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Philosophy of theism





PHILOSOPHY OF THEISM



# PHILOSOPHY OF THEISM

BEING

✓  
THE GIFFORD LECTURES

DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY  
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SECOND SERIES

BY

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## P R E F A C E.

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THERE are two subjects which above all others have a universal interest. One of them always concerns all sentient beings, but especially all persons or moral agents in all worlds. The other is more exclusively of human concern. The former relates to the moral meaning of the environment in which each person has to play his part as a rational and responsible being,—in other words, to the final moral trustworthiness of the universe in which he finds himself. It has to do with the character of the Universal Power, the Soul of the universe, into continuous intercourse with which each person is brought, in and through his ethical personality and environment, without his own leave too, by the bare fact of his existing under moral conditions. The other subject is the alternative of evanescence or permanence as characteristic of human persons. Do they all finally lose their self-conscious and percipient personality in physical

death, at least subside at death into a supposed timeless state, unchanging and without duration—an empty abstraction: or do they still continue in self-conscious and percipient life, notwithstanding the dissolution of the present physical embodiment, it may be with added spiritual power and responsibility as a consequence of relief from its limiting conditions?

Is our environment essentially physical and non-moral, or is it ultimately moral, spiritual, and divine? Is the maintenance of the bodily organism the condition and measure of the continuance of each man's conscious and percipient moral personality? These two final questions underlie human life. Neither of them can be got rid of on the ground that it is interesting only speculatively, or that it is even practically indeterminable and has no relation to conduct and character.

Natural Theology, in the large philosophical meaning of this term, is face to face with both these questions. For the word "natural," in the ancient and extended meaning of Nature, is applied not only to the world of material things in their continuous metamorphoses, but also to the world of persons or moral agents, and even to the whole sum of existence, temporal and timeless, finite and divine. To "follow nature" is accordingly to follow reason—including moral reason. The natural or philosophical theologian has then to consider whether men are doing this when they are proceeding upon the theistic or theological conception of the universe as its

true final conception; or whether they are not rather required by reason to suppose that a wholly physical or non-moral conception is the highest attainable; nay, whether they do not after all need to withdraw from every endeavour to interpret themselves and their surroundings, even physically and in common life, and subside in speechless, motionless, agnostic despair. The philosopher, in his theological capacity, has to examine critically Seneca's thesis regarding Nature: *Quid enim aliud est Natura quam Deus et Divina Ratio toti mundo et partibus ejus inserta.*

It seems to be in this large meaning of Nature that the term Natural Theology is used in the Gifford Foundation, and therefore as directly comprehending a rational treatment of the two universally interesting enigmas at the foundation of human life, which have given rise to Philosophy, and which cannot be overlooked in a complete liberal education of human beings. Accordingly the two volumes of which this is the second proceed upon this philosophical conception of the task imposed upon the theologian.

Express consideration by one lecturer of the human *rationale* of the final problem of the universe or of man is, however, perfectly consistent with the large place that scientific interpretation of nature, in the narrower meaning of the word nature, as well as scientific criticism of the phenomena of religion in its ascending degrees of development in the history of mankind, ought also to take in the outcome of this remarkable Foundation, which admits

of so many beneficial adaptations to the present transition state of thought on the ultimate questions in the civilised world.

That the design of these volumes is inadequately realised in them must be apparent to the thoughtful reader, who cannot fail to find postulates insufficiently criticised, conclusions sustained by reasonings that are not fully unfolded, and questions which may seem to deserve a prominent place either passed over or subjected to superficial treatment in an occasional reference. It is hoped, however, that the consecutive course of thought which I have tried to pursue may lead some who are disposed to reflect along a path where more abundant fruit may be gathered by their own hands. I venture only to ask that these two volumes of lectures may be looked at in their unity as a reasoned inquiry, not as a series of isolated discussions, still less as consciously associated with any interest that is at variance with what is eternally true or with the facts of the case. The short time for preparation that could be given by the academical authorities who honoured me by this appointment has not permitted me to explore as I could have wished the vast and ever-increasing library of books which represent the world's philosophical and theological thought. To escape the confusion of mind apt to be produced by further reading in these circumstances, I have confined myself to an honest exposition of results already reached in a life devoted to kindred pursuits, some of which had already found expression, in a less explicit form, chiefly in notes and dissertations included

in editions of the works of Berkeley and Locke, and in the relative biographies.

The moral or theistic conception of the universe of reality is accepted in these lectures as the true final conception, on the ground that, unless the Power universally and finally at work is morally perfect, as omnipotent goodness or love, there can be no valid intercourse with Nature, which instead has to be avoided as the revelation of a suspected Power. Philosophical Theism or Theistic Philosophy becomes accordingly the final Philosophy. As with Aristotle, but in a more human sense, philosophy and theology are at last one: philosophy becomes theology, or religion on its intellectual side—whether called natural or supernatural.

The history of mankind is in a manner a history of constant collision between men's sceptical distrust of themselves and their environment, as being only physical and finally uninterpretable, on the one side, and moral faith and hope in an environment that is trusted in as ultimately Divine, on the other side. It has been a competition between final Doubt and final Faith for the deepest place in human mind and character. In the first series of these lectures the voice of the Sceptic was prominent. In this second series Faith makes itself heard, as that which must at last underlie the deepest possible doubt, being the indispensable condition of any intercourse with the ever-changing universe of external nature and man. Tentative sceptical criticism, valuable for the intellectual improvement of the common faith, must not at

last subvert moral or religious trust and hope, which is trust and hope in the perfect goodness of the Power universally at work as the infinite Soul of the world.

That the method I have adopted is what might be called anthropomorphic or anthropocentric is not, I think, a reasonable objection to it, if all man's intercourse with reality must be under human conditions, or is possible so far only as the changing universe is adapted to and adaptable by man ;—not as it is at the divine centre itself in a humanly inaccessible Omniscience. The ultimate relations of men, in the fulness of their spiritual being, to the final realities among which they were involuntarily introduced at birth, under inevitable intellectual and moral postulates, and not the Universal Power, taken either in abstraction from, or in a complete comprehension of, the manifested universe—*this* is surely the sphere of the only philosophy and theology which man is able to entertain, or which is required to satisfy his spiritual necessities. This is Nature or the Universe in its full relation to him, when he is recognised as more than a sentient and intelligent automaton, and yet as less than omnipotent goodness. The difficulties found in this fundamental moral faith and hope seem to arise largely from ignorance of what a human knowledge of the universe in the end must be, and oversight of the impossibility that it can at last be other than a moral faith.

That a sort of combination of the abstract Spinozism which ignores change and philosophises *sub specie eternitatis*, with the empirical agnosticism attributed to David Hume,

which reduces the realities to inexplicable successive changes in mere appearances, is in this century working in the main current of thought in Europe and America, in sympathy with analogous ideas in India and the East, is a consideration which was present to my mind; for Spinoza and Hume were seldom forgotten. Nor was their service to truth overlooked, in the way of deepening and vivifying the timid conventionalism which professional theology so often exemplifies. Perhaps some thought about this dynamical Spinozism, or dogmatic agnosticism, may have been at the foundation of the Gifford Trust.

It is difficult to discuss at all adequately the questions of man and the universe in their final relations without making a large and unacceptable demand upon the reflective power of the reader,—at any rate, without a greater demand than is made by a Society novel. Yet I am well aware that these volumes fall far short of what might well be reached in this respect, by a more powerful philosophical imagination and a more lucid and penetrating intelligence, directed by artistic literary faculty. The defect is largely supplied in more recent contributions. When these lectures were in course of delivery, English literature was enriched by a treatise on 'The Foundations of Belief' by Mr Balfour, the Chancellor of this University, in which the reader finds the basis of theology investigated in a manner that rivals Berkeley or Hume in luminous and beautiful expression of subtle thought. Without venturing to offer observations upon an argument conducted with a some-

what different design, I may express the satisfaction with which I have found a sanction in his reasonings for the equal final insolubility of modern science and theology, and for their common foundation in what might perhaps be called the "authority" of the collective moral reason of mankind, as distinguished from discursive reason and physical understanding—if I may so interpret Mr Balfour.

Two other eminent men of affairs since have further added to the debt which philosophy and religious thought owe to illustrious statesmen since Bacon and Leibniz set the example. The world may be grateful to Mr Gladstone for the critical expositions in which he has so powerfully recommended and reintroduced the chief work in the philosophy of religion of the eighteenth century, thus associating his name with that of Bishop Butler. And the Duke of Argyll, with characteristic argumentative strength and eloquence, has defended the teleological conception of the universe on scientific grounds in his 'Philosophy of Belief.' That in these closing years of the nineteenth century three of the most eminent leaders in public affairs should have thus placed themselves on the side of final Faith in the struggle with final Doubt, is no insignificant sign of the times in this country and in the world.

The first series of these lectures tends to show the magnitude and singularity of the philosophical or theological problem which the second series endeavours to dispose of in its final relations to man.



As regards their form, it is hoped that the marginal analyses in the two volumes may help the reader in retaining the continuity of the argument and its relation to the central idea. A synoptical outline of the whole is appended (pp. 267-283) to the last lecture in this volume, in which the first five lectures are concerned with the moral and intellectual *rationale* of Theism, and the other five with the chief enigma of theistic faith.

I have to thank Professor Andrew Seth for his kindness in reading the proofs, and Mr Charles Douglas for an excellent Index.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
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# PHILOSOPHY OF THEISM.

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## LECTURE I.

### MORAL FOUNDATION OF THEISM.

I BEGIN to-day a second series of lectures on the Philosophy of Theism. Last year I offered an Introductory Course, meant to awaken reflection to what is involved in Natural Theology, "in the widest sense of the term." So conceived, it appeared to be concerned with the ever-pressing human problem, concerning the final trustworthiness and intelligibility of the universe in which we are living; the problem which underlies all human life, but especially in its religious experience. For, the meaning, reality, and worth of religion—in any of its degrees of development, above all in Christianity, professedly its catholic or absolute form—merges, as an intellectual inquiry, in this central question of philosophy, about the ethical value, and the intellectual relations of the indi-

Philosophy  
of Theism  
disting-  
guished  
from Sci-  
ence of  
Religion.

vidual self, the outward world, and God — the three existences of which the universe of reality is instinctively supposed to consist. The demand for Natural Theology, not in the narrow or exclusively physical, but in the universal or philosophic sense of the term “natural,” is a demand virtually for the *rationalis* of instinctive trust in the final principle of the universe, —the Power we all have practically to do with, in our daily experience through the five senses and in our consciousness of individual personality. The Natural Theology that is philosophical is not merely a history of religion, or a comparative science of religions as they appear in the historical evolution of the world —phenomena to be described and classified according to their natural causes: it is the historical evolution translated into the deepest and truest thought which man’s power of interpreting the microcosm or universe of his own incompletely intelligible experience permits. The terms of the Gifford lectureship not only admit but expressly include, among the subjects which the different lecturers are invited to make choice of for discussion, that which I have chosen — namely, Theistic Philosophy, with its eternal problems. This, as distinguished from historical Science of Religions, is more than enough to fill two courses such as ours. I pretend to offer only a series of Theistic Studies, as aids to reflection for those who are trying, as many now are, to realise intellectually, whether or not we are living and moving and having

our being in an essentially divine universe—that is to say, in a universe that in its final principle is morally trustworthy, and that is more or less interpretable by man, in an exertion of theistic or religious faith, as well as of physical faith.

The way in which this final question is disposed of, when expressed in terms of philosophy, seems to separate men as representatives of two opposite tendencies. There are those whose dominant disposition is to think of the universe agnostically, so that even the physical experience through which we are all daily passing becomes at last “a riddle, an enigma,” an every way “insoluble mystery”: there are those, again, whose life is one of deepening moral trust, even sympathetic intercourse with the Power that is continuously revealed in the temporal evolution of nature, and in the spiritual or supernatural constitution of man. The whole history of mankind may be read as the history of a struggle between final distrust and final trust. The one disposes to sceptical alienation from an uninterpretable universe; and life is then contemplated, according to the individual temperament, with easy indifference or with pessimist despair. The other inclination of mind is towards reconciliation with the universe in hopeful moral faith; even if it must be faith combined with incomplete scientific understanding of the Whole, and with inability to translate itself fully into sensuous conception. Do not aspira-

Either  
sceptical  
alienation  
from a  
wholly  
uninter-  
pretable  
universe,  
or recon-  
ciliation  
through a  
reasonable  
moral faith  
in the uni-  
versal  
Power.

tual weakness of man, hinder both the tendency to alienation, or the tendency to reconciliation from being carried practically to the extreme of Universal Nescience, on the one hand, or Omniscience, on the other? Men could not live even a life of sense if they treated the universe as *wholly* uninterpretable; and the *perfect* comprehension, which would supersede faith, involves either the deification of man or the degradation of the infinite reality.

Philosophy of Theism essays the adjustment of the perennial struggle of Scepticism with Faith.

The Philosophy of Theism is necessarily the centre of this perennial struggle between what, when fully thought out, becomes the empty negation of total Scepticism, and the final Faith that we are living in a universe that in its deepest reality is morally trustworthy, to which man may be reconciled without necessarily contradicting reason, and although the Faith may never be exchanged by man for perfect comprehension of the threefold totality—ego, the outward world, and God—in a human philosophy emptied of all mystery.

The presence of the Infinite in the universe tends to a Destructive or a Constructive issue, according to the way in which it is regarded.

The idea of the infinite in *quantity* that is irresistibly forced upon us when we try to understand finally the space through which our bodies move, the duration in which our lives are spent, and the causation which determines ceaseless change, is what gives uniqueness at last to our physical experience. Now, this idea of the infinite or mysterious quantity of existence in space, duration, and causation, according to the way in



which it is handled, may nourish either sceptical nescience or religious faith. Looked at in one way, it alienates man from the universe in which he finds himself: it shakes trust in it, as in something that cannot be intellectually grasped, on account of its infinite size, as well as its physical unbeginningness and unendingness. So that also in its changes, because already in its inexhaustible infinity, the changing universe seems to evade intelligence when one asks for its character and purpose. This final scientific incomprehensibility of that to a dim perception of which we are first awakened in sense, and call "real," produces perplexity and paralysis—a presumption that life is meaningless, and the world uninterpretable and therefore unapproachable—because we find that we must remain for ever baffled by the mysteries involved in its immensity, eternity, and endless causal regress. Yet the same negative idea of the infinity, or mysterious incompleteness, of existence, under which all seems to lose itself at last in causal mystery, becomes the very minister of moral and theistic faith, when what is causal mystery for the scientific understanding is handled in reverential humility, and is found to open room for, and even justify, theistic as well as physical faith in the Power that is at the root of all. For the consequent conviction that man cannot become omniscient is then apt to make the subject of this conviction disposed to accept an understanding of things that is at last determined by practical substitutes for omniscience that may be found in the

moral and spiritual constitution of man. The universe is seen to be too mysterious for us to interpret it even in part and physically, unless we submit understanding to the authority of human nature as a whole, which includes man emotional, and man acting supernaturally in volition, as well as man thinking scientifically, and at last necessarily baffled in so thinking. The littleness of self, and the mystery of physical evolution, is relieved by the elevating sense of the infinite reality, even with the element of *venture* which limited knowledge necessarily involves. In this disposition of mind it seems as if—

“ Our destiny, our being’s heart and home,  
Is with Infinitude, and only there ;  
With hope it is, hope that can never die,  
Effort and expectation and desire,  
And something evermore to be.”

The mysterious Boundlessness which envelops and governs our whole temporal experience, so regarded, opens the way to reconciliation with the Reality, instead of alienating us ; for it gives room to reverential ascent towards the living God, on the “ altar-steps ” that “ slope through the darkness ” of infinity.

Illustrations of the Destructive and Constructive influence of the idea of Infinity.

Thus its infinity, or physical incompleteness, makes the final problem of the universe look *foreign* to the scientific understanding, and, exclusively at its point of view, envelops us and our surroundings at last in an impenetrable darkness, which dissolves faith. Yet, otherwise regarded, this final margin of mystery becomes the light of life ; because the apology for the

faith instead of perfect science, without which life cannot be lived. One finds the Infinite casting its dark shadow in Lucretius and in David Hume, in Schopenhauer and Herbert Spencer: Philo, in Hume's 'Dialogues concerning Natural Religion,' is indeed the special spokesman of those who judge reality unapproachable on account of it, and the whole discussion in the 'Dialogues' is depressed by its shadow. Infinity turns its divine side to Plato and Pascal, to Descartes and Bacon and Locke, to Kant and Hegel and Lotze, and to the great religious thinkers, especially of Christendom; it unconsciously inspires martyrs and saints of the Catholic Church; it is latent even in the physical faith of the leaders of modern natural science, and in the common experience of the senses in all human beings.

The crisis of the struggle between Doubt and Faith turns at last upon whether the idea of the infinity or necessary boundlessness of the universe of reality is taken by its theistic or its atheistic handle. The immanence of mysterious infinity in human experience is the occasion of the struggle. This thought was in my mind throughout the Introductory Course. It is implied in its two opening lectures; it pervades the negative exposition and criticism of universal materialism, panegoism, and pantheism, with their resolution into universal nescience, in the five following ones; and it colours the constructive criticism to which the three concluding lectures incline. In now pursuing the construction, I will try in this and the four next lectures

The central idea of the first series of lectures.

to show the ground on which the finally theistic interpretation of the universe rests, and the harmony of this interpretation with the highest human exercise of reason. The five concluding lectures are meant to deal with the obstacle to theistic or absolute trust and hope in omnipotent goodness that is presented by the Evil which man finds mixed with Good in his experience of life.

Atheism,  
Theism,  
and Pan-  
theism, as  
competitive final  
concep-  
tions.

Modern thought confronts us with three responses to the final question about the reality and meaning of the universe. One of these is the atheistic or sceptical, which confesses total inability to find meaning or intelligible principle at the root of the temporal evolution in which we find ourselves involved: human experience seems an unintelligible flux or succession of accidents. Opposite to this is the religious or theistic conception, according to which the evolving universe is the constant expression of ever-active moral reason, so that we are living and moving and having our being in a perfect moral providence; and our final relation to the operative Power is a personal relation, because involving moral responsibility. Intermediate between the meaningless universe of the sceptic, and the morally or personally constituted universe of the theist, is the final conception of an impersonal, non-moral, physically determined universe; in course of evolution by Unknowable Power, the supposed centre of the unethical or necessitated natural causation, which gives a sort of continuity to the per-

petual flux; a continuity supposed to imply that one thing somehow comes into existence through another thing, but in which all are only *things*, not *persons*. Proper personality, with its implicate of moral responsibility, is here excluded as that for which there is no intellectual room: physical causality instead of spiritual morality must be the last word of a universe thus emptied of moral trustworthiness. This is ambiguously called the pantheistic conception and interpretation of human experience: those who adopt it are commonly found fluctuating between the universal nescience of the sceptic and the trust in moral order of the theist, in proportion as its merely physical "religion" declines into total distrust, or becomes invigorated by practical acceptance of the ethical postulates that constitute theism.

The spirit of the time asks which of these three attitudes reason justifies as the final interpretation of life. Must we become alienated from what we experience, in a feeling of the meaninglessness of the whole, or is reconciliation possible on reasonable terms? If the last, what is the best form of reconciliation that a thoughtful and good man can reach, for co-operating as it were with the Supreme Power in the infinite, or finally mysterious, universe of reality that is assumed to exist; and how may this harmonious relation be best expressed in terms of philosophy? Is it a wholly physical relation of one *thing* to another *thing* that is alone discoverable; or is it ultimately the moral and

Which of these three is the most reasonable attitude towards the changing universe of reality?

religious relation of one *person* to another *person*—myself in personal relation to absolute moral obligation divinely personified?

Am I only  
a thing, or  
am I also  
a person?

The answer to this question turns much upon the true answer to the question: Am I only a *thing*, or am I also a *person*? Am I obliged, by a necessity of moral reason, to believe that *I* originate all acts for which I can reasonably be blamed or praised; or, on the contrary, if I would not indulge in illusion, must I think of what are called “my own” actions in a wholly physical or non-moral way; acknowledging that they are not really mine, but vaguely actions of Supreme Unknowable Power: there being nothing in *me* that is supernatural, nothing for which, as its ultimate cause, I alone am responsible? Is the Power that is supreme and final manifested *only* in and through continuous natural phenomena—events dependent on other events, which other events are in like manner dependent on *their* natural antecedents, all refunding themselves at last into an unintelligible unbeginningness? May not the Supreme Power be more fully revealed in and through free moral agents, called *persons*; so related to the Supreme Power that each of them is *able to bring into existence what ought not to exist*, what accordingly is not necessitated to exist, but may be brought into existence, in opposition to the Supreme Power, by an intending act of the individual person who brings it into existence; who is nevertheless, as the final cause of his own moral and

immoral acts, under absolute moral obligation to the personal or moral Life of the Universe?

I must now ask emphatically whether the deepest and truest available interpretation of human experience is—that in which all experienced reality is regarded merely as physical cause and potentiality,—in which self-conscious life itself is only a physical event in the continuous evolution of sense-presented nature? Is not a deeper and truer interpretation found rather when all is finally interpreted in the light of moral reason, or what is popularly called conscience, with its sense of remorse and self-satisfaction for what is done personally, and its absolute imperativeness? If this last is the final meaning, we indeed find ourselves in a universe that is *physically* unintelligible in the end, in its mysterious regress into the unbeginning past, and its not less mysterious progress into the unending future, but which—notwithstanding this mystery of its physical infinity or necessary incompleteness—assumes moral trustworthiness and practical intelligibility when it is regarded as the revelation of absolute moral obligation conceived as personal;—so that its secret, concealed in the inevitable mystery of physical causality, is practically revealed, as far as man is concerned with it, in the voice of conscience with its sense of eternally underlying righteousness alone. Is not this the conception of the Whole, which—I do not say by strict logical necessity of the understanding I *must* take—but which I *ought* to take? To think of

And therefore finally in a moral relation to an Infinite Personality, or active moral Reason?

the universe into which I enter in all my concrete experience as inevitably involving in it, at the extreme of man's intellectual resources for the inquiry, the idea of Duty, and its correlative personal freedom, is to realise that I am a spiritual person, and not merely a physical thing. It is, correlatively, to think of the universe as the revelation to me of moral Personality, and not merely as an unbeginning and unending succession of physical changes. Is not this the interpretation which developed conscience and developed religious instinct may be said to put upon what would otherwise be physical as well as moral chaos? This moral personification of the physically infinite universe translates its scientifically insoluble problem into one that is morally or practically soluble. Natural science leaves us at last as it were in an infinite sphere, the centre of which is everywhere and the circumference nowhere. Conscience, with its implicates of personified moral obligation, and supernatural spirituality in man and God, enables man to read the daily drama of life in the evolution of inorganic and organic nature, as finally moral intercourse of individual person or moral being with Infinite Personality—concealed yet thus revealed; and shows us ourselves to ourselves as living in what is more than the infinite machine, because also, under its higher ideal, the free order of moral Providence.

So that  
moral  
Reason

Conscience, it has been said, not only teaches us *that* God is, but *what* God is. It expresses the voice



not of surrounding incognisable Power but of surrounding morally trustworthy Power; a voice that accordingly sustains faith even in a natural order that will not finally put us to confusion, when we trust it in the actions of common life, or in scientific verifications; inasmuch as we then find ourselves participating in a providential system of active perfect moral reason, instead of being always face to face with a finally inexplicable physical necessity. In this recognition of eternally living moral obligation, I can find myself *at home* everywhere, because everywhere in a morally principled universe, which gives to the most distant place, and the remotest time, a significance, and thus a homeliness, that transforms and reconciles the otherwise alienating physical infinite. This life is the light of men, that "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." One may "take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost part of the earth," only to find *there* the same personified moral obligation which is the supreme conception *here*, and so may everywhere recognise and rest in God. For in this sense "God dwelleth within all things." According to a great Christian divine, God is above all things, beneath all things,—above by power, beneath by sustentation, within by subtlety,—ruling above, containing below, encompassing without, penetrating within,—everywhere sustaining by ruling, ruling by sustaining, penetrating by encompassing, encompassing by penetrating,—everywhere personified moral obligation

practically resolves for man the final physical mystery of unbeginning and unending change.

of individual persons. This is the language of the higher religions, or religion in its ethical development, with its highest and absolute form in Christianity. The modes of the first appearance of religion in the individual or in the race, in the crude forms of fetichism and polytheism, and the inferior conceptions of primitive morality, are really irrelevant to the validity of religious and moral ideas in their advanced state of development. Their justification lies in what they are *now* found to be: this is not discredited by the incoherence of their early manifestations, either in children or in the childhood of the race. The faint forms under which the now matured contents and implicates of either physical or spiritual experience were first manifested must not prejudice their rational authority as speculative and practical principles, at their present stage. The mathematical calculus is not treated as illusion because infants and some tribes of savages, as well as whole tribes of animals, have got no distinct idea of number. The moral and scientific conceptions, on which educated intelligence now relies, are presented in living form in history in very various degrees: we apply them in their articulate form, not in their embryo state. And so we find God in the idea of Good, enriched by experience, and Personality becomes the supreme conception, because Moral Obligation is found to be absolute. The ideal issue, not the fact that the ideal has been gradually unfolded, is what is truly significant for philosophy and religion. The human

organism may have come naturally out of protoplasm ; but *man* is not merely protoplasm *now*, as we find him personified in great physical discoverers, or in moral and religious geniuses.

That the final interpretation of the universe is reasonably taken under a moral or theistic conception, not a wholly physical one, virtually coincides with Kantian philosophy ; although Kant has been claimed as one of the two pioneers of modern agnosticism, on the ground of the destructive criticism which he directs against traditional theistic dialectic, as logical proof of the existence of God. His analysis of pure reason seems to end in showing that absurdity is involved in every endeavour to read the riddle of the universe. Whether its final mystery is approached cosmologically, in the argument for a First Cause, teleologically, in the argument from signs of design, or ontologically, from the idea of absolute perfection, it refuses to yield up its secret to human understanding. And if Kant had ended with this, his authority might be produced in support of the sceptical ideal of life in a universe of which man can at last affirm nothing, in which furthermore he can do nothing that implies faith in its trustworthiness or in his own ; for one can find as little moral support in the empty categories of pure reason as in a wholly empirical view of things. But Kant surely means more than this ; at least his philosophy in its completeness is not necessarily inconsistent with its in-

Kantian  
moral  
Theism.

complete first chapter. The physically scientific understanding is not the whole of reason, nor the limit of man's practical participation in reason. If man were *only* physically scientific, the secret of the world would be so much out of his reach that he could not justify the moral confidence that is implied even in its physical interpretation. For existence, with its unique quasi-quantitative infinite in space and duration, and its causal mystery, becomes incapable of being handled at all, when it is dealt with as a *wholly* physical problem. The unbeginning and unending material rebels against the categories of an intelligence measured empirically by sensuous quantity: when finite intelligence is thus required to do infinite work, it must either become paralysed by the paradoxes that arise in its consequent attempt to image the necessarily unimaginable—to put eternity within time, or immensity within place—as the exclusively physical speculator has to do. Man in the fulness of his spirit—man moral and religious, as well as man the scientific thinker—must be in exercise, when he is confronted with his final question; and a spiritual and practical interpretation, in which the physically scientific one merges in the end, is what has to be looked for, in intelligence like the human, that is intermediate between physical omniscience and physical nescience.

Physical  
or scientific  
reason  
culminating in

Natural science, accordingly, is checked by reason, when the naturalist proposes to take the final question about human experience of reality exclusively

within his own province. The check is best administered, Kant's reasoning seems to imply, by showing the contradictions in which we are landed if we insist upon approaching the infinite reality, not with our entire spiritual humanity, but only with the data and presuppositions of pure reason measured by sense. Faith *only in this* gives support indeed to the working hypotheses on which scientific progress turns; but then even this cosmical faith is possibly misleading in the end, unless man can virtually put moral trust in the supreme principle of the universe, and regard experience finally, not as an aimless procession of customary sequences, which *may* in the end play him false, but as manifested moral order or providence. Even physical interpretation, in its faith in the steadiness of the natural order, and the adaptation of that order to human intelligence, proceeds practically, if unconsciously, upon a moral and religious interpretation of the Whole. *Human* nature forces us to acknowledge in existence more than *physical* nature, as the condition of its own spiritual health. I do not say that Kant so expresses the matter; but the full meaning of his philosophy, when moral reason is found supplementing the inadequacy of scientific understanding, is, I think, in analogy with this position.

This finally moral or theistic meaning of the temporal drama of existence cannot be scientifically proved: physical order, which is assumed in all physical verifica-

moral  
reason.

For physical faith in natural order presupposes

moral faith  
in the  
universal  
Power.

tions, is itself assumed without reason when moral and religious faith in the universal Power is withdrawn: without this deeper faith the temporal process may be supposed at any time to subside into chaos, in the innumerable contingencies of agencies out of the reach of our physical experiments; so that the root of all merely physical experiment may itself turn out to be a broken reed, as far as only sensuous intelligence reveals it. Even the agnostic naturalist is virtually expressing an unconfessed moral faith, when he proceeds upon the efficacy of what is called "scientific verification"; for he is taking for granted that scientific intelligence will not be finally put to confusion when it shows trust in the supreme principle of the universe, in its inductive ways of dealing with the procession of events. Their past custom of sequence is not in itself reason, unless it is so reinforced by moral faith as that the universe is practically looked at as manifestation of ever active moral reason, and therefore incapable of imposing upon us diabolical illusion, when we daily trust in its physical uniformities.

A moral  
trust in the  
changing  
universe of  
reality un-  
consciously  
implied  
in Des-  
cartes's  
argumen-

An idea of this sort may be found at the bottom of that vindication of the veracity of human perceptions and intelligence which Descartes suggests in his autobiographical account of his own philosophical recovery from a state of tentative doubt about everything. How do I know, he had asked himself, that

even in what my mental faculties most certainly assure me of, they may not after all be deluding me? My relation to my surroundings may be finally determined, not according to perfect moral order, but according to diabolical caprice. How can I be sure that I have a body, merely because I now see what I call my body, or how can I be sure that other living organisms exist outside my own? How can I *justify* the faith which I indulge in, that the customary course of nature is so reliable that I may act in the expectation that, under what seem to be similar conditions in future, I may expect similar issues to those which were evolved under like conditions in the past? What real assurance can a man have when he projects his thought into the past through memory; or into the past, the distant, and the future in scientific expectation? Why may not the physically scientific understanding always deceive in the future although it may never happen to have deceived in the past? How do I know that waking perception is not as illusory as a dream in sleep? For all these *may* be experiences in a universe in which the Supreme Power is enacting a diabolical fraud.

But if, instead of this fundamental doubt, I deliberately presuppose the final supremacy of God, or active moral reason, I am only giving reflective expression to the faith that is at the root of all other faith, deeper than which I cannot go. If God, or living goodness, is supreme, external nature and my faculties

tative vindication of the trustworthiness of the human mind.

The trustworthiness of experience presupposes, that the existence presented to us in our senses

and in consciousness is finally fit to be believed in.

cannot thus conspire to delude me. For this would be to suppose that the changing universe and my nature are in contradiction to one another, so that I should be obliged throughout all experience to believe a lie. The only presupposition that forbids the entrance of this total scepticism is the presupposition that God, or active moral reason, is practically omnipresent or omnipotent. The trustworthiness of my faculties, and so the physical interpretability of the universe, presupposes the action of morally perfect spiritual Power at the heart of the Whole.

This is not a conclusion from presented phenomena, but recognition of a necessary postulate.

This is not an *argument*, although Descartes tries to make it one, and it becomes circular. It is only the *overt* expression of a presupposition, without *tacit* assent to which, in some form, human knowledge and life must dissolve in total doubt or ignorance. The truth that one finds in the heart of this so-called argument for the trustworthiness of the human mind is, that the existence of God is presupposed in the reliability of experience. If I do not, at least tacitly, indulge in this moral faith, I cannot even make a beginning. Unless I believe that I am justified in interpreting the manifestations of existence as manifestations of what, in its ultimate principle, is personified moral order and goodness, phenomena cannot be interpreted, even physically, as in the natural sciences, and in the common-sense perceptions and acts of daily life. Agnosticism in religion and morality carries in



it universal agnosticism, including physically scientific paralysis as well as religious paralysis. Cosmic faith depends on moral faith in the universe of reality; and moral faith, in its religious form, is theistic or practically personal faith. Otherwise even what men cannot help believing and seeing to be true may be false—an illusory intellectual necessity. Unless we take for granted that we are born into infinite moral order or moral providence, the universe and our interpretations of those of its manifestations that enter into our temporal experience, may all in the end put us to confusion; and surrender us to idle dreams, with the contingency of a future of unbroken purposeless misery, or final discord between moral conduct and happiness. I cannot indeed logically argue all this, by an argumentative appeal to a speculatively demonstrated God, but I virtually assume God in practically presupposing the absolute reign of order. When I am sure that life cannot be a lie, this means that I cannot help believing that God exists, that obligation to goodness is supreme and eternal, and that this supreme and eternal obligation may be thought of as the perfect will of active moral Reason. I am tacitly assuming that the whole cannot be a devil's drama, notwithstanding the lurid appearances which the sentient beings on this planet often present. Faith in the final harmony of moral principle and expediency, or in moral trustworthiness at the root of experience, is thus the ultimate practical postulate of human life.

Mr Her-  
bert  
Spencer.

The commingling of inevitable ultimate ignorance with partial knowledge—the infinitely unknowable yet spiritually experienced God—in man's final interpretation of the world, suggests the ultimate conception adopted by Mr Herbert Spencer, as the basis of a synthetic philosophy. I name with the utmost respect this distinguished living representative of philosophical or theological inquiry, to which he has devoted a long life, with indomitable intellectual persistency, and a noble honesty of purpose of which there are few examples—combined in him with a largeness of speculative aim and architectonic tendency that, even at a distance, still reminds one of Aristotle or Hegel, and among Englishmen of Bacon, although one misses the splendour of philosophical imagination, and the classical culture of the author of the 'Advancement of Learning.' Mr Spencer attracts the average intelligence of the practical Anglo-Saxon mind, much as Auguste Comte found response in a like popular constituency in France, and then throughout the world. Dissimilar in many ways, these philosophers are not unlike in the fortune of their repute—undue depreciation at first in the academical coteries of Europe, exaggerated credit then and since among the multitude. As Comte has been called the philosopher of the half-educated, so too it may be said of Mr Spencer without disrespect; for the function is a high one. They will both in time take their due place, intermediate between extremes of depreciation and deification.

The consummation of Mr Spencer's speculation is that the dual universe of material and mental phenomena is the temporal manifestation of eternally Unknowable Power. Accumulated arguments and illustrations pave the way to his conclusion that the Reality underlying appearances is totally and for ever inconceivable, from the very nature of human intelligence. Common-sense, he tells us, asserts the existence of a Reality; objective science proves that this reality cannot be what we think it; subjective science shows why we cannot think it as it is, and yet are compelled to think of it as existing; and in this final assertion of a Reality utterly inscrutable in nature, Religion finds an assertion essentially coinciding with its own. We are somehow obliged to regard every phenomenon presented in experience as the manifestation of Power by which we are acted on; Omnipresence is indeed unthinkable, yet, as experience discloses no bounds to the diffusion of phenomena, we are unable to think limits to the presence of this Power; while the criticisms of science teach us that it is Power incomprehensible. And this consciousness of incomprehensible Power is the very consciousness that constitutes Religion. Religion, he further suggests, has vainly struggled to unite more or less science with its inevitable nescience, while Science has tried to keep hold of more or less of this nescience, as though it were bound to convert it into Science. Permanent peace between Religion and Science is possible only

Seeming  
Science and  
Religious  
Nescience.

when Science becomes convinced that its explanations are proximate and relative, and when Religion becomes convinced that the mystery it contemplates is absolute and therefore for ever inexplicable. Accordingly, Mr Spencer would divorce Science and Religion in the distribution of goods, assigning to Science all human knowledge, such as it seems to be, and reserving all human ignorance, such as it must be, to Religion. Religion is thus the unintelligible Feeling in which Knowledge that is only relative or seeming at last inevitably merges.

