we recede from the human type, as from man to the polyp, the lower we appear to descend. Man is left in undisputed preëminence. And if the line is prolonged beyond the limit of sensation, through the vegetal series, and until life itself in the special sense disappears, we seem to descend still further, and matter mechanic, insensate, the vast aggregation of inorganic objects typified by the clod, is found lying at the very base. By this manner of approach nature is indeed degraded to a plane below that of man's self-conscious intelligence. The transition from man to nature is here, of necessity, a descent. And nature in this aspect may inspire, perhaps, no religious awe.

But comparison of this sort is misleading from the beginning. Nature in the religious sense, nature in her unity, is ignored. It is a mere appraisement of the several objects of nature as set over one against the other, and diverts attention completely from the general being of nature of which they are severally the products. Such an assignment of values has its use, of course, in the refinement and extension of our knowledge. Science must abstract, particularize, and define. And it must apply special standards to the special matter of its investigations. But the comparison of man with nature, in any sense germane to religious thought, is not a comparison of man with the isolated objects of nature. The superficial lines traced by the point of sight as the bounds or barriers of individual things, the units of life or power which we mentally dissociate and vest with independence, all the forms and elements which we find by disintegration of the being of the natural world, are resolved again, in the religious view, into the general body of nature—and comparison fails. We cannot measure ourselves as against the immeasurable. Man may glance complacently from himself to the ape. As between the human brain and so many ounces of matter, choose it where we will, there is nothing which assails our pride. But neither man nor any individual thing can subsist alone, or as a mere extruded issue of the natural forces. Our lives are shaped and nourished at every instant, and through each minutest change, in nature's universal matrix, and the mind of man, which we would impose upon

nature as her standard, is itself conditioned and preserved by her ever-active energy. He is the creature: she is the creator. His is the evanescent thought: she is the eternal reality, the origin, the object, and the sustenance of his thought. To the religious mind, man himself, the measurer and critic of nature, appears as a phase of nature. His particular being, in body and in mind, is an outcome of her universal energy.

And in this all-pervasive energy man finds—distinguishing his particular being from the being of nature—not indeed his counterpart, or his own familiar attributes reduplicated in large, but activities which, as we have said, bear a certain analogy to his own conscious activity. Our anthropomorphism is not wholly unmeaning. Conscious intelligence computes, for instance, the motions of the planets. But in the moving orbs themselves, in the energy which through eternity guides their motions with certainty so absolute, is there not a principle as exalted as the intelligence of a Kepler or a Newton, who but sees and records the ineffable wonder which yet endures when the human faculty is quenched? Nay, in the structure of a leaf, in the irridescence of a shell, in the forces that shape a crystal, there is that which tries the conscious wit of man to follow and define. And is it a mere misnomer to name the formative principle of which these are but special effects, itself intellectual. The principle which directs the mind of man as observer must be distinguished, of course, from the principle which main-

tains in its order and relations the actuality observed. But the analogy is too obvious to be ignored, and it is in obedience to the instincts out of which language grows that we mark it by an identity of names. And the religious mind, the mind which is sensitive, that is, to the profounder relations which unite things dissimilar, and feels instinctively for the fibers which root the finite in the infinite, is little likely to exalt the special directive principle or deliberative intelligence in man above what we may call the intelligence of fact, the creative intelligence in nature which shapes each individual thing in its distinction, and of which the conscious presentative thought of man may at most be conceived as but a special and transitory mode. Our common thought goes no deeper than the surface, and is embarrassed by the multitude of divisions and distinctions patent on the body of nature. And we assume, upon this superficial view, a certain superiority in the reflective human consciousness. But what is our science in comparison with the reality which it studies? Is our geology more than the earth, or our astronomy superior to the stars? In the petty scales by which we are fain to determine values absolutely the worth of man's discursive thought, to man himself invaluable, may seem to the shallow or irreverent to transcend the worth of an infinity not essentially human. But in the broader view to which the religious thought inclines we see the madness of this conceit. Compared with the strong and wide-reaching web of existence man's thought is but a knot of fragile threads, trail-

ing a little way from loop to loop and parted by any accident. And shall our frailty measure omnipotence? Small need to ask the soul once touched by the sense of things infinite whether our little lives, rounded with a sleep, are lower or higher than the all-pervading life. The mortal mind is abashed by immortal universal being. Though nature may contain—if we are bold enough to assume it so—no several thing higher than the intellect of man, both the thinker and the object of his thought, the seer and all that he sees, are created and sustained by nature. She is the life in which our intellectual life is but an infinitesimal element, a momentary phase. It is through the modes of our self-conscious activity, nevertheless, that we must perforce interpret the modes of natural action. Of our human attributes we frame our thought of nature; by these, as intimations or symbols, we are fain to define our mental attitude or the manner of our approach to to the miracle of universal being. But nature, not less or lower than her arrogant creature man, infinitely transcends our thought. In the infinite reality thought is lost. And the finite mind, lost in the infinite, is filled with awe; its attitude is worship.

V.

No man will hinder thee from living according to the reason of thy own nature: nothing will happen to thee contrary to the reason of the universal nature.—*Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.*

Wirke, so viel du willst, du stehest doch ewig allein da,
Bis an das All die Natur dich, die gewaltige, knüpft.
—*Schiller.*

THE power in nature, it appears, may be conceived as manifesting in a certain sense attributes of our humanity. We may even call the impressibility of nature a form of consciousness; in fact, as shutting out of view the universality and delicacy of this impressibility, it were a kind of untruth to say absolutely that nature is unconscious. By some means nature takes account of, or reacts to, each particular event, even the most secret human thought, and if we and all men had the chemist's or physicist's familiarity with the intimate life of nature doubtless we should say, reflecting in our common language the common thought, that nature *knows* each event. And it were, to say the least, as reasonable thus to impute consciousness to nature as to shut our eyes to an obvious analogy, and subject all nature to the tyranny of a "blind necessity," a deity hypostatized from the abstractions of mechanics, and really as external as Fate or Providence. Yet the analogy is not more than an analogy. The human function and the more general function

of nature are not the same, and though a riper science may reduce the differences which to us seem to separate them so widely, and exhibit the conscious intelligence of man as a particular case of the universal responsiveness of nature, the specific human function must always be marked by specific characters, characters which cannot be transferred to the more general function whatever the tricks that language may play upon our thought.

And what we have said of intelligence and consciousness will serve as an illustration of the extended application which we may give to terms borrowed from the moral life of man. We may see in nature justice, for instance, or wisdom, or parental love. But if, yielding to the seductions of language, which tempts us to assume in the shifting content of thought the definiteness of things, we forget that a term when pressed beyond its strict and special application must lose much of its original import, we must surely be misled. We can set no fast limits, nevertheless, to the expansibility of our terms. To a susceptible spirit, poetical or religious, contact with nature may be felt, for instance, as personal contact. But in interpreting the sense in which the idea of personality may legitimately receive this general application, we find that the sense is necessarily much relaxed. Something in the general being of nature impresses us as we are impressed by the attributes of humanity. But the impressions thus received are vague—though the emotional result may be unmistakable—and the language in which they are expressed, sharing their

vagueness, cannot serve the purposes of definition; nor can we combine qualities so vaguely apprehended into a distinct or defined personality, or deduce from such qualities, as we might deduce the acts of a man from the character of the man, particular conclusions as to the actual course of nature in the government of the world. Such personal attributes, so assigned to universal being, do not represent general laws, or true inductions drawn in scientific or ordinary logical form from observed and correlated facts of being. They indicate a point of view. And their value, which only a cold heart will dispute, is emotional rather than intellectual, save as the intellect may account for our emotions.

But if the idea of personality cannot be applied to nature in any but this general and analogical sense, how may we hope to find in nature a basis for the principles of practice, that is, for religion as an imperative law of conduct? Can nature be impersonal and yet moral? Or if nature is not moral in a definitely human sense, how can she be conceived as the source of human morals? The moral law must be accounted for. The foundations of morality are so deep—so at least we may fairly assume from the universality of moral distinctions—that it seems impossible to regard its laws as mere conventions; and if they are in truth more than social conventions, and nature nevertheless is not in any strict sense either personal or moral, whence do they drive their force?

The Stoics, who held to the Socratic idea that the true law of life is that which reduces the elements of

life to harmony or unity, felt the same necessity which here presses upon ourselves. The ethical end, it seemed to them, must be of more than merely human prescription. And seeing in nature a rational principle shaping the matter of nature in accordance with law, they believed that the ethical law might be stated with greater breadth and force if the harmony which it induces in the soul were regarded as "harmonizing" the soul at the same time with the rational principle so discerned in nature. But the truth thus adumbrated their merely practical philosophy could not define. They could not borrow a philosophical principle, of course, from the Epicureans, and had not their own highly developed and instinctive sense of right impressed them with the force of a natural law, and had not their practical needs been more urgent than their philosophical, they would doubtless have been more distinctly conscious of the insufficiency of their account of the moral life as a life "in conformity with nature." The readiest explanation was that nature, or the divine life of which nature was conceived as the expression, is moral; that the ethical end is at the same time an end of nature, or of the divine mind, already conceived, after Anaxagoras, as informing nature with a vaguely personal life. And this interpretation of the natural ground of the moral law survives, *mutatis mutandis*, to the present day. But we cannot assume, shifting our regard from nature in man to nature in general, that her activities are directed universally to ethical ends, because we cannot grasp the final aim of nature, or

assume even that there is such an aim. Nor does it seem possible, if, mindful of the narrowness of our outlook, we forbear the attempt to interpret nature as All, or Whole, or Absolute, and hazard conclusions of no broader sweep than from our little coigne of vantage we have the right to draw, to construe the facts of nature as we find them into complete conformity with our moralties. If we apply to nature the standards which we apply to men, she must often seem indifferent both to ourselves and to the ends for which good men make sacrifice. In earthquake, famine, and storm, we must judge her, if we judge her by the human law, remorselessly cruel; and the world, as if of purpose to defy the demands of our morality, teems with creatures that seem formed expressly to cause suffering, that live in fact by the destruction of sensitive life. Nature, in morality as in other matters, is not, we must confess, conformed to our standards, and is as liberal of precedents for our brutish acts, apparently, as for the sublimest sacrifices of human love. We may take refuge again in the much-worn argument from ignorance. We may assume that in the hidden future, or in the wide realm of the unknown, the untoward facts which are seen must have their unseen counterpoise. It is a light thing, to men of a certain habit of thought, to take so much for granted. But we can assume nothing from our ignorance. If we have any clew to the unknown it is to be found in that which we know. And the truth seems to be, as we have foreshadowed, that in the strict and human sense nature as we have

knowledge of her is neither moral nor immoral. We may relax the strict sense, and find nature moral in an analogical or more general sense. We may see prudence or good house-keeping in the economy which suffers no atom to be wasted or lost; or eternal justice in the relations of action and reaction, cause and effect; or immortal love in the affinities of matter, or in the generation and sustenance of the myriad forms of life—though Empedocles, it is instructive to note, paired Love with Hate. Or looking with modern eyes on natures evolving life—a view not wholly strange, however, to this antique seer and savant—we may perceive in the processes of terrestrial growth a continuous progress toward ends which are in a certain harmony with the moral end.

> Self-kindled every atom glows,
> And hints the future which it owes.

But it will scarcely be contended that a system of morals applicable to human conduct could be derived from the natural sciences or the action of merely external nature. Morality, as human beings understand the term in judging human conduct, has constant reference to the ends of human activity, and being which does not conform to the human type is not to be judged by the standards which we apply to human conduct, and affords no definite or sufficient basis for the construction of such standards. So far as appears, humanity, high as are its prerogatives, is but an incident in the natural order, not its final cause or end.