Empty sense of Unknowable Power, as the final attitude towards the presented universe.

Consciousness of being always in the presence of wholly unknowable Power seems to be Mr Spencer's final attitude towards the infinite universe of reality in which we are having our being. Strictly interpreted, this is an expression of thorough-going agnosticism or total nescience; and this, as I have repeatedly suggested, leaves no room for any man to express himself at all about anything otherwise than in the form of question—if even thus, for purely sceptical interrogation necessarily dies in the birth; it can only be a still-born question. But the Spencerian philosophy consists of more than universal questioning. Its favourite assertion of eternal Unknowableness is combined with many other professedly reasoned assertions. The unknowable Power is affirmed to be a “manifested” Power: we are told that “the Power *manifested* in the universe is unknown and unknowable.” But how can Power that makes *itself* “manifest” in the material and spiritual phenomena

that compose the temporal succession be *wholly* unknown? That looks like the self-contradictory assertion, that the Power is at once manifested and not-manifested—that we know that it exists, but without being able to predicate anything of it, not even its existence, or at least its “existence” only when the word is emptied of all meaning. That which manifests itself must be known, as far as the manifestation or revelation goes. That the infinite reality stretches *without limit beyond* the manifestations that are presented in the physical, moral, and religious experience of men—including, of course, the necessary postulates involved in this experience, need not transform light that may be *within* the experience into the darkness of necessary and eternal total ignorance. Even if it could do this, so long as there is light enough remaining to enable one to make the one negative assertion of eternal unknowableness, he must have enough of knowledge about the Power manifested in the universe to justify this negation. But Mr Spencer retains a good deal more than this wholly negative knowledge. His Unknowable Power reveals itself in a way that, on his own showing, admits of a whole hierarchy of sciences being formed to represent the philosophical meaning of its experienced manifestations: human sciences of the revelations which the Unknowable Power makes of itself are presented by Mr Spencer in elaborate co-ordination. The Unknowable Power is so much manifested that he thinks he

is able to generalise its evolutionary and involutory laws—integrative and disintegrative—expressed in the history of its manifestations, and thus to describe one noteworthy characteristic of its customary behaviour. It seems to be a Power which, in its sensuous manifestations, is found revealing itself, slowly and gradually, in evolutionary and involutory order. At a stage in this process, states of human consciousness are found emerging, in persistent correlation with organic movements; so that the successions of external phenomena are accompanied by corresponding simultaneous psychical phenomena. The hierarchy of the natural sciences in which those manifestations can be co-ordinated is surely a standing proof that the Power thus revealed in the universe is not in every way unknown and unknowable. The verified contents of the sciences of matter and mind are a considerable contribution to our interpretation of the Power—an interpretation in which men put trust, and thus express faith in its morally reliable behaviour of the Power, in this part of their intercourse with it.

“Manifested”  
Power  
cannot be  
wholly  
unknown  
and un-  
knowable  
Power.

How far the revelations of the Supreme Power that *are* within human reach—in the physical, æsthetical, moral, and religious experience that men have, with its necessary rational implicates—how far these carry man, on his way towards omniscience or infinite knowledge, is of course a further question. Enough that the latent Power is not *wholly* unmanifested or unrevealed. It is doubtless only a physical God and a physical

religion that we have in the sequences of sense-presented evolution, interpreted in the natural theology commonly called natural science, sustained as it is by the attenuated moral or religious faith which tacitly enters even into physical faith. For this gives only a boundless and endless universe of *things*—not including *persons* at all, in the moral and spiritual meaning of personality. It seems to have for its last word Mr Spencer's own assertion, that the Power whose temporal manifestations are thus scientifically generalised is "an Existence which fills all space and time." I find this unproved proposition in one of his latest and not least interesting utterances, contained in a criticism of Mr Balfour in the 'Fortnightly Review.' But to affirm of the Power revealed in the universe of our experience, so much as is affirmed when we are told that it "fills all space," and must therefore be extended, looks like a really illegitimate incursion into the region of the unknowable.

This philosophy seems to oscillate inconsistently between that phase of Pantheism which interprets the universe as at last significant through its phenomena of "Divine" Thing, or infinite non-moral Power, and the absolute Nescience in which the Power is wholly unmanifested and undetected by reason. Yet there is in it latent theistic faith, so far as the ever-changing universe is treated as worthy of confidence, reliable, or what may be taken for a true revelation of the Supreme Power, at least in the evolution of physical

Oscillation between finally non-moral Power and a final universal Nescience, *i.e.*, between Pantheism and Pyrrhonism.

phenomena;—so far a trustworthy universe, not a capricious and diabolical universe, that may at any moment paralyse human activity and intelligence, perhaps by transforming itself into chaos and still keeping us in life.

Infinite or  
mysterious  
moral Per-  
sonality.

Mr Spencer ends in the cosmic or physical faith, that men are *things*, causally connected under Infinite Power, but without rising into the moral and religious faith, that men are *persons*, having their being in absolute moral correlation with what is finally conceived as moral personality, or personified goodness,—without recognising man in his spiritual personality as the most significant “manifestation” of the Power that is supreme. Because man cannot finally comprehend Reality in its necessarily infinite or incompletable *physical* order; and because he finds himself, when he tries to do this, involved in a tissue of unintelligible propositions, therefore nothing can be really known either speculatively or practically,—this seems to be the outcome of Mr Spencer’s argument. I find myself in contact and collision with an evolving and then dissolving universe, of which I am at the same time a part—an unbeginning and unending evolution, it may be—in which I cannot by all the methods of wholly physical inquiry discover final meaning or purpose: therefore I must dismiss as unwarranted the theistic interpretation in which all is recognised as the manifestation of morally trustworthy, or, as we say, personal agency. For its theistic final interpreta-



tion seems to mean for Mr Spencer, that the Power at the centre of the infinite universe must have a personal life so like man's own as that it is the theatre of successive conscious states. And as a person, whether called finite or infinite, can be conscious, he takes for granted, of only one state at a time, divine Omniscience is dismissed as an absurdity. The Omniscience that has to comprehend Boundlessness in space and time, either in a single intuition, or in a succession of conscious acts, cannot consist, it is virtually argued, with any idea we can have of personal life and conscious knowledge either in man or in God.

The inference, on grounds of this sort, that the universe does not admit of being at last morally or religiously interpreted by man, or as being regarded, for and by man, as practically manifested Spirit, reminds one of the quaint conceit of Du Bois Raymond, who refused to believe in God until he could find somewhere in space a huge brain, like the human, with warm arterial blood and ganglia, proportioned to the infinite greatness of the Mind that was dogmatically supposed to need cerebral organisation. As if the final Power in the universe could not be practically Spirit, or moral Obligation and Goodness personified, unless embodied in an organism like the human. It seems hardly less reasonable to insist that if man's final relation to the Whole is supposed to be a moral and personal relation, the Supreme Principle must be the subject of successive conscious states of personal life, like those of men.

Is a Divine Brain needed in a theistically interpretable universe?

Examples  
of a human  
knowledge  
of that  
which in it-  
self passes  
human  
knowledge.

This finite, or for ever incomplete, knowledge of what at last infinitely passes finite knowledge—moral and practical knowledge of what is at last physically incognisable by the knower—is illustrated all round the horizon of human experience. Take examples: One can demonstrate the geometrical relations of figures, although the Immensity toward which all finite places, shapes, and sizes inevitably carry thought is found to transcend human understanding; yet human understanding does not, on this account, reject Euclid as a bundle of unwarranted and illusory conclusions. Again, I am obliged to think of events as before and after, and I find that I can make reasonable use of a chronological table, while I cannot fathom the mystery of the two eternities into which I am necessarily carried, when I reflect upon the temporal evolution of the changes in which the supreme Power is revealed to me. So too the manifestations of natural causality that are presented in sense are treated as interpretable in science, and for practical human purposes; yet they are all at last involved in the impenetrable causal mystery of unbeginning regress and endless progress. In these instances I seem to say, *Si non rogas, intelligo*. I sufficiently understand the manifested Power, if I am not obliged, as the condition of understanding its manifestations, to reduce to sensuous intelligence the mystery into which these resolve themselves. Is it otherwise with man's moral or religious faith in what the universe finally is? This too suggests questions which man can

as little answer, about a consciousness or superconsciousness that is as remote from the human as Immensity is remote from the spaces comprehended in our finite figures, or as Eternity is remote from the temporal successions that can be measured in our tables of chronology. I am not obliged to be agnostic as regards either the spacial manifestations of the universe, or its temporal manifestations, because Immensity and Eternity, physically regarded, present a multitude of questions which man can never answer. May not the continuous self-consciousness of persons, in their moral and religious experience, with its necessary postulates, reveal, what is even eternally true—as it were in a *relative* eternal truth—while its problems only perplex man with contradictions, when he tries to realise, under the terms of his limited physical experience, a consciousness or superconsciousness that, as infinite, must be for him finally mysterious, and of which, in Mr Spencer's words, "not even the highest mental attributes conceivable by us" are adequate predicates. I do not see why, "unless I wish to be deceived," I must surrender as delusion either a physical or a fully theistic faith in the Real, only because human knowledge cannot become an infinite intelligence of infinite experience; or because man's *intelligo* disappears when he tries to transform it into the Omniscience from which faith and mystery are wholly eliminated.

Yet so it seems to Mr Spencer. Those who, like him Are men reduced to despair in turn away from a finally uninterpretable universe in

a morally  
uninter-  
pretable  
universe?

despair, so think and act, he tells us pathetically, "not because they wish to do this, but because they must": self-deception seems to him the alternative. "There is no pleasure," he goes on to say, "in the consciousness of being an infinitesimal bubble, on a globe which is itself infinitesimal, compared with the totality of things. Those on whom the un pitying rush of changes inflicts sufferings, which are often without remedy, find no consolation in the thought that they are at the mercy of blind forces, which cause, indifferently, now the destruction of a sun, and now the death of an animalcule. Contemplation of a universe which is without conceivable beginning or end, and without intelligible purpose, yields no satisfaction. The desire to know what it all means is no less strong in the agnostic than in others, and raises sympathy with them. Failing to find any interpretation himself, he feels a regretful inability to accept the interpretation they offer." But these striking sentences of Mr Spencer can hardly be said after all to describe an uninterpretable universe: they express positive knowledge that the force at work is "blind," and that human life is conducted on a globe that is "infinitely small" compared with some (so far) known "totality"; and they imply that enough is knowable about the manifested Power to justify some human assertions about reliable realities, "which must not be abandoned for deceiving fancies." They express, in short, a physical faith, while they discard as self-deception

the moral trust that is the implied guarantee of physical trust—both, it is true, logically unproved and unprovable, but justified in practical reason by the fact that human life without them is baseless, and its ideal unapproachable, so that each faith is a permanent practical need of Man in his final relation to the Whole.

Theistic or moral faith in the ever-changing universe, without doubt, is not equally developed in all men, nor so widely as physical faith in common experience and in the natural sciences. It may be asked, How and why is this so? Coleridge offers one answer in his 'Aids to Reflection.' "It is not in our power," he suggests, "to disclaim our nature as sentient beings," but it is more or less "in our power to disclaim our nature as moral beings." In recognising the finally ethical and spiritual constitution of the universal reality, "I assume a something, the proof of which no man can give to another, yet every man may find for himself. If any man assert that *he* cannot find it, I am bound to disbelieve him. I cannot do otherwise without unsettling the very foundations of my own moral nature. The reasoners on both sides commence by taking something for granted. But the pure physicist assumes what, according to himself, he neither is, nor can be under an obligation of moral reason to assume. If he uses the word obligation, he can mean only physical necessity. To overthrow faith in aught higher than physical necessity is the very purpose of his

Sensuous  
Faith and  
Spiritual  
Faith.

argument. He desires you only to take for granted that all reality is included in physical nature, and he may then safely defy you to ward off his conclusion—that nothing real is excluded.” This thought of Coleridge is exemplified in the individual men who are types of man at his best and highest—who represent constituents of humanity which, while normal, are yet not universally developed—felt and seen by saint and prophet, in others unawakened or obscured. They recall words long ago uttered in Palestine, which present in one aspect the moral foundation of theism—“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Summary. The eternal divine gospel that God is love may be taken as another expression for that perfect moral trustworthiness of the final principle of existence, which has been presented in this lecture as the essential principle of theistic faith, and the infallible foundation of all human intercourse, through experience and its rational implicates, with the Power that is universally manifested—*quem nosse vivere*.

## LECTURE II.

## CAUSATION THEISTICALLY INTERPRETED.

RELIGIOUS life as it develops in the individual makes him personify, or recognise as moral spirit, the eternal moral obligation on which human conduct ought to turn. In this religious recognition of moral order one finds the germ of theistic faith. It is absolute trust in moral providence that seems to be, consciously or at least tacitly, at the bottom of that recognition of even physical trustworthiness in the universe of reality, which the daily actions of men, as well as their natural sciences, finally presuppose and depend upon. Must not even physical faith dissolve without an implied moral and religious trust? Unless men take for granted that natural order is a dependable reality, and neither a temporary accident, nor the capricious contrivance of a diabolical Power at the heart of the Whole, intent upon misleading sentient human intelligence in the end, they can neither interpret nature.

Does not  
reasonable  
life in the  
universe  
presuppose  
God or  
perfect  
Goodness  
finally at  
the root of  
things and  
persons?

nor employ natural things in their service, in the spirit of the *Norum Organum*. When I try to think out an ethically sceptical conception of the universe, I find myself becoming scientifically and practically paralysed. Intellectual system in the universe disappears in the dissolution of moral faith in it, with the consequent dissolution of *all* faith, even that without which a human understanding cannot be so applied to presented phenomena as that they may be recognised as things. Man is rescued from universal scepticism through trust finally in the divine synthesis. The individual ego and the outer world are unintelligible unless God is tacitly presupposed.

Is not  
religious  
faith rea-  
sonable  
faith?

But is this finally religious trust finally blind? Is it more than an irrational inclination? Is it not rather so charged with reason, or moral obligation, that one may even say that indulgence in it is the only finally reasonable attitude of the human mind in its relation to the infinite universe of reality; and that its decay would be the decay of what is highest in the ideal human being, the decay of that in which humanity culminates? Can man be acting reasonably, or doing justice to his highest self, when he tries to extinguish this final and unconditional moral trust, which seems to enter instinctively into his mental experience; or when he tries to get rid of the theistic personification of the data of conscience, which makes him regard morally responsible Will as the only absolutely originative Cause of change that can be dis-



cerned, at the highest attainable human point for insight into the final principle of the universe?

These questions lead us into a fuller investigation of the reasonableness of moral and theistic trust, as the final rational attitude, at the different points at which its constituent elements and supposed supports have been looked at, in what are sometimes called "proofs" of the existence of God. But the word proof is used in a qualified meaning when it is so applied. Theistic faith, as the condition of all proof, is itself incapable of scientific proof. "Did you deduce *your own* being?" asks Coleridge. "Even this is less absurd than the conceit of deducing the Divine Being. Never would you have had the notion had you not had the idea—rather had not the idea worked in you like the memory of a name which we cannot recollect, yet feel that we have; which reveals its existence in the mind only by a restless anticipation; and proves its *a priori* actuality by the almost explosive instantaneity with which it is welcomed and recognised." Theistic or moral trust is an existing fact in human consciousness that asks to have its possible consistency with reason shown. It is a state of which the human mind may try to rid itself only if the intellectual difficulties involved in its action as the final faith of man are found to be greater than the difficulties involved in its suspension. Anyway, in dealing with the rationale of religion we are dealing with the rationale of something that is found

Theistic or moral faith, like physical faith, presupposed in our reasonings about the changing universe, and not originally derived as a conclusion from mere phenomena.

already in man's mental experience, manifesting itself in corresponding human feeling, human conduct, and human thought. We do not need to bring into existence by reasoned proofs the already operative faiths which sustain religious, moral, æsthetical, scientific life, or common working life—we cannot bring these into existence, in the form of conclusions logically evolved from premisses. They arise spontaneously in men's minds as the common root of their growing mental experience. Thus the daily physical experience of men, and the verified inductions of the natural sciences, show physical or cosmic faith in spontaneous exercise; and inquiry into the reasonableness of this inferior degree of faith in the universe is open to the philosophical analyst, who can interrogate reflectively what he is actually living by. So is it with the moral or religious faith on which the physical trust itself in the end depends. It already operates, before it is reasoned out philosophically; and that not only in the attenuated form of trust in external uniformities, but in the deeper form of moral obligation, the implicate of personal remorse, and involved in the religious idea of eternally personified moral obligation or goodness. And, as in the former case, so here likewise, it is open to the philosophic critic to reduce to its elements the complex fact of religious reliance on the final principle of the universe, as we have this reliance exemplified in the ethical religions, above all, in Christianity. This may still be done with a

view to determine whether a faith deeper than the physical or non-moral is only an anachronism, ready to die out in the fuller evolution of humanity; or, on the contrary, an eternal human need, which becomes stronger and more enlightened, in the form of religious life, in proportion to the advance of men in thoughtfulness and goodness.

What are misleadingly called “demonstrations” and “logical arguments” that God exists are really more or less successful analyses of the rational constituents of a faith already in germ. In *what* is this faith faith in? and is it justified in reason in being faith in *this*? This is one form in which the analytical inquiry might be expressed. Or otherwise — What does the word “God” mean, and on what ground is one moved to believe that that meaning corresponds to the actual reality? These questions underlie the so-called theistic “proofs,” each of which takes its own point of view for recognising the validity of the faith, or for testing its reasonableness. Thus one way of seeing the reasonableness of the theistic postulate may be found in what is virtually philosophical analysis of the principle of causality—that principle on which man rests whenever he contemplates the ever-changing universe: this is at the root of what is called the “cosmological proof” of theism. Another way, or rather a popular modification of the preceding way of showing the reasonableness of theism, is observation of natural adaptations of means to ends—especially ends that relate them-

Alleged cosmological, teleological, and ontological “proofs” of theism.

selves to man—"final causes" as they are somewhat ambiguously called. Adaptations of this sort, whether or not they pervade the evolving universe universally and eternally, seemed at least to present themselves more particularly in the history of organised matter, animal and vegetable: the construction of the human eye was a favourite instance. The universe was accordingly reported to abound in curious and useful superhuman contrivances, many of them adapted to promote life and happiness, and in the long-run to improve man—towards whose physical evolution and education, in the larger light of recent science, the whole planetary evolution seems to conspire, as if the world were contrived for that end: the inference drawn from all this is, that men are reasonably justified in the faith that the universe is manifested intelligence: here you have the familiar "teleological" vindication of theistic faith. Then again there are thinkers of more daring speculative power who essay to translate moral and religious faith exhaustively into necessary intellectual forms; sublimating the temporal evolution in nature and spirit in a timeless dialectical evolution of universal Reason, into which all reality is supposed finally to resolve itself: this is what may be called the "ontological" method of vindicating or rationalising theology.

Kant's criticism of theistic logic.

These time-honoured "proofs" are commonly supposed to have encountered rough and damaging intellectual handling on the part of Immanuel Kant.

Ever since he criticised them, they have been more or less discredited in scientific opinion. The discredit is probably not undeserved, if any one of these arguments, or even all collectively, is so misconceived as to be taken for the conscious source of man's moral and religious faith in the constituting principle of the universe. They are discredited when regarded as conclusive arguments that are able to determine a conclusion which, being infinite, is not in this way determinable. For either abstract reasoning or physical induction becomes a tissue of paralogisms, when it tries to bring the universe of reality, as a finite quantity, under logical conditions that are adapted only to what is finite, thus identifying scientific understanding with the larger reason that concerns itself with the final problem. Physical science and its argumentative proofs cannot be treated in this way as final philosophy. Yet theistic "proofs," so-called, may each in its way uncover the speculative and practical principles which underlie theistic faith, and final faith thus finds that it has been tacitly sustained.

Take first the Principle of Causality, and estimate the strength of the cosmological proof. Consider whether the theistic interpretation of the universe is not just the idea of causality in its final form, and in its ultimate application. In assuming, as we must, the dependence of every change upon a

Is Theism finally involved in the Causal conception of the changing universe?

cause, are we not virtually assuming its dependence *at last* on the only originating or uncaused cause that can enter into our thought — that is to say, its dependence on intending Will, recognised by and as active moral Reason? To answer this question we must try to make clear to ourselves what causality finally means and involves.

Causality as the supreme intellectual postulate concerning the changing universe.

We can easily see that men recognise the universal presence of causation in this ever-changing world: we all unavoidably proceed in life on the supposition that because we are living among changes, we must be living among causes. The causal relation is of all relations the most universal, in a universe of ever-changing things and persons; and for exclusively natural science, natural causation seems to be final. It becomes the supreme category, which comprehends all change under itself. Latent intelligence in man awakes, and gives the first signs of its activity in craving vaguely for natural or perceptible “causes.”

Without causality in the universe there could be no science of its events or changes.

But what sets human intelligence agoing in search of cause; and what is meant by the word cause, when it signifies that of which intelligence is then in quest? In an immutable universe there would be no need for the craving, and no room for the idea, nor room therefore for a conscious life such as man’s; for with us consciousness necessarily involves change of mental state and object. It is the actual metamorphosis, the continuous change to which all experienced things and all individual persons are subject, and in which things

and persons reveal themselves, that raises in man the final question of intelligence, *Why* all this is so? Mind is awakened in this temporal procession, or causal evolution, in which we are each participating, and which, as far as we can see, is in process, if not in progressive amendment, from everlasting to everlasting. This is the universal fact, signified by Heraclitus of old in the formula  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha \rho\acute{\epsilon}\iota$ —All things flow. The changeable describes the actual. Everything seems to be and yet not to be: it is at once being and becoming. By an irresistible intellectual necessity every event—every change—carries the thought of man *beyond the event itself*, into some preceding form of existence out of which the event has emerged, as the evolved transformation and equivalent of this its natural cause. For we have been gradually taught to believe in an exact equivalence or proportion between an event as an effect, and that event in the preceding form of its own natural cause; so that whatever appears in the new form must have its due corresponding phenomenon in another form—*i.e.*, that phenomenon which physical science calls its cause. Natural science rests at last on the faith that this is so; for if this were not so, scientific proof, or verification by fact, would be impossible: the organised knowledge of change which is called science—which is itself an event or effect in its way—could not come into conscious existence in human minds. Calculated comparisons of phenomena, with a view to inductive generalisations, would lose their in-

dispensable working postulate. If this causal connection between new forms of existence and their old forms were not a real and dependable connection; if there were no natural causality immanent in the universe, no physical order, there could then be no physical science, and no experience available for the conduct of life. The indispensable director amidst otherwise chaotic changes would be wanting.

The immediate advantage of a working knowledge of merely physical or provisional causes.

For consider what inquisitive intelligence and the practical needs of men have secured for themselves, when the discovery has been made that some new phenomenon, hitherto an orphan in the universe in the mind's eye, has found its parentage in other phenomena already dissolved, but of which the new phenomenon is proved to be the exact correlative, or natural effect—its proportional equivalent in the natural metamorphosis? Increased knowledge of those causal relations between new phenomena and their old equivalents is plainly useful to mankind—so far as human pains and pleasures are themselves effects, dependent on natural causes, first in the outside world, and then in individual organisms, by physical consequence; and so far as men are able to direct the current of natural changes into congenial channels, for “man as the servant of nature,” as Bacon advises us, can do so much, and so much only, as he has observed of the causal course of nature. Human knowledge of causal changes and human power meet in one. Where a presentable cause is not perceived, the natural effect cannot be secured



by man : nature to be commanded must be obeyed: that which in our thought is the cause is transformed in active life into the rule. It is only by obedience to the rules thus formed that man can live at all, in a universe that is undergoing constant and continuous metamorphoses, on which human thoughts, sensibilities, and overt actions are themselves dependent. We are all without our leave entangled while we live in this universal web of natural causation.

Yet notwithstanding its obvious utility, the discovery of the natural causes of perceived changes leaves the causal craving of persistent intelligence as dissatisfied as it was before. For the predecessor out of which a change has naturally emerged, and of which the change is a metamorphosis, *itself* equally needs a causal predecessor. The discovered natural cause, being only a finite phenomenon, must itself too be only an effect to the eye of awakened intelligence. In seeking for a perceptible finite cause the mind is seeking for satisfaction in a necessarily unsatisfying universe of mutually dependent phenomena. The cause sought for, if it is to give absolute relief, must be other than the provisional causes registered in natural science; for each of these, as much as its effects, requires something beyond an imaginable finite into which it may be refunded. The scientific discovery that oxygen and hydrogen is the causal equivalent of water, or the discovery that heat is a conditional metamorphosis and causal equivalent of modes of motion, has brought the discoverer

Discovery of the "natural causes" of events leaves the events finally unexplained: because every natural cause must itself be caused.

no nearer final satisfaction than he was before he reached them—notwithstanding the partial intellectual relief, and the increased command of nature, which growing knowledge of natural causes carries with it. The old form of each new phenomenon as much needs explanation as the new form itself did, and still when we have reached what physical science accepts as *its* cause, we have only enlarged our natural outlook by a wider empirical generalisation. The need for the final or absolutely originating cause, which can alone satisfy persistent causal craving, remains in other respects as urgent as before. The search for *wholly natural* causes is like the search for the source of a river that has *no* source. As in adding finite spaces to finite spaces, however vast the resulting space becomes, we are obliged to believe that we are no nearer Immensity or Boundlessness than we were when we began to add; or just as millions of years form a duration that is really no nearer than a single moment is to the unbeginning and unending, called Eternity,—so the endlessly regressive search for natural causes, with the discovery of more and more extensive physical laws, or customary uniformities in the natural procedure, leaves us still in want of the final or originative Cause of the natural network as a whole.

The humanly insoluble mystery of an unbeginning

Do we not find ourselves intellectually obliged to believe that, because Something is now undergoing changes, Something must exist eternally—either in the form of an unbeginning succession of causally equiv-

alent changes, or in the not less mysterious way of One unchanging unbeginning Something? “That Something has really existed from all eternity”—I use the words of Samuel Clarke, who, along with Locke, is a representative expositor of causality as the rationale of theistic faith—“is one of the certainest and most evident truths in the world, acknowledged by all men, and disputed by none. Yet as to the manner how this can be, there is nothing more difficult for the mind of man to conceive than this plain Self-evident truth. For how anything can have existed eternally—that is, how an eternal duration can be now actually past—is a thing utterly as impossible for our narrow understanding to comprehend as anything that is not an express contradiction. And yet to deny the truth of the proposition, that an eternal duration is now actually past, would be to assert something far more unintelligible, even an express and real contradiction.” Yet it is the mystery of infinite regress that science of nature has always to face; and this, without the theistic postulate in the background, makes it impossible to treat even external nature as trustworthy. For science advances in the discovery of natural causes in the moral trust that natural changes *are* orderly, and in the persistence of this order in continuous metamorphoses; but a wholly natural science proceeds only tacitly on this assurance, without analysis of its implicates, and not recognising the final guarantee for its own expectations. Why may not a natural cause some day issue in

series of  
natural  
causes.  
Locke and  
Samuel  
Clarke.

phenomena different from those into which it has hitherto been transformed? Or at least what security does the narrow experience that is open to man give against the practically chaotic interference of hitherto inexperienced natural causes, to the utter confusion of the expected succession? Does the inevitable demand for a cause on the part of human intelligence mean only demand for a natural or dependent finite cause, notwithstanding the ultimate unsatisfactoriness of such "causes," in their being themselves as dependent on what is physically unknown as their effects were? If so, physical science lands us at last in the infinitely mysterious alternatives of eternal Becoming, or eternal Being—eternal metamorphosis of imaginable phenomena, or the eternal unchanging unimaginable Something.

Natural causation, or evolutionary metamorphosis of phenomena, explains nothing.

In truth natural causes and the natural evolution of phenomena in themselves explain nothing. Response to the causal craving is not really provided by them, or only provisionally. They present an orderly procession of effects, not the agent in the whole dramatic performance. So they leave in the background the faith, necessarily postulated, that this performance on the part of the universe is more than a treacherous illusion.

But is our feeling of dissatisfaction with this provisional causation a reason for

But in adopting this postulate are we not relieving in dogmatic fashion the discomfort occasioned by the discovery that natural causes are not all that the persistent causal craving needs? Is not this to indulge in a vague faith that since natural science cannot give

what we want, a really restful cause is somehow im-  
 nate in the Whole—seeing that without its imman-  
 ence our discomfort must continue? Is not this to  
 proceed upon the gratuitous hypothesis, that we cannot  
 be living in a universe that is and must be constantly  
 uncomfortable to us, or at least a constant source of  
 intellectual uneasiness? Are men entitled to conclude  
 that because nature presents to natural science only  
 unbeginning and unending change, finally unexplained  
 and inexplicable, there must, for our relief, be forth-  
 coming an explanation of the Whole? Does it follow  
 that because perceived things appear to the sensuous  
 understanding to be naturally dependent on, or as  
 we say caused by, one another, and so far not really  
 caused at all, there must therefore exist uncaused  
 morally perfect Will, for explanation of the Whole,  
 only because it must not be supposed that men should  
 be subject to the discomfort of baffled desire? But if  
 something in my mind sets me in quest of causes, and  
 if the sensuous understanding in its scientific exercises  
 never reaches what I am in quest of, can I not refer to  
 something in my spiritual constitution that makes me  
 pause in the infinite scientific regress, and that puts me  
 under an obligation to believe that I am living and  
 moving and having my being under Power that is  
 independent of the natural regress and progress, and  
 on which all natural procedure is itself dependent,—  
 the Cause which not only does not need, but which does  
 not admit of being *itself* caused? If so, what is this

assuming  
 the reality  
 of super-  
 natural  
 Power, to  
 relieve the  
 feeling?

something in reason and experience, which arrests the otherwise vain search for final cause within the temporal order of imaginable change, and directs us at last to the philosophically satisfying Cause?

Our feeling of restlessness, in the presence of a universe of provisional causes only, is in itself an insufficient reason for concluding supernatural Power.

If all that could be found in this relation were only the uncomfortable feeling of continued causal dissatisfaction, it would be insufficient reasoning to conclude, as some seem to do—that because dissatisfaction is discomfort, the existence otherwise of the inevitable discomfort is a sufficient reason for making the still persistent causal craving a proof of the reality of supernatural Power. Of the seemingly unbeginning and unending evolution of changing phenomena called Nature, only an insignificant portion can come within the personal experience of each man, and a relatively insignificant portion within the collective experience even of the whole human race. To argue for more than this narrow experience presents, on the ground of uneasy feeling, looks like saying that there must be more than natural causation—that an empirical conception of the world must be fundamentally misleading—merely because the finally empirical supposition is *uncomfortable* when we try to think it out. If this uneasy feeling is the *only* ground in reason and experience for the hypothesis of supernatural and uncaused Power being immanent in the whole, we must be using empty words when we speak of this Power. And if the whole experience of man is and must be sensuous, or mechanically articulated, what meaning can be introduced into the words

which pretend to signify the true and resting Cause that *does* give satisfaction to the transcendental desire?

I do not see how these obstacles to the satisfaction of the causal craving can be met, or how any final interpretation can be put upon what is called natural causation, if the data to which an exclusively physical science confines itself exhaust man's resources. If this causality is the only causality, there is no room for final faith in the universe, or in any finally satisfying cause: we must at last face the infinite mystery of endless accidental change—that sceptical aspect of the Infinite, which dissolves all faith, in the idea of a capricious temporal process—an evolution without the supposition of a constant morally trustworthy Evolver—finally unintelligible motion. The supposed cosmological proof of the reality of the eternal Evolver or Mover becomes only one form of a vague dissatisfaction with the idea of the finite in quantity.

For this is only vague sense of dissatisfaction with a merely finite universe.

But while natural causation, exclusively regarded, conceals God, man, as presenting more than natural causation, reveals God—in signally revealing final causality, or an uncaused cause that is alone and absolutely responsible for its effects. Yet I should rather say that external nature conceals God, only if God is not revealed through the moral and religious experience of man. After this revelation external nature itself *becomes for man* constantly symbolic of the divine: each fresh discovery of a natural cause is then inter-

While natural or provisional causation, exclusively looked at, conceals God, Man reveals God, and supernaturalises natural causation.

pretable as only a further and fuller revelation of the supernatural Power of which all natural "agency" is the effect and expression. *After* God has been found in the *moral* experience of man, which points irresistibly to intending Will as the only known Cause that is absolute, the discovery, that this is the natural or provisional cause of that, is recognised as the only discovery that this is the divinely constituted sign, or constant antecedent, of that. The whole natural succession becomes the manifestation of infinite Spiritual or Personal agency: the universe in its temporal process is seen to be reasonably interpretable as finally the constantly manifested moral activity of God, incarnate in the Whole and in every part; in a way to which some may think they find a faint analogy, when they contemplate their own bodily organism, in its dependence on their own governing and responsible will—this microcosm thus the symbol of the infinite Macrocosm.

For in our experience of persons as morally responsible, we find final or absolute Power.

But what is that in man, you ask, which explains or justifies this divine satisfaction of the causal demand, as the highest reasonableness that is within man's reach, when he asks for the cause of the natural universe, and seeks relief for a sense of absolute dependence that finds nothing to be absolutely depended on in what is finite and caused? The existence of the vague feeling of discomfort, as I have said, is not enough. But we find in man more than dissatisfaction with merely natural causes. We find an obligation of moral reason to recognise that he is *himself*, as a spiritual person,



the absolute finally determining cause of all those changes in himself and in external nature for which *he* is morally responsible. This supernatural experience throws deeper meaning into Causation, derived from morally responsible intending Will, the only cause within human experience that is a finally satisfying cause; a cause which not only does not need, but absolutely forbids us to go behind itself for the explanation of whatever it alone is morally answerable for. Herein man shows in his own personality what a cause is that is really a cause, or what cannot be in its turn an effect. This is found in his own supernaturalness, or ability to originate acts, so far as he can be rightly praised or blamed for them,—those acts on account of which he may enjoy self-satisfaction, or have experience of remorse.

Regarded as animal organisms, men form part of the natural process, and they can neither be praised nor blamed for being what they are organically, or by heredity. Man does not, as a visible organism, create himself: he is evolved according to natural law, a procedure in that continuous process which we call "natural": the cause of the natural processes being orderly is the fact that has ultimately to be explained. But although thus organised naturally, he is found, under the natural evolution, to contain what is more than finite nature; at least if he is really justified in reason, in taking personal credit, or acknowledging personal blame, for determination to act, or to refrain from

As physical organisms, men share in the causal evolution, which morally or spiritually they transcend.

acting. Conscience, like a finger-post, points to the spiritual, personal, morally responsible agents of voluntary acts as, in their moral relation to those acts, examples, and the only examples, of causation proper, or supernatural agency, that man, when at his best, comes in sight of; and it assures us that when we come in sight of *this*, we have data which so far justify us in reading the universe in its continuous evolutionary process, morally and religiously, as well as physically and biologically.

In physical science the universe is interpreted with exclusive regard to the provisional causes which it contains.

Of course nature *may* be read *only* physically, or in terms of the wholly natural process—in terms exclusively of natural causation. It is possible, by abstraction from what is spiritual in man, to withdraw, as it were, all moral colouring from the natural procedure of events, and to treat the whole temporal succession as non-moral. Indeed, natural science has to make this abstraction of its attention, on the principle of divided intellectual labour; and because reduction of phenomena under the moral or supernatural conception would disturb that unbiassed search for physical causes, or established signs of changes, which is the chosen office of the naturalist. Natural science has to determine what are constant physical sequences in the universe, in terms of their natural causality only, without regard to the possible moral goodness or badness or their originating and responsible cause.

Thus the molecular changes which succeed one

another in the brain, nerves, muscles, and external organs of a murderer, when he is engaged in a criminal act, and which in their successive metamorphoses issue in that act: and also the molecular changes which occur in the brain, nerves, muscles, and external organs of a saint, which issue in an overt act of piety or philanthropy, are, for natural science, alike non-moral phenomena: they may be contemplated out of relation to conscience and to the supernatural agency of the men. The series of sequences in the visible organism of the murderer is scientifically as admirable as those of which the visible organism of the saint is the theatre. They are both interpreted under the same conception of natural causality, and the natural causes which the organism of the murderer illustrates are neither more moral nor more immoral in themselves than those which lead up to the most signal overt act of what is now called "altruism," or of religious devotion. The biology of the criminal makes natural science as well as the biology of the saint. Gravitation and natural evolution are neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy in themselves. They express methods that the universal Power follows in the natural procession of events.

Now, just as the phenomena of natural growth and the overt change manifested in the organisms of criminals and saints, are in themselves indifferent to the moral conceptions under which they may be brought, in that deeper interpretation of the universe, into which

Sinners and saints alike, in the light of wholly physical science.

So too is the whole universe of change, when only physically interpreted.

the idea of moral obligation enters, with its implied postulate of supernaturalness, or freedom from physical necessity,—so too the continuous physical evolution of the whole universe of caused causes—which, for all we can tell, may be in an unbeginning and unending process—may in like manner be contemplated in abstraction from the final or supernatural Cause of the whole, and therefore in abstraction from its moral and religious meaning. In all natural sciences this abstraction *is* made, leaving for *their* appropriated share in the interpretation of the world, the duty of filling in hitherto undiscovered terms in their register of natural sequences, and the attainment of more and more extensive physical generalisations. Each discovery in science is the discovery of something perceptible in the mechanism of visible nature that was before concealed; with the often illustrated issue that the discoverer and others are able to live more happily within the naturally determined machine. To think of the world, including its human organisms individually, as an unbeginning and unending process of organisation and disorganisation—the terms of which men are bound, by regard for truth, and for their individual comfort, to interpret according to the established sequences of its natural causality,—this is to think of things as the wholly physical inquirer does. But unless proof is forthcoming that no higher conception than this physical one is consistent with reason, or can be applicable to the temporal process—over and

above the physical conception; unless the intellectual difficulty of a moral or theistic interpretation of the Whole can be shown to be greater than a merely physical or atheistic interpretation involves; unless the *homo mensura* principle, upon which, in an attenuated form, natural science itself rests, forbids the spiritual interpretation, with its recognition of nature as essentially and finally spiritual,—unless proof of all this is forthcoming, what can be alleged in reason against the finally supernatural interpretation of the accumulating facts and laws which form the glory of modern science? To invest the discovered natural sequences with a moral and spiritual glory, by reading the whole, and in all its parts, in relation to the whole man—so including what is highest in man—and not merely in relation to his sensuous intelligence, and by doing so to merge physical or cosmic faith in the end in moral or theistic faith,—this is not to oppose science but to invest it with a new crown. “In the entrance of philosophy,” says Bacon, “when the second [or caused] causes, which are next unto the senses, do offer themselves to the mind of man, if it dwell and stay there, it may induce some oblivion of the Highest Cause; but when a man passeth on further, and seeth the dependence of causes and the works of Providence, then, according to the allegory of the poets, he will easily believe that the highest link of nature’s chain must needs be tied to the foot of Jupiter’s chair.”

The natural and the theistic interpretations of the

If all natural or provisional causation is finally Divine Causation, natural science cannot contradict Divine Science, but must form a part of it.

universe cannot conflict with one another, if each discovery of a natural cause is recognised as *also* a supernatural revelation, involving recognition of the final supernaturalness that continuously makes nature. Those who are educated in this conception can no longer see in the physical antecedent a usurper of the Divine Power, now superseded by natural law. What ground in reason is there for the assumption that the natural cause of an event rescues that event, as it were, from divine agency; and that if the customary physical antecedents of all the changes that occur in nature could be detected by experiment, there would then be neither need nor room for God? The truth seems to be that the more successfully scientific inquiry is applied to the sequences presented in experience, the more fully God is revealed; and that if we could realise the scientific ideal of a reasoned knowledge of the natural cause of every sort of event, we should then be in possession of the entire self-revelation given in outward nature of the infinite moral Person, of whom the natural world is the symbol and adumbration.

Modern recognition of natural causation, instead of capricious agency, in the final interpretation of the universe.

Experimental search for the physical order of the different sorts of changes that are presented in human experience is claimed as a distinguishing character of modern progress. In the early ages of the world, and still among imperfectly educated races and individuals, natural appearances, ordinary as well as extraordinary, were referred to the *capricious* personal

action of otherwise unknown spirits, so that *fear* was the foremost religious sentiment. All visible motions were supposed to be animated motions. Fire, air, earth, and water had each their separate spirits: thunder was singled out as emphatically the voice of God. The wayward agency of those incalculable forces then obscured the now developed conception of universal natural order. This supreme scientific conception now reacts against caprice in nature. For natural law is popularly supposed, not only to supersede the capricious forces of fetichism and polytheism, but to be inconsistent with the idea of the divine foundation of things, and of continuous divine agency, as the power really at work in all so-called natural agency. The arbitrary assumption is further made that causation can be only natural, and that a merely natural causation is finally intelligible. Accordingly, in proportion as natural causes are one by one discovered by science, God is supposed to be superfluous: natural causation, under the name of natural law, takes His place; so that if any room is left for God (which is doubtful), it must be somewhere in the far past, when the orderly process of this visible and tangible universe was supposed to be set agoing. And if scientific inquiry should ever be able to refer all events to their natural causes, it would, on this hypothesis, have then rid the world altogether of the theistic idea. Scientific and religious thought are thus made to pull in opposite directions. Theism, identified with the irregular action of a capricious

spirit, looks like an anachronism, and divine action appears unnatural. The theistic interpretation of the universe looks like a retrograde movement, a relapse into the childish and savage condition of thought to which the idea of physical causes and universal order is foreign. It is supposed to mean surrender of the territory conquered by experiment and scientific reason, when they have substituted natural causes for the supernatural ones of superstition. Under those ideas of what causality means, and of what theism means, the religious interpretation of events seems only covert polytheism, or of like intent as a working hypothesis. Spinoza in the seventeenth century, David Hume and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, reinforced now by a group of speculative naturalists, have warned the world of its intellectual danger, as long as personal agency—assumed to be capricious and irregular—is permitted to take the place of the persistent orderly agency of what is ambiguously called Nature, which, under what is really a metaphor, is supposed to rule the universe actively by its laws.

Moral or  
spiritual  
agency and  
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necessarily  
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tent with  
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other.

But are spiritual agency in the Universal Power, and physical order in what is virtually constant creation, as the effect—are these necessarily inconsistent? On the contrary, each of the extremes—the spiritual and the physical—seems to present one side of a truth common to both. The sense of dependence on persons more powerful than ourselves—agents in the meaning of agency that our moral experience makes intelli-



gible—agents who exert rational will—seems to be recognition of the only satisfying sort of power of which man is aware: it finds unphilosophic expression in the cruder religions, and in the superstitions which still confuse the religious thought of the unthinking. On the other hand, may not the modern scientific faith in natural causes be treated as the consequence of growing experience and apprehension of the fact, that the Power manifested to man's senses is a Power that continuously produces a cosmos, not a chaos—so that the natural effects of the constant agency are universally orderly, not chaotic? But the modern scientific faith may have to be purged of undue assumptions as well as the superstitious faith. Progressive substitution of natural order for capricious and meaningless interference, need not supersede final agency that is moral or personal, and which in a perfect personality must be the source and sustaining centre of perfectly rational order, however far that order may transcend man's limited opportunities in experience for fully interpreting it. It is when theistic superstition rises into the theism that treats all that is presented in the natural universe as finally one form of manifestation to man of perfect moral Spirit, and which sees at last, in all the physical conditions on which changes are made to depend, God operating in the various ways commonly called natural laws—it is then that religious thought and scientific thought approach, instead of moving in opposite directions. Then God becomes more fully

known, as in other ways, so also through a fuller scientific apprehension of the divinely ordered and maintained sequences, in their natural and therefore rational or divine concatenation. Neither the irregular agency of capricious Spirit, nor natural science, concerned only with the order and significance of the visible effects, and not with moral active agency at all—neither of these exhausts man's final relation to the universe; for this depends upon the reconciliation of these two conceptions under one that recognises the voice of Conscience inviting us to comprehend the whole natural evolution in its relation to moral order, moral growth, moral providence. There are signs, if I am not mistaken, that this idea of causality and power may enter more into the leading thought of the twentieth century than it has into the religious or the scientific thought of the past.

Theism as involved in the provisional causal regress, according to Locke and others.

This interpretation of all natural law and order as essentially divine is not to be confused with the causal inference of eternal Mind, that has been founded on the fact that finite mind, especially each person's own mind, is now found in existence. Human minds, it is said, are insufficiently accounted for by physical causes; therefore there must be a hyperphysical cause for them. Mind exists, for I am conscious: my mind must have been caused, for I have not existed always: the only sufficient cause of mind must be Mind: therefore God exists. This is what

Locke calls a "demonstration" of Eternal Mind. "To be certain that there is a God," he says, "I think we need go no further than to ourselves, and that undoubting knowledge we have of our own existence as conscious persons who had a beginning." There must be a cause for this: every cause must be a sufficient cause, or adequate to the effects produced, and as mind only is adequate to cause mind, my existence as a conscious person proves the existence of Eternal Mind.

This reasoning makes the existence of Eternal Mind a physical inference from the present existence of a finite person. But the final and the infinite is not logically contained in the provisional: only a provisional and finite mental cause can be found in provisional and finite effects: inquiry as to the natural cause of *their* natural cause is still open; for the procedure is still under the pressure of a mechanical idea of causality, with its unbeginning and endless regress. Nothing is presented to *arrest* the ever-renewed question of the cause of the natural cause; unless Mind is found, or rationally postulated, to contain what makes *it* absolute or final;—leaving all so-called natural causes destitute of any evidence that they are properly causes at all, or more than signs of phenomena that are caused by the supreme Power to accompany them constantly in nature. "I *ought*, therefore I *can*," points to spiritual or personal agency as the morally responsible, and necessarily absolute cause of action. It is the *only*

They fail to recognise the causal significance of what is revealed in the moral consciousness of personal responsibility.

index we have that points to originative power, and it reveals the ultimate meaning of Causality in the form of intending Will. We have no index that identifies *any* merely natural phenomenon as the necessarily exclusive and final source of what are called its natural effects; and therefore we have no reason for calling them *its* independent effects. The moral implicates of the reason in which I share, rather than the empirical fact of my existence as a thinking thing that appears in the temporal procession, seems to be what makes the universe, and my conscious life as part of it, that revelation of eternally active moral Reason which what is highest in me requires that I should spiritualise or personify.

Summary. The lesson of this lecture is that religious thought and physically scientific thought about the world, instead of destroying, really strengthen one another, in the recognition of continuous active divine activity, or endless creation, under the form of natural order. For the natural order of procedure may be interpreted as one form of the universal revelation of the perfectly reasonable Will. Thunder is no longer the voice of an interfering God, on account of its supposed physical inexplicability, or because it is a startling phenomenon; it is a revelation of God just because it is recognised as an event that makes its appearance under natural law, in the orderly evolution:—

“For if He thunder by law, the thunder is yet His Voice.”

## LECTURE III.

COSMICAL ADAPTATION AND DIVINE DESIGN :  
TELEOLOGICAL.

MY last lecture involved the principle that man's *moral* Retrospective. experience of a cause that must be absolute or uncaused, because responsible for its effects, offers the relief which the causal craving that is at the root of all physically scientific inquiry ultimately needs. This relief comes through moral experience in a practical form, not in the unintelligible form of endless succession of natural causes. If a deliberate personal volition, for which one can be justly praised or blamed, must be caused *absolutely and finally* by the *person* who is morally responsible for it,—then this unique example of what causal satisfaction means may be taken as practically a type of the mysterious Power constantly at work at the heart of things, determining the physical order, upon faith in which daily life, as well as our scientific inductions, proceeds. It is as active moral

Reason that man may regard the Power that is latent in the natural sequences that are presented within his experience. Nature may be treated by man as, for him, virtually the revelation of this *moral* Power, even if "rational will" or "moral reason" represents the Infinite Being inadequately, as viewed at the divine centre.

Two rival ultimate postulates, agnostic Naturalism and theistic Naturalism.

There are at last two rival hypotheses regarding the universe—if one may call them hypotheses. There is the hypothesis of an unbeginning and unending *physical* succession of changes, metaphorically spoken of as a "chain"—an infinite chain of non-moral natural sequences: there is also the *moral* hypothesis, which, without removing the infinite mystery of physical unbeginningness and unendingness, sees in the actual procedure of the manifested universe of things and persons, interpreted in science, the constant personal revelation of morally active Reason. It is true that both these hypotheses leave us at last enveloped in what is mysterious to the sensuous understanding: the infinity or mystery into which each retires at last makes an inevitable demand upon moral trust. In accepting either of them we must at last be acting in faith, instead of seeing the universe with the perfect intellectual vision of omniscience; but it is with an imperfect intellectual vision in which omniscience finds its substitute in moral faith.

Compared. Yet if these two rival hypotheses seem to have this common weakness, it appears on comparing them that the final mystery of an infinite physical regress and

progress of non-moral or wholly natural causes embraces no originative or satisfying cause at all, while the other hypothesis supplies what meets the causal craving, while it satisfies the spiritual constitution of man. On this ground alone, it would appear to be an obligation of reason *finally* to interpret the universe, not atheistically or agnostically, as the purely physical hypothesis does, but theistically, that is morally and spiritually, according to the second. The first leaves us in physical, because in moral, chaos: it professes physical faith in a universe in the movements of which it can have no moral trust. The second still presupposes physical trust, as proceeded upon in inductive science, but without adopting the negative assumptions of some speculative naturalists; for it finds that physical order and reliability postulate the moral order of perfect or divine providence. The atheist—in disclaiming as superfluous this perpetually creative moral Power immanent in all natural phenomena, the guarantee of the customary natural uniformity which he dogmatically assumes the absoluteness of—is virtually saying that the temporal evolution in physical nature has after all no spiritual meaning, moral or immoral; that all events happen without trustworthy reason, so that their future is incalculable; we cannot tell in what succession, because we must not presuppose a rational order. He is left without ground even for the faith that they will continue to happen according to the forecasts of physical science; or that in the future all may not

become uninterpretable chaos; or that the changing universe may not subside into changelessness. The moral key to any practical interpretation of the universe, even physical, has been wantonly thrown away, under the pressure of an hypothesis that is physically not more comprehensible than the theistic; while, on account of its discord with moral reason, it leaves us with a universe emptied of what makes it as a natural evolution worthy of scientific trust.

The causal and the teleological conceptions of the universe distinguished.

The theistic or moral interpretation of natural causation, which sees divine Power pervading physical sequences, may be distinguished from the teleological conception of the universe, in the popular argument for God from final causes or contrivances. This conception arose of old out of certain obtrusive instances of adaptation in nature to humanly useful or beautiful ends, which the world presents. It now includes apparent adaptation in the cosmical evolution *as a whole*, when viewed as a natural process that has been continuously leading on towards the evolution of Man, with his spiritual or supernatural endowments. For the universe in which we find ourselves does seem to be a universe which, as illustrated by this planet of ours, has been slowly making for the gradual development of *persons*, or moral agents, as its ideal goal.

Observation of natural

The fact that the temporal procession of phenomena is found to abound in notable contrivances, that have



not been contrived by the intending will of man, or of any other supposable intelligent agents limited in power like men, is probably the consideration that finds most favour with ordinary minds, when they are moved to ask themselves, why they believe that the world owes its existence to Divine purpose or predestination, instead of being an incomprehensible accident. Nature is found full of adaptations, especially in its living organisms; and, inasmuch as visible adaptation is to common-sense the sign of designing mind, it may seem that if we are in the presence of natural adaptations of means to ends, we must be in the workshop of a divine mechanist. The striking adaptations presented in organisms need a cause: physical (so-called) "causes" are not known by us to be really causes; but even if they were, they are insufficient causes of constructions so elaborate and useful, or so beautiful, as many of those which emerge in the course of the natural evolution of things, inorganic and organic. In presence of this spectacle we are invited, as by Socrates and Cicero and Paley, to refer the constructions in nature to Divine Design. The curious natural constitution of the eye, or of the ear, we are told to observe, is so adapted to a useful purpose that this organ cannot be thought of as a purposeless accident of collocation in an irrational flux. Its curious correlation of means to ends was not brought about, we very well know, by a human "eye-maker," while it is too elaborate to have been

contrivances, the popular proof of the Divine Designer.

brought about by a chance or unregulated concurrence of atoms. We are obliged, by common-sense or something in our minds, Paley tells us, to refer organs and organisms like this to a superhuman eye-maker or ear-maker. Elaborate adaptation our mental constitution forbids us ever to regard as uncalculated.

Explana-  
tion of the  
wide ac-  
ceptance  
of the tele-  
ological  
conception.

The ready popular recognition of the eye and innumerable other instances of superhuman adaptation as valid ground for theistic faith, may be partly explained by the way an elaborate and useful machine brings design home to the ordinary mind. In a world full of useful adaptations, one seems more easily than in other ways to find that God is working;—or at least that God must have been once at work, even if, now and during an indefinite past, the maintenance of organic constructions that at first came ready-made from the Divine artificer or creator has been intrusted to what are called “natural” causes. If the adaptations are now natural, they must have been at first supernatural, it is argued. God must, at some pre-historic time or other, have “interfered,” as we say, to “create” the organ which what is vaguely called “nature” now propagates. God seems in this way to be speaking to men out of the past, even if He has left only “nature” speaking to them at this hour,—speaking to them as one man may be said to speak to another man, through acts that are significant, because adapted as means to convey meaning from mind to mind. Just as a watch or other machine brings vividly

before one the existence of its human maker, so the special organ called the eye, or the whole human body—the adaptations which so ingeniously fit organs to their environments, and fit the minds of men too to the physical universe in which they awake into consciousness—all these and millions of like instances of contrivance have been found to quicken at least intellectual sympathy and affinity with the Power that must have been at work before all this could have become what it now is, and which it naturally continues to be. One is ready, too, when his attention is emphatically called to abounding examples of useful or beautiful adaptation, to feel as if God were no merely abstract Being, realisable only through metaphysical reasoning or speculation,—as if He were a living Person whose intelligent activity, at least in the past, is as manifest as the past intelligent activity of a human watchmaker is manifest to me in and through my watch, or as the inventive power of any sort of artist is revealed in and through the useful machine, or the picture of beauty, of which his design must have been the source. In contemplating means and ends in nature, I seem to trace this invisible Power, working consciously and of set purpose—calculating—making use of materials that possess latent capacities for being adapted, and made useful to men or other animated beings. The rude chaotic materials themselves, in virtue of inherent powers tacitly attributed to them, are supposed to *admit* of adapta-

tions, and so help to bring about the ends which we now admire and benefit by in the ordinary course of nature. Thus in the numberless examples of well-calculated contrivance which the great machine the physical universe presents, and also in the existence of the great machine itself, an observer seems to find at least the *relics* of the Great Mechanist or Contriver; —with as much assurance, he is ready to say, that He must be an intelligent Being as he has of the intelligence of him to whom he spontaneously refers the adaptations in his watch, or of the author or the printer of a book, in which arbitrary verbal signs are adapted to convey meaning from one human mind to another.

Natural adaptations make God visible, in the same way as the contrivances of a human artist make the artist visible.

If it be objected that I cannot *see* this *Divine* Contriver of any of the adaptations which natural theology refers to God, it may be replied that neither do I ever really *see* the *human* contrivers of any of the machines which I attribute to human plan or purpose —that is to say, if a human contriver means more than the visible and tangible bodily organism of a human being;—for this is needed to signify to me his *invisible* spiritual purposes, that must themselves be confined to his own private consciousness. But all recognise, in the case of man, that the visibly moved human organism is charged with invisible intelligent purposes, so that the man is not merely an unconscious automaton. Still the *conscious intention* of the human artificer is as invisible to the witness of the machine he has made as the *Divine* intending purpose in natural con-

structions is beyond the senses of all human beings. The conscious states of other living beings necessarily transcend the consciousness of all, except the one person whose conscious states they actually are.

Another circumstance, less obvious than the mere fact of adaptation as such, probably contributes to make the phenomena of natural adaptation touch the imagination of the mass of mankind forcibly, in the way of awakening the idea of Divine design and a Divine Designer. For natural adaptations all seem to converge upon Man. Withdraw men and sentient animals from the world, and what demand remains in it for useful and beautiful adaptation? The physical universe seems to be contrived in ways which adapt its natural sequences to animal life, but above all to the conscious life of human spirits or moral persons. The enormous amount of natural waste that goes on, the numerous natural malformations, and above all the appalling mixture of human and animal suffering discovered in the cosmical evolution, may indeed be set in objection. Of that afterwards. But these suspicious phenomena do not strip the natural revelation, through beneficial adaptations, of *its* necessary relation to beings that are sentient, and above all to human beings. It may be granted that this concentration of natural adaptations especially upon man is only what appears at man's own limited point of view, and also that it need not exclude innumerable ends higher than those which make for man. But it is as obvious adaptations at

The relation of cosmical adaptation to Man as a sentient and spiritual being.

least to *man* that the phenomena come before human beings as charged with meaning and purpose.

David Hume's acknowledgment of the religious significance of the constructions presented in Nature.

Something more than can be fully detected by the logical criticism of the understanding seems to touch the imagination and the heart of man, in this contemplation of a universe full of adaptations to the lives of its spiritual inhabitants. The impression of a divine revelation which consists in superhuman constructions and contrivances is acknowledged by the most sceptical in certain moods. "The whole chorus of nature," David Hume, in the person of Cleanthes, emphatically acknowledges,—“the whole chorus of nature raises a hymn in praise of its Creator. You alone,” Cleanthes remonstrates with Philo, “or almost alone, disturb the general harmony. You start abstruse doubts, cavils, objections; you ask me what is the cause of this supposed intelligent designing Cause? I answer that I know not, I care not; that concerns not me. I have found a Deity, and here I *choose* to stop my inquiry into causes. Let those go farther who are wiser and more enterprising.” In these words, nevertheless, Hume puts a wholly arbitrary arrest upon the regressive causal questioning—in lack of the morally rational arrest that we found presupposed in the necessary postulate of moral experience. This ground for arrest was outside the range of his vision and philosophy, finally determined as that was by the mechanical and empirical conception of “natural causes” that need to be themselves caused by what is external to them-

selves. Merely physical observation rather than moral reason or spiritual insight is the basis of Hume's conclusion, in his 'Natural History of Religion,' that "the whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent Author," and that "no rational inquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief for a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine theism and religion." And this "genuine theism" of Hume can be only that attenuated theism, which infers, from observed cosmical adaptations, the past, if not the present, existence of "an intelligent cause" of those adaptations—while still left in doubt about the omnipotence and perfect goodness of the physically inferred and after all only intelligent supreme Cause. According to physical analogy, he might say, intelligence other than human seems to have been somehow and at some time at work in Nature. But as to the good or bad character of this intelligent being, or the extent of his power, his empirical data leave him unable to determine anything: perfect or truly divine reason and goodness in the conclusion would be in excess of the only premisses which his philosophy allowed him to use. And thus his so-called "god" is only one intelligent and perhaps deceiving cause added to the intelligent causes we are accustomed to find in our natural experience of human contrivers. He offers us a god that needs an ulterior cause of his own individual existence.

The argument for divine design that is grounded on

The argument for divine design that is based only on observed adaptations, taken by itself, is inadequate.

cosmical adaptations—long favoured in popular natural theology, roughly handled by Spinoza, criticised by Kant, discredited by some speculative naturalists of the present generation—is in danger of losing the weight that is really due to it, as an auxiliary to the theistic interpretation that we are led to put upon the universe by our moral or religious experience with its necessary postulates, and also by the craving which sends us in quest of an originating Cause of change. Presuppose perfect moral reason or goodness as eternally personal, as what is always and everywhere active, and this at the heart of existence; *then*, under this indispensable presupposition and motive, the innumerable adaptations presented in sensuous experience correspond with, confirm, and bring vividly home to the ordinary mind, the conception of Divine intending mind existing virtually at the root of all, notwithstanding the mixture of seeming malconstruction, misery, and sin in which the world abounds. But to infer the existence of a Being of perfect power, wisdom, and merey, *solely* from specimens of otherwise unexplained contrivance that occur empirically in our observation of the external world, is to beg a conclusion already presumed; not one that has been logically gathered from observation of natural organisms. The divine conclusion is infinitely in excess of the empirical premisses: the largest collection of super-human natural constructions can yield only a more or less probable finite inference: the finite can never be



logically transformed into the infinite, which cannot be deduced from the finite as from a premiss. The empirical data perhaps suggest an intelligent contriver of the observed contrivances, analogous to the mind supposed in the human contriver of a machine, but wanting, so far as the observed facts can carry us, in what is uniquely divine.

Other defects in the supposed deduction of perfect moral design and the perfect divine Designer, from empirically presented instances of cosmical contrivance, begin to suggest themselves, when the empirical facts are taken to justify the infinite conclusion, instead of only helping to awaken the infinite presupposition, or faith in God, as the primary necessity of man's relation to the universe of reality. How, we may be asked, can the analogy of a human artist and his work of art apply to the Divine artist, whose power is supposed to be boundless, and who must therefore be the author of the very materials which, in his inferior relation of Designer, he is alleged to have adapted, with more or less difficulty, to his ends? Why should adaptation of resisting material be part of the work of the omnipotence, on which the material, with all its qualities and modes of behaviour, must, on the divine hypothesis, absolutely depend? This looks like supposing God to be the cause of a difficulty, only in order that He may afterwards show His skill and strength in the removal of it.

In its common form it seems to make God the author of a difficulty in order that He may show His skill in overcoming it.

Again. The introduction of the Divine Designer

And to imply inconsistency with the universality of law or rational order.

has been reclaimed against, as an “interference” with the province which science must keep secure for natural evolution—which, as natural, is dogmatically presumed to be undesigned: natural uncalculating evolution really deserves, we are told, all the glory of the useful and beautiful contrivances in which the inorganic world and its living organisms abound. Visible sequences in their customary evolution, it is argued, are all we have to do with, and it is worse than superfluous to invest *them* with the conception of purpose. Even although some natural effects present adjustments which, if their antecedent condition were a human hand, we might refer to man’s organism as their physical cause, a wider experience of natural evolution shows that, in the absence of *this* physical cause, other physical causes seem spontaneously to transform themselves by degrees into those useful and beautiful mechanisms which, in their former ignorance, men referred to the creative “interference” of God. Our own experience of what nature, without this supposed capricious and incalculable divine interference, *does* gradually transform itself into, demonstrates that supernatural interposition is superfluous. Unaided natural evolution is found, in fact, to issue in contrivances; and the contrivances are inferred to be customary issues of wholly natural antecedent conditions, which need no conscious design or predestination outside themselves. To assume arbitrarily “the intervention of a designing force” is to withdraw

interest and attention from what alone is of practical importance in a man's intercourse with what is around him—the visible causes that are presented to the observing faculty; for these, so far as men are themselves causes, they are able in some degree to adapt as means to their own ends. Visible causes alone, accordingly, are the causes on which our organic pleasures and pains immediately depend. Man has nothing to do with a "Power" of which natural science can say nothing, because it is outside all physical or sensuous experience.

A recent criticism of Lord Salisbury's British Association address illustrates these remarks. It is by Dr Weismann, the eminent naturalist, in a late number of the 'Contemporary Review.' I find in it the following remarkable sentence:—"The scientific man may not assume the existence of a designing force, as Lord Salisbury suggests; for by so doing he would surrender the presupposition of his research—the comprehensibility of nature." Now, by the "comprehensibility of nature," I suppose Dr Weismann to mean, the presupposition that changes in nature must be in all cases the issue or metamorphosis of ascertainable natural causes, whatever else they may be or may imply; and that the particular sorts of natural or dependent causes on which the different kinds of physical facts and events depend, and not the uncaused origin of the Whole, is all that physical science, at any rate, has to do with. The *physical comprehen-*

Yet all  
Natural  
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*sibility* of nature is, in short, the final postulate and motive of science: in obedience to which it persists in inquiring only for the *visible and tangible* established signs of changes. These, under the ambiguous name of "causes," form its exclusive concern. But that the "comprehensibility of nature," so understood, should bar out the conception of the natural world being also a divine revelation of means adapted to calculable ends, useful or beautiful, looks like saying that the world must be finally incomprehensible, in order that it may be naturally or scientifically comprehended. That a perfectly reasonable "designing force" should "necessarily contradict" or "interfere with" the scientific presupposition of the fixed order of natural causes, is itself a prejudice, the groundlessness of which I suggested in last lecture. The scientific "comprehensibility" or interpretability of nature, instead of being inconsistent with the immanence of intending moral power and perfectly rational design, is really only one way of expressing this final truth as a practical fact. To show that a certain event is the new form of some antecedent phenomenon is not, properly speaking, to show its cause or origin: it only makes us ask further, What invests the antecedent phenomenon with its so-called power? Does not this question at last throw us back upon *intending will* as the *only* originating power that man encounters, involved as he finds it in his moral experience? May not the sort of causation for which a finite personal agent is morally

responsible be taken as typical of the supreme Power; and may not that Power be conceived to act either with or without the visible causes, or physical signs, which alone concern the physical inquirer? If all natural causation may at last be reasonably *this*, then discovery of a natural cause, which is thus only the natural sign of a consequently expected event, is no disproof of the event being really or finally a physical revelation of divine intending Will. This thought indeed seems to be dimly present to Dr Weismann himself, when he adds in a concluding sentence, that "there is nothing to prevent our conceiving (if conception be the right word to use in such a context) of a Creator as lying behind or within the forces of Nature and being their ultimate cause." Yet here and throughout his remarks, the ambiguous word "force," in its unanalysed physical application, further obscures his meaning; which had been already confused by the dogma that "divine design" is necessarily "interference" with order in nature, or that it is, in his own words, an "intervention to supplement the forces of Nature just where they break down." It cannot be "interference" or "superfluous intervention," if intending Will is the *only* originative cause—all natural sequences and natural evolution being only its orderly, and therefore interpretable, or physically comprehensible, effects. Thus physical causes, not being themselves properly causes, are, *per se*, as uninterpretable as spoken or printed words are, when emptied of mean-

ing and purpose, and taken as isolated sensuous phenomena of hearing or of sight. It all looks different when we find that physical nature may itself be regarded supernaturally, without ceasing to be nature for all the intellectual purposes of physical science, or for the secular utilities derived from its physical interpretation.

Adaptations may be gradually evolved, according to natural law, and yet be really manifestations of continuous divine agency.

Further. Adaptations may be slowly evolved according to natural laws, in a natural progress that may often look to us like regress, and notwithstanding they may be the natural revelation of God. If morally intending spirit is the *only* creative power that man's experience suggests to him; and if the causal or originative activity of this power is the reasonable implicate of faith in natural order, and also in the innumerable adaptations that appear in nature—it follows that *continuous growth* or evolution, not *off-hand production*, as of a watch or other mechanism by a human artist, is the true analogy to the manifestation of God that is actually presented in the persistent maintenance of worlds. Providential evolution of the universe—including occasional crises of natural disintegration—in an essentially supernatural process from an incalculable past, with its outcome in an incalculable future,—*this* rather than sudden creations, or interferences with the divine continuity of events in the providential evolution, becomes the theistic conception of contrivance in nature, under the modern dynamical conception of the physical universe. Creation is then

Providence or divinely-determined natural progress. Evolution or metamorphosis is at once natural and divine,—the visible growth as it were of the universal divinely-directed organism, in which human organisms, naturally yet supernaturally, live and move and have their being. A universe charged throughout with natural adaptations may then be read as the expression of ever-active spiritual agency, otherwise recognised as living and acting Reason, revealed throughout the Whole. The more obvious examples form illustrations, for popular use, of pervading purpose in the physical drama presented to the senses, and come home to the ordinary mind in the way that characteristic actions and habits of a man strikingly reveal his inner life and purposes to onlookers.

An ideal of the physical universe, as not a finished product but a continuous natural process, in unending duration, in analogy so far with the continuous life of a plant or an animal, is proposed by the sceptical Philo in Hume's 'Dialogues' as a more reasonable final conception of Nature than that which likens it to a machine made by a human mechanist at a given time. But Philo makes the tacit assumption that if cosmical adaptations are in fact successive outcomes of the natural order, under the law of "natural selection" let us suppose, they cannot *need* immanent intending mind to direct them. The "course of nature" is credited with the seemingly artificial collocations: they are simply a part of the customary behaviour of Nature;

Is the universe, with its seemingly artificial adaptations and constructions, really a natural growth; and if so, can it also be the revelation of supernatural purpose?

as if Nature's conduct must ultimately be other than divine or morally trustworthy conduct. Take the following in one of the utterances of Philo:—"There are other parts of the universe besides the machines of human invention, which bear a greater resemblance than this to the fabric of the world, and which therefore afford a better conjecture concerning the universal origin of this system. These parts are animals and vegetables. The world plainly resembles an animal or a vegetable more than it does a watch or a knitting-loom. Its cause, therefore, it is more probable, resembles the cause of the former than the latter. The cause of the former is generation or vegetation. The cause therefore of the world we may infer to be something similar or analogous to generation or vegetation. . . . In like manner as a tree sheds its seed into the neighbouring fields, and produces other trees, so the great vegetable, the world, *naturally* produces within itself certain seeds, which, being scattered into the surrounding chaos, vegetate into new worlds. Or if, for the sake of variety (for I see no other advantage), we should suppose the universe to be an animal: a comet is, as it were, the egg of this animal. An existing tree bestows order and organisation on the tree which springs from it, without itself knowing the order; an animal, in the same manner, on its offspring, without foreseeing what is done; and instances of this kind are even more frequent in the world than those of order which arise from conscious reason and



contrivance. To say that all this order or adaptation in animals and vegetables proceeds ultimately from design is begging the question; nor can that great point be ascertained otherwise than by proving *a priori* both that order is from its nature inseparably connected with thought, and that it can never of itself, or from original unknown principles, belong to matter." Now if merely natural sequence *must* be taken, as Philo takes it, for our last word about the events that fill up the history of the universe, I dare say the natural processes of vegetation and of the birth of animals may give a better final conception of the Whole than any others suggested by the natural processes which come within man's experience. But if *all* natural processes, *per se*, are only manifestations or effects, in themselves uninterpretable; if even the scientific interpretation of such effects, as examples of "laws," itself depends upon moral and spiritual reason for the physical faith which makes it possible, and enables us with moral confidence to put even a physical interpretation upon changes; if, moreover, there is nothing in the theory of the physical interpretability of phenomena that is inconsistent with, or any way opposed to, a co-ordinate theistic interpretation of them; and if this deeper interpretation of their natural modes of behaviour, adaptations, and constructions, tends to satisfy man's genuine spiritual needs—if all this be so, why should natural causation, when its actual relations are ascertained by scientific inquiry,

be regarded as necessarily empty of divine or moral purpose? Why must I infer that every fresh discovery of what is called a natural cause is a discovery that relieves its natural effects of connection with God, or makes them undivine?