Must we then be content to be baffled in our search of nature for a basis of morals? To this complexion,

the theist may say, it must come at last. Moral distinctions must vanish in a philosophy which knows nothing but nature, and which must represent every impulse, moral or immoral, as proceeding from the same natural source. Vice is at least as natural as virtue, unless, like the Stoics, we assume a principle which limits the natural to the virtuous; *ergo*, vice is as well authenticated as virtue.

But we have gone too far afield. Moral good and moral evil are, as we have said, distinctions founded in the nature of human ends; it is nature working in humanity that has defined the moral law. And as nature may be studied only in her works, it devolves upon us now to look within, and to search for the general or constitutional ends, if any such there be, which are subserved by morality as a means. The difficulties inherent in the subject, it must be confessed, are not small. The intricacies of the inner conscious life present to our inspection relations even more delicate and complex than the relations of external objects. Our constitution is marked, nevertheless, by certain constitutional traits, and it may not be impossible, in spite of inconsistency and caprice and the evanescence of our conscious states, that a free and patient study of our nature may discover certain general and relatively constant ends—ends which in the eyes of a reasonable man impose upon our conduct a paramount law. And the law by which the various activities of our nature may be combined in orderly and effective movement in the direction of such ends, if we grant that such ends may be found,

will be for ourselves in an eminent sense a natural law; the law of nature, that is, to which we as human beings are rationally bound. Let us consider, then, the evidences of such a natural and rational law.

We pause, however, to clear up a misunderstanding which may arise as to the meaning of the word law. As employed in the natural sciences it implies, for the most part, a generalized statement of fact. The attraction between any two particles of matter, we say, is directly proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of their distances asunder. And this law, within the sphere to which it applies, is never violated. In fact we regard inviolability as a characteristic of natural law. Is the moral law thus inviolable? We might more pertinently ask, is it ever in full of all its demands complied with? Man's deep distrust of his neighbor, founded in long experience of social life, gives an air of grotesqueness to the suggestion even that ethical law should be interpreted as a summarized description of the actual conduct of any considerable portion of mankind. But natural law is not necessarily the expression of a completely actualized relation of fact. It may express the relation of means to end —to an end possibly never as yet attained. The laws of health, for instance, are the conditions governing the attainment and preservation of a state of the body distinguished as normal, and have been studied with tolerable success, though possible a body in all respects normal is never, or but rarely, to be found. The mind, resolving the actual into its elements, re-

combines them into an as yet unrealized ideal; through the imperfections of the actual man we discern the perfections of the man that shall be. Imagination, elaborating the material of experience, figures in idea the end; science, testing experience, discloses the means, which are what we recognize as the laws of health, or of normal physical life. And in a manner analogous to this, that is, by idealizing the inner life, and testing by experience the laws of psychic growth, we learn the conditions made by nature indispensable to the actualization of the spiritual ideal. And among these conditions we must name, preëminently, fulfillment of the moral demand. The moral life is, as in nature established, a condition precedent to the attainment of an ideal end. Moral laws, accordingly, are natural laws. They express the natural relation of cause and effect, of means to an end.

And the supreme importance of these laws, let us add, must arise from the supreme desirability of the end to which they define the means. However rigorously the end were conditioned by the means, unless we were interested in the end we should regard neither means nor end; and unless the end were supreme, there would be no intelligible sense in which the authority of the moral laws, the means to this end, could be regarded as supreme. Nature has no codes or formulæ in which we may read the inert record of her will. Her laws are discovered only in their operation, and a natural law which is paramount for us can be recognized as such only as we see in its fulfillment necessary means to a paramount end.

And here lies the authority of the moral mandate. Without the interest which we must have in the end to be attained by the moral life all our acts would stand on the same footing; the sinners appeal to nature would be as valid as the saint's; for whether we fulfill the conditions of approximation to the ideal type or the conditions of reversion to the brutish type we are equally powerless to escape the universal embrace of nature. It is our interest which discriminates. And this interest is organic; it is inherent in the human constitution, a character impressed universally by nature creative upon man her creature. Many modes of life are by nature made possible. We may be led hither and thither as impulse uncontrolled or our interest misconceived happens to guide us. But the same sovereign nature to whom we owe each instinct has, in the general form of our nature, determined for each man, independently of errors of judgment or vagaries of the will, a supreme interest or end, and through this interest, conceived in its full breadth, has prescribed for each instinct its rational limits, and for life as a whole its supreme and rational law. And it is this law of which we are in search. Conformity to this law would be that conformity to nature which the stoics found so difficult to present in theory, and of which they gave such illustrious examples in practice. And upon this law, if upon any natural law, our ethics must be founded.

VI.

For that is, and ever will be, the best of sayings, that the useful is the noble, and the hurtful the base.—*Plato: Republic, 457. Jowett's Translation.*

THE inquiry here carries us within the bounds of psychology. To trace out the foundations of morality is to discover a principle which is broader than that of moral distinctions. The science of conduct resolves itself into a particular phase of the science of human nature.

We assume—not to carry the inquiry farther back than is necessary for our present purpose—we assume in our nature certain impulses or tendencies to action. Such inherent tendencies we observe even in the unconscious life of our system, and we arrive at consciousness with an organization which, irrespective of the particular direction which may afterwards be given with conscious preference to its activities, is determined to actions of a certain general kind. Man is predestined by his structure to a set of activities different from those of the sheep or the tiger. But within the limits to which we are constitutionally restricted there is wide range for variation. A form or principle is required by which, within the range allowed by the general form of our organization, our activities may be determined more definitely in direction and degree.

Such a principle may be found, we submit, referring the matter to common experience, in the desire for happiness or well-being; in the fundamental desire, that is to say, to increase the several and general satisfactions of life, and to make life as a whole, as it progresses, in a completer sense worth the living.

Take some simple instance, the impulse to walk, for example, or to eat or drink. Taking some such impulse for granted, and isolating it, so far as that is possible, from the general activity of the organism, we have still a principle to seek by which we may determine the time, place, occasion, continuance, and other circumstances of the act which the impulse initiates. The principle of the mean, which assumes a certain recognition of the extremes, may serve as a useful practical guide, but neither mean nor extremes can be discriminated without reference to some relatively determinate point or standard. For the virtuous mean Aristotle refers us to the judgment of the reasonable or prudent man. And we may consult the reasonable man here. Until the personal judgment can be reduced to quantitative terms, or measured by objective standards, the subjective or personal factor cannot be eliminated. Something is gained, however, if we can reduce the personal judgment to lower or more elementary terms. And in such cases as we have instanced, at least, the true or rational mean appears to be established, in the end, if we disregard everything but the natural and specific effects of the isolated act, by the feelings of satisfaction or discontent, of pleasure or pain, associated

with or consequent upon the act under consideration. The force of analysis can as yet, perhaps, no further go. The interpretation of such feelings in physiological terms, with reference, say,—to instance a recent hypothesis,—to the nutritive states of the organs employed, would aid us collaterally in giving definiteness to our criterion, and might impart to it something of objective clearness. But though physiology has done service to psychology, and promises to do much more, it is very far as yet from giving us a general objective standard for the comparison of pleasures and pains. We must content ourselves here with the introspective method, and the confirmation of its results in common experience. And a little consideration is enough to convince us that, if we could in any case isolate the individual from his fellows, and could further restrict our attention to some simple function or some single form of activity of such individual, the point of maximum satisfaction or pleasure would determine the golden mean or the rational law for that particular case.

But no case is so simple. No organ or "faculty" acts entirely alone. Nor are the faculties combined in mere contiguity, like a bundle of fagots. They act and react one upon the other in close organic union, and a question which might be answered readily enough as referring to a single impulse or a simple taste becomes more difficult when other tastes and other impulses, if not the man entire, go into the account. The satisfaction of one impulse may be at the expense of another, or of all the others, and may

be modified, or even changed into discomfort or pain, by the reactions it sets up. It does not appear, however, that the complexity of the functions of an individual life changes the general principle established for the simpler case. The fixed point or standard is merely shifted to the position which is marked by the highest satisfaction resulting from the play of the functions as a whole. A man indulges his appetite, for instance, with some reference directly to the sense of taste, but mainly, if he is a reasonable man, with regard to the effect upon his health and strength; and for the sake of restoring his health, once lost, he is glad to take remedies for which he has no appetite, and which are nauseous to the taste. And the structure of the mind requires that we should consider the particular forms of mental activity in the like general light. While functions unexercised yield no pleasure, but a sense of discontent more or less distinct, and exertion pushed beyond a certain limit causes weariness or pain, the mean between these two extremes, considered in relation to the particular function which is employed, does not solely and finally determine for such function the occasion and extent of its activity. No particular function is a complete and unqualified law unto itself. The several activities of the mind must be considered with reference to the mind as an organic whole. And the estimate, whether in terms of mental or in terms of physical life, must be made with reference also to remote effects—effects which are often sufficient to outweigh in their importance to the individual all present considerations of

pleasure or pain. Nevertheless, making every allowance for this added difficulty in making a just estimate of hedonic values, we cannot find that life as a whole, considered from the point of view of the individual as a dissociated unit, discloses any other rational principle for its own regulation than the degree of individual satisfaction or pleasure which attends its activities as a whole.

But as a matter of fact the individual is only in very rare instances dissociated, and the social nature of man makes it impossible to narrow down the functions of life, in society, to a circle which excludes society. Certain impulses, impulses which appear to be as original and fundamental in our nature as those which are distinguished as strictly self-regarding, are directed to the happiness or well-being of others. We cannot be indifferent to the situation of those who are about us, and especially of those who are closely related to us. Their pleasures and sufferings are, in a greater or less degree, our own. The difficulty, already sufficiently great, of establishing a general rule of personal conduct, is thus indefinitely increased by the individual's social instincts. It might seem, indeed that the effect of these instincts is to change the rule; that in recognizing the happiness of others as an end, and a natural end, of desire, we abandon the ground upon which it is possible to find in individual interest the governing principle of individual conduct. The desire which goes forth of the self cannot, it might be urged, be determined by a principle which resides in the self. But here again the

rule is complicated rather than changed. It is my sympathetic or social interest, an interest still my own, which engages me in the interest of others. A man cannot be said, indeed, to really desire the happiness of others unless he feels, on his own account, some interest or pleasure in their happiness; and a pure or disinterested regard is not a regard from which all personal interest is expunged (a contradiction in terms), but a regard which, undisturbed by calculations of profit, or by ulterior non-social motives, is purely social or sympathetic. Nay, does not the beneficiary find the sweetness of the gift in the pleasure which the giver feels in his giving? And would not a spirited man resent, even in extremity, every offer, though prompted by more than a Kantian sense of duty, in which such pleasure seemed wanting? True, one does not incessantly study or bring into conscious relief the egoistic ground of one's benefactions? The ultimate motive to genuine beneficent activity, the sympathetic interest which makes the motive mine, and which most commends the benefit to the beneficiary, would defeat itself did it not leave me free to study the tastes, the pleasures, the welfare of others, as proximate interests. All compound motivation shows a similar obscuration of the original motive; it is the more immediate steps necessary to the realization of the final end that require our more immediate attention. And language itself misleads us here. The sympathetic motive being called an unselfish motive, we speak of it as if it were entirely dissociated from the ends cherished by

the self. But the entire self includes, of course, all our ends or interests, all our motives. The ends which are placed without the self, and approved as unselfish, are not without the self in its entirety, but merely opposed to ends which are identified with the self in a special and narrower sense, that is, with the self less the social and generous interests which do in fact constitute a part of the self as a whole. The ego does not cease to be the ego when it becomes unselfish. It is discharging an essential function, the gratification, namely, of the social impulse. And it seems impossible to assign any principle for the government of the ego in the discharge of either its social or its non-social functions which does not appeal to some interest of the ego. A principle, to become mine, must have some basis in the nature of my aims. If you seek to engage me in your cause by appealing to my physical sensibilities or my fears, you address yourself to what are called my lower interests. And if you honor me by assuming my scorn of such appeals, and seek to enchant me with stories of long-suffering and martyrdom, you appeal to an interest which you believe to be stronger than my longing for creature-comforts or even for life, but an interest which is still my own. You must ground yourself in my interests somewhere. You must offer gratification to some impulse of my nature.