The mystery of the infinite in the universe, taken sceptically, paralyses the apprehension of design within our narrow experience.

In truth it is the overwhelming idea of the infinity of the universe, when it arises under an empirical habit of thought, that seems to oppress Philo, and others who, like him, think only empirically, with what, if they yield to it enough, must become a despairing sense of the uninterpretability of *all* that is presented in experience, —its uninterpretability even up to the extent to which physical interpreters profess to read its meanings into natural science. Philo takes hold of the Infinite, as it were, by its sceptical or agnostic handle, and so, instead of its mystery quickening reverential faith, the idea of infinity seems wholly to disintegrate human experience. The incomprehensibility of a wholly physical experience, with its final negations of Boundlessness and Eternity, into which the natural sequences refund themselves, are allowed to paralyse moral reason, and religious faith in the supremacy of perfect goodness, which otherwise enable man to keep his head, and wisely regulate his course, even in an experience which, when only physically regarded, at last surpasses human knowledge. With the loss of the absolute moral postulate of practical reason, the mysteries of the infinite in quantity—the infinite in space, in duration, and in physical causality—dissolve the divine analogy

between cosmical adaptations in nature and those adaptations which we are accustomed to refer to human contrivers. And this disintegrative sense of mystery, if the sceptic is consistent, must not cease to operate when he contemplates what we call the contrivances of men. The men who surround us, notwithstanding the signs of design presented in *their* visible organic history, may also, like the universe, be only automatons: no man can enter into, or be conscious of, the invisible purpose which he nevertheless attributes to the human artificer whose organs are seen at work. The dark shadow of infinite mystery not only destroys the analogy so far as to forbid the *theistic* interpretation of the curiously adapted world; it not less forbids the spiritual interpretation of the visible adaptations in a watch, which refers them to the conscious design of a human watchmaker. More than this, it forbids all scientific interpretations of natural phenomena; because it implies that the universe, on account of its infinity, is too unique for *us* to make *any* affirmations about *any* of its events. It has, for man at least, lost its finally synthetic principle, and become a succession of meaningless sensuous impressions, and all this only because it has become in thought infinite in extent and duration and physical causation, and therefore to us incomprehensible.

Conscious design at work in another mind can  
 cases invisible. I see the material constructions, and  
 I see the movements in a human organism that natur-

be revealed  
to my  
mind only  
through a  
medium.

ally lead to the statical products; but I can neither perceive nor be conscious of the mental activity that I suppose in their cause, and which, in the case of living *human* organisms, is referred by me to a conscious life and agency that is human, and more or less like my own. We are more at a loss how to represent to ourselves the invisible life-processes that animate other animals on this planet in *their* seeming adaptations of means to ends, and their works of art—bees in their mathematically regulated constructions, ants in their organised commonwealth, or dogs in an intelligent kindness that often seems to rival that of man. Yet when I find in them too continuous signs of policy, calculation, adaptation, resembling those which give expression to these invisible states or acts of conscious life in myself, something in me obliges me to regard the phenomena as signs of another acting intelligence, or at least of what is, for all practical purposes, acting intelligence other than man's. In all cases the assurance of continuous orderly adaptation of means to ends, whether presented in human organisms and their movements, in the organisms and outward movements of animals, or in the universal evolution, obliges men to treat the manifestations as virtually a revelation of purpose. When overt actions which involve skill are performed through our organs, as they often are, without our voluntary agency, or individual intending will, we are obliged to refer them to *another intending intelligence*. “*We* are not conscious,”

it has been remarked, “of the systole and diastole of the heart, or the motion of the diaphragm. It may not nevertheless be thence inferred that *unknowing* nature can act thus regularly, as well as ourselves. The true inference here is—that the self-thinking individual, or *human* person, is not the real author of those natural motions, and the adaptations which they present. And in fact no man blames himself if such organic motions, over which he has no control, go wrong, or values himself if they go right. The same may be said of the fingers of a musician, which some assert to be moved by habit only, which understands not. But it is evident that what is done by rule and calculation must proceed from *something that understands the rule*; therefore, if not from the mind of the musician himself, *from some other active intelligence*; the same perhaps which governs bees and spiders in their constructions, and moves the limbs of those who walk in their sleep.”

The immanence of design in a curious natural construction may be affirmed, although we may be unable to pass even in imagination into the conscious life of the designer. Although the universe is to us *practically* the manifestation of sufficiently comprehensible examples of means adapted to human ends, it would be presumptuous to infer from this alone that the intelligence so manifested must itself reason and calculate in successive conscious states or living acts, as in the conscious experience of men. We cannot do this

We may recognise adaptations without being able to comprehend fully the Power to which they are referred.

even in the case of those beings we call "inferior animals," who are so great a mystery to us, but infinitely less in the case of the Universal Designer. Yet so far as man is able to look into reality, he sees in natural adaptations what he may with moral confidence act upon, as signs of what *he* can think of only as consciously calculating mind; but this without having a right to assert that he can adequately realise what, for want of more expressive language, he calls eternal or infinite "Mind."

Natural law itself implies adaptation to interpreting intelligence.

I have spoken of adaptations in nature as fit to be distinguished from law or regularity in the sequences of nature. Yet looked at more deeply, it may appear that not only do faith in physical law, and faith in divine construction or adaptation, rise somehow out of the practical constitution of man, relieving him of the sceptical paralysis that would be otherwise induced by the appalling sense of mysterious infinity;—the two faiths even appear to coincide at last. For all natural uniformity—law in nature—may be regarded as adaptation of the temporal process to the moral and intellectual constitution of man. If we could suppose ourselves living consciously in a physical chaos, instead of living in what faith recognises as a physical cosmos; and if in this supposed conscious life we could be endowed with our present moral and religious constitution—with moral reason in its highest human development,—we should still,

it would seem, be obliged to suppose that the chaos around us must somehow, and at some time, have its final outcome in a reasonable world; but besides this greatly increased strain upon our moral faith, we should lose the educational and other practical advantages of living now in a world so adapted to us that we gradually learn how to regulate our conduct, in reasonable expectation of changes which the sustained order in nature enables us to anticipate as probable.

The divine constitution of physical order, with its natural evolution of organic adaptations, may seem a roundabout method for accomplishing what infinite Power might be supposed to accomplish in man extraneously or by sudden miracle. What is the purpose of an organism so curiously constructed as the eye, one may ask, if men could have existed, able to experience mentally the conscious state called "seeing things," *without eyes*; or what the need for the complex structure of our bodily organisms, if we could have the mental life we pass through between birth and death *without bodies*, or as unembodied conscious spirits? If those elaborate bodily constructions do not *originate* the conscious life with which they are found connected, *what are they adapted for?* and must their organic adaptations not be looked at as superfluous in what is essentially a spiritual world? This raises a question about Matter, and about miraculous as distinguished from natural revelation of God, the consideration of which enters at a later stage in our course of argument.

The final purpose of Matter and its physical adaptations, in relation to man.

Summary. The lesson of the present lecture is, that design is a conception in harmony with, and even involved in, natural evolution, and that whether Nature is contemplated as a whole, or in its particular organisms and events. Designed order in the whole involves design in each part, as much as universal gravitation is illustrated even in the fall of an apple to the earth. The universality of adaptation—the application of the idea of providence to all natural changes—seems as possible as the universality of the ideas of gravitation or of evolution within the sphere of *their* applications. Nothing is too great or too little for natural law, and therefore for providential purpose. Universal Providence is in this sense necessarily special. The very idea of natural law is teleological.



## LECTURE IV.

## DIVINE NECESSITY : ONTOLOGICAL.

I HAVE been trying to show that those are proceeding unreasonably, and therefore unphilosophically, who treat theistic faith, or the disposition to put finally an ethical and religious interpretation upon the universe, as in every form only a subjective sentiment, characteristic of some men, or some races of men, or of certain stages in the history of mankind—a sentiment which may take the form of what is called religious thought, but which after all is only transitory fancy that is likely to become an anachronism, if it is not already this among the educated. The great historic fact of the permanence, in many forms, of the disposition to put a morally obligatory or supernatural background to human life, and especially to extraordinary events that happen in the world, with the immense influence the religious instinct has in the history and development of mankind, suggests that

The Science of Religions has collected facts which suggest that critical analysis will discover reason in theistic faith.

theistic faith in the Power at work around us must be reconcilable with reason, if it is not even reason itself, in its deepest and truest *human* manifestation. The modern Science of Religions has accumulated abundant evidence that Religion *is* this potent factor in history; although the human disposition to interpret experience in the light of supernatural power darkens and degrades the interpreter, when a faith that is essentially ethical presents itself as non-moral, or immoral superstitions. But even in superstitions, one can trace the ineradicable dissatisfaction with what is merely finite, and some sense of dutiful conformity to eternal and ennobling ideals. And in all this theism appears in germ.

Theists may be indistinctly unconscious of the fundamental rationality of their theistic faith.

The individual subjects of moral and religious experience of course may not themselves see what their own disposition to read the world religiously means when regarded philosophically; they may fail to see in our morally religious faith the most rational conception that man can finally form of the changing universe. Those even in whom the religious instinct is strong and pure are not on that account intellectually awake to its essential reconcilableness with reason, or with the physically scientific interpretation of the world, which so many now treat as if it exclusively were the final reason that is the proper criterion of all reasonableness and unreasonableness.

The rationale of theistic

My last three lectures were meant to show that in yielding to the religious tendency, which, in its de-

veloped form, puts a theistic interpretation upon everything in nature, we are not only not contradicting physical science, but are really explaining and sustaining the physically scientific interpretation of the world. What is there in reason which forbids us to think of the laws or customary sequences in physical nature as finally the outcome and revelation of perfectly reasonable Will—in other words, as one at least of the modes of the self-revelation of God? Natural laws are not disparaged surely when they are not only believed in on the faith of experiments, but also accepted at last in moral and religious faith. Thus, instead of banishing God from their sphere, they are, so far as they go, an articulate revelation of the perfectly rational Will that man's natural environment should be a concatenated and calculable physical order, and not an incalculable procession of chaotic events or chance changes. When Nature is looked at thus, each advance in the discovery of its scientific meaning is seen to be also an advance in the theological interpretation of the universe. The customary procedure in the natural evolution of phenomena becomes in our thought God's natural, and therefore reasonable, mode of acting; referred to God because there is no trace in human experience of any other absolute or final cause than intending will, or moral agency, which divinely raises what would be otherwise only a natural into a supernatural reality. This consideration is what one seems to find at the root of the so-called cosmological

faith so far found in the cosmological or causal "proof" of the validity of this faith.

argument for God, or for sustenance of faith in the religious interpretation of all natural changes and their laws. Vaguely and at first the idea of cause expresses only the deep-rooted human sense of dissatisfaction with chance changes, and the implied need for an unconditioned cause, by which this causal dissatisfaction—only provisionally relieved by scientific discoveries of natural causes—may be finally and reasonably satisfied and put to rest. It seems to be true philosophy that man should accept the only arresting and final sort of cause that human experience offers—that found involved in his own moral responsibility, under the necessary postulate of moral reason. And this transforms the otherwise wholly physical and spiritually unsatisfying universe, into what turns out to be more than physical: when thus more deeply conceived, and more seriously lived in, it is found to be providential moral order.

The immanence of Design in Nature as a whole, and therefore in all natural constructions and changes.

But this impotence of mere physical phenomena, abstracted from the spiritual activity which they may be believed to manifest, and of which they and their natural orderliness are the significant signs—this, their seeming impotence, is not the only ground in reason which sustains theistic faith in the power at work in the universe. A sense of the powerlessness, *per se*, of outwardly manifested Nature indeed welcomes immanent intelligence and moral agency, and is ready to say—*Mens agit molem*. Yet this is not all that the outward changing world suggests. In last lecture I

turned to those more precise signs of the immanence of Mind in nature which observation claims to detect, in the form of means obviously related to useful or beautiful ends, in which the organised matter of the world naturally abounds. This illustration of calculating thoughtfulness in external Nature becomes more impressive with each advance of natural science, and especially since the comprehensive idea of organic evolution has more and more formulated the physical interpretations which pass current in this nineteenth century. For what, at our human point of view, is called divine Design is now recognisable, not only in particular instances of natural adaptation, like those on which Paley dwells, but universally in the very notion of natural evolution and progressive orderly change itself. The isolated examples, singled out by the old-fashioned natural theologians, as proofs of the past interference of a calculating and contriving God, are now found to be provisionally explained as gradual processes that can be expressed in terms of natural law. In the imperfect causal vocabulary of exclusively physical science, the human body, including of course the human eye and man's other organs, may be all naturally accounted for, we find, by "natural causes," causes long and slowly in evolutionary operation. Thus the whole history of the physical world may turn out, in the progress of physical science, to be a history of slowly forming special instances of natural construction—increasingly useful or beautiful adaptations of

means to human ends,—but all arising as sequences in the successive processes of what science calls natural causation. The visible machine of Nature seems to be giving rise to the outcoming constructions and adaptations, and this according to discovered processes of “natural selection,” or other natural modes of behaviour. But what if the ambiguous Power, called Nature, is only metaphorically “doing” this or anything else? What if its phenomena present to experimental inquiry no proof of their own final and proper agency, while man has proof of final and proper agency that must be supernatural, because it is moral or immoral. In that view of things the great natural machine is really charged with supernaturalness, so that all its natural evolutions not only admit of, but require, a teleological as well as a physical interpretation. Natural causes explain, for sense and sensuous imagination, the bodily organisation of man, as well as its special organs, such as the eye or the ear. But then the merely physical explanation is always only a *provisional* explanation. It may in addition be thought of as the design of what, at the human point of view, seems predestinating Mind, so that continuously operative Reason may, at the end, be credited with all the adaptations that are gradually elaborated in the natural time-process. On the supposition that scientific inquiry verifies a universal natural evolution, as I am now supposing, science is only revealing a universe of natural adaptations that are in process of slow continuous formation, the natural laws

or modes of procedure being the scientific expression of how creation proceeds. The Power that keeps the whole in motion is then thought of as Power that is making more and more for useful and elaborate relations of means to ends, in the virtually living organism commonly called outward Nature; and in issues of gradually increasing value, measured by the satisfaction given to what is highest in man, who is himself the highest of the progressive and providential outcomes on this planet. The whole and each event in Nature, as thus contemplated, becomes in our view charged with Purpose, the revelation to us of latent Reason, to which the human spirit responds in intellectual and moral sympathy. This is just to say that God is the real cause in all the natural causes that are making either for the integration or the disintegration of the universal virtually living organism—the presented Universe—which, in either natural way, integrative or disintegrative, continuously reveals God.

It is only when the final mystery of the physical infinity of Nature is taken wantonly by what I called its atheistic handle that *our* want of physical omniscience is produced as sufficient reason for refusing to read all experience theistically. For the world would be scientifically uninterpretable, if man were obliged to turn away from all attempts to explain even its natural meaning or laws, until he had relieved himself of the final *physical* mystery by rising into omniscience. I cannot even move from where I stand, if I am bound,

The infinity of existence need not paralyse the power of interpreting what enters into our experience.

before I do so, to have a perfect knowledge of the universe, and so make absolutely sure of my intellectual ground. The hypothesis that the orderly evolution of nature is a history of Purpose, may humanly sustain itself, by observed facts of natural means in their relations to ends, which, when I am affected by the mystery of physical endlessness, are found so impressive,—and this even although my end of the line of natural sequences appears to be its *only* end—it being regressively without any beginning, *i. e.*, any other end than the present moment. For I do seem to be here confronted by the mystery of a line that has only one end—that at which I am percipient, when I make the regressive movement of thought in quest of the beginning of the natural procession of changes.

Special  
natural  
adaptations  
and  
universal  
natural  
design.

When particular constructions found in nature, like the human eye in man, or the wings in a bird, are appealed to as signs that intelligent agency must have been at work in overcoming the resistance of intractable natural material, by adroit combination and collocation—like a human artificer making a machine,—this way of conceiving the case presents two difficulties. In the first place, it represents natural law, and the qualities of “matter,” as in conflict with the Designer of the contrivances. This is so, no doubt, when the artist is a man. And if the supposed divine Designer is credited with the natural laws and qualities, as imposed by Him upon matter in some prehistoric period in the illimitable Past, this looks like His mak-



ing the difficulty at first, for the sake of the pleasure of overcoming it afterwards. In the second place, to ground faith in supernatural design on visible adaptations, found in particular instances of the employment of matter for purposes useful or pleasant to a living being, is exposed, as I have said, to the risk of having the supposed supernaturalness in those instances discovered to be after all according to a natural process; and with this the supernaturalness disappears, if we must assume that when an event or a construction is proved to have happened naturally, it must *therefore* cease to be due to supernatural Power. But it is otherwise when reason—at least something not unreasonable in the constitution of man—*makes* us recognise, in all natural processes and issues, really divine processes and issues; so that whenever useful or beautiful adaptations of means to ends, in organic structures or otherwise, are naturally evolved, this evolution, however slow and gradual, must be interpreted by man as the constant action of immanent Deity. External nature, as presented to the senses, is then, throughout the whole course of its natural evolution—out of an original fire-mist, if you please, or out of whatever else can be proved scientifically to have been its early form—external nature or physical universe, I say, may then be for man one phase of the Divine revelation—practically for us a revelation of supernatural and superhuman *design*—whatever more it may be, at a point of view higher than the human.

Miraculously accomplished divine design.

Whether this natural revelation, charged throughout with what men may in effect treat as design or calculation, and expressed in what might be called a natural language—whether this revelation has included in its past history, among other revealed designs, those also which are called “miracles”—physical and other miracles—is a question which belongs to a later stage in our course of thought. It demands the consideration of what is meant by a physical miracle. Is a miracle an event brought about according to the natural procedure, through undiscovered, and perhaps to men for ever inaccessible, natural causes, but designed, by its uncommonness and natural inaccessibility, perhaps to draw attention to prophetic inspirations, and so to quicken otherwise dormant or languid moral response? Or is it an event, presented indeed in nature, yet not conditioned by any physical cause, but one in which the Reason that is actively immanent in nature dispenses, for a purpose, with all physical causes, and reveals design only in the miraculous physical effects, which thus appear in nature without any physical cause at all? If the second of these is taken for the true conception, a physical miracle would be an event in nature in which the immediate action of the all-pervading Mind was not in the lower meaning natural, but action independent of physical conditions. We should then have to distinguish the supernaturalness that is manifested according to perceptible processes from extra-natural or miraculous manifestation

of supernaturalness. But this only by the way, in the present connection.

In last two lectures I invited your attention to what is suggested by the finite and ever-changing phenomena presented in the physical universe, or temporal process, in support of theistic confidence in the perfect reasonableness and goodness of the Power that is at the heart of the Whole. There is still inadequacy, however, in these considerations, taken by themselves, even although they are important elements and auxiliaries in a more comprehensive rationale of theistic faith. At least when put into the form of arguments, the infinite conclusion seems to be fallaciously begged, in the causal argument, whether taken in cosmological or in teleological form. For one thing, the final appeal in both may seem to be made to an *individual* reason and consciousness only, while the conclusion is assumed to apply to Universal Being; and this, it may be said, can be legitimately done only by the Universal Reason or Consciousness somehow entering into man, and elevating his individual reason into Reason that, as universal, can alone finally interpret universal reality. How can the required rationality at the heart of the universe of Being emerge from, or be found in, my individual intelligence—an intelligence of which, moreover, no one except myself can be actually conscious? How can each person's private intelligence—so peculiarly his

Defects both in the merely causal and the merely teleological arguments for the theistic interpretation of the universe.

own as that no other individual can be conscious in *his* living thoughts—how can this isolated mind be the foundation or centre of a knowledge of the Universal Mind and Meaning? I and all other individual egos might never have existed, and yet the universal or final rationality of the universe of reality would remain; at least if what men call human “knowledge” be real, and if the physical universe presented to our senses be trustworthy and interpretable—capable, as metaphysical pedants might say, of being “objectively justified”? Adequate analysis of theistic faith, if theistic faith is valid in reason, must find an element that is wanting, or at least left in the background, throughout the theistic interpretation of natural causation, and also in the teleological conception of natural processes and natural organic constructions.

The ontological conception and its implicit theism.

What has been called ontological “proof” of the eternal and universal inseparability of thought and real existence—self-conscious Knowing and actual Being—is sometimes brought forward in this connection. The idea of unconditional need for Eternal Mind, the impossibility of reality in the absence of thought, the contradiction implied in the universe existing without God—this idea has taken many forms of expression in the course of theological and philosophical speculation about the final principle of existence. May it be accepted as at least implied in theism? Is an infinite or omniscient Knower the rationally necessary implicate of all reality? From Plato to Hegel, not

to speak of pre-Socratic European, and still earlier Asiatic meditations, the absolute and final necessity for Mind — the omnipresence or omnipotence of active Reason—is an idea that has in different forms pervaded theistic dialectic. Through this abstract necessity the individual thinker has essayed to secure for himself a more commanding position than the individual consciousness of one human mind seems to supply. It is assumed that one's hold of the final principle of the universe cannot reasonably be dependent on one's own, lately born, isolated self: if I have, or can ever attain to, intellectual possession of reality, I must somehow become involved in a higher Reason than my individual reason; spiritually I must become more than an orphan spirit, or spiritual atom. I must be somehow *identified* with the Universal Reason, and this in proportion as I become truly myself. So regarded, my true self seems, in proportion as it unfolds, to be at bottom the Universal Self: what is called "individual" reason finds ultimate justification in the discovery for which this philosophy takes credit—the discovery that reason finally is not mine individually, but mine, as it were, theistically, or in so far as God lives in me. My self is then truly and infinitely realised in God; and the individual, orphan, isolated self is renounced, the more the individual man becomes universal, and in so becoming, becomes divine. The essential divinity of what is truly real is the rationally necessary conception with which Reason is

credited, when we have learned to rise from the abstractions of special or separate physical sciences into the central and absolute philosophy of Being, which philosophy is theology under another name. For a resolution of religious faith into philosophic science may, with equal fitness, be called theology or philosophy: it would be the theology that deserved the proud title of supreme Science, or Science of sciences.

Various  
phases of  
ontological  
theism.

A position akin to this is, I think, virtually taken in the chief forms of ontological proof, final ontological synthesis, or constructive necessity of thought. I have described it perhaps more according to the manner in which it is presented in our own century or generation, than in some of its earlier and cruder forms. But one recognises it in the Idealism of Plato, where things of sense dimly symbolise the rational reality towards which the individual man may gradually approximate, as he rises from contingent sense appearances, and fluctuating opinions, and enters into the underlying intellectual necessities of Divine Thought, in which alone is true reality. That the Thought which transcends the private consciousness, and which can be entered into only through mystical ecstasy, contains the secret of Being, or of the universe, was the supreme lesson of Plotinus in later and more transcendental Platonism. Recognition of absolute or ontological necessity for the real existence of Divine or Perfect Being, as involved in the very idea of perfection, pervades the celebrated theistic dialectic of St Augustine,

St Anselm, and Descartes. Perfection in idea, it was argued, must include actual existence; for an idea cannot be conceived as perfect unless conceived to be in consequence existing, thus existing by an abstract necessity of reason. The absolute reality of the Divine Being, in other words, is involved in the idea of infinity or perfection that is latent in all of us: thought necessarily underlies existence: and so universal thought must underlie universal reality: real existence needs living thought to constitute and sustain it. These are varied expressions of the idea which appears at the bottom of ontological theism and theology. Expressed in its cruder form, this looks like the childish fallacy, that merely because I fancy that a thing or a person exists, that thing must therefore actually exist. But to say that the eternally real existence implies eternal thought or reason is very different from saying that men's contingent fancies about finite things must be objective realities, or, as in Kant's caricature by analogy of the ontological argument—that because I imagine that I have money in my purse, it must be true that I have it. That there is intellectual need for God involved in the idea of space and immensity, also in duration and eternity, is another form of ontological argument for theism: it appears in Samuel Clarke's once famous demonstration of abstract intellectual necessity for the divine existence. And the other argument of St Anselm and Descartes might be taken as an awk-

wardly expressed anticipation of the *esse* is *percipi*, or *esse* is *percipere*, of Berkeley; itself anticipated long before St Anselm or St Augustine, in the τὸ αὐτὸ νοεῖν τε καὶ εἶναι, attributed to Parmenides. That the Universal Mind is, by abstract necessity, the *præius* of all individual things and persons, and presupposed in their existence, is the constant refrain in Berkeley's 'Siris,' in which the inevitable demand for Reason, as the finally uniting principle of existence, is reiterated at many different points of view. "Comprehending God and the creatures in one general notion, we may say," according to Berkeley, "that all things together make one Universe, or τὸ πᾶν. But if we should say that all things make one God, this," he thinks, "would indeed be an erroneous notion of God, but would not amount to Atheism, so long as Mind or Intellect was admitted to be the governing part. It is nevertheless," he argues, "more respectful, and consequently the truer notion of God, to suppose Him neither made up of parts, nor to be Himself a part of any Whole whatever." The intellectual need for recognising that the universe must be constituted in Universal Reason is, one may say, the chief lesson of 'Siris,'—a book of aphorisms, and a stage in the modern unfolding of the ontological conception that God is the intellectually necessary foundation of all that we call real, and the very essence of reality.

The recognition by Leibniz of universal ideas, innate



at once in the universe and in every human mind, in a pre-established harmony with the natural processes, may likewise be taken as the germ of an ontological theism. Kant's philosophical revolution made him the Copernicus of philosophy and theology, in expressly taking human thought as, for man, the final explanation and regulative principle of the universe, instead of supposing thought itself and its necessities explicable by things, as naturalism dogmatically does. This opened the way to the all-comprehensive philosophical theism and theology of the post-Kantian era in which we are living. If human experience is an experience of what is real, it was argued that it must be an *intelligible* experience, its intelligibility being its justification. Our knowledge, even our desire to know, implies that what is presented in experience must be intrinsically capable of being known. Now the conviction that we are living in a knowable universe, already more or less interpreted by man, doubtless contains an essential germ of theistic faith, which readily adapts itself to ontological theism. External nature is instinctively treated by us in the sort of way a book is treated by its readers. We expect to find meaning in all our experience of things: this expectant trust supposes that we can enter philosophically into its essential or final Reason. The philosophically unfolded Reason that is implied in the intelligible existence of things, or in the interpretability of what is experienced is not my individual

Theistic  
Ontological  
Necessity  
as in  
Leibniz  
and since  
Kant.

or private reason; nor can it be the merely private thinking of any other individual person: it must be the absolute and universal Thought, if experience is real. The universe must be a tissue or network, as it were, of intelligible relations, in virtue of which it is capable of being reduced to science. Its intelligible relations are the divine Thought or Reason that is universally involved in it—latent at first as far as each of us individually is concerned, but which men may and do bring into their actual perceptions more and more, in proportion as their scientific interpretation of things advances. This advance, so far as it goes, might be called increasing individual *participation* in the Universal Thought; so that, in proportion to his success as an interpreter of portions of the universe, a man may be said to be identifying himself more fully with that Universal Reason or Consciousness, which the possibility of his having scientific and philosophic experience presupposes to be at the centre of the Whole. I begin to “participate,” it may be said, in objective thought or reality, when, by expectant calculation, founded on past experience of the manifestations of what is real, I bring my individual thinking out of the state of idle fancy, and into line with the outwardly manifested or real thought; thus substituting reasonable interpretation of nature for an individually capricious “anticipation” of nature, as Bacon would call it. And so I may be said to be “identifying” myself with God, or with the divine thought immanent in experi-

ence, which now expresses itself in and through my thoughts about things, that are becoming more and more divine-like, as my science advances. In like manner we say that in reading a book intelligently and sympathetically, the individual reader is entering into it—thinking the thoughts of its author; becoming one with, or participating in, his spirit. The reader enters into and thus far becomes one with the author; the author enters into and becomes one with the sympathetic reader.

Again. Thought or reason, whether so manifested in a human microcosm, or manifested in the macrocosm of the universe, must be referred, at least by man, to living conscious Mind. He is instinctively obliged to *personify* it, as we say, and that whether it presents itself in purely intellectual relations, or as obligatory moral reason. The relations of science which an interpretable universe involves, oblige us to suppose that we are living in organised living intelligence, just as moral obligation presupposes us living individually in moral relation to the living moral Reason that is supreme. Universal thought to us means universal conscious life. So that the indispensable initiative of having scientific intercourse with contingent phenomena, of which we have trial in our fragmentary human experience, appears as the beginning of intellectual intercourse with the Universal Consciousness; or, if another mode of expression be preferred, the beginning of the revelation in us of the Universal

Abstract  
Thought  
and living  
Mind.

Consciousness. It is an approach on our part, and a self-revelation on God's part, which becomes more full and articulate with all human progress in philosophy.

Hegelian  
ontological  
Theism.

Following this line of argument or speculation, we find ourselves becoming involved at last in something like the dialectical procedure of Hegel. For his philosophy of the universe is finally and throughout a philosophical theism or theology—the most comprehensive and elaborate perhaps that modern thinking has produced; and which, indirectly even more than by direct assimilation, has been giving new forms to the religious thought of this age. Its sympathetic yet critical introduction to the British and Anglo-Saxon world is largely due to an eminent countryman, a former Gifford Lecturer, whom we are proud to have living among us in Edinburgh. Dr Hutchison Stirling's 'Secret of Hegel,' published some thirty years ago, marks the beginning of a new era in our insular philosophy, with corresponding activity and enlargement in religious thought. Its appearance was almost contemporaneous with that of another epoch-making book, representative of the opposite pole of philosophy, yet not without affinity to the all-comprehensiveness of Hegelian religious thought—I mean the volume of 'First Principles,' and the synthetic philosophy of which it was the pioneer, which forms Mr Herbert Spencer's contribution to the intellectual life of his generation. For Mr Spencer's philosophy of the universe is as it were an inverted Hegelianism—resting

on an empirical, not on a rationally ontological base, and constructed by empirical generalisation, not by the necessities of purely rational dialectic. Its apotheosis is in the universally and for ever Unknowable Power, at the extreme opposite to the potential if not actual Omniscience which Hegel seems to claim.

The Hegelian dialectic is virtually the Hegelian theology. It becomes a Philosophy of Religion—Philosophical Theism the boldest and most thorough-going—which issues in a system that may be called indifferently Philosophy or Theology, seeing that in Hegel these are virtually one. His interest in the problem of existence seems to be religious and Christian as much as intellectual. As with Aristotle, and still more with St Thomas Aquinas, theology is with Hegel the consummation of speculation, if not, as with Bacon, “the Sabbath and port of all man’s labours and peregrinations.”

The theo-  
logical  
Dialectic  
of Hegel.

Hegelian dialectic might be taken as an exhaustive intellectual elaboration of what is put only in a tentative and practical way in the cosmological argument; which, as I suggested, is founded on the craving for cause that finds rest only in the agency of Divine Spirit, or, as one might say, in the Universal Consciousness. The Hegelian progressive and ascending synthesis is a process which is brought forward to show articulately in reason the inadequacy of the lower and more abstract categories of thought,—the intellectual need for ascending regressively from the extreme in-

Outline.

adequacy of Pure Being to the infinite fulness of the concrete Divine Reality—making manifest that the universe in its true concreteness necessarily presupposes infinite wealth in its divine ground—in the Thought or Consciousness that is universal. This is not an old-fashioned deduction—things and persons deduced from a principle—unfolded in the way conclusions in mathematics are drawn out of the axioms and definitions in which they are tacitly involved; nor an induction from facts, in the way natural causes are generalised from their physical effects. It is a reflex synthesis of what is alleged to be found by reason, as necessarily presupposed in the lower and more abstract categories of thought, when they are purged of the inadequacy and error that pertains to them if they are taken as ultimate. Thus purely abstract Being must be less adequate to express Universal or Divine Being than the higher category of change or Becoming: this, in turn, is less adequate than Being that is determinate, and so on, till Infinite and Spiritual Being, or God in His fulness, is reached,—to be realised more and more fully in the progressive conscious intelligence of individual men, as it is always latent in Nature. This regressively dialectical ascent promises, at each stage of advance, a fuller conception of the Absolute Being or God, till at last God is found by the philosopher in the form of rationally articulated reality or universal consciousness, more or less shared in by all finite things and persons. Each partial step on the

ascent, on account of its unsatisfying abstractness, craves a richer or more concrete thought; and without this further development, the judgment is left sceptical between affirmation and negation. The consequent intellectual unrest is the movement which carries the mind upward, until it finds complete satisfaction in the universal rational consciousness. This is recognition that the universe of rationally articulated things and persons is essentially Divine: the perfect rational articulation is another name for God. Dialectical development of the categories of thought, in their hierarchical gradation, may be called the gradual unfolding of philosophical or ontological theism. The individual thinker, potentially identical with God, through the unconscious immanence of the now articulated rationality in himself as in all things and persons, becomes consciously identified, in proportion as, through the dialectical synthesis, he is made to see philosophically how he is living and moving and having his being in universal reason or universal consciousness. He becomes aware of his own participation in Deity, by translating into thought what was otherwise held in the imperfect intellectual form of feeling. Philosophy is, in short, theistic and Christian faith in the universe, *translated in terms of thought*: the translation makes explicit the reason that is latent in the feeling, making all visible as the infinite or divine universe. This philosophy is offered to this generation as the intellectual form of religion, — assimilating in itself the

Christian as the one catholic and absolute religion. It claims to be religion so far as religion is intellectual, but not necessarily to the exclusion of religion in the more human and practical form of feeling, emotion, and faith. And if theology is the intellectual interpretation and co-ordination of man's final relations to the divine universe of reality, Hegelian philosophy is Hegelian theism or theology; the two are really synonymous. Hegelian dialectic becomes Christian theism elaborated in the form of eternal and necessary thought — *sub specie aeternitatis*, as Spinoza would say. It appears at the opposite pole to every modification of agnosticism, and yet the extremes are sometimes found to approach.

Questions suggested by the ontological Theism of Hegel.

Is the philosopher justified in reason, when he announces, as discovered intellectual necessity, the perfect rational articulation of the universe in the universal consciousness called God, as what all things and persons must really exist in? Is all that is implied in the actual existence of *things* and in the moral agency of *persons* fully explained, or relieved of all mystery, so that the burden which has put so much strain in past ages upon faith is found to disappear, when the Hegelian translation of theistic faith into this form of theistic thought has been dialectically unfolded? Is faith found to be exchanged for sight, in the perfect intellectual vision supplied by this dialectical reconciliation of the universe of nature and spirit? Is



this philosophic thought adequate for the accommodation of all the facts of experience for which it is bound by its profession to provide room; or must we all still bear, in the form of life and living trust, a burden of mysteries, which neither this nor any other intellectual interpretation of the universe is able finally to eliminate? Does Hegelian thought penetrate deep enough to take in all the genuine facts of man's physical and moral experience—all the facts, I mean, which can vindicate their genuineness, and the need for recognising them, by the sceptical disintegration of human experience—the impossibility of any scientific and moral intercourse with reality that follows—if *they* are disallowed or ignored? When the dialectical unfolding of the universe of existence is said to show that “all things and persons exist in God,” does this mean that nothing exists (or can exist) except God? Does it mean that so much actual existence in visible and tangible *things* as is implied in their being media of intercourse between persons is an illusion; and also that faith in the free or self-origivative power of *persons*, in their morally responsible acts, is misleading fancy? How do individual persons retain their morally needed personal identity, if their personal activity—evil as well as good—is really the activity of God—consciously to themselves God, up to the degree in which each man learns through philosophy to recognise only Deity in what he still calls “himself”? As a fact, is not each man able to originate voluntary acts, which

are therefore called his own—acts many of which *ought not* to have been acted, and which, therefore, there was no absolute necessity in reason for the human person to create? Or, on the contrary, are all acts that enter into the temporal manifestations of the divine active reason—the malignant will of the murderer, equally with the lofty ideals that are more or less realised in a philanthropic and saintly life—are these all alike acts of God—part of the divine life? Do they all express the Universal Consciousness in its incarnate activities?

There are especially two mysteries of existence from the burden of which I do not find the promised intellectual relief—

(1) I cannot find in this dialectically evolved necessity the explanation of the mystery involved in the existence of individual personal agents who must themselves be blamed for acts which ought not to exist—acts for which there is no rational necessity that they should come into existence, and which therefore cannot be acts accordant with moral reason. Are not all immoral acts undivine acts? How does the dialectical necessity transform personal responsibility into a final thought in which human consciousness is freed from all mystery? Does the offered philosophy more than cover with a new vocabulary what is still a mystery, hid in the final unknowableness — as distinguished from a human or practical knowledge?

(2) Then there is the mystery of individual persons and outward things naturally existing in time—the

Does this ontological dialectic solve the moral mystery of finite persons and their moral power?

Or of timelessness.

mystery of change, with its relation to an unbeginning and an unending natural succession, or to the "timeless" Universal Consciousness. While human understanding has to face *this* mystery of mysteries, how does the dialectical procedure transform faith in it into concrete thought and intellectual vision, making the faith become sight? Can future change be conceived as always real? Is all that has been and all that is to be—the temporal process which faith assumes to be in actual fulfilment only gradually—is all this only illusion: so that whatever happens in time must, as such, be unreal, and the words "before" and "after" only an expression of error or of ignorance? Can the dialectical ontology resolve into one perfect timeless conception our otherwise finally mysterious faith in the historical reality of the procession of natural changes and in the eternity of God?

combined  
with the  
historical  
reality of  
individual  
things and  
persons?

In this connection I find wisdom in the words of Lotze, one who is perhaps the deepest and most considerate thinker among the later Germans—I mean Lotze. The words suggest the inadequacy of all abstract categories of Reason to explain exhaustively mysteries of actual fact and experience; which nevertheless they may enable us to co-ordinate, in subordination to the reasonable faith on which our individual relation to the supreme realities of the universe seems finally to repose. "All universal propositions, upon which our knowledge depends," says Lotze, "are judgments which do not tell us that anything concrete is, or takes place;

they only declare what would exist, or would have to take place, in case certain conditions actually occur: they merely express certain general rules which we must follow in the construction of the content of our ideas. On the contrary, those propositions upon which all the special interest of religion depends—for example, that God is, that He has created the World, that the soul of man survives death—these are all declarative judgments, which assert particular definite facts. The first-mentioned general propositions are nothing but expressions of the forms of activity in which reason, according to its own abstract nature, must be exercised. On the other hand, the declarative propositions of faith, which assert facts with respect to the ordering of a world that is more than abstract reason, cannot with equal legitimacy be regarded as the innate endowment of our intelligence, but are in some sort the result of experience and spiritual culture.”

All this raises a significant question about the nature and limiting conditions of human understanding as regards our final conception of the universe, to which I will ask your consideration in next lecture.

## LECTURE V.

## PHILOSOPHICAL FAITH.

THE final problem of the universe may be taken as the signal object-lesson for illustrating the limit of man's power to interpret experience, his intellectual relation to reality, and the ultimate constitution of moral faith in the universe. Can our final relation to the highest realities be found in and through what we are as thinking or intellectual beings only? Does the reasonableness of our philosophic interpretation of things not depend on complex influences, other than those that are determined by the scientific understanding measured by data of sense? Must not the moral, practical, and reverential dispositions in man, as well as the logical understanding and sense-experience, be recognised when we try to read the deepest available thought about the world—including the spiritual world—that we are living and having our being in? Is it therefore possible for man to eliminate all mystery from his

The final problem of the universe is the signal object-lesson for measuring man's power to think or know.

final philosophical conception of himself, the world, and God—in an intellectual vision in which an imperfectly understood faith, that things are working together with loving purpose towards a reasonable end, is exchanged for an all-comprehending philosophical intuition of the infinite reality in an unmysterious rationally articulated system? Is man potentially, if not as yet with full consciousness, an omniscient being? Can his individual intelligence of the universe become perfect without any eternally necessary remainder of incompletable mystery left for faith to assimilate, in what some might deprecate or disparage as a mystical act? What if this be in reason impossible, unless man can become absolutely identified with God—his incarnate consciousness one with the eternal consciousness? Moral faith or trust must then be each *man's* highest form of living, in relation to what can be completely intelligible only at the Divine centre of things, from which man is eternally excluded, as entrance into it would mean complete deification. If this be true, theistic faith cannot be exchanged by man for theistic thought that has been completely liberated, by philosophical speculation, from that abridged or broken, because imperfect, knowledge that at last takes the form of feeling, faith, and action.

Alternatives which must be faced by a philosophy that pro-

These questions are suggested by attempts to think out exhaustively the human ego, the outer world in its temporal process or evolution, and the Divine active reason, all “organically united” in necessities of reason,

and emptied of resolved mysteries. This is offered as relief from the mental discomfort of imperfect knowledge, implied in a final faith burdened with mysteries. The moral faith out of which theism seems to emerge cannot, of course, sustain what is demonstrably self-contradictory—what can be *shown* to be absolutely irrational. But may the faith, in addition to conformity with this negative criterion, be also transformed, in a human mind, into completely unmysterious insight—unclouded mental vision, that is, so to speak, *co-extensive* with universal reality? If a philosopher affirms this, and professes that he has accomplished this transformation, let us make sure that no convictions which are indispensable to human experience are thereby virtually converted into illusions; rejected only because they cannot be provided with accommodation in the philosophic theory that is offered in exchange for a final faith. For we are in that case face to face with the alternative of either rejecting a philosophy of the universe that is obliged to *spoil* indispensable root-convictions in order to vindicate its own claims, or of eliminating the convictions themselves, in order to save the philosophical theology that must be pronounced inadequate if they are retained. In order to rise wholly out of the incomplete knowledge of the universe, which needs trust, shall we adopt a speculative system which contains the seeds of general scepticism? Should we not rather regard the offered system as a failure, if it cannot consistently

mises to transform final faith into final thought.

recognise in their integrity the root-convictions which human life needs ?

Locke formally raised the question of the necessary limits of man's philosophical or theological knowledge.

It was the speculative intrepidity, more immediately of Spinoza and others, in offering a purely intellectual solution of the mysteries which confront religious and moral faith, that at the end of the seventeenth century opened what is now perhaps the most significant question of modern thought — that between a final nescience, a final gnosticism, and a final combination of nescience with gnosticism in which the last word is moral faith in the perfect goodness or perfect reasonableness of the end, incompletely conceivable by man, towards which all things are making ;—towards which, in virtue of necessary moral postulates of experience, we are obliged to believe that they are making. John Locke was in this matter the earliest spokesman of modern religious thought, as regards the question of the limits of a human understanding of the realities of existence: he sought by argument to restrain rash attempts philosophically to translate human feeling and faith into full intellectual vision. Locke set to work in order to try how far a human understanding could go in what one might call the ontological direction,—in dispensing with the authority of faith, as non-rational, possibly fallacious, but anyway an insufficiently thought-out sort of knowledge. He was the first deliberate modern representative of this investigation. Yet one need not take his famous 'Essay,' in which the inquiry is only initiated, as a sufficient



reply to the fundamental question about the power of man as a thinker to think out the universe, or as to the possibility of elaborating a philosophy or theology which should make all that was mysterious about the human ego, the temporal process of nature, and the Eternal Consciousness or Universal Reason, fully understood. Locke only raised what has become the question between a thorough-going agnosticism, a thorough-going gnosticism, and the intermediate blending of the two in a final faith. The question has come to its crisis in the nineteenth century, which is confronted by the philosophy that finds its apotheosis in the Unknowable, at the one extreme, and the philosophy which, at the other extreme, seems to claim the Infinite Reality as within the comprehension of human thought.

The caution that is characteristic of Locke's state of mind finds emphatic utterance in the familiar sentences in the Introduction to his 'Essay,' which tell of its occasion and design: we there learn what gave rise to his philosophical enterprise, which has become the problem of modern thought in the last two centuries. It was the perplexities in which human understanding is involved when one engages intrepidly in religious speculation, and tries to interpret the universe finally. "This it was," Locke tells us, "which gave the first rise to this Essay concerning human understanding. For I thought that the first step towards satisfying several inquiries the mind of man was very apt to run into, was—to take a view of our own understanding, examine

The infinite  
"ocean of  
Being."

our own powers, and see to what things they were *adapted*. Till that was done, I suspected we began at the wrong end, and in vain sought for satisfaction in a quiet and sure possession of the truths that most concerned us, whilst we let loose our thought in the vast ocean of Being;—as if all that boundless extent were the natural and undisputed possession of human understanding, wherein there was nothing exempt from its decisions or that escaped its comprehension. Thus men extending their inquiries beyond their capacities, and letting their thoughts wander into those depths where they can find no sure footing, it is no wonder that they raise questions and multiply disputes; which, never coming to any clear resolution, are proper only to increase their doubts, and to confirm them at last in perfect Scepticism.” Locke’s tone in this enterprise has been deprecated as an expression of the languid speculative interest, and compromising intellectual mediocrity, of the unspeculative Englishman. We are told that the true and only way to determine the extreme resources of man’s understanding, is for men to make trial of what their intelligence can do: let each man actually enter the water, without first seeking to find, in this abstract way, whether he is able to swim; let him persist in trying, in hope of reaching a fully satisfying or omniscient intellectual vision of the infinite reality. Furthermore, we may be told that for man to ask how much man can know, is to presume already that man *can* know

enough to justify him in engaging in this supreme intellectual enterprise—that which Locke inaugurated, which Kant a century later carried further, and which underlies contemporary theological thought and controversy.

But an inquiry into the foundations of what may turn out on reflection to be necessarily incomplete human knowledge of God, the world, and the individual self, in their organic unity, need not be engaged in—indeed was not by Locke—in order to find first whether man can be intelligent of *anything*, and then to find whether he can reduce all final questions about the three supposed realities to answers in which no remainder of intellectual incompleteness or mystery need remain. To show that a *human* knowledge of the universe *must* at last become incomplete or mysterious, presupposes that something is knowable by man, although divine omniscience may not be within his reach. Now the inquirer who recognises that he already knows something, or that he has some amount of intelligible experience, may perhaps be able to find points at which reason itself forbids further approach to intelligibility or completeness, under human conditions of thought and experience; the point, for instance, at which understanding is arrested by the absence of all experience, or else by the discovery that there are indispensable needs and convictions of human nature which are spoiled whenever they are taken as *adequately* rendered in a human intellectual vision, instead of remaining in

Man may inquire whether his thought of the reality must not at last take the form of reasonable moral Faith.

A criticism of Reason as it can be manifested in man is possible.

the living religious or moral faith, which would be thus shown to be our only and sufficient philosophy. It may be found that such faith cannot be held in its spiritual integrity in the purely intellectual way, inasmuch as the whole man, emotional and moral as well as intellectual, may be required to sustain what human understanding can only in part comprehend, or realise in terms of sense and sensuous imagination. If it should turn out on inquiry to be so, what is called man's "participation" in the Universal Consciousness or Universal Reason would be *finally* an act of trust in what his spiritual constitution authorises and requires, but which his understanding of the changing universe is too incomplete to unfold in a finally unmysterious philosophy. In this way submission to what is reasonable would at last bear the character of submission to reason as *trusted authority*, rather than recognition of reason, on account of the fully perceived meaning and rationality of the faith. It would be the issue of the living action of *the whole man at his best*, in response to the universe of changing reality in which he awoke in dim perception and self-consciousness at first. This is what I mean when I speak of human attempts to determine the final meaning of the universe, as being necessarily, in their last and highest form, what may more properly be called reasonable *faith* or *trust* than absolutely complete science. The result must be the outcome of what is characteristic in man in his whole spiritual personality, not the outcome of man

merely in his sensuous understanding, which is incapable of grasping and elaborating what is needed for the whole divine or infinite problem. Man, as Goethe says, is not born to solve the problem of the universe, but to find out where the problem begins. The reason of man and the reason of God are in this different.

May it not be said that the otherwise impassable gulf between the Divine Omniscience or Infinite Knowledge — towards which no advance in *our* scientific knowledge is more an approach than an addition of finite spaces is an approach to Immensity, or an addition of finite times an approach to Eternity — that the gulf between this Omniscience and our necessarily incomplete scientific understanding of the universe is practically crossed — sufficiently for human purposes — by our spiritual humanity in the fulness of its rationally authoritative *needs* — by the larger reason, if one chooses so to call it — by reason as authoritative, as distinguished from the purely logical understanding? For this would be reason in the form of authority, so far as it is a faith and hope that is imposed by something in the mind — which cannot be shown to contradict logical intelligence, although the reality cannot be adequately represented in the religious or philosophical imagination. This may be sufficient for man, while infinitely insufficient. When opposed to what is properly knowledge, this final trust or faith involves the incompleteness, or necessary mysteriousness of its object in imagination, and in any empirical

In its final outcome, man's knowledge of the changing universe of reality takes the form of morally reasonable faith or trust.

evidence, while yet the faith cannot be charged with being absurd or self-contradictory. It is not sufficiently comprehensible for this charge to be brought against it, and therefore it may be reasonably sustained by what one might call *spiritual motive* as distinguished from *full intellectual insight*. It may even be said to be the crowning example of man's inevitable dependence upon authority, that all human thought about the meaning and active principle of the universe, must end in an *authoritative*, because partly blind or agnostic, exercise of reason, as contrasted with those acts in which a man comprehends, or completely grasps, a defined but isolated object.

Reason in Man thus becomes finally an authoritative principle.

*Faith, trust, authority*, are accordingly words not unfit to designate the final relation of the human spirit to the universe of reality. Properly speaking we *know* only what is perfectly comprehended: we *submit* in faith to the *authority* of our spiritual constitution, when it moves us to assent to what can be only imperfectly comprehended. In this way reason itself, it may be said, at last rests upon authority: for its *original*, in a finite intelligence, with limited experience, does not consist of logical conclusions, but of what is spontaneously accepted by reason as reasonable, because imposed by human nature spiritually developed. It is therefore of the nature of trust. Our final interpretation of the appearances which the changing universe presents—so unlike in many ways to what man might have expected in an essentially divine universe—is

therefore an interpretation that has to unfold itself in the moral faith that relates to a fragmentary revelation of perfect reason and perfect goodness or love. Working convictions, the object-matter of which cannot be fully translated into picturable thought for the understanding, even by the philosopher, seems to be the implied condition under which man exercises intelligence, and which must therefore determine his finally reasonable attitude towards the Whole. It is a *crede ut intelligas*, but in which *intelligo* is partly contained in the *crede*; it is not the *intellige ut credas* in which omniscience or perfect intelligence is the precondition of the *credo*. This philosophical faith can be implicit knowledge, but it is for man an unrepresentable knowledge, of the infinite reality: it is the human equivalent for Omniscient Divine Reason. So it may be said that we have at last only faith in the "authority" of a necessarily incomplete, or finally mysterious, knowledge, because the concrete conclusions of human reason must all be rested on trusted principles that are not in their turn logically proved conclusions. In the end—

“ We have but faith : we cannot know ;  
 For knowledge is of things we see ;  
 And yet we trust it comes from Thee,  
 A beam in darkness : let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
 But more of reverence in us dwell ;  
 That mind and soul, according well,  
 May make one music as before.  
 But vaster.”

And leaves  
room for  
knowledge  
that  
“passes  
human  
know-  
ledge.”

It is in this way that the religious instinct in man rises above the finite and transitory, and although incapable of complete intellectual satisfaction, may yet reach satisfaction which takes the form of spiritual life, and of a philosophy that may be disparaged as indolent and mystical, or dogmatic and uncritical, by those who resent limitations in our power of conception and understanding. This too, I take it, may give meaning to Sir William Hamilton's paradox when he speaks of the last and highest consecration of true religion being “an altar to the unknown and unknowable God.” For this may signify that the final Principle, or supreme Power, of the universe is unknowable by man, in the sort of way we are said to know “things we see,” or natural laws of change in the temporal procession, in the physically scientific meaning of knowledge. But in a larger meaning this final faith or trust may itself be called knowledge, as when St Paul says, “I *know* in whom I have believed,” or St John in his exclamation, “We *know* that we *know* Him.” The “knowledge” that “God is love” is the deepest expression of theistic faith in the principle of the universe.

The dutiful  
obedience  
of under-  
standing  
in Man to  
the author-  
ity of the  
Reason  
that is  
latent in  
the uni-  
verse of  
reality.

I seem to find a germ of this philosophy latent in those opening aphorisms of the ‘*Novum Organum*,’ which express the action of final faith in its physical form: in words reported as spoken by Jesus to his followers in Palestine, one seems to find recognition of the final faith in its moral and spiritual form. When Bacon speaks of man as the interpreter of nature, only



so far as he is its *obedient minister*; and when he makes the suggestion in the often-quoted words, "*Natura non nisi parendo vincitur*," does he not strike the key-note of reverential submission to an authoritative voice, proceeding from the reality that is undergoing investigation, and which must not be gainsaid, although it is only imperfectly comprehensible, accepted at last in an act of obedience rather than of victorious intelligence? And is not a like idea at the root of the memorable words, "If any man *will do* God's will, he shall know,"—know by this practical criterion—the final difference between individual opinion and the divine reality—know this so far as this is intellectually comprehensible by man? Not through intellect alone, or by man exercising himself as a thinking being exclusively, but in and through the constant exercise of all that is best or highest in him—through the active response of the entire man, while still in an incompletely understood "knowledge";—it is only thus that it is open to man finally to dispose of his supreme problem, with its mysterious intellectual burden. The final philosophy is practically found in a life of trustful inquiry, right feeling, and righteous will or purpose,—not in complete vision; and perhaps the chief profit of struggling for the vision may be the moral lesson of the consequent discovery—the consciousness of the scientific inaccessibility of the vision.

The rational reality in which all finite spirits may in a sense be said to participate, cannot be fully reached

Revelations  
of God in  
the actual

universe,  
that are  
imperfectly  
reducible  
intellectu-  
ally by  
Man.

even in the most philosophic thought of a human spirit, if the time-consciousness of finite intelligence and the eternally complete divine thought must remain unharmonised. And we must meet the mystery of man's personal power to create acts that ought not to be acted, which are inconsistent with the perfect reason, and for which the human person, not the Power at the heart of the universe, is responsible. These two along with other mysteries are bars to the perfect vision. The burden of the first is not removed by explaining away history, and resolving the whole at last into the Universal Consciousness, in which the illusion of time is supposed to disappear; nor is the mystery of the other relieved by disclaiming moral responsibility for man and other finite spirits, and thinking of them all as only temporary, non-moral, occasions for the manifestation of eternal Substance. The reality of time and change disappears in the one explanation, so that the words "before" and "after" are philosophically irrelevant, and this means scepticism even as to all the temporal evolutions of external nature, and in the history of man. Then if God can be self-revealed as the real agent even in the immoral acts of man, how can this be reconciled with the inevitable self-accusation of which the immoral man himself is conscious, which supposes that he himself must be the culprit, and therefore the sole origin of the acts? And how does it consist with reprobation of the man by moral reason in mankind, or with the constitution of society?

It is difficult to see that modern thought of the Hegelian sort has done much towards translating these two mysteries—the universe in time, and morally responsible personality—out of the darkness in which preceding philosophies have had to leave them, and in which it seems that they must remain—unless man can become God. Philosophy may show, notwithstanding, that those dualisms—continuous change and absolute endlessness—physical causality and moral freedom from this sort of causality—are not necessarily inconsistent with scientific reason. It may also show that moral reason obliges us to live under their pressure, although we cannot fully think the whole out into an articulately consistent image, but must be content with a *fragment* at the last. Moreover an eternal consciousness that is supposed to reduce to illusion the temporal procession of events in Nature, and to explain away the moral economy of finite spirits independent enough to originate acts that ought not to be acted,—this abstract universal consciousness, or abstract system of rational relations, while called “spirit,” now begins to resemble the Universal Substance of Spinoza, of which nothing could be predicated, which takes a semblance of meaning from the illusory things and persons in which it is manifested in time. The intellectual vision which was to give relief seems to present a God that is in a gradual process of revelation and self-development in what is after all an unreal or illusory revelation;—at least if we are bound

Can we find relief for the mysteries of “endlessness” and “moral evil” in an abstractly reasoned idealism?

to think that God is dependent on the successive conscious acts of finite persons—who are not really persons—for entering into consciousness at all.

The  
“organic  
unity” is  
still incom-  
pletely  
compre-  
hended  
unity.

On the other hand, is it more than the semblance of a perfectly explained “organic unity” that the Hegelian thought presents, if it is able to preserve the reality of outward events, and of persons with their self-originated changes, and if it is to deliver the divine perfection from all responsibility for the immoral actions of men? It is true that men are not conceived by the Hegelian to be mechanically parts of God, although they find their true reality in Him; but in that case “organic unity” is only a term which covers over a relation still left in the mystery of a necessarily incomplete human thought or philosophy. It is still an organic unity that passes human knowledge, although it is doubtless innocent of the gross idea which makes all things and all persons only physical parts of One Boundless Substance, the physical effects of One Unknowable Power called Nature.

And the  
mysteries  
of endless-  
ness and  
moral evil  
are only  
verbally  
relieved.

That Hegel meant his final thought to be interpreted consistently with the actuality of the world, and also with the moral personality of man, I do not deny; nor can one fairly interpret this philosophy or theology “pantheistically,” in the obnoxious sense that involves final moral, and therefore final scientific, scepticism. Its fundamental unity is perhaps elastic enough to admit of being interpreted so as to comprehend, but in some mysterious way, the world of successive nature,

and the world of human spirits,—without spoiling our experience of the actuality of the world, or the morally necessary conviction of the freedom of each man to create actions referable exclusively to himself for their responsible causation. But then this is no more than an assertion of faith at last. Yet we were led to expect that through Hegelian dialectic this and every other legitimate faith could be translated into philosophic thought, with the burden of its mystery all removed—not merely with the mysteries articulated in a fresh form of verbal expression. If there is here more than amended verbal articulation of the old difficulties, one fails to find it, as long as, notwithstanding Hegel, the burden still oppresses that resisted all former attempts so to think out the universe of reality as to eliminate, for example, the two mysteries which I have taken as illustrations of man's intellectual inadequacy. Even the philosophic human knowledge of what we are living and having our being in, and of how we are so living, to us seems still to remain knowledge of something that in the end passes knowledge, that is known while it is still unknown; known, in a moral and spiritual life which can be lived if we will; unknown, because it cannot be fully thought out in the infiniteness of its reality. So intellectual analysis of human experience generally, and of religion in Christianity, seems always to leave at the last a residuum of trust, inevitable in what one might call *authoritative reason*, instead of *perfectly understood reason*;—the

authoritative reason in which reverential obedience to what is trusted in as reasonable is more prominent than intellectually victorious insight. Surely the authority of final faith can be dispensed with only in the Omniscience which leaves no room for mystery or incomplete knowledge.

The Hegelian intellectual analysis of Christian Religion may be interpreted as making a more modest claim.

But after all it may be only the question of how the final attitude of man to what is of human interest in the universe of reality should be *named*, rather than a difference with regard to what the actual attitude must at last be, that separates those who suppose that they are adopting, from those who suppose that they are rejecting, the Hegelian interpretation of the relation of man and the universe to God. Should the final attitude be called *knowledge—thought—reason*; or should it be called *faith—trust in authority*? To call it “knowledge” seems to claim too much, as long as there must be an *inevitable* remainder of mystery, which leaves the so-called knowledge incomplete in quantity, and an unimaginable unity, incomprehensible by the sensuous intelligence. To call it “faith” may seem to mean that it is empty of objective rationality; for this is not secured by even the most confidently felt conviction, individual certitude being no sufficient ultimate test of absolute truth. As for “authority,” this is a word that suggests deference to a person, instead of the impersonal intellectual necessity that belongs to purely rational proof. Yet if those who prefer to express,

under the names of "reason" and "knowledge," their final relation to the highest reality, at the same time disclaim for man the omniscience which otherwise seems to be assumed in their words,—then this philosophic thought, at last obliged to submit to arrest, is really the philosophic faith that at last trusts in what is not fully open to man's understanding. The difficulties in which the inevitable remainder of final ignorance involve every human mind are not necessarily suicidal, if they do not necessarily forbid man, on pain of contradicting reason, from satisfying his moral and spiritual needs. The suicidal or essentially sceptical philosophy is then the one that claims to have thought out in its infinity what man can think out only incompletely.

An intellectual analysis of religion and Christianity that adopts this final attitude, would probably be regarded by some as not inconsistent with Hegelian theism, and its exhaustive interpretation of the universe in terms of the divine reason. The "organic unity" of Nature and Man in God is then interpreted in a meaning that admits the moral freedom of agents who are responsible for themselves when they act immorally, and also the reality of change or temporal succession. What is called "participation" in, or "identity" with, Universal Reason, and "organic unity" of the universe, are taken only as emphatic expressions of the conviction that men are not isolated psychological atoms, but members of a moral totality,

Hegelian  
speculation  
humanised.

in which the moral faith that is in us is sure to find sympathetic response in the incompletely comprehensible Divine Reason that is perpetually active at the centre of the Whole. So the further man penetrates intellectually, the more fully this divine order discovers itself; more and more of what corresponds to the final faith is recognised in the principles that are determining the history of the world; and it is seen that, while men are "free" to resist God by doing evil, it is in their harmony with the Divine Reason that the highest freedom is to be found. So understood, the Hegelian speculation becomes an elaborate dialectical recognition of man's final dissatisfaction with the limited phenomena of sense in time, in perception of which human life begins; also of the obligation which the reason that we call *ours* finds to unite the universe of change in dependence on the Perfect Reason that, in broken form, is involved in our experience, but under which we never fully comprehend the Whole. It becomes a vindication of the universe, as incapable of being conceived as mindless, purposeless evolution of phenomena—as really the expression of morally related Spirit—thus relieving the chill of abstract physical science with the warmth of pervading Divine life and love. In the thorough-going intellectual analysis of Christian Religion, man may in this way be helped to recognise his own moral or personal reality, by its mysterious affinity with the transcendent intellectual system on which all depends. Still this philo-



sophy would be at last only an expression of faith, founded upon needs inherent in the entire human constitution, not on perfect intellectual comprehension on the part of the human thinker. It would at most represent man's best way of carrying an intellectual burden that is too heavy for the sensuous understanding. It would be his philosophical acknowledgment of absolute dependence upon the constantly active Reason that he is nevertheless mysteriously able to violate and resist, in his volitions and voluntary habits. This final faith or theistic reason is weakened when it is made the object of logical proof. Its justification is that the universe of reality dissolves in sceptical and pessimist doubt when the moral faith is withdrawn. The ultimate foundation of proof must be incapable of proof, and intellectual reserve is the correlative of a philosophic faith.

Philosophical Faith is the truly rational trust that nothing can happen in the temporal evolution which can finally put to confusion the principles of moral reason that are latent in Man, scientifically incomprehensible as the world's history of mingled good and evil must be when measured only by finite experience in scientific intelligence. Philosophical Faith is thus the reflex of theistic faith.

Philosophical Faith  
the reflex  
of Theistic  
Faith.

## LECTURE VI.

## EVIL: THE ENIGMA OF THEISM.

Retro-  
spect: the  
preceding  
Course.

My first course of lectures was meant to quicken and deepen a perception of the absolute uniqueness of the final problem, in its threefold articulation, with which philosophy and theology are concerned; also to suggest the inadequacy and incoherence of all attempts to resolve its triplicity into an impersonal philosophical unity, as well as the impossibility of treating the universe as wholly uninterpretable in the nescience to which those attempts conduct. Towards the end of the course we seemed to approach the elements of a settlement accommodated to the needs of man in his true ideal.

The  
present  
Course.

In the present course I have hitherto been trying to penetrate the ground in reason for theistic or filial faith in the Power that is finally operative in the universe, and is thus at the heart of all our experience. The questions which I now meet are

concerned, directly or indirectly, with the supreme difficulty which theistic faith has to overcome, when we find ourselves in a universe which, in this corner of it at least, presents a strange and unexpected mixture of what is bad with what is good. This is an obstacle to moral faith, and the religious interpretation of the world, which must be honestly met. But first let us recollect the chief issues thus far.

It was urged that human life, in its practical dependence on experience, always presupposes ethical trustworthiness in the Power that is continuously revealing itself in all the experience of which man is conscious. We cannot proceed at all under the possibility that the universe in which we are living and having our being may be morally untrustworthy, or deceptive, and therefore even physically uninterpretable, so that reason or order, in the evolution of its events, is not to be finally depended on. Such a universe would be either intended by its supreme Power to put us to intellectual and moral confusion, or, if it be an unintended issue of what is finally chaotic change, its events would be equally liable to traverse reasonable expectations. Moral trust in a perfectly reasonable universe of reality is the needed condition of experience, and for understanding what any fact or change really means. This fundamental moral trust may be only tacit and unreflected on by many men: its latent presence is not apt to be recognised, for instance, in the trust we daily put in

The Ethical Foundation, or Moral Faith in the Supreme Power in the universe.

our perception of things around us, or in our memories of the past, or in the assumption that the intellectual necessities of which we are conscious may not after all be illusions, even although *we* are intellectually necessitated to think that they must be true. Yet in all this an ethical faith in our mental experience is virtually implied: there is a moral acknowledgment that the distinct recollections of memory, and the supposed physical order, and the perceived intellectual necessities, cannot be transitory illusions in a temporal procession of external changes and mental states that is all hollow and deceptive, so that the whole performance may be the manifestation not of a trustworthy but of a malignant or of an indifferent Power. For human activity is sustained by the optimist faith, that the universe with which we are in living intercourse must at last be treated as a morally trustworthy reality—a perfectly good and omnipotent moral Power or Person being therein manifested.

Conscience  
and Caus-  
ality.

In this ethical root of life, and spiritual ground of the interpretability of experience, one finds the germ of Theism. It is the absolutely uniting and harmonising principle, in that threefold articulation of real existence from which we set out. The universe of reality is finally a *moral* unity incompletely comprehensible in human intelligence, but which moral reason obliges man to suppose somehow consistent with moral perfection in the Power or Person that is continually

at work in the heart of it. Cosmic faith morally involves this amount of theistic faith; for even physical interpretation of a presumed cosmical order must be interpretation of that in which morally trustworthy Power or Personality at the centre is being physically revealed. Really originating power is recognised by man only in spiritual or morally responsible Will: there is therefore no reason to suppose that physical causation is more than the sensible expression or language of spiritual activity. It is an undue assumption that any natural cause *can* be other than a dependent or caused cause, at last an effect of personal or moral power. The causality attributed to external things may be philosophically conceived as the orderly expression of eternally active Reason, the only true agent in all natural changes. All so-called natural agency may not unreasonably be regarded as really divine agency;—the issue, not, indeed, of a capricious will, but of the infinitely perfect and constantly operative Reason, which may be trusted not to lead us into illusion, if we do justice to ourselves as interpreters of its revelations in nature and in man.

The cosmical system, moreover, may not unreasonably be interpreted throughout as a universe of organic adaptations, in which everything is fitted into every-

The physical universe is possibly a self-evolving organism, charged throughout with moral purpose.

sentient and intelligent being to the Whole, and of the Whole to every other sentient and intelligent being—the adaptations, not all intelligible to us, yet legitimately assumed by us to be latent in the universal constitution of things.

The insoluble physical mystery into which the outward world at last resolves itself, not necessarily inconsistent with its finally theistic meaning.

That the finite and ever-changing universe, in which our conscious lives become morally involved during the interval between birth and death, is a temporal procession of natural causes, all in their turn natural effects, in a natural regress which may even be unbeginning, and that this may continue without end in its successive metamorphoses—all this does not seem to militate against the intellectual possibility and the moral need of finally interpreting the universe in theistic faith and hope. The mystery of unbeginningness and unendingness in which the temporal procession of natural events seems at last *lost*, need not involve moral distrust of the manifestation which what is real makes of itself now; has made of itself since it emerged out of the mysterious Past; or which it has to make of itself on its way into the mysterious Future. The infinite—that is to say the necessarily mysterious—duration of the natural manifestation does not make the course of things and persons morally untrustworthy or scientifically unintelligible—as far as human nature and experience provide for faith and incomplete science. That the past and future of the natural procession disappear in physical mystery, is only another way of saying that human intelligence is necessarily inter-

mediate between Sense and Omniscience. Our relation to the infinite, as the thought of the infinite arises out of quantity in extent or in duration, is in harmony with the intermediate position which man occupies. Duration is revealed to us in the form of a quantity that seems to become at last not a quantity; and this contradictory duality, which follows us everywhere when we try to reduce the infinite problem to the conditions of the understanding that measures by the experience of sense, faces us conspicuously when we try in vain to read the final riddles of physical causality and natural science. But the inevitable darkness in which we then become involved need not communicate itself to the moral reason, nor disturb absolute ethical trust in the Power that in the end determines the experienced reality. That I find myself living in an infinite sphere, the centre of which seems to be everywhere and the circumference nowhere, or in an infinite succession, cannot disturb the eternal necessities of moral obligation, and need not disturb the faith that man's highest relation in all this is to Power that is morally reliable. Although "clouds and darkness" are round about the revelation of this Power which the universe makes, yet "righteousness and judgment" must be "the establishment of its throne"; and thus the whole natural process must be making for the righteousness in which the divine ideal of human life is realised.

The finite in quantity and the infinite are mys-

Duration,  
in its  
blended  
finitude  
and infinitude,  
analogous  
to the  
relative  
revelation,  
yet final  
incompre-  
hensibility  
of God.

teriously blended in our idea of duration, which is at once infinite and finite, subject to finite measures, yet finally unlimited; either way incomprehensible under the conditions of human conscious life and personality. The temporal process inevitably resolves at last into what transcends all temporal limits, so that its final issues are perceived only as what is beyond sensuous understanding. For interminable duration is *absolutely* unimaginable: a million, or a million times a million, of years, being finite, is a period that is in itself imaginable, although a human imagination cannot distinctly picture so prolonged a process: but endlessness is necessarily unpicturable as a completed unity, for a sensuous picture is inconsistent with the thought; while eternity, if supposed as a state that is inconsistent with duration, and in which change is therefore impossible, is not less incomprehensible. Duration expressed in change is at once cognisable and incognisable, at least through intelligence measured by sense—thus signally illustrating what the universe of our experience in all its aspects illustrates, when intelligence measured by sense tries fully to realise the Power or Personality that finally animates the whole. God, like duration, is at once intellectually apprehended and yet the final mystery—revealed in man, and through man in all natural causation when it is interpreted according to the analogy of what is highest in man;—yet at last as unrevealable scientifically as endlessness, for the timeless is, as such, unreveal-



able through the changing temporal procedure in nature.

The word "person" has been condemned as an unfit term for designating the Power or Principle that pervades and harmonises the cosmic organism, making its evolutions the object of at least tacit ethical trust. The conception of the final Power as personal is alleged to involve a contradiction in terms. Infinite Being, it is argued, as all-comprehensive, must be the negation of personality: for personality involves the antithesis of something that is not-self or impersonal, therefore excluded from the person, and so makes personality necessarily finite. Thus I am asked by a critic to explain how an omnipresent Being can by possibility be personal: ubiquity and personality seem to him as irreconcilable as light and darkness.