And it is in the social impulse that the moral law is founded. The moral aim is the complete socialization of the race, the organization of mankind into a fraternity in which man's social nature, and, in-

deed, man's nature as a whole, shall find its fullest satisfaction; and the moral obligation, as an inner principle binding a reasonable man in virtue of his constitution as man, must rest ultimately in his interest in the establishment of a perfect social state. Moral principles, that is to say, derive their force, in the end, from the individual's interest in the institution of a true society. And there seems to be no escape, on natural ground, from this ultimate reference. We may expand the content of morals and make it as broad as the sphere of human activity, but we shall go far to find a natural basis for a rational law binding on the individual—and it is to the individual conscience that the moral law is addressed—other than the interest of the individual as determined by nature in his constitution as man; and the universality of such a law must be grounded in a community of interests among individual men. Even the theological systems, with other worlds in view, and with all the apparatus of supernaturalism at their command, appeal to individual interest. But having an eternity of rewards and punishments to distribute, the center of interest is thrown so far beyond the limits of this our natural life as to leave little motive for studying the relation of morals to our profoundest interests under present and natural conditions. If, however, we content ourselves with merely natural considerations, it would seem that some inherent and natural interest in the law which we seek to impose must be shown, some instinct or impulse of the individual must be found which is gratified through the fulfillment of the

law, or the law remains foreign and meaningless, and must borrow significance, like that which attaches to our penal laws, from an interest with which it is but artificially or indirectly associated. And the natural interest which sustains the moral law is primarily, we submit, the social interest.

But in estimating the importance of morality as a social obligation we should bear in mind that the benefits of the social state are not confined to the direct gratification of the social instincts. Art and science, civilization and refinement, well nigh all that life means to the modern man, were impossible but for the opportunities which society alone, society, that is, organized and cohering as a moral life, can offer for the play of individual genius. As the individual, therefore, is interested in his own development, he is interested in the establishment of sound social habits, and especially in the fulfillment of the moral demand which embodies the requirements of elementary social law. He may not be alive to this his true interest, or in the disorder of his habits he may wilfully disregard it; but the conditions of his happiness lie deep in his nature, and are independent of his recognition or present inclination. Nature herself has bound up his well-being in the establishment of a true social state, which coheres and continues only by the force of the moral tie. Hence the peculiar force of the moral obligation. In the moral judgment it is society itself, prompted by the insinct of self-preservation, which speaks through the individual, and reinforces the individual judgment by the whole energy of its struggle to main-

tain the conditions of social life. It may seem perhaps that at times a rigorous observation of the canons of morality lacks justification in the individual account of pleasures and pains. The fault, possibly, may lie in our formulæ. The phenomena of life depend upon conditions so complex and variable that our attempts to reduce these conditions to a law must often result in mere approximations; and when we consider that our formulations of the moral law are applied to men in all situations, and in all phases of development, it is conceivable that the law, as we formulate it, may not have the same justification for all absolutely in its direct operation upon the individual life. But since a true society, which is a voluntary coöperation of independent minds, is necessarily founded in morality, (a true morality being but a voluntary compliance with the elementary conditions of the social state), the justification of the law is to be sought, not in the direct and apparent results of each virtuous act, but in the advantages accruing to the individual from the social union as a whole. It is possible that the general welfare may sometimes demand unconditional and apparently uncompensated sacrifice on the part of a few. We know that even the soundest legislation works hardship in exceptional cases. But the advantages of good legislation, in spite of its imperfections, remain to the individual, as it affects him generally, incalculable; and the advantages of moral or primary social law are so much the more incontestable as compliance with its demands is the indispensable condition of the social union itself, so far as it is really social, and of

all that man, whose dread of isolation is hardly less than his dread of death, can hope to gain or enjoy in the society of his kind. And with this general consideration, which is sufficient to establish the general validity of the moral law, we must here be content. The discussion of particular or exceptional cases, as also of the theory of punishment and the question of responsibility, belongs to a special treatise on ethics.

We must leave to the ethical student, too, the task of deducing and systematizing the provisions of ethical law, noting only our conviction that the principles of morality, as disclosed in the long experience of the race and as commonly formulated among civilized nations, may be taken as true enough in the main to stand for the natural law. The right remains, of course, to search for completer formulæ, to determine with more precision the application of each particular rule. But meantime we may agree that the ordinary statement of the law is at least an approximate statement. Practically, it may be taken for nature's law, the natural and indispensable condition, that is, of the establishment of a true social state.

The end directly contemplated in the moral law, however, namely, the establishment of a perfect social union, is, as we have seen, but a means to the attainment of an ulterior and a broader end. Ultimately, we contend, the moral end and all disciplinary ends are merged in one general end, the attainment of a happier estate. Happiness, it is true, is a comprehensive word which includes, in gross, the attainment of many different ends, and is therefore

open to different interpretations as taste or inclination varies, or as our skill in the estimate of hedonic values is less or greater; but as it is idle to affect in our language a rigor which the facts will not warrant, or a precision which is wanting in our knowledge, we content ourselves with a term which is fairly intelligible, and which experience and reflection tend to define with increasing certainty. We put the term happiness, therefore, to represent the ideal or perfect satisfaction of man's nature as a whole in life as a whole, or such approximation to this ideal estate as the circumstances of life make possible. We allow a certain indefiniteness in the term. We admit, further, that constitutions differ, and that to the extent of this difference the ends of life, as also the means for the attainment of such ends, must differ. But so far as morality is concerned such differences are relatively unimportant. Morality is founded in certain common characters and common interests of humanity. It is, as we have said, elementary. All are interested in strengthening and perfecting the social union, not only as a means of gratifying the social impulse, but as a condition absolutely indispensable to the general development of our nature, and to the ampler, keener, and more varied satisfaction which attends the activity of energies more fully and more harmoniously developed, a development which, as we have seen, is impossible except in the social union. And the essential law of this union is the moral law. Morality defines the form of the elementary social relations, and the qualifications of the individual will

pre-requisite to the formation of such relations. Truth, honesty, justice, love—so far as a man is destitute of these, the elements of the moral character, he is disqualified for the social life. Morality is capable, therefore, interpreted as a means to happiness, of something like definiteness of treatment and universality of application. Though we may allow that life is too complex and that men are too unlike to admit of the reduction of the conduct of life generally, as a pursuit of happiness, to definite prescriptions valid for all, yet if any science of conduct is possible, if there is anything whatever in the ends pursued by humanity which is common to the species, the elementary principles of such a science ought to be susceptible of some precision of statement. And among such elementary principles, we maintain, must be included the principles of morality.

The moral law, therefore, lying at the basis of politics and jurisprudence—(ethics was fused with politics in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle)—and of all the more specific requirements of the social union, may be regarded as a main condition of the attainment of ideal happiness, and of the ideal life in which alone such happiness is possible. In other words, virtue is a means—an indispensable means—to such happiness as man may hope for through a life in union with his fellowmen. The moral quality of an act, accordingly, is not an ultimate, irresoluble fact. It is a means to an end. And it may be discussed and determined as we discuss and determine the reasonableness of the means to any end, that is to

say, in the light of the fitness of the means to promote the realization of the end. The end here, proximately the solidification of human society, is ultimately, the promotion of human happiness, that is, the happiness of the units which constitute humanity, since it is only through the individual consciousness that society is conscious of happiness or unhappiness at all. Moral determinations, therefore, and all distinctions urged as valid in morals, may be analyzed and weighed with reference to the end to be attained by the moral life, and are to be approved or condemned, not absolutely, or as ultimate facts of consciousness, but according to their relation to this end. And such determinations have become, to a certain extent, habitual or instinctive. The conscious reasoning process has been abridged or eliminated. But they do not for that reason occupy a position which takes them out of the ordinary course of the development of the mind. They are particular cases of a general law, a law which, so far as men are reasonable, governs their choice in the general relations of life, including those which are commonly considered extra moral.

VII.

Mon voeu le plus cher serait.....d'entretenir en vous.....le culte des belles connaissances, ce goût des choses de l'esprit sans lequel l homme civilisé n'atteint jamais à toute la noblesse de sa destinée ni à tout le fini de sa nature.—*Sainte-Beuve.*

And he answering said, 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; and thy neighbor as thyself.—*Luke X,27.*

It appears, then, that the moral law is a natural law. Man being by nature what he is, and the laws of his growth being such as they are in nature established, the moral law prescribes certain natural means indispensable to the attainment of the end which appears, upon due consideration of man's nature, to be in reason supreme. And this sequence of means and end is the sequence of cause and effect. In so far as we follow the end which is by the form of our constitution man's supreme or rational end, we must, in the nature of things, shape our lives in harmony with the moral law as defining an essential part of the means. We may ignore the moral demand. But to ignore the moral demand is, so far, to abandon the end toward which we advance by the moral life. Means and ends are causally conjoined.

And it were hard to overstate the importance to mankind of a general and settled moral habit. The social union is a moral union. The struggle for the

supremacy of the social instincts is man's great moral struggle. And as all the gains of civilization depend upon social or coöperative action, man's progress in the development of his being or in the realization of life's essential ends, begins in morality. The moralist's persistent assertion of the urgency of his message is justified by the facts of our nature.

But life can yield its maximum satisfaction only through such development of our functions generally as is consistent with their completest efficiency as a whole; and the discharge of the social functions proper, especially when these are further limited to such elementary acts, aptitudes, or tendencies as commonly occupy the attention of the moralist, engages but a portion of our total conscious activity. In other words, the moral law, broad as is its application, is not the whole law of conscious life. There are forms of our activity—intellectual, artistic, creative, for instance—which demand a special discipline, for which morality, at least as ordinarily interpreted, makes no provision, and of which it hardly takes cognizance. The moral demand, shaped by experience to our practical needs, is restricted to the fundamental and more obvious necessities of social life. And having, moreover, in the form in which we actually find it, a strong traditional element, to which it owes much of its force in the control of conduct, it is not wholly free from the vice of tradition, that is to say, from the tendency to become unreasoning, hard, and formal, which marks the arrested development of thought. But were it as vital and expansive as a ra-

tional apprehension of its aim should make it, much that concerns the government of life as a whole would lie without its distinctive sphere. True, one may scarce name a phase of life that has not its social bearing; and possibly, with a little ingenuity, one might cast every principle of life into ethical form. The ethical ideal would then stand for the full ideal, and govern the whole sphere of life, leaving no room for religion, as a praxis, except as identified with ethics. But such an expansion of the content of ethics, though of present service perhaps in correcting the obstinacy with which popular religion cherishes certain cosmic and theologic hypotheses to which it is committed, must tend to obscure the fundamental importance of ethical distinctions, and therefore to weaken the real strength of the moral demand. Nature indeed knows no absolute line. Each element of life is organically united with all the elements that enter into the vital union. But this underlying unity does not justify us in ignoring all distinctions in the point of view, or in refusing separate treatment to clearly separable fields; and inasmuch as the moral laws, slowly learned in the pain of experience, have acquired in the thoughts and instincts of the race a fairly distinctive form, this general form it seems best, if only on practical grounds, to retain.