Those who allege this objection to the finally ethical or theistic interpretation of existence seem to include as necessary to their idea of personality what I should exclude as irrelevant, even when the term is applied to human beings, still more to the supreme moral Power. Does not the faith on which life reposes—the faith that the universe is finally trustworthy, and that I am morally free—put one who experiences this faith in a consciously *ethical* relation to the reality that is operative in all his experience? Now if the term "person," as distinguished from "thing," is taken as the one term which especially signalises *moral* relation among beings, and which implies moral order, as dis-

Person-  
ality.

Person-  
ality as  
applied  
to the  
morally  
trusted  
Supreme  
Power.

tinguished from merely mechanical or physical order; and if the universe of reality, in its final principle, must be treated as an object of moral trust, when we live in obedience to its conditions, does not this mean that it is virtually personal, or revelation of a person rather than a thing—an infinite Person, not an infinite Thing? If our deepest relation to it must be ethical trust in perfect wisdom and goodness or love at the heart of it—trust in its harmonious adaptation to all who are willing to be physically and morally adapted to it—this is just to say that our deepest or final relation to reality is ethical rather than physical: that *personality* instead of *thingness* is the highest form under which *man* at any rate can conceive of God. This is the moral personification, or finally theistic conception, of the universe of experience.

The  
Infinite  
or finally  
mysterious  
Person.

But this inevitable moral postulate does not oblige those who—for the reason now suggested—speak of God as “Person” to affirm of God all that is now found essential to a human person—any more than the use of the term duration, when we speak of a short duration and eternal duration, obliges us to suppose that eternity must be time. The “personality” of God need not mean that the Being adumbrated in Nature and Man is an embodied and separated self-conscious life like the human,—that God is organised and extended—coextensive with space, and in this gross sense ubiquitous; or that the divine intelligence

is a conscious life that is subject like ours to succession, or to change of conscious state. Ubiquity and eternity are for us terms which express, commingled, comprehension and necessary incomprehensibility. The Augustinian idea of the "Eternal Now," as expressive of what our universe of temporal change is in Divine intelligence, hardly helps to make intelligible to us the sort of consciousness thus attributed to the Power with whom we are in constant moral relation; for a fixed untemporal universe of reality seems not to consist with the reality of perceived change, or with the difference between what happens now and what has not yet happened. Its practical adoption by us seems to dissolve all supposed past and prospective realities into illusions of universal nescience. Personality in man, moreover, implies memory; but we are not bound to suppose that the ethical postulate of life and experience implies the same in the moral Person with whom all experience brings us into constant intercourse. Again, a human intelligence of the world involves reasoning on the part of human persons; but it does not follow that the Supreme Moral Being, signified to us in the universe of nature and man, is actually conscious of eliciting conclusions from premisses, or of generalising under conditions of inductive calculation. The "personality of God" is a formula which implies that, in relation to us—and at the human point of view, the Power manifested in nature and in man must be

regarded at last morally, not physically only—as an imperfectly conceived Person, not as an imperfectly conceived Thing.

The physical and intellectual mystery of the universe, not the chief obstacle to a finally moral or theistic interpretation of it.

The conception of the three presupposed realities as finally a spiritual unity or moral order, incompletely comprehensible physically or scientifically, that is as manifested to man in the natural temporal process, is a conception that is outside all merely natural science. Yet moral faith in the world, which we find so strange when we look round and reflect upon it, may be sustained by the relief which this ethical interpretation of its final meaning affords to demands of moral reason of which man is conscious, when he is moved to interpret morally what is at last physically incomprehensible. But the final mystery of unbeginning and unending natural causation, in which the temporal process is lost in both directions, and the contradictions which emerge when the finite measurement of the understanding alone is employed for the infinite comprehension of physical Nature,—these intellectual difficulties are not after all the pressing “burden and the mystery of this unintelligible world.” For a universe in which the finite and the infinite, the natural and the supernatural, are so blended as in the end to transcend the scientific imagination, is not necessarily inconsistent with absolute filial trust on the part of the human persons who are participating in this mysterious existence. Their theistic interpretation of the Whole seems, in spite of those purely

intellectual difficulties, to be still ready to relieve the agnostic embarrassment that is inevitable when a *physically* scientific solution of the infinite problem is demanded;—urgent too, since when theism is lost man is left isolated in a wholly uninterpretable world,—a world that cannot be lived and acted in after total paralysis of the final moral trust. Let it be granted that man cannot explain how or why God exists, the constant sustaining and intending Power throughout the whole course of nature, or indeed why any thing or person should exist at all. This human ignorance is no insurmountable objection to the application of the moral or divine postulate to the changing world in which we actually find ourselves.

The formidable obstacle to ultimate moral trust in the Power continuously working in the universe is found, not at the mysterious extremities, or because *they* evade scientific understanding—*omnia excunt in mysteria*—but in the suspected contents of this corner of the universe, in which so much is found that ought not to exist at all. On this planet what is bad is mixed up with what is good. Capricious infliction of pain on beings susceptible of pain seems, at least in this region, to be as much the customary procedure of the Supreme Power as the secure happiness which the world, supposed to be a revelation of ethically trustworthy and therefore loving Power, might be expected to present universally. Ignorance and

The mixture of Evil with Good in the universe is the supreme enigma.

error, moreover, take the place of intellectual insight, more or less in all human minds; and reason, "the candle of the Lord," in the light of which sentient beings might escape many evils in their experience, and might attain to more that is good,—this candle of the Lord burns so dimly in human minds that even those who have the largest share of it complain that it only shines enough to show the darkness. But even pain and error may be evil only relatively, and as incidents natural to gradually developing intelligence: at a higher point of view they may be seen to be absolutely good. At least they are less formidable obstacles to theistic trust than the occurrence of immoral acts, the entrance of which into existence contradicts the eternal ideal of moral obligation, and which must therefore be absolutely evil. If what is known to contradict the righteousness that is the basis of theistic faith and hope *can* nevertheless enter into existence in the volitional activity of men,—with a prevailing disposition also towards moral evil among mankind—what trust can be put in the absolute perfection of the Power that is at the root of all? The universe seems absolutely untrustworthy, its phenomena therefore uninterpretable, and human life hopeless.

How can  
moral per-  
fection be  
predicated  
of the  
Universal

Somehow persons on this planet are not as they ought to be. Experience shows the world to be "in a very strange state," Butler somewhere says, and it does not appear that it was ever in a perfect state, or

that mankind will ever become perfectly good. How then can the supposed supreme Power be infinitely good, when the continuous evolution of things and persons, in which the character of that Power is revealed to us, contains so much that is evil? A person's character is judged of by his actions: the actions of the Person that is operative in the experienced universe seem not to consist with perfection.

It is true that man's experience of the infinite universe is confined to a very narrow corner of it—chiefly to this remote planet, and to a small part of what it contains—as regards the sentient beings, and the self-conscious persons who inhabit it; and even of them each man's knowledge is fragmentary and superficial. Yet apart from the relations of outward things to the sentient and personal life of which the earth is the scene, what good or evil can be attributed to the "dead things" themselves? The mixed good and evil of the universe, as far as man's experience can carry him, resolves into the good or evil that is found in the sensitive, intellectual, and volitional state of the *living* beings on this planet. What are they, we may be asked, as examples of the Whole? Our planet, compared to the stellar system, is less than one grain of sand compared to all the grains in the solar system; and its living occupants may be more insignificant in relation to the Whole than the living occupants of a single grain of sand in relation to all the living beings supposed to inhabit the earth. Nor can man determine

Power, when that Power is revealed in the form of a universe which contains sorrow and sin?

Our experience is confined to the sentient beings on this planet, and even in this is limited in space and duration.

certainly whether the possession of living inhabitants is a peculiarity of this planet alone in the stellar universe, or whether each sun with its attendant planets is similarly occupied; whether some are empty and others crowded with living beings; whether personal life is always confined to organisms located on stars, or also extended to unembodied spirits able to range through space, or even existing consciously out of conscious relation to place and time. Then there may be sentient beings whose intelligence is brought by *their* senses into relation with a material world that presents none of the qualities which matter presents to us; inasmuch as they are endowed with none of our senses, but instead with five, or fifty, or five hundred senses wholly alien to those of man. That these and innumerable other *possibilities* are open may seem to minimise indefinitely the importance of the mingled good and evil of the great current of existence as it flows through the experience of men on this planet, so limited in its extent, and so brief in its duration in each individual life, and even in the past history of its whole human race.

But this does not relieve the difficulty of Evil being found anywhere, in a universe supposed to be ethically trust-worthy.

But after all this limitation does not much affect the present question. Ethical trust in the absolute perfection of the Power at work in the universe is inconsistent with one evil in a remote corner, as well as with a universe of evil unmixed with good. *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*. Trust is lost in a man who has once deceived us, although no man is omnipotent



and omniscient. Much more must a single act that can be pronounced absolutely evil seem to destroy ethical trust and hope in the supposed perfect Power or Person. To believe in the Divine perfection, as Cudworth remarks, is to believe that all is as it ought to be; and this faith is apt to be upset if *anything* is found existing which ought not to exist, however insignificant the corner in which it is found, and however rare the occurrence may be. One such issue must darken the infinite purity. And for man the issues on this planet are all in all. He interprets the universe by the specimen of it which enters into his own experience.

Now, the hardest difficulty which man has to meet in putting a theistic or ethical interpretation upon the world is not the existence of natural causes—unwarrantably assumed to supersede God, instead of to reveal God. It is the bad state in which man finds men, and other sentient beings too, on this small planet. It may be true that we cannot so distinguish the possible from the impossible as to assert with extreme pessimists that this is the worst world possible, nor even that it is found so bad that it were better to pass out of conscious life altogether (if that is a possibility) than to persist in life under the given conditions. Yet, at the least, the history of this planet forms a revelation of omnipotent goodness of a sort unlike what an intelligent being predisposed to absolute ethical trust in the universe of reality might expect.

Philo puts the case plainly in Hume's 'Dialogues':

The existence of living beings in the strange state in which those on this planet are found is the apology for agnostic pessimism.

This difficulty as put by David Hume.

“ It must, I think, be allowed that if a limited human intelligence, utterly unacquainted with the actual universe, were assured before trial that it was the production of a very good, wise, and powerful Being, he would in his conjectures form beforehand a very different notion of it from what we find it to be by experience ; nor would he ever imagine, merely from those attributes of its cause of which he was previously informed, that the effect could be so full of vice and misery and disorder as it appears in this passing life. Supposing, indeed, that this person were brought into the world assured (on *a priori* grounds) that it was the workmanship of such a sublime and benevolent Being, he might perhaps be surprised at the disappointment, but would never retract his former belief, if founded on any solid argument ;—since such a limited intelligence must be sensible of his own blindness and ignorance, and must therefore allow that there *may* be many solutions of these phenomena [evil mixed with good] which will for ever escape his comprehension. But supposing, which is the real case with regard to man, that this intelligent creature is not *antecedently* convinced of a Supreme Intelligence, benevolent and powerful, but is left to gather such a belief *solely* from the appearances of things, this entirely alters the case, nor will he ever find any reason for such a conclusion. He may be fully convinced of the narrow limits of his own understanding ; but this will not, in these circumstances, help him to infer the goodness of the omnipotent Power,

since he must form his inference from the facts he knows, not from what he is ignorant of. The more you exaggerate his weakness and ignorance, the more diffident you render him, and give him the greater suspicion that such subjects are beyond his faculties. You are obliged, therefore, to reason with him from the known phenomena only, and to drop every arbitrary supposition and anticipation."

This is distinctly put. One cannot infer a good artist from a bad picture, especially if he has only this one picture to go upon for his conclusion. And if the true philosophy of the universe is, as with Hume, purely empirical, it is not only impossible to conclude that the world is the revelation in fact of omnipotent goodness; it is also impossible to interpret any of its phenomena for any purpose. Is there any alternative to universal doubt, if we are at liberty to suspect the moral integrity of the Power that is manifested to us in nature and in man? Not to speak of physical science, can the commonest movement in life be made if we may finally distrust the Power that we are therein continually in intercourse with? No doubt the narrow limit of human experience does not experimentally justify the faith that the universal Power must be perfectly good: intellectual finitude only admits that man does not know enough to warrant the conclusion that the suspicious phenomena are *necessarily* inconsistent with perfection in the Power that they reveal. And if moral perfection must be

It is an insoluble difficulty in a purely empirical philosophy; but then this philosophy is itself paralysed, even in its physical interpretations, when all ethical or theistic trust is withdrawn.

presupposed in the faith without which self and the world are wholly uninterpretable, and life unfit to be lived, this seems to be a *reductio ad absurdum* of the dogma that a purely empirical ultimate premiss is adequate philosophically. A primary premiss that is wholly empirical can never get under weigh, for it is really not a premiss. Moral trust in the final principle of the universe is needed to enable man to make way at all.

Pain, error, sin, and death are the chief Evils presented in the human experience of the universe.

Animal suffering, human pain; error or misinterpretation of experience; violation of moral order, against which conscience protests on the entrance into existence of acts inconsistent with eternal moral obligation; death, which cruelly separates persons united in social fellowship, and brings the curtain down before the act is well begun,—*these*, I suppose, are the chief evils which, on this small and remote planet, seem at variance with its divine order, with our ideal of love and justice, and with omnipotent moral integrity—on faith in all which human life tacitly reposes. It is to these suspicious facts that we apply the term “evil.” For what crimes do animals endure the torments which so many animals undergo in the order of nature? What good purpose is served by the miseries of which surrounding things are the natural causes, and which, if all natural causation is really divine causation, must be caused by God? On this planet Nature often looks cruel and unrelenting, or, at the least, wholly indifferent to the pains and

pleasures of living beings. And the seeming cruelty or indifference is perhaps presented on a greater scale in other parts of the stellar universe than on this planet. Do not stars suddenly disappear—in collision, it may be, with other stars—involving, we may fancy, the sudden death in agony of their living passengers, or, in other cases, continuous suffering beforehand, while the natural changes were gradually unfitting their world for living occupants?

But the greatest enigma presented in the experience of man is the existence *in man himself* of acts of consciousness which ought not to exist,—in other words, the existence of what philosophers call moral evil, and what theologians call sin. How can the presence in the world of that which moral reason pronounces absolutely inconsistent with the moral order on which faith in the universe finally reposes,—how can *that* be in harmony with, or not expressly contradictory of, such faith? Pain, error, and death may be only relatively evil, as seen at the human point of view. But sin is absolutely evil. Pain is the correlative of pity and sympathy, and thus a natural means for the education of spiritual life. Moreover the assumption that the physical pleasure of moral agents ought to be the supreme end of their existence, far less of the existence of the universe of Nature and Man, is one which reason would find it difficult to sustain. The ideal in what Cudworth calls the “intellectual system of the universe” is

The existence of moral evil in this part of the universe is the final difficulty in theistic faith.

surely something higher than physical pleasure, as one may argue from facts of observation, and from reflection on the constitution of man: and there is nothing in the categories of intellect, or in the necessary postulates of moral reason, that seems to require this otherwise dogmatic assumption.

For Sin cannot, like Pain, be explained as only relatively Evil.

But the continued presence of what is unconditionally evil cannot be disposed of in this way. How to relieve the mystery of moral evil, including irregular distribution of pleasure and pain, has been the philosophical and theological perplexity from the beginning. It finds expression in Hebrew poets like Job, and in Greek dramatists like Æschylus. It has been the source of innumerable speculative fancies which have left their traces in popular opinion. Can it be reconciled with a final moral trust in the Power that is revealed in external and spiritual experience?

Either Manicheism, or else One imperfect, or One wholly indifferent Power, as solutions.

That the universe, taking it as man finds it in and around him, must be the issue of a constant struggle between two rival eternal Powers, the one benevolent, the other malevolent, is the ancient hypothesis of Manicheism, symbolised in the Zoroastrian antithesis of Ormuzd and Ahriman, and it is not without supporters in the modern world. Its implied subversion of the ethical postulate on which human life reposes, and without which experience becomes incoherent, must discredit this hypothesis with those who are not prepared to yield at last to universal nescience and

pessimist despair. A like difficulty attends Monism, which, superficially regarded, presents plausible alternatives—either that the One Power, revealed in the inorganic and organic world, is a Power of mixed good and evil, corresponding to the mixed phenomena of which the revelation contained in nature and man is found to consist; or else that the One Power is blindly and absolutely indifferent to the happiness or misery, the moral good or moral evil, of the dependent living beings. Dualism, in the form of two eternal Powers, good and evil, and Monism, or a single eternal Power, partly good and partly evil, or else indifferent, are both inconsistent with moral faith in the universe—that is to say, with religious recognition of God in the articulation of the realities—because inconsistent with moral trust and hope in experience.

Again. The traditional teaching of ordinary Christian theology attributes the evils which afflict men and other animals on this planet to a “fall” of the human race from its divine ideal into a mainly animal and sinful state, caused by the temptation of a wicked being called the Devil, in whom Evil is personified. The first man sinned, and in consequence all men are inclined to sin, and so suffer for their inherited opposition to the will of God. This may satisfy those who do not care to press the question. But it only moves the cause a step back, while it even aggravates the original mystery. It throws no light upon the existing mixture of evil in the universe, even if the alleged

“Temptation by the Devil”  
only a provisional explanation.

facts on which it proceeds are admitted. The Devil being presented as the occasion of moral evil in man, and sin being then transmitted as the natural inheritance of the human race—the fact of its pre-existence in the Devil still remains; with the added difficulty of naturally transmitted sin, which seems to make sin physical evil, to transform moral persons into non-moral things, and to destroy individual responsibility. If the Devil is an eternal Power, co-ordinate with God, we are landed in Manicheism. If he is a “fallen” finite person, whence came moral evil into him? The difficulty is aggravated. What is unconditionally, and therefore irrelatively, evil somehow arose, and is now naturally transmitted in a universe which is still supposed to be the revelation of omnipotent and perfectly good Power.

Can moral evil be a necessity of finite personality; or of the intractableness of Matter; or may it even be explained away as a mere negation?

The preceding hypotheses fail to sustain trust in the Power universally at work in a universe which contains what ought not to exist. There are other theories in which the moral Evil is sought to be explained away. For they imply that its appearance is *unconditionally necessary* in a world of finite or individual beings. Finitude must include evil or imperfection, it is argued. Contrast or antithesis, we are told, is unavoidably involved in all individual existence, which must be the product of opposed forces, and character is naturally formed by the struggle of evil with good. Good can exist only in opposition to Evil; analogously attraction involves



repulsion, and positive involves negative electricity. In infinite unindividual Being alone can perfection be realised, without an otherwise necessary mixture and antithesis of evil. But an unconditional necessity for moral evil makes the evil no longer immoral. No one can be blamed for its unconditionally necessary existence, or feel remorse because it is thus found in existence. Some of the old philosophers insisted that Matter was the obstacle to a perfect universe of unmixed good; the universe could not be formed, it was assumed, without pre-existing Matter; and the intractable material was supposed to be incapable of reduction to perfect order even by Omnipotence. But if this be so, Evil is no longer what *ought* not to be: *it cannot but be*. Again, that Evil is only a negation, while no real existence can be only negative, is another speculative fancy of theologians, and in philosophical theodicies. Nothing that ought not to exist, it is argued, can ever come into actual existence; what actually exists only errs by defect of reality. A cruel or a dishonest purpose, however, is surely something that actually enters into the mental experience of the cruel or dishonest man; nothing seems to be gained by this verbal relief, except a change of name.

That "moral obligation" is only the creation of arbitrary divine will, so that arbitrary will becomes the criterion of divine moral obligation, is the hypothesis of some theologians. It also explains away moral order, while it resolves goodness into omnipo-

Moral obligation cannot be resolved into arbitrary will.

tence, virtually transforms persons into things, and leads to final scepticism.

Either  
Pessimism  
or Opti-  
mism the  
ultimate  
alterna-  
tives.

These theories, strictly understood, all seem to lead towards the pessimist scepticism which is the anti-thesis of faith and hope. Does, then, theistic or philosophical faith and hope mean an optimist conception of the universe? and, if so, in what meaning of Optimism? This question will be considered in next lecture.

## LECTURE VII.

## OPTIMISM.

MORAL evil is not an abstraction. It is an actual fact, found in the lives of human persons who occupy this planet. The appearance of Sextus Tarquin, that monster of cruelty, is taken by Leibniz as an example of the lurid facts which threaten to paralyse theistic faith, casting doubt on the moral meaning of the universe. Leibniz seeks to explain them in the celebrated optimist theory unfolded in his 'Théodicée.' But Tarquin and Nero and Caligula are not singular, among monsters who have appeared in human form, and occupied thrones as well as all places from thrones downwards, in the history of mankind to the present hour—the source of told and untold misery to myriads of living beings. For moral evil is found in more than a few persons. Experience of mankind shows a mysterious tendency to decline from man's true ideal, which possesses human beings from the very beginning of their personal life ; which shows itself as a tendency

The existence of what ought not to exist, in human beings.

that ought continually to be resisted, and against which the policy of mankind ought to be a constant struggle—sustained in each individual person, in the form of religious endeavour to live the divine life, and thus recover the ideal man in his individual instance. Indeed the moral interpretation of the universe is strangely apt to meet with aversion instead of satisfaction. Ingenuity is exhausted, not in searching for God, and in recognising signs that we are living in what, if we will, may become our divine life; rather in searching for arguments through which men may escape from moral or theistic trust in the supreme principle of the universe, and then conclude that sentient life is not worth living;—so that the supreme end of man should be, to get out of life finally; if indeed it be possible for a being who has once become personal to become finally impersonal. How and why there should be this tendency to negation, instead of to the divine, this pessimist instead of optimist disposition, especially in present-day speculation, this disposition to prefer the merely physical faith that taken alone is untrustworthy to a final faith in spiritually perfect meaning of the universe, is difficult to understand, as well as how far individual men are morally responsible for it. It is a downward disposition which may seem inherited rather than originated by each person, at least not so originated since each person awoke into his present life; unless one may suppose a latent memory of a pre-existent life, which

may hereafter become patent in conscious memory. On the whole, we are obliged to acknowledge that much which ought not and need not exist is commonly existing in this corner of the universe;—whatever may be the case in the other parts of its infinite extent, or at other periods than within that section of unbeginning duration which is embraced in our scanty record.

The actual existence of what ought not to exist, in a universe which is tacitly assumed, in the commonest physical acts and knowledge, to be so far a trustworthy and hope-inspiring universe, is the perplexity of persons who desire to retain moral faith in the outcome of experience as the divine basis of life. The broad fact of prevailing injustice and cruelty among men, and the “cruel” indifference of the course of things to the happiness of living beings, seems not to consist with the natural evolution being a manifestation of perfect goodness. It inclines the sceptic to treat the whole as a non-moral, and therefore really impersonal, procession of phenomena. It suggests pessimist surrender of filial trust and hope that the Power to which what is highest in man responds is continually at work in us and around us, in order to assimilate us to Himself. A universe in which nothing *can* ever make its appearance that ought not to appear, seems, in our first thought, to be the only possible manifestation of the infinitely perfect moral Being presupposed in morally religious faith. Does not the rise into actual

The apparent inconsistency of this fact with any trust in the Power of which such a universe is the revelation.

life of that which conscience obliges man to condemn as absolutely evil necessarily involve, either limited, and therefore imperfect, goodness, or else deficient power—either way the absolute or final untrustworthiness of all that man trusts in, for the physical regulation of his life, the formation of his knowledge, or the improvement of his character? Does not the existence of vice, and its long-continued toleration in this part of the universe, mean, not infinite goodness, but an imperfect regard for goodness, on the part of the omnipotent Power? The supposed divine guarantee of our inductive faith in experience, it is urged in the name of reason, must be either a Power that is not willing to hinder the entrance of what ought not to exist, or not able to do so, or both willing and able. The last of these three suppositions alone, it is taken for granted, corresponds to the idea of omnipotent goodness. But that the supposed Power at the root of all is *not* both able and willing to bar the entrance of what ought not to exist seems proved, by the observed fact that much that is morally and physically evil has existed, and continues to exist. The flood of sin and suffering that is always flowing in human and in all sentient life on this planet seems to show either impotence or moral imperfection at the heart of an experienced reality such as this; so as to produce total paralysis of faith and hope, when the narrow world of human experience is taken as sufficient proof of moral indifference and

impotence combined, in the final interpretation put upon the Whole.

The theistic conception of the universe is necessarily optimist, in as far as it implies that its constitutive principle or system is absolutely the best; for this is what we mean by its being divine. To believe in God is to believe that the supreme idea, expressed so far in our experience of things and persons, is as it ought to be; so that whether or not individual persons are all as good as they might be, the divine Idea in the whole could not possibly be better. To suppose that the temporal procedure of the Supreme Power is the revelation of an Ideal that is radically bad must mean that it is not the outcome of perfect wisdom and goodness, but of a Power that is indifferent, or even hostile, to what ought to be. This Power, whatever other name might be given to it, could not appropriately be called God, when God means personification of perfect goodness, or of what unconditionally ought to be: God only thus becomes the ground of the trust, that neither our physical nor our moral experience in the divine universe *can* in the end put the persons who have the experience to confusion. To suppose that the Supreme Ideal embodied in the universe could be better than it is, means that evil more or less belongs to the divine ideal, that the Supreme Power is untrustworthy, not the personified moral obligation presupposed in our primary faith. Theistic faith expires in the sup-

The theistic is the optimist interpretation of the universe.

position that God might prefer absolute evil to the absolutely good. The Supreme Power might be fraudulent, or it might be blind indifferent Power: in either case all that is presented in experience—my whole self-conscious life—may be finally illusory; the so-called faculties of knowledge may be formed to mislead, or their issues may be meaningless. The revelation that is presented in the temporal procession of natural things, and in the living existence of morally good and morally evil persons, *must* therefore admit of being interpreted under some form of optimism, if it is fit to be interpreted theistically; and this whether or not the optimist or divine conception can be fully thought out by man's intelligence. For indeed it is not to be expected that it can be so thought out in a human understanding as to leave no remainder of mystery enveloping the universe. To think finite things and persons out infinitely is to transcend a finite intelligence of them, or, in other words, to empty the universe of all that is mysterious. Only in Omniscience can the universe be infinitely thought out. Yet the maintenance by reason of moral trust in the root principle of all is not necessarily inconsistent with this imperfection of intellectual insight;—unless the imperfect intelligence does see enough to make it necessary to destroy final moral trust and hope, and thus arrest human life by a suicidal scepticism.

Can moral  
evil enter  
into an

But is this arrest inevitable in reason, as the consequence of the broad fact that what ought not to exist



does exist *somehow* in the lives of conscious persons living on this earth, and that pain enters, with a seemingly capricious disregard of desert, into innumerable sentient lives? Can a divine or morally constituted world admit what is morally, and therefore absolutely, evil? And even if the temporary rise of evil may be somehow not necessarily inconsistent with the infinite goodness of the Supreme Power, inasmuch as virtue, let us suppose, may be educated by the consequent struggle, which may issue, let us also suppose, in the final extinction of evil,—can the persistence, and perhaps endless persistence, in the universe of what is inconsistent with moral reason be reconciled with the eternal ethical obligation presupposed in absolute goodness personified?

optimist  
universe?

In last lecture I suggested the insufficiency of various attempts made to explain the fact of the presence of evil in the universe. Some of them are theories formed at the expense of the perfection of the Supreme Power or Powers; others by explaining away moral evil, either interpreting it as the unconditional necessity of finite and individual beings, or else as an unactual negation, for which no power at all need be, or indeed can be, presupposed;—not to speak of attempts to put the difficulty of moral evil in man in the background, as by referring it, in an aggravated form too, to the agency of a superhuman spirit. Manichean dualism; monistic indifference, if not malevolence; ontological

Hypotheses in which either moral trust or moral evil disappears.

necessity for evil, in a universe of reality which contains finite, and therefore necessarily imperfect, beings; necessity for evil in a universe formed out of intractable Matter; and the unreal negative nature of evil,—these are speculations which either destroy moral faith in the Supreme Power, or else destroy the absolute and eternal difference between what *must* be or *is* and what *ought* to be. They leave us in a universe which at last reveals persistent collision between two rival Powers of good and evil; or presents the action of One Power that is either indifferent to good or that intends evil; or finally a universe that consists of non-moral things only, to the exclusion both of good and bad persons.

An unwarranted assumption.

The question why God permits moral evil, since its existence must be opposed to perfect moral and providential order, seems to involve an unproved assumption. It tacitly assumes that a *necessitated* absence of evil must be in itself good, or alone good, so that only impossibility of its ever making its appearance is consistent with the moral ideal of the universe. What ought not to exist, it is supposed, cannot anywhere, or in any degree, coexist with omnipotent goodness. But has this ominous dogma ever been shown to be a necessity in reason? Has it been proved that the difficulty of subsuming the universe under the conception of theistic optimism is as great as that involved in the rival alternative,—namely, atheistic, or at least agnostic, pessimism—with the arrest which

atheism logically puts upon *all* interpretations of experience, including even those on which animal life itself depends, so that suicide is its natural issue? Cosmical trust in experience seems absolutely inconsistent with a radically untrustworthy universe.

But it may turn out after all that the root-question here is—Whether it is morally necessary that the universe in which the Supreme Power is revealed should be a universe of non-moral *things*, to the exclusion of individual *persons*, who, as moral beings, must be *able to make themselves immoral*? Must not the perfect ideal include the existence of *persons*—with the consequently implied possibility of *their* making themselves bad, and keeping themselves bad—which last, it seems, means making themselves gradually worse? Now, a universe of things, in moral correlation with persons, or which exists for the sake of the inter-communication of persons, and for their intellectual and spiritual education, seems to be the sort of universe we human beings find ourselves in, if we may judge by the appearance it presents in this little corner. The moral probation and education of man looks like its chief end—when regarded, I mean, at the highest *human* point of view; for I am far from supposing that it would seem only this, or not much more than this, at a higher point of view, or that if man could become divinely omniscient the whole difficulty might not disappear, in the full light of perfect reason. But, as the case is, man can interpret the universe only under

Must a divinely constituted universe be a universe only of non-moral things; or may it not also include finite or individual persons, who, as persons, must have absolute power to make themselves bad?

human conditions. This interpretation gives him the humanly related universe—really all that he has to interpret, or to do with—and its final *human* meaning may be eternally true under the human relations, and enough for the purposes of his spiritual as well as his physical life.

Can "persons," free, in virtue of their moral personality to resist, as well as to assimilate the divine life, exist in a theistically interpretable universe?

May it not be then that the perfect ideal, or what ought to exist according to the infinitely true and good "intellectual system of the universe," includes the *possibility* of the entrance into existence and the continuance in existence of that which ought not to exist, and which does not exist by an absolute necessity, but only in and through the free will of finite personal agents? As moral beings, finite persons are free to originate voluntary acts that are bad or undivine, as well as acts in harmony with the divine moral order—acts, that is to say, of which they are themselves the creators, or absolutely originating causes—if *they* must be held morally responsible for the acts coming into existence. Now must the universe in which infinitely perfect Power is revealed be a universe which consists exclusively of naturally necessitated, and therefore impersonal, things? May it not rightly contain supernaturally acting persons, and even find its larger issues in their education and moral trial? Does not a *necessitated* absence of sin and sorrow mean the necessary non-existence of persons, and the existence of unconscious things only, or at most of things that might be called conscious automatons—but not properly persons?

And is *this* the highest ideal of the universe that man even can form? Is not a world that includes persons better than a wholly non-moral world, from which persons are excluded—on account of the risk of the entrance into existence of what ought not to exist, through the personal power to act ill that is implied in their morally responsible agency? If so, may not *acts which ought not to exist* enter into existence, through the agency of persons, under a perfect or divine ideal of the Whole? Individual persons, or dependent beings who can create voluntary acts that ought not to be acted, cannot be excluded from existence, if God can admit persons, and sustain persons in existence, consistently with the ideal perfection of goodness. God cannot make actual what involves express contradiction, namely, an individual person who, because under an absolute necessity of willing only what is good, is not a person—if individual personality involves morally responsible freedom. If this impossibility seems to limit omnipotent Power, and to make it finite, the alternative supposition—that the existence of a person, or being who is morally responsible for acts that enter into existence, is *not* possible in a divinely constituted universe—is not less a limitation of omnipotence. It is a limitation, too, that is imposed only on the ground of the residuum of mystery, or incomplete conception, implied in the idea of individual personality; whilst the obstacle to an agent existing who is at once an individual person, and yet unable to act

personally, lies not in its mysteriousness, but in its being a contradiction in terms.

A contradictory ideal, at once including and excluding individual persons, cannot be the Divine or Perfect ideal.

For is not express contradiction presented in the supposition of finite *free* agents existing without the *possibility* of all or any of them doing what ought not to be done? If so, the assertion that the infinite perfection of God necessitates the persistent sinlessness of responsible persons living in the divine or perfect universe, would be to assert that irrationality, not reason, is at the root of all. It is no abatement of omnipotence to assert that an express contradiction cannot be realised even by omnipotence. A contradiction in terms is irrational, or indeed meaningless: to say that, if God is perfect, individual persons, exercising responsible freedom, *cannot* produce volitions which *they* ought not to have produced, and which are opposed to eternal moral reason or divine will, is not to vindicate divine perfection, but to destroy it. It is to say that if God, or infinitely perfect Power, exists, then only things, not persons, *can* coexist in the divinely constituted world. The perfection of omnipotence is surely not seen in power to realise contradictions. So we say that God cannot sin; cannot make a thing or a person at once to exist and not to exist; cannot make 2 and 2 equal to 5; cannot make a circle have all the properties of a square while it remains a circle; cannot make the actual past never to have been actual. If we may put faith in the perceptions of the reason in which we share,

*these* are not possible issues of omnipotence, for inability to realise them does not really limit it; the assertion of *their* possibility has no meaning.

In those examples the contradiction or meaninglessness is glaring. There are other contradictions in which the absurdity is not less, but in which it is less obvious. This of the inability of morally responsible individuals to make themselves bad may be one of such. Is not an *individual* person who should be morally responsible, yet absolutely incapable of an immoral volition, an impossible or contradictory idea. If he is free to act, he must personally be able, as their first or absolutely originating cause, to originate evil acts. To refer his acts to the Divine Will, instead of to the finite person, would transfer moral responsibility for the acts from the individual to God, and would also reduce the individual from a moral agent to a conscious thing or automaton.

Further, the essence of man's moral responsibility lies in the origin, not in the physical consequences, of his personal or voluntary acts. The overt consequences in external nature of a good or evil act of human will are determined under law of nature—that is to say, by the agency of the Divine Power that is operative in all natural order; but the invisible voluntary determination itself—so far as it is immoral—so far as there is an *individual* responsibility for its badness—cannot be thus physically determined by God, under the natural or really divine method of procedure. For is it not

There cannot be an individual person who is not an individual person, because not able to become bad.

The moral freedom of acts lies in their origin, not in their natural issues.

in the personal centre to which the act of will has to be referred, as its primary or responsible source, not in what follows from the act in nature under natural law, that the secret of moral evil lies? Accordingly it is the origin of the evil volition, not its consequences as a natural antecedent of change in the surrounding world after it has been originated, that must be kept in view. Hence a person whose volitions could not, according to the laws of nature, be followed by the changes, beneficent or the contrary, which he intended, would remain responsible for the deliberate intention, so far as this state of mind was his own absolute creation: but plainly not for any physically impossible consequences, these being divinely determined according to the mechanism of nature, and so withdrawn from the man's personal power or will, and therefore from his personal responsibility, his responsibility for badness being measured by his own power to make bad. The accountability of a person presupposes this supernatural character in the acts or states for which, as so far intrusted with individual supernatural power, he is accountable: *he* cannot be the moral or immoral agent in an act for which he is not responsible, on the ground that it has not ultimately originated in himself, but must be referred to its place in that constant course of Nature, which is the effect, not of his imperfectly reasonable will, but of the perfectly rational will of God. Thus the real question about the existence of evil acts of will, and who is responsible for them, turns



upon the previous question—Whether the supposed human agent of the evil action is the only power to whom the act is finally referable; or whether acts supposed to be only his are in reality only natural links in the succession of caused causes, all of them orderly effects or manifestations of the supreme universally operative Power? Does “I ought” mean that *I* can, or only that *Nature—i.e., God—can*? It is no doubt impossible for fallible men to determine with infallible certainty the exact line which separates *overt* acts for which an individual person is responsible, and phenomena which should be referred to the divine mechanism of nature—inherited by, or external to, his organism. We cannot know in every case whether the overt action is in this regard the man’s own action, for which he alone deserves blame; or how far its occurrence is due to its place in the mechanism of nature, for which he is not responsible. But moral responsibility is conditioned and measured by absolute power to do or not to do that for which there *is* moral responsibility. A person is morally responsible for his personal volition, and for what changes he knows that his volition must be followed by, according to the ordinary evolutionary metamorphosis or course of nature.

Personal origination of acts, in freedom from the Power that operates in the natural uniformities, I assume to be the fundamental postulate of personal responsibility. So that a wholly physical and biological science of man, which concerns itself only with the

Persons as related to natural or provisional causality.

natural uniformities of which the human organism is the theatre, ignores what is supernatural in man—that by which he is distinguished as a rational spirit, and which makes him the faint image or symbol of the infinitely perfect Power that constantly supports and operates in the physical universe. The course of natural causes is found in correlation with a supernatural and more comprehensive order in man, with which the exclusive biologist takes no concern. So far as an individual person is properly a person—so far, that is, as there *are* events for which *he* alone is morally responsible—he is extricated from the mechanism of natural causation—this because he is included in that higher economy to which the natural mechanism may be in harmonious subordination, and for the sake of which it appears to be directed in its progressive evolution, at least as seen at our human point of view.

Individual moral personality implies that individual persons may make themselves bad.

Another agency than the human may operate through our intellectual and emotional consciousness; but the power to originate volitions for which he is responsible *must* be the person's own who is responsible for them: he cannot be only their natural cause, nor can they be only naturally caused, which is in the end to be divinely caused: they must originate in the individual. An agent cannot be a personally responsible agent without this individual power. One may, with the atheist, or under an ideal of universal natural necessity like Spinoza's, suppose a wholly non-moral universe, in which all is mere nature, although it may by

a fiction be called divine; and this ideal universe may seem more worthy than the actual universe with its sins and sorrows. But such a universe is freed from the risk of wicked persons on moral trial only on condition that it is empty of good persons on moral trial. To relieve the world of all risk of anything existing in it which ought not to exist, supposed persons on moral trial must be reduced to non-moral things. Morally accountable individual agents must be excluded from the universe. To argue that the ideal of the universe cannot be perfect, and that its final Principle or Supreme Power cannot be ever-active and infinitely perfect moral Reason, if moral evil, with naturally consequent suffering, is found in any part of it, implies, does it not, that God cannot be God if we find in existence a world of personally responsible agents on personal trial? A circle that is destitute of all the essential properties of a circle could as well be supposed to exist as a finite person on moral trial who is wanting in the one essential mark of a finite person on moral trial.

The real question thus seems to be, not whether sin and sorrow can enter under the perfect ideal, but the previous question—Whether the existence of individual *persons* is consistent with the perfect or optimist conception of existence? Can dependent beings *such as men* rightly exist, who can put and keep themselves below their ideal; and if some of *them* do so, why do they not either rise into their true ideal, or else

The real question is, Whether the existence of individual persons is consistent with optimism?

have their self-conscious personality at once withdrawn from the universe, so that sin may at least not be a permanent element in existence? "Offences must needs come"—if *persons* exist; but the "woe" is to the persons by whom they come. Indeed, the existence of finite or individual persons seems to involve the risk of evil as long as they are found in the world. It does not appear that omnipotence *can* exclude what ought not to exist, as long as there are beings whose essential characteristic is, that they are able to bring evil into existence; and who cannot want this power of resisting the divine order, and of excluding themselves from union with God in the divine life, without losing their moral personality and being only things.

Is a universe which contains persons—who, being persons, must be free to make themselves bad—necessarily an untrustworthy and hopeless universe?

Is the human understanding able to demonstrate that a world empty of *persons* is a more divine world, or the outcome of a higher ideal, than a world consisting exclusively of *things*—unconscious things—and it might be also conscious things or automatons, but without proper moral personality? Would it enhance the perfection of the self-revelation of God in Nature that nothing supernatural should, in the form of good and evil human agency, appear in the course of nature; or that evil should be excluded, by also making goodness in the form of morally tried personal life impossible? Is it only on such terms as these that man can consent to regard the universe as the revelation of finally trustworthy Power, and its ideal as perfect? Are we obliged to say, that the presence

of more or less moral evil, even under this condition, is necessarily inconsistent with an optimist conception of the Whole, and therefore with the proper divinity of the Supreme Power. A divinely necessitated moral goodness in individual persons, but one which destroys responsibility, and therefore personality itself, is in necessary contradiction with personality. A finite "person" must have been intrusted with power to resist the divine will—that all persons in the universe should be always good, or should become good, if they have made themselves bad.

"Evil," according to a special form of optimist conception that was elaborated by Leibniz,—evil belongs not to the actualities of the universe, which are all determined by the divine Will, but to eternally necessary abstract ideals, to each of which correspondingly different actual universes must conform, these ideals being independent of all Will, even the divine or omnipotent Will—like the abstract mathematical necessities which God cannot reverse, because they are of the essence of reason. The ideals are eternally necessary, and cannot without inconsistency be made different. And if evil is thus necessarily involved in the best possible ideal according to which God could make a world, then either no world at all can make its appearance, or it *must* be one in which wicked persons and suffering animals may be found. The world as we have it is still good, notwithstanding the seeming

The optimist of Leibniz.

monsters that make their appearance in it. For their so-called crimes are the necessary means of more than equivalent good. Thus the tyrant Tarquin is figured by Leibniz in a variety of positions other than those in which he must be in *this* universe—good and happy in each of these—but in each case in a universe that is, in consequence of his goodness, necessarily inferior to the actual universe, in which the Tarquin of history spread disorder and misery around him.

“A good Tarquin would have necessitated a worse universe than that in which the wicked Tarquin appears.”

Had Jupiter, the goddess of Wisdom is made to explain,—had Jupiter made Sextus Tarquin happy at Corinth, or a good and prosperous king in Thrace, instead of a cruel and licentious tyrant at Rome, the world in which he was found could no longer be *this* world, and must have been less good on the whole than the one in which Sextus actually appeared. So that Jupiter could not but choose this universe, even with its tyrant Sextus; because *its* ideal surpasses in perfection the ideals of all other possible universes, and forms the apex of the ideal pyramid. Otherwise, Minerva goes on to say, Jupiter would have renounced his wisdom, and preferred the worse. “You see, then,” she continues, “that my father has not made Sextus wicked: he was so from all eternity—in the best of eternally necessary ideals. Jupiter has done nothing but award him actual existence, which supreme wisdom could not refuse to that ideal universe in which this so-called criminal is necessarily contained; Jupiter has only made him actual, instead of ideal; under the

perfect ideal from which an "evil" Tarquin is not excluded, because his exclusion would make it an impossible ideal. So the crimes of Sextus are even already seen to be the source of great issues. They made Rome free, and then Rome became a great ideal empire, with illustrious examples of manliness; though even these are as nothing to the final issues of that eternal ideal in which the wicked Sextus and a glorious Roman Empire are found, as realised in admiring thought, when, after a happy passage from this mortal state to a better, the gods shall have made us able to conceive the Whole.

An objection to the theistic meaning of the world which underlies this allegory of Leibniz might be suggested. Is it not the case that a Power which sustains a world that contains evil, when either the evil might have been left out or the making of the world might have been omitted, does not do what is good? God makes a world in which there is evil, which either could have been made without evil in it, or which need not have been made at all. The inference seems to be that the Power to which this mixed world is to be referred has not done what ought to be done, and so this world cannot be the revelation of omnipotent goodness. Leibniz replies that no doubt there is seeming evil in the world in which man finds himself, and also that it was possible to evolve a universe without this evil in it, or else not to have a universe in actual existence at all, for its actual existence depends on the free

The argu-  
ment of  
Leibniz.

will of God. But he rejects the assumption that a universe in which there is the evil we find may not be the best; since, for all man can tell, the best may be not that in which there is no such evil; for it may turn out that the evil is the natural and needed parent of the good. An imperfection in the part may be needed for the perfection of the Whole. A general will prefer a great victory with a wound to loss of the battle without the wound. Sin may introduce into the universe something nobler than what could have been brought into existence but for sin. In that case, Leibniz argues, a world with sin in it would be better than a world without sin. But Leibniz fails to show *how* the supposed perfect eternal ideals make the evils which are found in the world inevitable, or how a world in which nothing could come into existence that ought not to exist might not be the perfect world.

The insufficiency of his optimism.

This form of theistic optimism seems to make moral evil not something which there is an unconditional obligation to condemn, but rather what may, for its own sake, be admitted as good by the Supreme Power, on account of its consequences. It also seems to imply an inadequate conception of the power of *persons*, in virtue of their individual moral responsibility for their own acts, to bring into existence what ought not to exist, and what is therefore not brought into existence by a divine necessity. If moral personality is origina- tive—to the extent of the spiritual acts and states for which a person is morally accountable, then—as I have



been arguing—the question resolves into the consistency of the existence of persons, able themselves to make themselves bad, with infinite perfection in the Supreme Power. May beings exist, under the perfect intellectual system of the universe, who are *able to resist* the divine will—that all persons should be morally good, and so realise the ideal of rightness or duty.

That the glories of Rome should make the crimes of Sextus only relatively crimes, but absolutely and finally good, by a necessity which omnipotence is unable to overcome, is surely an unsatisfying idea. It seems to relieve the difficulty by explaining away moral evil, or rather by transforming it, at a higher point of view, into good; so that the worst crimes are only relatively evil, but really what *ought* to come into existence. It seems to imply that Sextus could not help being bad, because what *we* regard as a bad Sextus was *really* a good Sextus, when he is looked at in all his relations, or as a part of the universe. He is what he is by an intellectual necessity of existence, not by a personal act of his own that is absolutely independent of ideal necessities, and that might, but for himself alone, have been other than what it actually was. This is to make Sextus unfortunate, not blameworthy. For moral evil is the entrance into existence of what ought not to exist, and for which there was no absolute necessity, only a free individual volition. His sin is the singular effect of the person in whose voluntary act it is created. Is the existence of individual persons on moral trial,

It seems to make moral evil absolutely good.

who therefore can make themselves bad, necessarily inconsistent with omnipotence, or necessarily inconsistent with perfect goodness? Can the universe not be finally divine, even if it contains individual beings who are able to make and keep themselves *undivine*, notwithstanding God's will and endeavour that they should be good?

The intellectual possibility that the optimist conception, which is the alternative to that of life in a finally untrustworthy universe, may be, notwithstanding its remainder of mystery, sufficient reason for moral and religious faith.

But, after all, this moral trial of individual persons without their own leave, their weakness and ignorance, and the associated miseries of men and other sentient beings, presented on this earth, forms a strange and unexpected feature of the revelation of morally trustworthy Power presented in the universe. The persistency and extent of the lurid phenomena within human experience are still insufficiently explained, by the reference of acts of will that ought not to be acted solely to the originative agency of individual persons. Under this condition, one might have expected to find some persons resisting, others perfectly conforming themselves to, the moral ideal of reason and assimilating the divine life. The contrary fact, and the morally downward tendency found in men, suggests that there is a remainder of mystery in personality which we are not able to remove; perhaps that the persons on this planet began to exist personally before their birth into this life; or perhaps that no individual person is wholly individual. But incomplete knowledge, as distinguished from absolute self-contradiction, always leaves room for the optimist conception that is presupposed in a finally trustworthy and hope-

ful, or divine, world. Pessimist universal scepticism—which is literally suicidal—for final extinction of conscious life would be the escape out of an experience that *may* in the end deceive us all, even issuing in an outcome of universal woe—this pessimist scepticism can be imposed, not by incomplete knowledge, with its remainder of mystery, but only by a complete perception that the existing universe *must be* absolutely contradictory to a final idea of perfect goodness. When the necessary alternatives are *theistic optimism* and *atheistic pessimism*, I fail to find in reason this necessity for the suicidal alternative; and I do find the opposite alternative supported by what is highest in the constitution of man, or by man at his best. This is not demonstration, as in pure mathematics. But is it not enough to satisfy him who sincerely seeks to become what he ought to be?

## LECTURE VIII.

## PROGRESS.

A univers-  
ally scepti-  
cal pessim-  
ism the  
logical  
alternative  
to theistic  
optimism.

THE *reductio ad absurdum* implied in a finally untrust-  
worthy universe, which makes inevitable the pessimist  
and universally sceptical conception, is the philoso-  
phical vindication of the theistic or optimist inter-  
pretation of the world. The optimist alternative is  
demonstrable, so far as universal nescience and despair  
admits of refutation by the impossibility of interpreting  
experience, or even sustaining life, without final moral  
faith, consciously or unconsciously in operation. This  
refutation should be sufficient, unless it can be demon-  
strated that the mixture of evil—intellectual, physical,  
and moral—with what is good, or conformable to moral  
reason, is *absolutely contradictory* to the idea of morally  
perfect Power being at the root of all. But this demon-  
stration would be literally suicidal. If the evil found  
in the universe is not *somchow* consistent with the  
perfect goodness of its supreme Power, and so with  
a deep or ultimate optimism, the universe of so-called

reality must either be wholly meaningless, or else charged with an evil meaning: trust and hope must be withdrawn from it, in all the phases of our intercourse with ourselves and our surroundings: a human life, in the darkness of this discovery, would not be worth living. The ideal for the individual man, if man may then be supposed to have any ideal, would be, to get out of personal and sentient life as soon as he could—on the supposition that it would be possible ever to get out of it, after a person is once in it;—to get out of it, either in the vulgar way of suicide, or in the philosophical way of a sort of *Nirvana*, by absorption in the universal meaninglessness.

When I speak of the opposite conception to all this as an optimist conception, you must understand what I mean by optimism. For it is not an optimism which means that the universe contains nothing that ought not to exist in it; it is an optimism which refers the real evil that does appear—while it ought not, and need not—to the will of individual persons who enter into nature and make themselves bad. The rise of evil is thus contingent upon the universe being a universe of persons, not of things only; and a universe, too, which, at least at our human point of view, seems to be gradually evolved, as a school for the education and moral trial of responsible persons. This gives rise to spiritual relations between persons, human and divine, as well as physical relations among things: and it obliges us to look at natural causes, and the divine

Moral evil cannot be an impossibility, if the world may reasonably contain individual persons on moral trial.

system of natural causation, in a higher light than physical science does. It implies especially that persons, being persons, may *make themselves bad*, and thus become a new and modifying element in the unbroken physical uniformity in which God is otherwise revealed. If the theistic, or morally perfect, ideal of the universe includes individual persons, and moral relations between persons—superior to things and *their* relations, presented in the sense symbolism of physical causes,—then the entrance of what ought not to exist is an *inevitable contingency*. Absolute exclusion of the possibility of evil ever making its appearance, in the form of immoral resistance to the divine will—this resistance leading to suppression of divine life in the resisting persons—would then involve a contradiction to the idea of moral personality, educational probation, and trial. Its forcible removal, too, by the Supreme Power, as long as persons continue to exist, able to resist the divine will, would also seem to involve a contradiction to the idea of individual personality. A world of persons, such as we find, must, as personal, be *capable of being made bad in the persons of whom it consists*. The entrance into their lives of volitions which ought not to have been willed is not “permission” of what might have been prevented—by the Supreme Power keeping all persons perfectly good: to keep persons perfectly good, by an absolute or irresistible necessity, would be to transform a spiritual world of persons into a wholly physical or non-moral world of things,

of which neither moral worth nor moral evil could be affirmed.

Self-conscious persons, it may appear from this, are more emphatically real, and more independent individually, than material things are, if things are in themselves impotent. But the actual existence, whether of things or of individual persons,—that is to say, the existence of either of these two presupposed existences in the original threefold articulation of realities,—may only mean that neither things nor persons are actually states or phenomena of God, the third presupposed reality. Visible material things must be somehow other than only conscious states of persons. For outward things must at least have outward reality enough to be available media of intercommunication between separate conscious persons: they afford an interpretable system of signs, charged with the meanings of which natural science is the objective interpretation: they must be able to convey the meaning of one mind, more or less adequately, into another mind that otherwise could not get possession of it, at least under human conditions of experience;—we practically find at least this amount and kind of objective reality in visible things. And this sort of reality seems not inconsistent with material things having their potential existence in God, when they are *not actualised* in the sensations and intelligence of living beings; in whom, and for whose uses, they present themselves in actual and orderly existence—

Non-moral things must be treated and used as real, although they are only impotent natural signs.

whatever other ends they may serve in the divine system.

The only known power, outside the Divine Power which pervades Nature, is the power attributed by moral reason to individual persons—to resist their divine ideal.

But although material things are, in an imperfectly comprehended way, more and other than exclusively private phenomena of individual consciousness, we have no reason for supposing that things, like persons, are authors of acts, which would imply that they can originate them so far—like persons—as it were outside the divine power. For we practically distinguish *things* from *our personal consciousness*, and also from *God*, the sustaining power in things and persons; we likewise distinguish *ourselves* from things, in virtue of our being endowed by God with *moral* personality, which, as far as our responsible activity extends, enables each man to resist the divine will. And this autonomy of persons is not necessarily inconsistent with the causal concatenation of physical nature, of which indeed each person needs to avail himself in all overt action, as distinguished from wholly private determinations of his will. Individual persons seem to be the only origivative powers in existence that are revealed to man, over and above the universal and constantly operative power of God. Why should this resisting power of persons, in virtue of which they may refuse to assimilate with the divine ideal, necessarily contradict the finally optimist conception of the universe? This would seem to imply that a person—a creator of evil acts—could not exist in a divinely maintained and ordered world, and therefore that God



could be revealed only in and through unconscious things, or at most through conscious automatons, neither good nor bad morally.

But one may still ask how a universe that contains within it this possibly disturbing element of individual personal agency can be kept by God in harmony with the perfect or divine ideal? If a universe which includes resistance of persons to what ought to be—their individual power to make and keep themselves in states of mind and will in which they ought not to exist—if a universe so constituted is of a sort that it is within the power of God to manifest Himself in, is it not a universe that may finally be converted into moral chaos by the individual persons in it, even while it might continue to be a physical cosmos—so that progressive improvement in the persons who compose its successive generations would be impossible? More than this, may not individual persons, with their implied power of initiating evil, gradually make the world of persons a world in which *all* individual persons are wholly and finally bad? May not the existence in the universe of persons undergoing educative and moral trial lead thus to universal and unending moral disorder; so that theistic faith would be virtually extinguished by that very supernaturalness or moral personality in man on which I have argued that it partly rests? The existence of persons who, as persons under moral relations, must all be free to become permanently bad; who cannot by any

But what if all individual persons were to maintain themselves in permanent resistance to their divine ideal?

power, divine or other, be hindered from becoming bad, without being reduced to irresponsible things, seems to imply the possibility at last of a universe in which all persons have become irrecoverably bad. What then becomes of the theistic or optimist conception? Theistic faith would then turn out to be a fallacious guarantee for the moral cosmos which this faith seems necessarily to presuppose in the final outcome. So far as it consists of persons, the universe would then have become a universe of devils—surely not a possible manifestation *this* of the perfect Power presupposed in our moral or filial theistic instinct, as the needed support and reconciliation of human life.

Why is there any universe of reality or any temporal process?

It is here that the very existence of persons, whose personality enables them to make and keep themselves bad, is the chief enigma, and the evidence of the limitation at least of *our* final conception of the universe. To resolve this enigma fully we should need to know why the finally trusted universe of things and persons now exists, has existed, and will continue to exist—if, indeed, even this way of putting the problem, in terms of changing existence in time, does not take in what may have to disappear at the central point of view, as distinguished from our one-sided human conception. The reason for the actual existence of God, and of the universe of things and persons in which He is revealing Himself, is the insoluble problem; and without solving *it* we cannot be sure that our knowledge is complete enough to show that even a

moral world composed of persons who have made themselves permanently wicked would be necessarily inconsistent with the perfect ideal. We must first get possession of that ideal. This is not needed for human purposes;—if each man finds that he may maintain the filial trust that all will be absolutely well with those who withdraw personal resistance to the perfectly good Will, and permit the divine ideal of Man to be gradually realised in themselves.

An experience of persons that like man's is limited to the human beings found on this planet—in ignorance of innumerable other orders of persons that may exist elsewhere—persons connected, it may be, in unknown relations to men, all persons in the universe being perhaps morally related to all others, as all things are physically related in the physical system,—this infinitesimally limited human experience of persons, combined with the final theistic faith in the righteousness and love of the Universal Power, form *our* available resources for determining what the absolute meaning of the Whole may be;—or rather of the Whole so far as man is personally related to it. Now, when we contemplate the history of moral and sentient beings on this little world of ours, do we find that the persons who appear and then disappear, in their successive generations, *are* becoming better or becoming worse, according to our highest ideal of what ought to be? and do we find that their environment

Experience suggests that the history of persons on this planet may be the history of a progressive struggle towards the ideal of Man.

—what is called their civilisation—is in progress towards what is better, or in regress towards what is worse? Does it suggest gradual approximation, in individuals and in their social state, to what is ideally good, or is the movement all in the opposite direction? Is it a struggle of the evil with the good—involving enormous waste, at least as it superficially appears—waste of sentient lives, and much torture of their sensibilities,—but withal a residuum of gradually victorious endeavour? *Struggle with evil*, more or less successful, yet somehow on the way to infinitely good and righteous issues, may be the form which the optimist or theistic conception of life is found to assume, when we accept the guidance of history and experience.

But apparent progressive improvement, in an originally imperfect world, does not of itself fully explain the present mixture of evil.

But this progressive abatement of the evil that is now mixed with the good, in individual lives and in the social economy, is by itself inadequate to reconcile the suspicious phenomena which suggest sceptical pessimism with a perfect filial trust in the optimist interpretation of the world. In the first place, it does not explain how, under the divine or perfect Ideal, there can be *need* for improvement, or why man should require to be raised to his ideal, instead of always, and in all instances, illustrating it. Progress presupposes previous imperfection or evil; in all development the antecedent state is inferior to the consequent state. The present imperfection, which calls for the progressive correction, has to be explained. Why is

the race of man ever found in a state and with surroundings which require progressive improvement? More than this, if a person's departure from the divine ideal of humanity is in any degree the act of the person—if he is found willing what he ought not to will, and what he might have willed differently—this means more than the physical imperfection which may be improved by physical progress or evolution: it necessarily goes deeper than this: it implies not merely a relative imperfection, which may disappear in the course of physical evolution, but what is absolutely evil. It involves the absolute evil that is implied in personal blameworthiness for its coming into existence, and which is not removed in an improvement of the social surroundings, or by expanding personal intelligence. The blended greatness and littleness of man, on which Pascal enlarges, is not fully recognised under the idea of a gradual elimination of what is relatively imperfect, in and through a progressive natural evolution.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, faith in the gradual abatement of evils, under the method of progressive evolution, in the course of which they are supposed to be gradually disappearing, is now the favourite scientific faith: this faith may even be regarded as the form which an unconsciously theistic trust in the final principle of the universe is assuming in professedly agnostic minds. For it *is* of the nature of moral or theistic trust, although it is scientifically

Empirically generalised progress is unfit to sustain absolute faith in the Power that is so revealed.

illustrated only by a narrow and brief experience of facts—those presented by things and by persons in this small world, viewed in the light of their past history. It is an expression of confidence that, because the phenomena here presented seem to illustrate a natural history of progressive improvement, so far as the evolution has yet gone, they may be expected to persist in being progressive during an indefinite future. That the progressive evolution is to be endless, or, if not endless, that it is some day to reach perfection and then to persist in an unending perfection—the successive generations of men thereafter all fully realising their true ideal—this of course cannot be presented fact: it must be an act of faith. On the contrary, we are told by some expositors of the empirical evolutionist conception to anticipate later on regress instead of permanent perfection—even a final disintegration of all the products of the present progressive movement in mankind—issuing at last in the disintegration of the planet itself, and the consequent disappearance of all living actors in the meaningless drama of so-called progress that was once acted on the earth, but of which, with the final extinction of the human actors and of the planet itself, all conceivable record or result is for ever lost. The universe has then become what it would have been if man and the other living beings on earth, with the earth itself, had never been the subject of the supposed natural processes of construction and disintegration.

But many in the now living generation, who profess to reject theism, seem notwithstanding to find a theistic satisfaction in an attenuated because empirical faith in physical progress: they meet the final difficulties of speculative thought by iteration of the words "progress," "development," "evolution"—which strictly speaking only suggest the mode in which the universe, regarded as physically constituted, seems in the meantime to be behaving itself;—also in which it has been behaving itself, as far back as men can see into the past; and in which it is expected to behave through an indefinite future, and this notwithstanding the professed agnostic withdrawal of all theistic or moral faith in its trustworthiness. The *justification* of this expectant trust is supposed to consist in "verifications," offered by physical phenomena that have been emptied of moral reason under the empirical evolutionist conception, and which *may* therefore be the sport of a malignant, or an indifferent, or a blind irrational Power. Nothing deeper is recognised by those who accept this attenuated semi-theistic confidence in the improving tendency of evolving nature, and who indulge in it seemingly unconscious that even this reliance, so far as it goes, contradicts their own agnostic renunciation of final moral faith.

Inconsistency of a non-theistic faith in progress.

The conception of the world as at present naturally in progress towards a physical millennium, is a form of relief from the enigma of the bad found mixed with the good, in a universe still treated as so far

The sort of religion which trusts or worships the Universe, as

progressive, after it has finally withdrawn from it all moral or theistic trust.

interpretable and therefore trustworthy. It has been called "meliorism." Inadequate as a morally theistic faith in the temporal process of the universe, or as an explanation of its evils, the idea of gradual, even if often interrupted, individual and social amelioration is nevertheless full of human interest, and is illustrated by a large collection of facts. Indulgence in the idea belongs to goodness and nobility of character. It gives life to generous hope, and helps to correct the selfish type of individualism, by educating that larger sort of individualism, which finds the true idea of the individual in his unselfish relation to other individual persons, as well as to the Universal Power or Person. If those now living are not themselves actually to see the issue, there is still a consolatory faith in the millennial comfort and satisfaction of later generations of men and other animals. And all this because a present tendency towards a higher ideal seems visible, and this tendency is trusted in, like any other natural law, even when the trust is not recognised by those who indulge in it as ultimately moral and absolute. Present ills, it seems, may well be endured by this generation, as greater ills were endured by past ones, on account of the potential promise of ideal good in store for our successors;—this partly because we find the now existing members of the human species so far sharing in the advancement, and also because the idea gives us the happiness of thinking that we are contributing towards its fuller attainment by our suc-



cessors. Social activities thus sustained seem to shed some light in the darkness, and bring hope and joy to a generation somehow unusually perplexed by pessimist despair, in the decay of conscious theistic faith. But even this imperfect form of moral trust in the Power at the heart of the universe may be more sincere and productive of good, in some who profess their agnostic inability, than in the merely conventional theism into which modern agnosticism has introduced a much-needed disturbance.

Organic growth or progress is, at any rate, a physically scientific watchword in the nineteenth century. It is the expression of a prevailing conception into which we are educated, partly by the recent increase of man's power to adapt natural causes to human purposes, thus obviously rendering this planet of ours more fit to be lived in conveniently, because in organisms brought more into harmony with their surroundings. It has not been always consciously so among men; nor is it so now in all minds. The ideal of progress lies in the future: but some men and some whole generations have found *their* ideal in the past, or in the future only so far as it is hoped to be revival of the past. There are always to be found minds, as Bacon remarks, given to extreme admiration of antiquity; others to extreme love and appetite for novelty. Few are so happily tempered that they can hold the mean, neither rejecting what has been well laid down by the ancients, nor despising what is

The New  
and the  
Old, as  
ideals.

well introduced by the moderns. These affectations of antiquity only and of novelty only, Bacon regards as the humours of partisans rather than the sane judgments of mankind; and he seeks for his ideal, not in the state of any one age, past or future, which is unstable, but in the light of reasoned experience, which is eternal.

A really progressive activity unites past experience with ideal anticipation.

The divine method of progressive evolution which facts illustrate seems to involve a composition of the two opposite tendencies. A supposed progress that seeks wholly to sever itself from the past illustrates, in the consequent regress, the irrationality of the procedure. But the ideal that is found wholly in the past, and that induces desire only to preserve what has been, arrests change; yet change is essential to life. True progress, based on the Reason that is latent at once in the mind of man and in the surrounding universe, cannot lose continuity with the reason that has in a measure become patent in the history of man. In all advance, what is new seems to arise out of what is old, in the way of metamorphosis, instead of absolute isolation from and rejection of all that is old. As Bacon says of progress in science, some of those who have handled knowledge have been men who take pleasure only in trying experiments empirically, while others would make inherited dogmas supersede new trials. The former are like the ant; they only collect without constructing. The others are like the spider; they only make cobwebs out of their present possessions. The

bee takes the middle course, which is the right one: it gathers its material from the flowers of the garden and the field, but it transforms and digests them by a power of its own. The rational dualism, which unites the past and the future in a moral faith and hope that is educated and balanced by what has been, seems to be involved in the real advancement, whether in knowledge or otherwise, of a being like man, intermediate between the animal and Deity, between sense and omniscience; and whose progress must be from the former towards the latter of these extremes, gradually making patent in his own consciousness the Divine Reason of which the changing universe is the revelation.

Faith in progressive evolution, as the divine law, must be modified by the consideration that the Past presents to view persons whose intellectual or whose spiritual development is in advance of all living examples. Who, in the succeeding generations, has surpassed Aristotle in comprehensive intelligence? Socrates and the Hebrew prophets were followed by ages of comparative moral and spiritual darkness. Saints and martyrs have shown a self-sacrifice that is foreign to the experience and sympathies of more selfish and faithless successors. Things and persons are commingled in the temporal process, so that the onward current seems often disturbed and deflected from its course. The originative action of persons seems to interfere, for unexpected good or evil, with a physical order which faith expects to find continuously

Progress  
through  
Regress,  
and  
through  
Persons.

progressive. But these seeming anomalies are not demonstrably at variance with the deeper presupposition of theistic faith in the universal system, according to which the temporal procedure is an incompletely comprehensible development of the Divine Idea. The progress of mankind, as I think Wordsworth somewhere suggests, is not like a Roman road which goes straight to its goal; it is rather like a winding river, frequently forced to turn backward, in order to overcome obstacles which cannot be directly eluded, but moving—in consequence of the deflection—with additional forward impulse.

Pain and  
Progress,  
as means  
and end.

Physical evils and intellectual evils—pain as well as ignorance and error—may be thus means of advancement towards the imperfectly comprehensible end to which the universe is moving. It is commonplace to suggest that dissatisfaction or pain is at the root of progressive improvement in individual persons and in society. Suffering and sympathy with suffering is an indispensable condition of personal education in goodness. Man's intellectuality and spirituality is brought out of the latent state into the conscious state, by the discomfort of its being only latent or unconscious. The discomfort of the state of ignorance and error is a motive to the discovery that relieves it. That we are in these respects still out of harmony with our divine ideal makes us unsatisfied: this dissatisfaction evokes the reason innate in us, which is truly divine reason. The educating influence of these uneasinesses may be re-

sisted or perverted, if the person wills to persist in a state in which he ought not to continue. But the divine influence of pain is in innumerable ways on the side of what ought to be—of what indeed might be but for the perverse will of the person who resists that educating pressure of nature which is really the expression of divine power in the form of natural discipline.

We have an illustration of intellectual progress through apparent retrogression, according to the analogy of the “winding river,” in the past history of philosophical speculation. Systems seem to the superficial student of history to succeed one another in an aimless series, without permanent advance. One may fail to discern in their succession the often interrupted and slow education of human intelligence, and the natural adaptation of each system to the age in which it was evolved, as the divine condition of the ultimate advance. Yet surely through the intellectual sects and systems of the past an unceasing, even if an unconscious, “purpose” has been running, so that the thoughts of men have gradually “widened with the process of the suns.” The history of human intelligence appears as a history of progressive development, often interrupted or regressive, the issue of a composition of forces, each inadequate, and therefore while it is in vogue still a source of intellectual dissatisfaction, but then, in the form of pain, an impulse towards wider and deeper conceptions—in this a type of personal and social progress in all its phases.

Intellectual progress as illustrated in the history of philosophical thought.

The mean  
between  
extremes,  
and com-  
position of  
intellectual  
forces.

Has not the confused, and seemingly even self-contradictory, philosophic past been a continuous struggle, in which, on the one hand, various forms of idealistic construction, wherein the secret of the universe is supposed to be evolved out of a single axiomatic principle, are found arrayed against the different phases of sceptical pessimism and indifferentism, with a consequent despair of moral reason being finally latent in the universal movement? And may not the gradual outcome of the evolutionary struggle—purely rational idealisms opposed and slowly corrected by the sceptical criticism—be nearer approach to the philosophy which acknowledges, as its constructive principle, with increasing intelligence, the moral or theistic faith, that is intermediate between the mental paralysis of Nescience, and the Divine Thought which in its infinity evades the philosophic grasp of man? The natural impossibility of permanently subsiding into the doubt which abandons the universe as uninterpretable, either as a whole or in any of its parts, together with the repeated failure of ambitious human attempts to comprehend existence as the changing states of a single Power, lead the philosopher into the intermediate path of Theistic Philosophy, as the only one open to man:—on which, nevertheless, his intellectual activity needs to be quickened from time to time, by the attempts and failures of exclusive Idealism and exclusive Empiricism. With this irrefutable faith in the reasonableness of the Whole, he lives assured that facts and events, however mysteri-

ous, can never put either causal or moral intelligence to permanent confusion, and thus make the fundamental faith of reason no longer tenable by man. To follow this path—intermediate between Nescience and Omniscience—is to acknowledge men as more than animals, yet less than identical with God—through their sense organisms part of Nature, while in their spiritual experience they may in different degrees participate in the divine life. A philosophy which looks only to man's visible organic connection with nature is logically atheistic, which means universally agnostic. And is not the philosopher who supposes that he fully comprehends the infinite macrocosm in and through his own finite microcosm—in a perfect identity with the "fulness of God"—logically acosmic, in a pantheism that is logically atheistic? What is man, Pascal asks—in the spirit of the human philosophy that accepts the intermediate as the true—what is man amidst the immeasurable realities which encompass him? At one point of view he seems to lose himself in the Infinite; at another, he seems to lose himself in the abyss of Nothing. Yet he is beyond the Nothing out of which he seems to sense to take his rise, and he is found short of the Infinity in which he seems, in his own necessarily incomplete thought, to be swallowed up. The intermediate is stamped upon all our faculties and all our experience. We are alike unable to know all and to remain ignorant of all. Yet, in another view of the case, unless we know all we cannot know anything, since each finite

thing and each individual person is connected with every other, and is fully explained only when seen in rational correlation with every other. In the only permanent and humanly progressive philosophy many things must in the end be "left abrupt."

Is not  
theistic  
faith, so  
far as it is  
strong and  
intelligent,  
the funda-  
mental  
factor in  
the pro-  
gressive  
improve-  
ment of  
man?