And the practical distinction is philosophically justifiable. A single broad principle, as we have said, comprehends in the main all that is ordinarily included in the moral demand. Morality interpreted as

the primary or elementary law of social life is practically coextensive with the scope of the judgments commonly recognized as moral. From the empirical character of such judgments, as they arise in the common consciousness, we may well understand how the line of demarcation corresponding to this underlying principle should at times be overstepped, but it will be found upon analysis, we submit, that where morality is emancipated from the arbitrary requirements imposed by mere custom, ancestral or religious, the moral laws may be readily reduced to the fundamental conditions of social union. And as these general conditions are precisely the conditions which would naturally be recognized, not indeed by every barbarous tribe, but by all the races of men who have addressed themselves with any considerable success to the problems of social organization, we see how it is that morality, defined as the fundamental social law, should assume a form which, with some natural differences, is practically the same in all developed communities. A tract of conduct so consistently distinguished, in practice, and so easily covered, as thus distinguished by a common principle, it were best therefore to reserve as the proper domain of this principle when we attempt to reduce our empirical judgments to scientific form. Hence we have marked off the field of morals as a part only of the general field of conduct. Morality goes to the character of the individual, not in his many-sided and general capacity as man, but in his quality, distinctively, as a member of the human fraternity; and it is further

distinguished from social law in general by the fundamental character of its requirements. It is to the general body of social law what the constitutional law of the state is to the great body of its subordinate legislation; it is the organic law of social life. Indirectly it has, of course, a bearing upon all our conduct, social and non-social, seeing that there is no phase of the activity of a vital organism but is conditioned by, and in turn reacts upon, the activity of the organism as a whole. But, for the reasons assigned, it seems better to restrict the immediate subject-matter of morals to the attitude and general disposition of the individual unit toward other such units in the organic unity of society. And the moral principle, thus restricted or defined, will expand, so far as it needs expansion, by the natural laws of growth. As the feebler moral impulses settle firmly into instincts, that is, as our actual moral state improves, the moral demand, which in its application to our actual conduct cannot ignore the limits of what is practicable, will become upon is own proper ground more searching and comprehensive. And the essentials of conduct will cover, no doubt, a progressively wider area of conduct.

But if morality, as here accepted and as commonly understood, occupies only a part of the field of conduct, moral discipline must be supplemented by a broader culture. The moral law should be apprehended in the light of some principle or idea which embraces the possibilities of human life as a whole. And for such an idea we must turn to religion, as conceived

by its profoundest teachers, and developed in the direction of its soundest growth. True, there is hardly a notable error but has been consecrated by association with religion. So, also, one could scarce name a crime against humanity that has not been committed in the name of the state. But the religious idea and the idea of the state, though sadly distorted by ignorance and passion, are both, apparently, indispensable, and are both capable of purification and expansion. And the fact that religion assumes to comprehend the total activity of human life, and has shown itself susceptible of adaptation to the thought of any age, would suggest, it would seem, to a mind impressed with the evolutionist tendencies of the time, that in our need for a discipline and an ideal which shall be as broad as our human endowment, we should make use, as far as possible, of the accumulated strength of religious habit, rather than undertake the establishment of a new discipline or cultus in more or less conscious antagonism with that which has been instituted under religious sanctions and under the influence of religious ideals. In fact, the distinctly idealizing tendencies of religion seem to mark it as the necessary counterpoise to man's discontent with the bare actuality, and an indispensable means of correcting the grosser effects in the mind of the struggle for existence under the actual conditions of life. The religious imagination has doubtless run wild. It is the tendency of every strong impulse to run wild. But without imagination, without ideals which are the creation of the imagination,

the hope of rescuing humanity from its animalism and selfishness is slight, and we must trust to the increase of knowledge to discipline the imagination—not to weaken it; to strengthen it, rather, by teaching it to walk, as Shakespeare and Raphael walked, on the ground of reality; by directing it to the facts as the fittest matter for its creative or shaping hand. And there is in religion, however we may condemn its irrational elements, an ideal of human perfection, whether conceived as embodied in human life or as exemplified in an expanded form in the divine existence, which has been of incalculable service to humanity, and which is so far broader than the moral ideal that it needs but easy modification to supply the want of which our study of morals has left us conscious. Heart, soul, strength, mind, every instrumentality and every power, are constrained to the service of this ideal. Man is conceived as in his whole being responsible to an ideal being; and we have only to develop this conception by a completer recognition of the richness of human capacity, and by a juster appreciation of the meaning of the ideal and of its relation to the actual, to fit the conception for every purpose which we may hope to accomplish by means of an idea as comprehensive as the scope of human activity and aims.

Contrasting religion, then, conceived in this developed sense, with morality, we find that it comprehends morality. In its practical aspect, that is, as furnishing a guide for conduct, it is distinguished from morality by its greater breadth, or as the whole

may be distinguished from its part, since it takes cognizance of all the means to life's general end, and commands the devotion of heart, mind, soul, strength, to the realization of the fuller ideal in which the moral ideal is merged. It comprehends all duty, all aspiration; hopes for all happiness. The faith of many ages, shaped by the dream of a fairer life, to which we feel instinctively that this actual life must tend, has laid the scene of its consummated hope in a "world beyond," created under gentler conditions than our care-laden earth, and lying nearer to the hand of that providence which delays, it would seem, to soften the harshness of natural conditions and stay the injustice of our fellowmen. But the naturalist does not so despair of nature. For him the ideal is the development of the actual. He looks forward, not to translation to other worlds, but to the transformation of the existing world, building his hope upon the reformation of the will, completer organization or fraternity, the unfolding of powers yet latent or feeble, and the slow amelioration of the external conditions of life. But wherever the world of our longing, it is man in his ideal estate which inspires man's finest thought and touches his spirit to finest issues; and it is the impulsion toward this ideal world, wherever in imagination it is figured as real, which characterizes the religious life. Religion is the effort of our nature to perfect itself as a whole. It is the total impulse of the rational life shaping all the means of life to life's supreme end; the resultant of all vital tendencies seeking each its fullest realization

as a constituent force in the action of the soul as an organic whole. Religion, in a word, is, in its best and ultimate sense, the general principle of life asserting itself in its completest and most effective form. And morality is so far from exhausting the contents of religion, that the moral regeneration of our nature is, in a sense, but a preparation for the realization of the religious ideal. The education and discipline of our powers, the enlargement of our interests, and all the finer effects of human energy, are possible only in the medium of a socialized community, in a community, that is, which has acquired a certain solidarity through the strength of moral ties. Where these ties are wanting there can be no social state; and where these ties are relaxed there we may see already the beginnings of a social and general decline. It is indeed a commonplace of history that vice, which is the corruption of the social bond, brutalizes the mind, and tends necessarily, as it debases the feelings, to the extinction of art, science, philosophy, and all the higher forms of the intellectual life. The function of morality, however, is not merely preparatory or ancillary to the general discipline of the spirit which is the function of religion. Society is more than a means to ulterior ends; the social impulse is an integral part of our nature. The feeling which holds us to our kind, and makes the human face, marred as it is by relics of our original wildness, the dearest sight that can satisfy our eyes, is a joy in itself, an end in itself. Love, the fulfillment of the law, is its own sufficient reason. Life, nevertheless, is more than the fulfill-

ment of the social law. It is conceivable, indeed, that every barbaric impulse were softened, and the last ugly residue of the struggle for existence were refined from our manners, leaving our lives notwithstanding insipid and barren. But in truth love itself is not mere love. It is companionship in life's occupations: presupposes, as its ground and opportunity, interests and occupations which companionship shall make more gracious. And the soul grows morbid when not well occupied. Atrophy wastes its substance, and a chafing, inarticulate discontent eats up the zest of life. Hence the emptiness of our ordinary ambitions. The soul is but in part alive; its fine aptitudes are ignored, and the taint of insufficiency infects the natural sweetness of life.

> "We look before and after,
> And pine for what is not;
> And our sincerest laughter
> With some pain is fraught."

Power undeveloped, life denied, cankers the life which finds expression; and man, born to the freedom of nature, "so noble in reason, so infinite in faculties," drags himself hopelessly in a dull round of habit, making of the means of life its end, and shutting out the hope and illumination of those generous aims which broaden the intention of life, and which alone bring life to its full fruition.

To correct this morbid condition, and to grasp and keep before the mind the functions of life as an organic whole, which suffers as a whole when it is maimed or disordered in any part, is the office of

religion, we conceive, as distinguished from morals or the discipline of any social function. The total end of life is attainable only through the discharge of the general offices of life, each in its place and degree, as measured by the general result; and religion, which owes its inspirational power to its loftiness and breadth of view, relieves by its freedom the constriction of each special pursuit, and tends especially to check the degradation or necrosis of the finer energies which results from absorption in materialistic aims. It blows over our faces the air of those Delectable Mountains which haunt the vision of every idealist. It will liberalize the ethical aim itself, which commonly unites with a kind of translocated materialism, or longing for celestial luxuries, which calls itself religion, in diverting to petty issues the little thought that we spare for the general conduct of life. Idealizing the form of our humanity, religion ignores no element of manhood. The careful pains, the late-learned skill, with which we spell out the letters of nature's imperishable laws; the sense impressible to beauty, and the plastic hand which recasts all natural forms in art's original molds; the brooding thought which enters, impatient of the too obvious sense, among the mysteries and shadows of being and lingers about the portals of the infinite; have all, as elements of that fuller manhood which is at once the despair and the hope of each generous spirit, a religious worth. And in that fairer manhood are attributes which the more pretentious gifts obscure. The patience of weakness, the heart that bears

up under defeat; nay, the laborer's strength, the runner's swiftness, the workman's craft, ranks each in its degree as a fit expression of the energizing soul. Life is the sum of *all* its qualities. And religion, as the cultus of the general ideal, cherishes each in its peculiar excellence, and cherishes all.

On practical grounds, however, it may well be found that morality must long furnish the main text of our religious teachings. The gravity of the interests which depends upon the strength of the moral tie, and the relative feebleness of the moral instincts in a large part of mankind, appear to justify the restriction of religious effort mainly to the reinforcement of these instincts. But we cannot overlook the fact that morality itself must suffer where the general development is retarded. Rude sensibilities imply dull sympathies. Ignorance and a blunt intelligence, even where the conscience is alive, miss all but the more obvious of moral distinctions; and in communities where there is a pervading dullness of moral perception even the more sensitive will feel the effect of the general obduration. Every man's conscience is influenced by the standards of the men amongst whom he moves. And the moral sense shares the bias and disproportion of the mind. The religious partisan who would shrink from a conscious lie circulates without scrutiny slander of a Romanist or a freethinker, and political immorality is rife among men who in private relations pass for men of their word and honest. Hence, as the wise physician attacks the diseases of the body not always with spe-

cifics, but oftener perhaps by raising the general tone, so the thoughtful moralist, knowing that the conscience cannot be wiser than the reason which guides it, or tenderer than the feeling which quickens it, will broaden the basis of his work, and rely even more upon the elevation of the mental tone than upon direct moral teaching. As mere moralist he must study more than his science. The very depth and pervasiveness of the moral interest require that he shall conceive of his ethical doctrine as but a chapter in the general doctrine and discipline of the soul. Without the inspiration of religion's broader aims he is a dogmatist or a martinet. Mere rules or dicta inflame no zeal; it is the beauty of the full ideal which touches the imagination and kindles the ardors of a sacred passion. Ethics must borrow its heat from religion.

Religion, in fine, as here conceived, regards the capacities and possibilities of life in their harmony and entirety. Recognizing in ethics the same general principle which in reason should govern the conduct of life, it insists upon the general principle as against the particular rule, or rather as the source and justification of all that is sound in our rules. This general principle is the law of human happiness, the natural law which prescribes the immutable conditions of human well-being. Religion apprehends in this law the fiat of omnipotence. Shifting our regard from immediate to remoter ends, from the meaner interests of life to its broader intention, it traces the scheme and purport of our lives to universal laws, and grounds

our frail being in the infinite. It is, in a word, reason in its highest exercise, feeling on its highest plane. Comprehending life in its total scope, it spurns the suggestions of an errant inclination, and winning us to the contemplation of great ideals stirs in us a zeal to seek for our particular lives, meager as may be their gifts, the most perfect expression. And human nature, denying the religious law, denies itself, for in the end it is the vital principle itself which determines the form of the law.

VIII.

Il y a au sein de l' humanité une source de chaleur qui n'est pas pres de s'éteindre, et, quand même il serait prouvé que l'humanité comme le soleil se refroidera un jour, il y a quelque chose qui ne meurt pas, c'est l'idéal,—*Renan.*

In reducing religion, as a law of conduct, to the law of the complete or ideal development of life we arrive at a principle which furnishes the key to the solution of our main problem in each of its aspects.

We started our inquiry assuming as the underlying thought in religion that there resides in nature, or is manifest through nature, an overruling power. And to propitiate, or in some way harmonize our relations with, this power we assumed to be religion's underlying aim. So much we took for granted. Our task then was two-fold; first, to interpret this power as apprehended in the religious sense; secondly, to frame a theory of life in harmony with its action.

We took the ground at the outset, also, that our knowledge of such supreme power, interpreted here as natural power, must be based upon a study of the order and content of nature. We postulated, in fact, that nature is identical with universal being. But as being in general includes both man and the object of his worship—includes, indeed, all objects and all determinations whatever—it was necessary to search for a principle in the light of which we might inter-

pret nature universal in a sense specifically religious; or define, in other words, the religious aspect of nature. Such a principle or clew it seemed that we might find in the principle of morals. Seeing that morality is generally recognized as an essential element in the religious life, and as binding upon humanity in a certain extra-human sense, we pursued our search by investigating the relation which nature might be found to sustain to human morals, and learned at length that the moral law is to be construed as a form of natural law. We showed, further, that this law is but a branch of the more general law of conduct which is determined by universal nature for her particular creature man in the specific form of the constitution which he has received from the hands of nature; which is, that is to say, the natural condition of an end naturally and constitutionally desirable. And this more general law, which embraces life as a whole seeking complete or ideal expression, we identified with the law of the religious life. The supreme or religious law was traced to the form of the vital principle itself.

Our two-fold problem was thus considered in its second or practical aspect first. Religion, as a law of conduct, refers us back to the human constitution, and the conditions established by nature under which our humanity may consummate its deepest desire. The law of the religious life is thus, in a profound and real sense, a law of nature. And it is a rational law, the law which defines our "reasonable service" and that conformity with nature, felt rather than

defined, which was the guiding principle of the Stoics. For the rational ends of life being predetermined, together with the conditions under which this life may be realized, in the constitution which is our gift from nature, the life which ignores these conditions, or makes irrational choice of means to its end, is out of harmony, not indeed with all natural law, since that were impossible, but with the law which nature has prescribed for the attainment of the ultimate end which it is our nature to desire. It is a discordant and an irrational life. In an eminent sense it is an unnatural life.

But the vital principle which defines the office of religion as a law of conduct is the very principle which we have been seeking as a guide to the true apprehension of nature as an object of religious contemplation. The soul is an essential unit. The various phases of life, practical, emotional, intellectual, are all but various phases of the same activity; and the same constitution which determines the true law of conduct, or the practical law, discloses also, in the discriminations of its sensibility to nature and natural impressions, a principle of distinction by which we may interpret the universal and indeterminate being of nature in a determinate and specifically religious sense. In the structure of the soul is found our criterion of the divine or ideal in nature as of the divine or ideal in man. Nature's inexhaustible content comes to the touch of human feeling and is judged as good or ill, or mean or fine, with reference to a norm predetermined by nature in the modes of our sensibility and the condi-

tions of its ideal satisfaction. It is the eye and the apparatus of vision which determine the ideal of color and light; it is the ear and its accessories which determine the harmonies and perfection of sound. Or if we allow with the psychologist that it is the whole organism which reacts upon the report of each special sense, it is still the form of our impressibility which determines in its perfect or ideal gratification the standard for every impression. And this is true of all impressions whatever. So much truth lies in the dictum of Protagoras. "Man is the measure of all things." All that enters into the substance of nature's boundless complex must be judged by the mind. And the standard here, like the standard of conduct, is no arbitrary or capricious standard. It is grained in our system, and its application to the general matter of our impressions, on the one hand and to the determination of our conduct and practical aims, on the other hand, is life's supreme or idealizing function. And life idealizing itself as a whole is the religious life. Essentially it is one and the same principle which, in respect of our conduct, demands the perfect development and organization of our practical energies, and which impels us, in respect of the contemplative or intellectual life, to search in nature for order, adaptation, beauty, sublimity, and all ideal aspects of nature—all that is perfectly responsive to perfected human sensibility or feeling.

The religious life, therefore, in either aspect regarded, whether as the search for the deity or divinity of nature or as the search for a divine law of

conduct, is reducible to a single formula; the quest of the ideal. This, in a word, is the office of religion. The deity we seek and adore is nature in her ideal manifestation; the law which we revere as supreme is the law of the ideal life. And the form of the ideal has reference in either case to our nature. Ultimately, religion construes the universe and defines the law of life with regard to the principle of life itself, referring this principle, again, back to nature, the universal source of life.

The religious interest centers, then, not in universal power as undifferentiated and uninterpreted, but in a certain aspect or interpretation of nature. Nature indefinite, indeterminate, unaccented by human interests, is but a bewildering maze of change; but in the divine we regard the general ground of nature's being as manifesting, or tending to manifest, the perfections demanded by human sentiment for its perfect satisfaction. It is the soul's specific sensibility which discriminates, and deity is nature as perfectly responsive to the soul's demand. And wherever we turn we discover this divinity; in germinant life, in the play of the elemental forces, in the orbits of the stars; and the soul, reflecting on itself as the product of the same universal power which discloses these perfections, distinguishes in its own depth also a divine intent, an instinct, or inspiration, constraining the life to its ideal form. And even when the sense revolts the eye may discover an attendant perfection. Slime and filth transmit all the wonders of light; disease, to the pathologist, may seem more

beautiful than health; and in him who may consider it dispassionately the anatomy of the tiger provokes admiration by its perfection as an instrument of death.

But the perfections of nature are relative always to some specific type or end; the ideal is limited by its idea. And the perfect aspect of nature may be but the obverse of imperfection in the reverse. Darkness alternates with light. For each proof which piety may instance of God's goodness the skeptic is ready with evidence of malevolence. Nay, piety itself has recognized and personified the black and untoward aspect of nature no less than the fair and propitious; and Ormuzd must share dominion with Ahriman, God with Devil, Love with Hate. The universal reality, in short, is a composite of contrasts and oppositions, aspects of being which vary as they are addressed to our various sensibilities, or as they obstruct or reinforce our intention; and which, it would seem, we may never perfectly harmonize, seeing that perfect harmony, in any sense intelligible to ourselves would imply a universe created wholly in the human interest or with reference to the human organism, and so, as a whole, apprehended; an implication which the rashest of dogmatists would scarcely insist upon. The pantheistic dream of universal good, into the terms of which we may translate all partial evil, is thus as unverifiable as the theist's assumption of a humane providence struggling with the perversity of incorrigible nature. Nevertheless, it is the good alone, the good in the broad platonic sense, which engages the religious interest. Religion, as the pro-

duct of the idealizing impulse, sees and pursues the ideal alone. That which it sees in nature—the deity or divinity of nature—is nature tending to an ideal expression of her types and powers; that which it seeks and conserves in humanity is the ideal expression of the human type.

And art too dwells and works in this ideal element. But while the æsthetic sense is gratified rather by the outer charm and the purity of definite objective types, or associates the forms and qualities of things according to a certain unity of sensuous impression determined by the form of our sensibility, the religious sense penetrates the apparent and external form, and searches the beautiful, which is the perfect in its type, or the sublime, which is nature in her grandeur and power, for the inner meaning or the deeper law through which it may refer all types and powers to their universal source, aspiring to reach at length, if that were possible, the point of view at which all imperfections should vanish, and all forces, forms, and qualities should appear as perfections of the universal life apprehended in the unity of an ultimate ideal, an infinity of infinite perfections. Religion represents, in fine, the subjective demand in its profoundest intent. It includes art, in its deeper meaning, and all idealistic tendencies; and though under present conditions it is mainly absorbed in the practical idealism of morals, nothing that pertains to the refinement of the human type or to the realization of human ideals is foreign to its scope.

And religion, reflecting upon its own origin and

aims, or attempting the systematic interpretation of man and nature as in relation, generally, to the ideal, passes on the other hand into philosophy. The philosophical aim is "truth." The ideal here is a perfect general representation of the created world as it is. The philosophical interest, as distinguished, say, from the practical interest or the æsthetic interest, impels us to schematize the facts and the laws of being, not directly with a view to re-forming them or re-disposing them in furtherance of some high or cherished aim of ours, but with reference in the first instance to the action of the intellect in apprehending them. The fact, perfect or imperfect in its type, the fact as it exists, with the law of its existence or its place in the scheme of things, is here the desideratum; and philosophy, as the systematization of the sciences or of the specific forms of knowledge, ministers to the interests of the intellect, distinctively, as an instrument of cognition. But our intellectual interests, owing to the interplay of function which characterizes the organs of intellectual life, cannot be wholly disengaged from other interests, and as a matter of fact the problems of philosophy have been to a large extent religious problems because our broadest and profoundest interests, which are the interests that religion conserves, are those which naturally engage the attention of comprehensive intellects seeking fit material for the cognitive faculty to act upon. No profounder interest, indeed, can engage human activity than the relation of the actual man in the actual world to man and the world as figured and demanded

by our ideals, which is the relation to be determined, if possible, by religious philosophy. And this is a relation of fact, an object of intellectual cognition. Religious philosophy is therefore, inasmuch as it studies a determinate relation established in the order of nature, a form of natural philosophy, and religion has always been found, in the course of its actual development, in close relation with man's cosmological conceptions. Our religious schemes, it would seem, depend upon and change with our views of the scheme of nature. But neither science, in the ordinary, more physical sense, nor the philosophy of science, is necessarily religious. Knowledge is obtained by abstraction of specific parts, qualities, or aspects of being from the whole of a given content, and the form of the results which we reach in the scientific contemplation of nature depends upon the form of the material which we abstract for consideration from the plenum of nature. By elimination of nature's inexhaustible wealth of form and quality we may resolve all being into bare force; the study of spatial relations will reduce the heavens and the earth to the compass of an astronomical chart; or, inverting the order of physical sequence, we may come, in our search for the primal cause, upon an elemental star-dust or some primordial gas. Physical, chemical, and mathematical inquiries lead us directly only to physical, chemical, and mathematical results. And, in general, the relations which we consider in what is called the scientific investigation of nature are highly specialized and abstract, representing nature with fidelity, indeed, so far as

they go, but not as in relation to the vital and ideal interests which are the theme and motive of religious thought. The mountains lying in the sunlight are more than the elements of their constituent rocks; something more than a lesson in optics shines through the purple haze which blends their rugged lines. And philosophy, regarded as a mere synthesis of the abstractions of science, though it satisfies a noble curiosity and occupies a necessary place in that general discipline and development of our nature which it is the office of religion to care for, still leaves us cold, is not yet "divine" or religious philosophy. Its universe is but a system of forces,causes, elemental combinations, and general classes—the mere anatomy of nature—and represents as incompletely the relation of the universal reality to the idealizing thought which moves religious feeling as the chemical formula, two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen, represents the sublimity of Niagara or the sea.

Religious philosophy takes as its immediate subject-matter not the fact which is, but the fact which, on demand of the subject man, ought to be. Its theme is an idea, the idea of a perfected humanity domiciled in a perfect world; and it is interested in the actual world and man in his actual estate, not as mere matters of fact to be fitted to their place in certain schemata of facts, but mainly and primarily as disclosing the means and conditions of the progressive realization of this idea. Such means and conditions are, neverthless, matters of evidence, and capable of scientific treatment in accordance with the laws of

evidence. And though the immature thought of man has spurned the actual world as impotent to satisfy or realize his ideals, and as having no interest therefore for the religious or idealizing mind, a more intelligent study of nature has corrected our understanding of nature's methods, founded a new cosmology, and opened vistas of hope in the natural world which outreach even the enthusiast's fancy sporting with the insubstantial elements of an imagined world. Changes vast and revolutionary, it appear, are but the cumulative effect of graduated and unperceived mutation; and natural idealism, studious of nature's ways, conceives that man may grow step by step into that which he ought to be as the earth step by step was fitted for his habitation. It seeks to root itself, accordingly, in the ground of fact; in the constitution of nature, the ultimate source of life and power; in the constitution of man, whose life it seeks to perfect.

A knowledge of facts as they are, and a clear recognition of the laws of growth actually operative, are as necessary to the elaboration of productive and enduring ideals as is the constructive energy of the imagination itself which bodies forth the forms of things as yet unknown in nature. Da Vinci and Angelo, idealists of color and form, were anatomists too, and students of the living model. Dante, Shakespeare, Balzac, had been but ineffective idealists of the motives and the passions of life, had they been less profoundly versed in the actual experience of life. And all the various and special arts, born of a special subjective need, and striving for unity and perfection

of expression in their several creations in response to this need, depend upon the artist's mastery of some aspect of nature which he represents under ideal forms, or of some mode of human sensibility to which he offers ideal gratification. Religion, on the other hand, is related to all impressions and all unities, and represents the impulse of the soul to perfect itself as an organic whole harmonized with the organic life of nature. It idealizes our humanity, and would surround it with an ideal world, unifying man and the world as concurrent effects or expressions of a common power which tends everywhere to express itself in ideal forms. But religion, that is, natural as opposed to conventional religion, must begin with man and the world as they are. Its ideals can be realized only through development of the actual in conformity with the actual laws of growth, and its need of knowledge is as profound as is the primary need or aspiration which religion seeks to satisfy. There is nothing in the entire circle of the sciences, in fact, which has not, either as instrument or discipline, a bearing upon the religious problem. The interest of religion is of course most vital in the facts and laws which are most deeply related to human welfare, in the facts and laws of the inner life. But the sympathies of religion are universal. Its interests are coextensive with the human interest, and the opposition between science and religion exists only so far as religion assumes a false basis of fact, or a theory of nature and natural law which will not bear the minute and patient analysis of science in its effort to

attain to a just apprehension of the fact. Religion in conflict with science, or that which is known, is in error. Religion may offer us fair ideals, nevertheless, while yet cherishing many illusions of fact; but it cannot maintain such supremacy as comports with the dignity of its aims until it becomes a more patient student of nature as we find her, until it ceases, in spleen, or in despair of nature's aid, to project all its hopes into other and imagined worlds, and submits its ideals as types for realization by actual men in the real world. True religion is the true law of growth. Its datum is the actual; but its function is the cultus of the ideal, that is, to develop the actual, to give true form and tendency to the real, to lure and guide and shape that which is to that which ought to be.

And the effort of religion to exceed this its true function, and to grasp at something which it calls the good absolute, must always fail. Man, mortal and finite, can do no more than orient himself and better himself and his estate in an infinity where the human element, though of the substance of the infinite, is but an element. The soul, specific and human in its quality, needs but meat for its proper sustenance and room for the play of its peculiar faculty; and its reasonable demand, its sole object, rationally apprehended, is to find in the wide range of the world such sustenance, such opportunity; no more. But religious philosophy, forgetful of the essential human reference in all our standards, and vesting the soul's demand for perfection relative to the

needs of its kind with the efficacy of a law applicable to the universe in its infinitude, assumes that our idea is the form to which infinite and eternal being must be compressed, and wastes itself in the struggle to round out our general impression of nature into a total unity, in which all particular impressions, good or ill, perfect or imperfect, may appear, tried by some ultimate standard, as all alike harmonious and perfect. The effort is not, indeed, fruitless. As the vision widens deformity and disproportion tend to disappear. The broken line which bounds our horizon at the level of common life rounds into the full circle as we ascend. And it is the dream of philosophy, theistic, deistic, pantheistic, to reach such elevation of view that all evil and insufficiency may suffer a divine transformation, and the actual itself be seen in its totality as the absolute ideal. Color of justification for this presumption comes even from science as it broadens. When we see the physicist watching in awe the action of the forces of crystallization and showing us in the body of death an immanent beauty and life; when we see the naturalist tracing the steps by which nature, even through rapine and greed, lends her creatures a keener intelligence or a finer grace; it seems not impossible that the science which is stigmatized as profane, and which, in the rigor of its scrutiny of the facts, is wont to discredit the idealist as warping the vision to a false clew and hindering knowledge, should itself suggest a more comprehensive view of nature, and resolve away certain of the perplexities of religious

thought. And this progressive expansion and organization of thought is the life of thought. But our progress brings us no nearer, it would seem to a final consummation; is itself, indeed, an infinite progress; and an ideal unity in which every phase and detail of being shall find its place as in all relations good and fair appears to be as unattainable as a mental representation of universal being rounded off into a physical unit or whole. Nature can not be reduced in idea even to the scale of the human relations which are implied in our ideals. Man is in nature; he is not to be assumed as the end of nature; and the ends to which human nature, harmonized with itself, and happy in means and opportunity of harmonious self-expression, must ever tend are yet too specific and narrow to be imposed upon the being of nature generally. The ideal law is natural law; but it is natural law as related to human sensibility and auxiliary to human needs. Nature in her various kinds, or nature for herself and in her universality, can not be tried by the laws of human conduct or constrained to the compass of human aims. She offers, nevertheless, infinite recourse to the activity of the human mind. Herself without limit, and eluding all effort to compress her infinitude to the measure of a finite idea, she opposes no limit to the idealizing course of human thought. The search for the divine can never end.

IX.

God's wisdom and goodness!—Ay, but fools
Misdefine these till God knows them no more.
Wisdom and goodness, they are God.

—*Matthew Arnold.*

Schädliche Wahrheit, ich ziehe sie vor dem nützlichen Irrthum.
Wahrhe it heilet den Schmerz den sie vielleicht uns erregt.

Goethe.

RELIGION we define, then, as the quest or cultus of the ideal. It is distinguishable from the arts which relate to special forms of the idealizing impulse in that it embraces our nature in its entirety; and whereas these special arts are occupied for the most part in creating exemplars of their several ideals, the practical or formative effort of religion is directed to the amelioration of our humanity generally, or to the progressive assimilation of the human type, in its most comprehensive sense, to the human ideal. But the human organization, though specific among nature's innumerable species, is, as we have seen, the key or touchstone of the ideal, as the human mind must conceive it, universally; and the more perfect the human organization as in relation to its own ideal, the more complete is its efficiency as an instrument for the interpretation of the universe in its divine or ideal aspect generally. Thus religion, strenuous to perfect the human type, passes from man to nature,

essaying the interpretation of all particular forms, forces, qualities, and tendencies as perfections relative to the universal life of nature But the actual we cannot resolve wholly into the unity of the ideal. Nature cannot be grasped in unity, or as a whole, in her mere reality; much less can she be comprehended in an ideal unity, or harmonized in all her visible aspects with standards of perfection paramount for man, but relative ultimately to the human organization, and therefore specific, not universal standards. The search for the ideal is, nevertheless, the essential function of religion. In the life of man, or in nature's infinite life, the religious enthusiast must pursue his idea, which, though never perfectly realized, is yet forever in process of realization.

For all things have their divine or ideal aspect. Though the infinity of nature mocks our attempts to reduce the universe of being to the limits of any particular idea, the religious soul is conscious of divine suggestion in every natural thing. And this, the divinity of nature, is the Deity of our aspirations, the Ideal, the omnipresent Good, that we adore. Obeying the common tendency of thought to clothe its more distinctive ideas with individuality and independence, men have personified this ideal, parting it from nature conceived as impersonal and created, as if it were another nature, distinct, personal, and creative. But the ideal, thus parted from nature, is parted only in our thought. The reality, so far as the ideal is real is in nature, and is, as reality, inseparable from nature, who is at once created and cre-

ative (*natura naturata* and *natura naturans*). And it were as reasonable—as a process of thought it would, in fact, be the same—to abstract and personify the principle of evil as to abstract and personify the principle of goodness, for the evil which we shun and the good which we pursue are but converse aspects of nature, discriminated by our organization as men, and having real existence, not as beings or essences dissociated from nature, but as alike included in her universal reality. Deity therefore, truly conceived, is God, the Ideal, or the Spirit of the Good, manifest in nature. The divine is not to be dissevered, save in the abstraction of our thought, from nature. It is an aspect or principle or tendency of nature, emphasized by human feeling and human aspirations, to which it is so nearly and so profoundly related that for us it is supreme as a principle directive of our vision or apprehension of nature; but the reality in which this principle is manifest, the actual being in which the spirit or process of the ideal appears, is the being of nature.

But it is in humanity, of all nature's products, that we, as men, must look for our true Avatar. Here, for us, is the true incarnation of deity, in the coalescence of the human and the divine; nature in the brief span of a human life and nature in the long story of humanity's ascending progression tending to the more perfect embodiment of the human type. In the older thought the operation of deity was as an extra-natural influence playing from without upon the human faculty, and bearing it on to achievement

above the plane of merely natural action. But to the naturalist the voice of deity is a natural voice; the inspired thought, in religion and morals as in literature and art, is still a natural thought. The change in the point of view is indeed momentous, and far-reaching effects must follow the change. And new wine, we have been warned, should not be put into old bottles. But though in the long process of growth into which we now resolve the incomplete story of creation much is outgrown, the truth which commends itself as new has grown out of the old and is vital with the life of the old; and it seems not unfitting that the ideal, long associated with the thought of deity, should still be called divine, and that religion, whose peculiar office (so far as it has not been perverted to the mere conservation of vested interests and conventional opinion) has been to keep alive our sense of deity as idealized being, should yet discharge the same high function, though the divinity which we worship is found in humanity, and in familiar and companionable nature, whom we cease to revere only as we strip her of her divinity to clothe the supernatural withal. Deity, in the earlier philosophies but the intellectual or disposing principle of nature, then the hypostasis of natural power, and afterwards dissevered from and conceived in opposition to nature, comes again at length in the revolution of modern thought back to nature, immanent, inherent, indissociable from the life of nature.

But this divinity in nature, or in human nature—is it in truth the deity we needs must worship? Re-

ligion has so long been associated with a personality assumed to be distinct from and superior to nature that, with some impatience perhaps, one may ask, "Why yet talk—if we are convinced of the futility of all attempts to transcend the natural order—why yet talk of religion or religious inspiration, or darken counsel with terms that have lost their significance? If the supernatural be indeed extinct, what remains but a supposititious deity to kindle the religious fire? In reducing the divine to the plane of nature we have so changed the form of deity, it would seem, that we have lost the substance. We may oppose the natural force of the soul to the unpitying force of nature without; but religion—if we are abandoned to such tenderness as resides in nature's impersonal laws, what is there left of religion?

The change which the change in our attitude toward nature must work in religion is indeed so profound that its effects can hardly be overstated. The abolition of the practices of idolatry, the absorption of polytheistic powers in a single supreme power, wrought changes less radical perhaps in their influence upon the habit of the mind than the changes involved in the reversion of our belabored and conventionalized thought from the supernatural back to the natural. But we have seen that a law of life founded in some theory of our relation to universal law is a necessity of the rational and reflecting mind, and religion, which claims absolute authority over the conduct of life, is for each man properly identified, in its philosophical aspect, with the doctrine which to him

accounts for such authority. And the form of religious thought in general has been tending steadily, though in part, perhaps, unconsciously, in the direction which, in virtue of the changes it is undergoing, it must hereafter consciously pursue. There is, indeed, a stage in religious development when the force of the ideal does not yet appear, when religion is little more than a timorous effort to propitiate a formidable and malignant power by means such as might appease human wrath; and there are doctrines in our lately dominant theories which carry unmistakable traces of this earlier and ruder phase of religion. But since the absorption of ethics by religion, idealistic tendencies have become more and more pronounced in religious thought. The object of religious worship has been more and more completely identified with the moral ideal, and the belief in hell is at length disappearing, not so much on account of the weakness of the evidence for its existence—or the belief in a local heaven might have shared its decay —as on account of the incompatibility of endless suffering, endured by any creature, with the ideal attributes ascribed to the creator. And the force of the ethical ideal is undoubtedly becoming in religion the governing force. Indeed, so far as we can perceive through the mass of speculative and fanciful matter with which the great religions have been overlaid, it was the intention of their founders, long ago, to give it predominance. But they were interested in the practical issue rather than in the theoretical basis of their teachings, and if it appears to our later

thought that ethical law is not the mere fiat of a supernatural lawgiver, as they may have believed, but a form of natural law, we are still, as learners of the ethical life, in harmony with the great teachers whose constant minds and heroic lives gave to ethics its preponderant force in religion and merged their immortal figures in our immortal ideals. Hence, however radical the changes which we introduce into the philosophy of religion, if the ethical ideal is kept steadily in view the main content or the substance of religion, as religion is represented in the lives and teachings of its greatest leaders, is not changed. We have in morals a binding element uniting the new with the old. The moral law, transformed from a personal into a natural law, becomes a means of transition from the personal to the natural theory of religion.

In making this transition, therefore, we do not abrogate the office of religion. We simply rationalize its theory. Taking up substantially as we find it the ethical element, which is central or tends to become central in the older systems, we allow it, in terms and with deliberate preference, the same central importance; tracing then the form of this ideal to the form of our nature, we show its relation to a yet broader ideal which is referrible to the same general principle, namely, the effort of our nature to seek its fullest satisfaction in the fullest expression of its essential vitality; and the moral ideal thus rationalized and expanded becomes the religious ideal, the pursuit of which yields the profoundest happiness, "the

peace which passeth all understanding," and constitutes the religious life. Religion is therefore neither destroyed nor displaced by something substantially unlike it. It is simply developed. That is to say, the gap between the new thought and the old faith is not so wide that we need break, or attempt to break, the continuity of the line of religious growth; or, rather, there is no gap, we develop a naturalistic system from the naturalistic elements which religion already contained. The theory of a personal deity, personal in the specifically human sense upon which many yet insist, indeed falls away; and to the dogmatist on the one hand, or the skeptic on the other, who maintains that this hypothesis, with the supernaturalism which it involves, is essential matter of religion, its decay means of course the decline and fall of religion. But we have to guard ourselves here against the seduction of scholastic disputes about names and essences; and in dealing with a matter so comprehensive as religion, so subjective in its nature, and so inevitably modified by constant and progressive change, it would seem that critical consideration were more profitably directed to the truth or falsity of its content as we find it than to any attempt to conclusively determine the essential implication of the name. It is our contention that the substance of religion is not changed by the substitution of a natural for a supernatural theory, and that the particular form in which we conceive of the power which is recognized as the ultimate source and sanction of the laws of human well-being is less es-

sential, having been the subject of constant change, than the recognition of the fact that some such power, whatever the form in which we apprehend it, exists. But, however this may be, the existence of such power, natural or supernatural, will hardly be denied; and if the system of thought or the law of life which the mind, maturing its reflections, constructs about its conception of such power, conceived as natural power, shall not be called religion, it will at least occupy the place which has been occupied by religion, and the question of names may be left to take care of itself. To us no name seems so fitting as that of religion. But if its fitness be disputed we shall not be very strenuous to insist on the name. It is not the verbal symbol, but the momentous truth which is symbolized, which is our present concern.

But the mind is as yet tender of its errors, and misses in the face of unfamiliar truths the warmth and intimacy of the illusions displaced by the truth. Religion consecrates all things, true or false, with which it is allied, and we have looked so long upon nature as dependent upon extraneous power that the investiture of nature with her natural rights is resented as sacrilegious. The theistic prejudice has discredited nature. We ignore, or take for granted simply, the common and standing miracle of natural being, or gaze at it as a mere mechanic wonder, the invention of a non-resident mind; or if the awe and admiration inspired by the vastness and perfection of nature's works can not be repressed, they are diverted from their proper object, the immanent life and power

of nature, to the transcendent being assumed as nature's designer. But science has opened the book of a new revelation. The infinite and eternal has descended from the clouds and shines in the dust. And with the juster thought of nature comes a sense of emancipation, a feeling of security and reality, as if one were escaping from the phantasmata and spells of enchantment into the familiar world and the plain light of day. If an illusion lost is nevertheless a loss, the truth frankly accepted brings fresh inspiration. We may allow that the source of that inspiration through which human feeling in the past reached its highest plane was conceived in many a lofty mind as personal and as more or less disparted from nature. The fact could not well be otherwise. Feeling takes its clew and tendence from the thought, and where the mind through the undeveloped form of its knowledge sees in nature no original power or direction it traces the source of its own life and inspiration inevitably to a non-natural director of nature. But the truer insight made possible by the expansion of knowledge will give the feeling a truer form. And the conception of divinity as the expression of the infinite and eternal under ideal forms, which is the underlying conception of developed religious thought, will lose nothing of its religious quality by translation from the domain of speculative shadows to the natural realm. It may be said indeed that religious feeling has survived in spite of theorists and dogmatists. The cumbrous structures which have imposed themselves upon religious thought have borrowed from

the sweetness and sincerity of devout and simple souls more of vitality than they have given, and when a truer apprehension of our relations to nature shall have allied itself with our instincts and ranged itself with the general furniture of the mind our devotion to the ideal law need discover no less singleness and strength than the devotion of the long roll of martyrs who have witnessed the power of the ideal. Nor need we fear, as many seem to fear, that the moral ideal, if it shall lack the extraneous support of conventional religion, must needs decay. Its strength is inherent. True, it has so long been allied with the dogmas of religion that to the timid it may seem a perilous experiment to bare the doctrine of morals of its time-worn associations; but time was when the alliance was but feeble, or as yet not formed, and the moral sense, independent in its origin, grew then with an independent strength. And it grew to such vigor that it even invaded the realm of religion and compelled on Olympus the reformation of the old immoral gods, as lately in christendom it has slaked, if not extinguished, certain subterranean fires. Religion, or what is taught as religion, needs rather borrow strength from morals than that morals should depend on religion. Our ideals, imperfect as they are, spring from the depths of our being, and are as ineradicable as any principle of our being; and without doubt the moral ideal, conceived as embraced in the general ideal which we have here identified with the religious, will flourish as vigorously under the discipline of science as ever it flourished under the tyranny

of dogma. It is a baseless dread which distrusts our later thought. All that ever was now as really is. And if it be possible, as the too optimistic thinker would aver, that even the illusions of the mind as it moves from stage to stage are beneficent, can we doubt, when we consider the cumulative effects of error, that is better, always, where it is possible, to know that which is, as it is; that the truth, as compared with error, must be yet more beneficent?

But the aspirations here identified with the substance of the religious impulse are too intermittent and too feeble, it may be said, to influence the lives of men in general as they have been influenced heretofore by religion; only imaginative minds, or minds of relatively high development, conceive the ideal as a motive for action. With the masses of men, who accept themselves frankly as they are, it is simply the strongest propensity that rules; and ideal laws, having no reality in their minds, no edge to cut their sensibilities, can exert no real influence on their lives. Religion as here interpreted is too impalpable for the gross uses of the world. To become a power among men it must touch them where they can feel.

If it were simply a question of devising, under the name of religion, the means for coercing all sorts and conditions of men into the form of goodness, and if the truth of our creeds or the sincerity of our professions bore no essential relation to the moral or religious life, we might spare ourselves the pains of scrutiny, and offer our adherence to the highest bidder, to the propagandist who promises most or

threatens most. And, undisturbed by the question of evidence, we might still urge, with the propagandist's recklessness and fervor, the material pleasures of heaven, the sensible pains of hell. But where the truth is in question the matter of evidence should cut a certain figure. And if we believe that our religious difficulties will never be settled except through independent conviction of the truth as determined by the evidence, it is our duty to apply the tests of truth to the postulates of religious teachers without the bias which a tremulous consideration of results is certain to give to our estimate of the evidence. There may be those who are persuaded, with Plato, that any "useful" fiction may be paraded before the ignorant and superstitious as truth, assuming, it would seem, that the ill-instructed may be entrapped or cajoled into conformity with a law which they would never respect on its merits. But can we believe that a great delusion will work as a great moral force? Veracity, veracity of insight as well as veracity of expression, is (as Plato himself perceived) of the very fiber of the moral life, and whatever specious advantage is to be won by deceit, we cannot build up a sound morality by systematic fraud.

> 'Sage, thun wir nicht Recht? Wir müssen den Pöbel betrugen;
> Sieh nur, wie ungeschickt, sieh nur, wie wild er sich zeigt!
> Ungeschickt und wild sind alle rohe Betrogenen:
> Seyd nur redlich, und so führt ihn zum Menschlichen an.'

Insincerity and hypocrisy will scarcely be avowed, it is true, as allies of religion; and the brand of the liar, even among the irreligious, is the hotly resented brand of shame. And yet do not our religious teach-

ers discredit the truth by discrediting an uncompromising application of the tests of truth? Do they not, in all solemnity, affirm as fact matters which they have never scrutinized? as truth, principles which they have never disussed or dare not deny? But man must know where he stands. We cannot play fast and loose with nature and her immutable laws. Nor are the fundamental principles of religious philosophy so easy of determination that we may dispense with criticism and evidential tests, or light-heartedly assume the truth of any principle which seems to us beneficent. The evils which a false principle entails are cumulative, and in the beginning may be completely disguised. It is the sounder practice, taking one step at a time, to assure ourselves by every test that may be applied that each step as we take it is on solid ground.

The prior question here, then, is the truth of idealism, not its force as a motive. It may be shown, nevertheless, that the ideal is in fact a force among men, and is something more than a delicacy for the refined. Ideal motives may be present, indeed, where there is little suspicion of their presence. Every impulse or faculty tends, in proportion to its strength and the completeness of its development, to create in the mind a standard, or an ideal law, determining from within the measure and form of its activity. The eye will revel in color, the ear in sweet sounds, and music and painting with their subjective laws are in every man embryonic; the skillful hand delights in its skill, and art, whose end is in itself, graces not

statuary and architecture only, but every utilitarian service which is but the means to an end; and every natural turn or talent of the mind, craving its proper exercise, finds satisfaction in its own perfect work independently of the ulterior or utilitarian or self-regarding aim. And the finer the capacity the more unselfish or impersonal its action. The stronger the genius or passion, relatively to the personal interest, the more it tends to subdue or ignore all ends but the gratification of its craving for complete or ideal expression. Hence we are all, all at least who are conscious of any spark of originality, idealists. Every ambition is an ideal, and only such as are destitute of any native aspiration, whose mental life is but the reflex response to the stimulus of other minds, are inaccessible to the force of ideal motives. It is the devotion to narrow and perverted ideals, not any general incapacity to subordinate the act to the idea, that in the main of mankind corrupts the purpose and disorganizes the life of the soul. Even the criminal and the desperado have a standard of shrewdness and daring which they respect, and meet their punishment sometimes with the fine resilience of a manly spirit.

> "Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
> Sae dauntingly gaed he;
> He played a spring, and danced it round,
> Beneath the gallows-tree."

And so the various aims pursued in business, in politics, in social life, aims not less repulsive, often, to a true social feeling or less hostile to the social interest than is the violence of the outlaw, represent

ideals for the sake of which men will sacrifice safety, ease, enjoyment, all that is most potent to seduce the will. The power of the imagination to project and keep figured before the mind a form or idea of the acts indispensable to the perfect achievement of the work undertaken, apart from ordinary personal considerations, is not limited to the few who in an artistic or special sense are recognized as men of imaginative minds. It is a power which, in some degree, one might say, is inseparable from the human outfit. Dimly or distinctly there is mirrored to each man's mind, during the formative period at least, the manner of man he would be—strong or brave or wise or rich or good—and the ideals thus formed, varying according to the structure of the mind or the influence under which it falls, react upon all its aims and affinities and form or deform the general conduct of life.

There is little weight, therefore, in any objection urged on the ground of the insensibility of the mind to ideal influences generally. The difficulty lies in shaping our ideals in accordance with a juster estimate of vital good. And this difficulty lies deep in our nature. From the beginning there is disproportion or bias in the structure of the mind, and therefore in the configuration of its ideals; and education must strike deep into the substance of the life to correct its bias and mold it to a truer form. The discipline of the race, however, shows a progress. The true law has a yet deeper organic basis than the false, is in fact truer because it is deeper. The de-

sire for a deeper, a less qualified satisfaction with the results of life, for a profounder harmony of the vital elements, is a fundamental desire, and is at the bottom of our very discontent; and this rooted desire, appearing in ease and in dis-ease, through our dissatisfaction or through our content, must tend, while the soul has freedom to act and intelligence to meditate upon the result of its acts, to promote a juster appreciation of spiritual values and a better adjustment of our efforts to our ultimate end. Selfishness itself learns to discipline its forces, and frames for itself a contracted or distorted ideal; and the office of religion, as here conceived, is not to expunge all common motives, or to inject some novel principle into our nature, but to broaden our apprehension of the actual capacities of life, harmonize its present interests, enlarge and purify existing ideals, and fire the imagination with some glimpses of a remote, and for us perhaps unattainable, ideal. The process is necessarily slow, but it is continuous with processes already well advanced. It is the process, in fact, which religion has always, since its alliance with morals, undertaken to accelerate; and natural idealism, as a philosophy of religion, is but an attempt to refer religion, as a permanent force in human development, to a natural basis, and to strengthen it, by harmonizing it with natural law, for the performance of its proper work

X.

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven: the fated sky
Gives us free scope; only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.
—*Shakespeare.*

O Power, more near my life than life itself.....
I fear not Thy withdrawal; more I fear
Seeing, to know Thee not, hoodwinked with dreams
Of signs and wonders, while unnoticed, Thou
Walking Thy garden still, commun'st with men,
Missed in the commonplace of miracle.
—*Lowell.*

THUS the mind, estranged from nature by an inveterate tendency to objectify or personify its own abstractions, comes back in affectionate reverence to her, our Alma Mater. And nothing that touched the deeper feeling or the finer sense is lost. But nature, no longer the mere premiss from which we conclude the being of infinite power, is herself the power, and herself awakens the emotions which, conceiving of nature in a mechanic sense, we have regarded as the soul's recognition of deity conceived as an exterior and supra-natural mechanician. Deity is immanent, rather, the spirit of the ideal, actual and operative in nature. The vastness and perfection of her works, the immutability of her laws, her imperishable energy and life, in fine, all that was ever read in evidence of the being and attributes of a dissociated deity, all that natural theology, basing itself

on that natural religious feeling of which the sweet and reverent spirit is conscious in the presence of nature, turns to theological use, remains as the expression and evidence of nature's own divinity. Nature in her own character and right embodies the manifold good which we have conceived as hers by mere reflection and contingence, or have interpreted as an index only of the perfections of her designer. That is to say, in nature herself, and in nature alone, need we search for the divine.

But, mindful of the infinity of natural being, we shall guard against making a transcendental use of our predicates or ascribing determinate attributes to the indeterminable universality, lest we fall again into the perplexities and contradictions of theology. Our characterizations of nature are relative always to the spirit or purpose or idea in which we contemplate the being of nature. Nor can the mind, shifting its points of view, by successive approaches exhaust its field, or sum up the qualities of being in a series of supreme determinate attributes. We find, if we venture the attempt, that our language, as our thought, loses in content what it gains in generality. We generalize only by abstraction of quality. And in the highest generalization—being—all quality or attributive force disappears, save as there may be reserved in the term certain faint traces of the attributes it has dropped, or some implication that being cannot be conceived save as in qualitative relation with the mind which conceives it. But a relation or an attribute of tenuity so extreme has no religious

value. The aspects of nature which appeal to religious feeling, though they must be broad enough to direct the mind from the individual toward the universal, should yet be sufficiently determinate to be conceived and felt in their qualitative character. We cannot worship a bare abstraction. Nor can the religious sense rest in any merely negative aspect of being, as the Un-conscious, the Un-knowable. Such negations may have a temporary use in correcting a certain bias or false emphasis of religious thought, too dogmatic, often, and too overweening in its assumption of knowledge; but whatever their schematic value, as religious concepts they are sterile. That there is somewhat of being which we do not, or which we can not, know; that our human conscious thought is not the thought, if thought we may call it, which is expressed in the order and beauty of the Cosmos; may, as propositions, be true, and of serious import, perhaps, in denial of a false or an overstrained theory. But there is no inspiration in a mere privative or negative. Negation, though it may correct an error, inhibits, as mere denial, the sympathetic and unifying impulse in which religion is founded, and tends, by emphasizing difference rather than similarity, to alienate us from nature. The vital concepts in religion are positive concepts. Religion dwells, not in difference or disruption or denial, not in the thought of self and its demarcations from the general being of nature, but in the consciousness of the union of our individual life with the universal life. Hence religious language is inevitably personal.

The characters which the religious mind must contemplate in nature are those in virtue of which nature may be felt, if not adequately defined, as a personal life in intimate contact with our human personality. The religious impulse is thus the poetic impulse in its most generalized form. As the literary spirit, most completely represented in poetry, generalizes individual feeling and gives it universal form, searching for the touch of nature which makes the whole world kin, so the religious spirit generalizes all being, and searches the universe with sympathetic eyes for vivid expression of all that is kindred with itself in the universal life.

And matters are much simplified when the search for deity is thus shifted from some timeless and spaceless realm—whatever that may mean—to the realm of nature, and the divine attributes, of which nature is the evidence, are found in nature herself who offers the evidence. In contemplating deity as immanent in nature religious thought approaches its object more directly, and more intelligently, we may presume, since nature is always present to correct the extravagance and inconsistencies of our thought. With the eternal reality ever before us, transcending the capacity of our language as of our thought, we shall not read the attributes of our human personality, in their specific character as human, into the general being of nature; and, abandoning the attempt to interpret universal law as the expression of an arbitrary personal will, we shall cease to be vexed by the contradictions inherent in such an interpretation and in all

our efforts to define the infinite through the determinable attributes of the finite. We may dwell on the analogies between nature and human nature, on the essential unity of the life which binds humanity to the being of nature—which is all that is demanded by religious feeling—but the ends of our human nature will not be assigned as the ends of universal nature, or as furnishing a measure or standard to which all her operations must be assumed to conform. Our peculiar impressibility, our interests and our aspirations, though the ultimate ground from which we derive all rules for self-direction as human beings and all standards of preference in respect of the infinite content of nature, impose neither form nor limitation upon being universal. The human spirit, trying all things by its peculiar touch, chooses, contemplates, assimilates, in virtue of laws peculiar to its nature; and that which we cannot convert to our uses, which offends our human sense, or which clashes with our human aims, we may leave, if we must, unappropriated, unassimilated, unharmonized, as elements of a universe which, while it includes our humanity, includes also an infinity which transcends our humanity. The necessity of resolving away all infelicities, all discord, all that mocks our human sentiment, is gratuitous and self-imposed. It is the mere implication of a theory. And the mind, relieved of the necessity, imposed by such a theory, of interpreting all things in a predetermined sense, is free to look at nature as she is—to take the facts as it finds them—constrained by no pious obligation to

call evil good, but inwardly impelled in all evil to search out the good, that is, to discover in nature, or to create of the substance of nature, that which responds to our human ideals. This is the sum of our life; and this should suffice. Man, his interests, the laws of his being, are finite; nature, as the general medium and ground of being, of all that is individual and specific, is herself neither individual nor specific, but infinite.

Nor need we fear, searching for divinity in the domain of nature, to miss the strengthening and curative power of which religion has professed to know the source. Certain rankling reflections, moreover, which paternalism provokes do not arise in the naturalistic view. From a personal providence we ask the tenderness of personal consideration. But the sternness of the general conditions of life, the commonness of misfortune, failure, pain, tend to strain men's confidence in parental and providential care, and to instill in all but the sweetest natures a lurking resentment fatal to repose and spiritual strength. And even where such confidence is complete, the habit of interpreting the severities of life as within the scope of an overruling personal intention, which must necessarily include compensation or personal amends, cannot be so favorable to firmness of moral fiber as the habit of frankly accepting the inevitable as so far final. The theistic hypothesis, in fact, by encouraging the demand for an arbitrary relaxation of the harsher conditions of life, tends, in a degree, to demoralize the mind. It puts us at a false point

of view. Suggesting to our importunity the means of supplementing or overriding the operation of natural law, it leads to a view of the facts of life as transitory, provisional, and in a sense unreal: we reserve the right, if nature seems unkind, to appeal from nature to the author of nature. But naturalism, seeing in nature the sole and universal reality, accepts her laws and the whole discipline and circumstance of life in earnest, and inspired with a serious present purpose to use the present opportunity, or to create its opportunity, fosters the growth of a cheerful and resolute manhood.

And nature, rude as is her chiding, is full of benefit. Though by tears and supplications she cannot be constrained to swerve by the smallest aberration from her course, she works ungrudgingly, untiringly, with him who allies himself to her laws. For loss of any good she offers other good. But her indemnities are not for the supine and fearful. And neither piety nor goodness may ignore the conditions she imposes, or idly presume on her favor. She demands of us the willing hand, the docile mind, the skill which discipline teaches. Her gift to us is opportunity. We have assumed, too lightly, that nature is a scheme which but centers in man, who may with justice feel himself aggrieved if in the individual case fate seems harsh. Nature is, rather, a field of infinite possibility, offered to man, not as his sole prerogative or birthright, but to him with all the offspring of nature, and to him effectively only as he has the courage or address to use the proffered ad-

vantage. The personal obligation to deal with us graciously, which we would read into the scheme of things, attaches only to our theories of personal government, theories founded in the constitution of humanity and inconsequently applied to the constitution of nature universal. There is no debt to us from nature. Our wisdom is to take without cavil the good that she offers—to take it as a gift. Nature is before us; awaits us. She is under no pledge to our desires; but her store is inexhaustible, and if we have willed the unattainable, or suffered loss that seems irreparable, she still awaits us; we are yet free to choose of her gifts. The soul's attitude is ever the main matter. If the spirit be yet alive and tender, nature's mere presence is consolation. There is life in the touch of light and air; sanatory influence exhales from the soil; the very grass at our feet is full of healing. And the soul may be nourished even on disaster. Borne in upon itself, it has leisure then to disengage essential good from the specious hopes which distract the purposes and eat up the energy of life; and the futile personal will, reconciled at length with the eternal will, discovers its affinity with all devout and inward-looking minds that have penetrated the shows of life and laid hold upon its verities. It is well, we may feel then, that nature should know no deviation or bias. Were she less constant there were less ground for the Stoic's courage, the Christian's self-surrender, the Buddhist's calm. The fretful soul would change the unchangeable. Our petty egoism demands of the inexorable personal conces-

sion, and relaxation of the chain which binds each effect to its cause. But riper wisdom, rapt by glimpses of the infinite life from which our finite life proceeds, stills our repining, and is content that universal being shall follow stable and universal laws.

THE END.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01015 0888