That the progressive improvement of man involves a gradual extinction of the religious conception of the universe, and that the final victory of the gradual evolution will consist in the disappearance of this conception, is the incoherent philosophy which Auguste Comte has helped to diffuse in Europe and America in the passing generation. Religion, in the form of superstition, is assumed to be an anachronism, which the human race, in civilised countries, has now nearly outgrown, so that everywhere it is found in a slow decay; maintaining a languid life among persons of imperfect intellectual insight, but so inconsistent even with the present stage of social advancement that, at least in prosperous countries, it exists only as a comparatively harmless superstition, no longer a real and always persecuting power in human affairs. For it seems that we have arrived in the social evolution at a stage in which the educated mind distinctly sees that the universe, including man, is simply a succession of passing appearances, which can only be interpreted physically, according to their coexisting and successive relations or modes of procedure. Yet is there not, one may ask, an uncriticised and unconscious theistic



faith, at the root even of this thin and shallow interpretation of the world?

Supposed consequences of the application of cosmic faith in the physical meanings of phenomena, are contrasted by Comte with the effects of the crude religious ideas under which ancient superstition ascribed events to the irrational caprice of spirits, signalised all uncommon events as eminently supernatural, and saw in the miseries of man only the cruel anger of the gods. At a later stage in the history of man, Comte seemed to find these childish mythologies giving place to empty abstractions of metaphysical thought: words, void of all positive meaning that could be verified in sense or imagination, were made to do duty instead of the declining mythologies, and to conceal man's necessary ignorance of all beyond the finite phenomena which somehow succeed one another on the stream of time. But the age in which these verbal abstractions ruled the human mind—the so-called metaphysical stage in the social progress, next in succession to the mythological or superstitious—is supposed, in its turn, to make room for strictly scientific interpretation of physical phenomena, the only legitimate intellectual employment of mankind, and destined to be the universal philosophy, in the further advance of society.

Whether this last is to be the final stage, in which progressive improvement is perfected, is not clearly explained. Perhaps the exclusively physical science stage is expected to last till a process of disintegration

Comte's three stages of progressive evolution, in which a superstitious theistic faith is said to be gradually superseded by an exclusively physical faith.

What is the further outcome of this physical faith?

begins, when the physically interpreted world itself will resolve into pristine fire-mist. But even before this planetary catastrophe, the pessimist issue of merely physical faith, in what may therefore turn out to be a wholly untrustworthy or even malignant universe, may have relieved the planet of its minute philosophers, by the suicide which would be the practical application of an apotheosis of despair.

Comte pre-supposes the inconsistency of theistic with physical faith.

So Comte represents abstract metaphysics as in the historical evolution subversive of theology, and the physical sciences as in the end disintegrative of both. In each step of advance in the wholly physical and alone legitimate interpretation of the universe, he sees the retreat of so-called metaphysics, and so-called theology, from the territory thus conquered by science: so that when the scientific victory is universal, the universe it is supposed will be *seen* to be incapable of being interpreted in the light of eternal necessities of reason and of philosophical theism. Man must then lose the moral faith by which I have supposed that his interpretation even of physical nature is sustained at last, and in which he finds his available strength.

Instead of recognising in divine moral trust the reasonable foundation and culmination of all natural science.

Does not a deeper philosophy than that of Comte proceed, on the contrary, on the principle that the physical interpretation of the universe, instead of excluding the really metaphysical and the really religious, is itself sustained by each of these; that ever advancing discoveries of natural meanings, and of natural relations of means and ends, are concrete embodiments

of abstract conditions imposed by intelligence; and that these last conduct to the final conception in the faith that the Whole is the expression of perfectly good and wise Power, or morally intending active Reason? An atheistic or agnostic faith in progress is necessarily baseless and incoherent; for, if it really means what it says, it is wanting in the moral assurance that, notwithstanding intervals of seeming regress, things *must* be working together for good to all those who are struggling to live in conformity with the divine ideal, and in whose persons the world is accordingly becoming more divine. The idea of progress is, tacitly if not explicitly, a teleological conception of things and persons, and those who really accept it must be virtually sustaining themselves, so far, in a moral or theistic trust.

## LECTURE IX.

## MIRACLE: WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

The idea of miracle and its connection with theistic faith.

THE idea of miracle, however vaguely it may be conceived, is particularly associated with the manifestation of God to man, and also with the enigma of moral evil. A revelation of God incarnate in the ideal man Christ Jesus is regarded as a miraculous entrance of God into a man, for reconciling with God persons who have made themselves bad, but who might be induced to become good in response to this miraculous revelation of divine goodness or merey, and appeal to their languid theistic faith. It is in proof of this appeal being really divine revelation that physical miracles are reported to have occurred; and Christianity is the one religion which has its claim on theistic faith vindicated in this particular way. Physical wonders are more or less associated traditionally with other religions; but the one that has a series of physical miracles, in justification of its authority, associated

with it, and that is regarded as in itself a miracle, is the Christian, including its early development in Judaism. The Jews craved miracles; the Greeks preferred speculation, and were repelled by a religion that was represented as a miracle, and that seemed to ask men to see God signally in what was miraculous.

Now what is meant by a miracle? If it is conceived either as an external event or as a spiritual experience which cannot be explained by power latent in outward nature or in human nature, and which *must* therefore be referred extra-naturally to God, this raises a question about the sort of events and of inward experiences that can, and the sort that cannot, be scientifically explained by natural causes—explained, that is to say, according to discoverable laws of the natural evolution, and in the way of development by education of the divinely constituted spirit that is latent in man? Is man able to determine between what is and what is not done by God according to natural law? Is he fit to determine what the innate potentialities of his own divinely constituted mind may be, or what the limits of their outcome, in the form of an increased enlightenment of the moral or filial faith in the final principle of the universe, which I have regarded as tacitly presupposed in *all* man's dealings with experience? Then what is to be thought about the relation in reason of miraculous outward events, and of miraculous mental experiences that are supposed to be humanly inexplicable, to the naturally progressive evolution which scien-

Questions suggested by the supposition of miracle.

tific man somehow assumes to be within the horizon of his intellectual vision? Is a miracle an event that can assimilate with the physically progressive evolution in outward nature, or with the original "inspiration" which "gives understanding," in the form of Common Reason? Can it be involved in either, or is it in antagonism to both? Is a miracle something that Universities, Royal Societies, and persons who devote themselves to scientific interpretation of nature, have in a pre-eminent degree to do with; or is it something so outside physical nature, and even outside the moral or supernatural in human agency, that it must be kept apart, as foreign to reason, or something on which reason must not exercise itself? Is miraculous revelation to be received and assimilated through some mystical process of dependence on authority presupposed to be infallible; or may it be tested, in the ordinary critical way, by those accustomed to weigh evidence? Again, is a miracle absolutely such, or only relatively to human intelligence? What is the criterion of miraculous, as distinguished from non-miraculous, outward events; or of miraculous as distinguished from non-miraculous spiritual experiences? Individual men, and successive generations, differ widely in their ideas of what is and is not naturally possible. An event which in the opinion of one man, or one age, is considered miraculously divine, is afterwards discovered to be a divinely natural issue, evolved according to physical law. What was regarded as a miracle by an ignorant man is found by a scientific expert not to be a miracle;

—at least if that only is miraculous which is wholly abnormal,—not referable to physical causation, nor to the education of the incarnate spiritual Reason in the persons supposed to be miraculously inspired. In the progress of science, may not all supposed miraculously divine events of the past be reduced to intelligible places in the cosmical order? if they can be so explained they do not cease in consequence to be divinely caused. Would the discovery of the natural cause of a miracle,—the discovery, for instance, that the introduction of life into an organism, or the restoration of the dead to life, is after all under cosmical law—would this divorce the supposed miracle from God? If all that is called miraculous can be thus wholly assimilated by the natural system, must theistic faith disappear, in all persons who accept the discovery? Can a miracle, if thus relative to the degree of intelligence in the individual spectator, mean anything really abnormal, at the divine point of view? Or are we to suppose two distinct sorts of divine power—the one exerted cosmically, conditioned by what are called natural causes; the other exerted supernaturally, unconditioned by any natural cause;—and must we suppose that the second of these is a more difficult divine exertion than the other? If so, what is the ground in reason for this supposition or inference?

These questions about miracle, apt to arise at this point in our course of thought, bring memorable reports of miracles into prominence, and the abstract idea of

Is “miraculous” religion really natural?

*miraculousness* seems to demand fuller consideration. We have to look at their relation to the whole philosophical rationale of theistic faith in the revelation of God that is presented universally, and which we have already found latent in all our experience. Is faith in so-called miraculous revelation of God different in kind from this theistic trust and hope, or only this further unfolded, and so more intelligible?

Can either philosophy or natural science be concerned with miracles?

It may seem at first that a miracle bears on its face that it is something wholly foreign to "natural" theology, even in the widest meaning of "nature." To refer to miracle at all may be regarded as out of place, in a philosophical inquiry into the reasonableness of moral faith and filial hope in the final meaning of the universe; out of place, too, in any scientific inquiry into the natural causes according to which events are concatenated, and by their recognised relations in which concatenation changing things become scientifically intelligible. For what is called a "miracle" is commonly supposed to be an event that has emerged in the history of the planet *without a natural cause*, perhaps as a consequence of arbitrary magical will on the part of the miracle-worker: the miraculous visible consequence is moreover supposed to afford some sort of guarantee for reposing faith in the divine infallibility of the persons who appear as miracle-workers: *their* acts or words, so far as these are associated with the wonderful event, are supposed to become invested with divine infallibility. It might be argued that



if a claim to miraculous inspiration, which has been verified, for example, by fulfilment of the claimant's prediction of his own resurrection after his death, *could* turn out after all to be undivine, then *this permitted coincidence* in the temporal sequence of those events would imply that the Power that finally determines all outward events was morally untrustworthy—because in this instance, and therefore possibly in others, participating in a fraud. But no mere physical miracle can thus destroy theistic, and therefore cosmic, faith: no physical miracle can contradict the active moral Reason that a reliable experience presupposes at the divine centre, or verify an immoral revelation as divine. And the widely received report of the resurrection of Jesus has been followed by scientifically incalculable momentous consequences in the history of mankind,—above all other reported resurrections of men. If it now touches human imagination more languidly, through the lapse of time, it has already awakened the most efficacious religious faith experienced by man, evoking in Christendom the latent hope of eternal life.

Again. Whether or not events of this kind have long ago occurred on our planet may seem to be to us now only isolated matter of past history, and of this sort too even if those “wonders,” which are regarded as signal signs of God, are still of possible occurrence. For their very definition isolates them from natural science: if they are events that have *no* natural causes, physical science, which is the issue of the search for

The physical marvels of natural science, and the physical miracles of religion.

natural causes, can have nothing to say to phenomena for which it is assumed there is no place in the cosmical system. Scientific inquiry indeed is bringing into light innumerable natural causes hitherto unknown, and in its light men are enabled to adapt to human convenience in unexpected ways the cosmic web in which we all find ourselves involved. Discoveries, and applied discoveries, of causal connections among phenomena are called "miracles of science," but *they* are miraculous only because they surprise men—not because they are events divorced in their origin from all natural causes, although they are believed to occur within the cosmical system.

Physical miracles, as isolated, are said to be out of place in the philosophical rationale of theistic faith.

Thus excluded from natural science, physical miracles may also seem—if they do occasionally occur—to be not less remote from metaphysical philosophy than from scientific physics. In philosophy what is sought for and satisfies must involve something fixed, permanent, eternal, absolute, final—whether found at last in the form of perfect comprehension, out of which all mystery is eliminated, or of final faith, in which we are moved to unconditional trust, notwithstanding its necessary remainder of incomplete knowledge, which men call "mystery." But philosophy turns away from what is only transitory, what belongs only to particular times and places, what has happened only in a certain year, and locally only on some part of the globe,—especially something reported as long past, and so less and less connected with the present as the years roll

on, leaving past "miraculous" events at an ever increasing distance. The wonderful phenomena reported as having made their appearance in the ancient world, which form the stock of what are regarded as physical miracles, possess this character. If they are neither outward events that are persistently, because naturally, bound up with the cosmical system, nor experiences of the spirit in man that are necessarily involved in the active Reason that is immanent at once in man and in the universe, they seem unfit for recognition in philosophy, and to be unconnected philosophically with the moral and filial faith which I have put before you, as the reasonable attitude of man towards the changing universe.

As past events that are only occasional, and that are supposed to be absolutely isolated so far as natural causation is concerned, our information about miracles may seem to be necessarily only external and empirical, dependent on a human testimony that is gradually becoming inaudible, and which in course of time must prove a weakening tie, if indeed it does not altogether disappear after the lapse of ages. David Hume argued that miracles must be impossible to prove, so far as evidence of their occurrence depends on history and tradition, inasmuch as faith in human testimony can never be so credible as the cosmic faith that every event must have a natural cause: human experience of the uniformity of the physical evolution is more credible than any historic record of its non-uniformity can pos-

Must not all past miracles, in the course of time, disappear from view, and become gradually pre-historic myths?

sibly be: witnesses are found to be fallible, but the course of nature is not found to be fallible; and even if an infallible witness could be produced, when he was pitted against the infallible natural order, the contradiction between the two infallibles, it was argued, could only produce that sceptical paralysis of all faith, alike in nature and in supernature, into which the thinker, baffled by the absolutely contradictory, inevitably subsides. But leaving out of account this ingenious philosophical puzzle of David Hume, which exercised theological reasoners in a past generation; and granting that, within narrow limits of time, the occurrence of an event that had no natural cause may be made credible through history and tradition,—can it remain credible after the lapse of ages has left the reported miracle at an almost invisible distance. Just now, the records of mankind may make credible events that happened a few hundred, or even a few thousand years ago. But what can be their credibility after man has existed on the planet for hundreds of thousands of years? How must miracles look that are reported to have occurred a million of years before? Can events so inconceivably remote be still available for strengthening and enlightening theistic faith and hope; and can there *then* be any security for a faith and hope that is supposed to depend wholly upon an event attested by this unimaginably prolonged tradition, instead of upon the cosmical system, the eternal necessities of reason, or the development of the divine spirit latent in man?

The critical temper of the time might suggest other obstacles to the philosophical recognition of events supposed to enter into the continuous physical evolution miraculously, or unconditioned by any physical cause. Not only is history a precarious vehicle for the conveyance of information about events, and increasingly so through thousands and millions of years, but even our five senses are found to deceive us with regard to present events: at least men often mistake their own fallible interpretations of what they see for something seen. The ignorant seek for wonders; and, not responding to the divine inspiration of "the prophets," imagine that they would be persuaded if they saw a man miraculously rise from the dead. Miracles are commonly found in the early histories of religions. But did the reporters really see what they supposed they saw? Prejudice in a human mind is apt to induce interpretations of presented phenomena that are in harmony with some sentiment that is dominant in the spectator: subjective visual perceptions produced by the dominant idea are readily mistaken for objective realities. The historic record of miracles is in this way apt to be poisoned at its source. Events that do not really occur are supposed to be perceived: the fancied perception is only a misinterpretation of what actually happened. Or if the event which is assumed to be miraculous did actually happen, is there sufficient ground in reason for the assumption that it must have been an event divorced from every natural

Even if an event which is claimed as a miracle should appear, could the spectator have infallible certainty that it does not admit of being caused naturally, according to some undiscovered physical law?

cause? Is not this a presumptuous assumption, on the part of human beings who have discovered a small number only of the innumerable natural causes that are gradually disclosing themselves, in the course of what is perhaps unbeginning and unending natural sequence? Perhaps the supposed miracle may turn out, after further experimental inquiry, to be only one of the marvels of science, with its natural cause detected. Man, in his victorious struggle with nature, may even discover the means by which the "wonder" may be converted into a sign of his own mechanical, or chemical, or biological skill, when he is able to repeat the "miracle" as an experiment under his own hand. For what limits can be set to the progress of science in the discovery of natural causes? Already facts confirm this anticipation. What in early times were supposed miracles of healing are now produced by means familiar to the scientific physician. The natural results of the telegraph and the telephone are miracles when tried by the standard of the physical knowledge of a former age. Are we justified then in taking for granted that the visible restoration of life after its dissolution in physical death is an event absolutely beyond the ordinary laws of natural causes in the universe; or even that men may not become able to employ natural causes so as to introduce conscious life where there was none before, or to restore it after it had ceased?

The supposed absurdity of

I have suggested some considerations which may make men who have been educated in modern ideas of

historical criticism, and of the physical interpretation of nature by experiment, disposed dogmatically to assume the absurdity of all past and present miracle, as if this were an axiom of reason; and to treat all reports and observations of events said to be destitute of natural causes, as concerned with something foreign to philosophy and science, and unworthy of attention according to common-sense. That whatever can be reported with truth as having happened must be capable of some sort of *physical* explanation is the implied postulate. Does life actually appear where there was none before? This appearance, it would be dogmatically taken for granted, must be an illusion, unworthy of investigation; or, if it cannot be thus overlooked, let it be referred for its natural explanation to experts of the Royal Society; or let the report of its occurrence be tested by legal experts accustomed to test documentary evidence. That it is absolutely inexplicable *physically* is the one hypothesis which would be dismissed without being tested: though of course many events that *are* physically explicable are allowed to be, as yet if not always, inexplicable by man, it is taken for granted that they *might* all be referred to their respective natural causes, in a true and full interpretation of nature—if not by men, yet by beings of larger intelligence and more varied experience than man.

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cause.

The prevailing disposition to see miracles only in

But is not nature, as orderly, itself essentially miraculous.

this light recalls the theistic interpretation of causation already explained. What is meant by "nature," and what by the natural causation which a physical miracle is supposed necessarily to supersede? If nature means only what is coextensive with the finally mysterious sphere of wholly impotent physical causes, and if *all* physical events must be supernaturally caused—moral causation by persons being the *only* sort of power of which man has rational assurance—if this be so, then the evolving universe itself is throughout a constant miracle: we are all living, and moving, and having our being in a possibly unbeginning and unending order of cosmical changes that is absolutely and finally trusted in, as alone the really miraculous manifestation of the ever-active moral Reason that is perfect. Is there any way of finally conceiving the universe of natural change that is so reasonable, and so satisfying to man as he ought to be, as this is? It carries all natural causation, or physical interpretability of nature, back to the eternal moral or spiritual Agent, the eternally active moral Power; all other known causes in existence—except individual persons, who *can* make themselves bad—being only metaphorically causes, really the passive subjects of special methods of evolutionary metamorphosis? Can any particular physical miracle be *so* miraculous, one is ready to say, as the miracle of the natural universe that is continually present to our senses? It loses its sense of novelty, and ceases to inspire consciousness of its



miraculousness, only on account of its commonness, and because of the unreflecting prejudice that the discovery of the physical cause of an event is the discovery that God is *not* the agent in its visible outcome;—so that each newly discovered physical cause seems to put God further away from the world. A metaphorical “power” within the natural cause is in this way made to narrow the sphere of divine operation, so that, in the event of a universal victory of natural science, divine power would be superseded, and the universe regarded at last under a wholly natural or non-theistic conception, with our conception of the finally mysterious physical past and future emptied of all moral or filial trust.

But the physical universe may be called a constant miracle, producing uniform change, under a physical order and adaptations which are the persistent expression of active moral Reason. Man at least can recognise no other originative power than moral or spiritual power. And as an illustration of omnipotent goodness, is not active moral Reason, it may be asked, *more* impressively manifested in the universal physical evolution, on which theistic faith and hope puts the moral interpretation, than in any imaginable occasional instances of *special* events, which are referred to the immediate agency of the same Divine Reason, in some inexplicably abnormal exercise of power? Is not the gradual evolution of the solar system a *greater* miracle, if one may speak of degrees of the miraculous,

And is not the universal miracle, involved in all natural causation, more marvellous than any special physical miracle could be?

than the reported arrest of the sun in the sight of Israel upon Gibeon, or of the moon in the valley of Ajalon? Does not the gradual evolution of living organisms (man included) which the planets within the solar system now contain, seem a miracle of greater power than the return to human life, on one of those planets, of an organism that was dead?

Can physical miracles be really more divine than ordinary events under natural causation are?

In theistic faith and hope, the physically conditioned universe called *outward nature* throughout presupposes pervading moral power, or morally responsible personality, as the ground in reason for trust in the regularity of its evolutions, and even for trust in our individual self-consciousness. In other words, it presupposes a constant miracle—if miraculous power means power that is morally free from physical nature, and that does not itself admit of a natural antecedent as the condition of its exercise. This Power is accordingly the divine object of an absolute trust which excludes the universal agnosticism that makes all interpretation of nature baseless, with its mixture of despair. That theistic faith must be weak which fails to see the immediate action of God in *all* change that occurs under the conditions of natural uniformity or physical law; or which looks for direct divine action only in “interferences” with physical law, or in the occurrence of events that are not naturally caused. Whence then the supposition that divine power must be more at the root of “special creation” and “miracle” than at the root of ordinary moral providence; more really present in par-

particular providences than in the universal providence which comprehends all particulars; or that there is absolutely something more divine in preserving the three men in the furnace than there is in fire when it is naturally burning, or in rain when it is naturally falling—in the incarnation of God in the perfect Man than in the incarnation of God in universal Nature?

But a further question rises here. *Must* all events that happen be naturally conditioned? Do events in all cases need to have physical causes? Is the original and constant miracle of the universe in its natural uniformities *the only possible miracle*? Is it the only miracle that is consistent with a theistic faith and hope that is perfectly reasonable? Whether the original and constant miracle, by which the world is kept in its providential natural order, when measured only by the physical effect, is or is not a greater miracle than the arrest of the sun or moon in their apparent courses. or than the resurrection to bodily life of a person who was dead—still may there not be room, under a more comprehensive purpose than that which is expressed in merely physical causation, for an *occasional* occurrence of events that are *not* the outcome of the divine action as conducted under condition of visible causes, but in which the divine power is unconditionally, or extra-naturally, operative? The divine maintenance of the whole visibly conditioned evolution may be imagined a greater miracle than any

But even if they are not more divine, it does not follow that the moral Power at the heart of all physical order must be manifested always under the conditions of physical causation.

one of the alleged extra-natural or miraculous manifestations. Notwithstanding, in a universe charged throughout with relations of means and ends, or in which every event is not only connected under natural law with every other, but in which every event is a means to what man may regard as a "designed" end, and in which, at least when looked at from the human point of view, the Whole seems to be supremely related to the moral good of *persons*, including persons who have made themselves bad—in reasoning about a universe *so* constituted, *must* we assume, or are we at liberty, with our weak intelligence and narrow experience, to assume, as an axiom, that the physically conditioned activity of the Supreme Power or Divine Spirit is the *only* sort of Divine activity that is reasonable? May there not be reasonable purpose in what is technically called "miraculous" divine activity,—an activity that is either absolutely independent of physical conditions, or at least that must appear to man, with his limited knowledge of natural causes, to be independent of such conditions?

No *a priori* proof of the absolute impossibility of physical miracles is possible, under the limits of man's knowledge of the Power con-

Probably man's experience and teleological conception of the Power finally at work in the universe is not adequate to determine whether physical events ever make their appearance thus independently of physical laws, through the physically unconditioned agency of the moral Power assumed in theistic faith to be constantly operative in nature according to physical methods. If this be so, it seems to follow that the

abstract impossibility of an occasional miraculous suspension of the physically conditioned form of divine activity cannot be proved, and that any alleged instance of what looks like miracle is open to the tests of experience. It is true that if miraculous events must be destitute of physical causes, their miraculousness cannot be tested by those inductive methods which lead up to the discovery of physical causes: for in that case there is no physical cause of a miracle to be discovered. But what obliges us to assume that even perfect knowledge of all the physical causes in existence, and of all the physical aspects or relations of events, must contain the only possible, or the highest, revelation of the Universal Power? May a physical miracle not be an event in nature that finds its rational significance in its *moral* relation to the *persons* in the universe, rather than in its *physical* relation to the *things* in the universe? Especially if experience presents a world of human persons, existing in the strange state of bringing into existence what ought not to exist, and what there is no *a priori* necessity for the existence of, may not experience, in connection with this, present extra-natural or miraculous events, evolving themselves in really rational correlation with the abnormal activities of persons who have made themselves bad? Is it intellectually necessary to suppose that moral reason makes the omnipotent Will less free from the pressure of physical causation than men are, when they produce acts of will for which they are morally responsible?

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Nature.

May the infinite moral Power that is presupposed in theistic faith and hope, not rise above the physically conditioned form of divine activity as well as man does, who is found to do so, in a measure, in all acts for which the man is morally responsible? Is the supreme Power more obliged in reason to act *only* in ways that must admit of being expressed in terms of natural causes,—than men themselves are? Moral and immoral acts of men are in manner human miracles: the moral agency of man is incompletely interpretable physically. May there not be agency occasionally manifested in nature, for a moral purpose, that is in like manner uninterpretable in physical terms?

Spinoza's argument for the absolute impossibility of miracles takes for granted that they must be due to caprice, and so manifestations of unreason.

Spinoza's argument for the absolute impossibility of physical miracles may be taken as expressing in a philosophical way the common scientific difficulty. The infinite system of God or Nature, it is by implication argued, if it is divine, must be perfect. Its occasional miraculous modification would imply its imperfection; for what is in perfect harmony with reason already does not admit of being mended, as it were by an after-thought. Miraculous suspension of the perfect reason, perfectly expressed in whatever is by nature, must mean irrationality in natural law thus dispensed with: it implies inconstancy or caprice, not the absolute perfection in which there can be no room for second or amended thoughts. What is already perfect does not leave a place for repair by occasional miracle. For God to act in nature extra-

naturally is for God to put a slur upon nature and natural causation; and as Nature is really divine, occasional miraculous action would be God or Nature becoming imperfect or irrational. On Spinoza's premisses, it would involve a contradiction or discredit of Nature; and no doubt discredit of the reason that is in nature leads to universal scepticism. In other words, to interpose occasional physical miracles in the physical system would be to make it other than the perfectly rational system which natural science presupposes that it must be. And so we are asked, on these premisses, to conclude that the miraculous entrance into existence of any visible event, or of any invisible inspired experience, of which no natural account can be given, is absolutely impossible, and not merely a physically uninterpretable fact.

This might perhaps be a sufficient argument, if the universe were a wholly natural or non-moral universe —if it consisted of non-moral *things* only, and not also, and this too in its highest known aspect, of good and bad *persons*. Then the only sort of science possible would be found in the sciences commonly called “natural,” which search for the caused causes, or natural signs, of events. It might be an argument, if men at their highest, according to the true ideal of man, were only conscious automata, who could have no more than a physically scientific interest in themselves or in anything else—if this were a world in the experience of which man could have no final moral

Does not this argument proceed upon too narrow a conception of what is ultimately reasonable, in a universe that consists of persons as well as things?

trust, and in which he could not be responsible for what he was or did, because he could not, in any degree, make or unmake his own character. But is this the sort of universe in which man actually finds himself? Is this not a world in which *men can and do act immorally*, and in which, accordingly, without unreason, omnipotent goodness may be revealed in a larger reason than that measured in terms of the causal connections visible in nature, yet not inconsistent with this natural evolution? The existence of individual persons,—moral forces—may make reasonable an unfolding of divine Purpose larger than that which appears in physical causation measured by sensuous intelligence. It seems not inconsistent with reason that physical order and method of procedure should not be the only, or the highest, form which omnipotence reveals, and that, in the final rationale of the universe, the customary order of events should have a subordinate place, in an incompletely understood yet intellectually possible harmony.

The kingdoms of Nature and of Grace, or of Things and Persons.

At any rate miraculous events cannot be irregular events, if “irregular” means irrational. So far as it is really divine revelation, miracle must be the manifestation of what is reasonable, in the highest meaning of intellectual and moral reason. But it does not follow that all that happens must be finally referable to the physical system of natural causes: or that this system is itself not subordinate to, yet capable of



harmonious assimilation with, the perfect divine ideal. There may be no *physically natural* law of miracles, and yet there may be divine reason for and in miracles; whether that rational order is or is not fully discoverable by man, either in science or in philosophical theology. "I hold," says Leibniz, "that when God works miracles He does it not in order to supply the wants of *nature*, but those of *grace*; and whoever thinks otherwise must have a very mean notion of the wisdom and power of God." Miracles are in that case divine or rational acts, proper to a universe that includes persons under moral relations; while they would be out of place in a universe of things wholly under physical or mechanical relations.

If God is miraculously as well as naturally revealable, and if the natural is finally involved in, or continuous with, the supernatural revelation—so that, at the supreme point of view, perfect intelligence might pass in rational order from the lower or less comprehensive to the higher or more fully rational—from the realm of Nature to the realm of Grace, as Leibniz puts it—then the superficial antithesis of nature and supernatural would disappear. And under the limitation of human intelligence, the moral response which a deeper and more comprehensive, so-called miraculous, revelation receives from the spiritual constitution of man might be a sufficient reason for assimilating it too, in a thus deepened theistic faith;—provided that this assimilation is not hindered by its demonstrable

Their harmonious relations possible.

inconsistency with perfect reasonableness. All the more if it can be shown that the fuller revelation evokes a fuller and more intelligible outcome of theistic faith, and is therefore more obviously reasonable than the attenuated revelation of God presented in the customary natural order.

That Christianity should be found to be natural, would not make it undivine.

But if, in the progressive development of the human mind, man's conceptions of what is natural could become so enlarged as that the whole Christian revelation of God should be seen to be a development of the ordinary course of nature—theistic faith, the most deeply Christian, would then be discovered to be the most natural religion of all, but surely would not on that account be undivine. It would rather be seen as the culmination of the normal self-manifestation of God to men, instead of being mysterious and abnormal, and needing to be sustained in theistic faith by something more in man than his sensuous power of interpreting the universe. In the deeper and wider meaning of "natural," all revelation of God must be in rational harmony with what is absolutely or finally natural;—otherwise it could not be thought or reasoned about at all. For thought or reasoning, so far as applicable, implies rational connection in whatever is thought or reasoned about—if not under physical laws of dependent physical causes, yet under teleological relations of means and end, or of yet higher categories in the intellectual system of the universe. The legitimate idea of a miracle is found in its teleological reason.

Ordered progress and miracle—as in last lecture and in this—are these conflicting ideas? Their conflict is said to explain the sceptical sadness regarding the final question for man which has diffused itself in this nineteenth century in Europe and over the civilised world. But may not an honestly agnostic spirit illustrate in this instance how critical negation is really a factor in the progressive movement towards a larger and deeper affirmative faith? For is not the nineteenth century, in consequence of this negative criticism, closing with a profounder sense than the world has before reached, at once of the universality of physical law, and of the miraculousness of the root of all law in nature? May we not begin to see that the final presupposition of perfect moral Power at the centre of things and persons is not subversion of physical order, but rather its construction on a deeper foundation? Visible nature then appears no longer on the hollow final foundation of a supposed wholly physical uniformity. Beneath this otherwise uncertain ground in *things*, it is further interpretable as the constant revelation of perfect moral reason—providential procedure having for its chief end the intellectual and spiritual education of *persons*, according to an order that is in the last conception of it moral or divine—the temporal process being the school of God, for the education and trial of the spirit in man.

A co-ordinate deepening at once of the ideas of the universal natural order, and of the ultimate and essential miraculousness of the Universe.

## LECTURE X.

## THE MYSTERY OF DEATH: DESTINY OF MEN.

Philosophical  
meditation  
upon  
Death.

PHILOSOPHY, according to Plato, is meditation upon death. This is the voice of poets and thinkers outside Christendom and within Christendom. That the expectation of death makes human life miserable, and that this misery may be removed by the philosophy which sees the peace of eternal sleep in the dissolution of the body, is the key-note of the most sublime poem in Roman literature. The meaning of human life and the destiny of men has attracted contemplative thought in the generations of mankind which have passed one after another into the darkness, asking whence they have come, and whither they are going? The books which record human conjectures about the secret kept by death might form a large library. They belong to ancient, medieval, and modern times, in all countries and races that have produced books. Not the least interesting to some of us is the "Cypress

Grove" of our countryman William Drummond, the pensive poet of Hawthornden, in which this passing world is conceived as a show-room, where it is unreasonable to wish to continue, after one has looked at it, with the vision of a reality that waits for him when by his departure he has made a place for succeeding spectators. The meditative tenderness of Wordsworth's "Essay upon Epitaphs" presents the subject in another aspect, taken again at a higher point in his "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." Moral faith in Death, tempered by modern doubt, is the prevailing note of Tennyson in "In Memoriam." Isaac Taylor's 'Theory of Another Life' is an ingenious exercise of physical imagination for the support of faith in what is apt to be distrusted or disregarded as absolutely unimaginable.

Death is concerned with the problem of the universe more immediately in one of its three presupposed existences—namely, the individual person—as distinguished from visible things and from the invisible God. Am I after all really a third existence that is finally distinguishable from outward things and from God? Or, on the contrary, am I only a transitory phase of what is really One Substance, called indifferently Matter or Nature or God. Am I so mixed up with the material world, in which I find myself now incarnated, that I must share the fate of my visible organism, and cease for ever to be personally conscious as soon as I have ceased at death to be visibly incarnate? The sensible

The final problem of the universe of reality, as related to the Death of persons.

world, of which through my bodily organism I am now a part, is the subject of constant metamorphoses. Is my conscious self, after all, not a third sort of existence, but only one of the many metamorphoses into which ever-changing Being under certain conditions naturally resolves itself? But how can I be only this, if I find myself uniquely distinguished by a persistent identity through all past changes of conscious life, in the experience of memory;—identity to which I find nothing corresponding in the changing phenomena that are presented to the senses. Our bodies and all outward things are in a constant flux: the words “sameness” or “identity” apply to outward things metaphorically only, as compared with the application of those words to our self-conscious personality. The person of yesterday, or of half a century ago, is connected with the person of to-day, in a way that is different in kind from that in which our bodies, or surrounding things, are connected with our bodies and their surroundings of yesterday or of half a century ago. After a faint, or a dreamless sleep, we are still obliged to connect the self before these intervals of unconsciousness with the self of which we are conscious when we awake, as one and the same individual person. It is one of the conditions of mental sanity that man should practically recognise this unique sameness or persistency. It is not one of the conditions of sanity there should be recognition of like sameness in the individual things

that are presented to our senses. Further, we are obliged to believe that self-conscious persons, in addition to this imperfectly comprehensible difference between themselves and unconscious things, have a self-centred power of making and keeping themselves good or bad, of which one finds no trace in visible things.

Here the gravest of human questions rises. What in reason should men believe about the relation of this persistent conscious person—this one subject of ever-changing pains and pleasures—this creator of innumerable good or evil acts—to the dissolution by death of the visible organism, through which he now finds himself naturally connected with the world of sensible things outside? Is the continuous moral identity of the self-conscious person also transitory, so that at death, like the bodily organism on which his conscious life now depends, the hitherto continuous self-consciousness finally ceases, and resolves itself into unconscious elements? Do persons cease for ever to be conscious when they finally cease to signify visibly their conscious activity to other persons?—for cessation of *manifested* personal activity is of course the consequence of the disintegration by death of the visible organism, through which the otherwise invisible conscious life and history of one person is more or less signified to another person. On this planet alone one finds hundreds of millions of conscious persons in each generation signifying to one another their in-

Does the self-conscious person finally cease to be conscious and percipient in the dissolution of his body?

visible conscious life—some of them showing signs only for a few hours, a few it may be for a hundred years—after which each organism dissolves, and there is no more any sensible sign of continued consciousness.

The uniqueness of the invisible self-conscious person, in contrast with the perennial change in the world.

But are there not facts, which each living person may recognise, which suggest that this conscious person, morally responsible for states into which he puts himself, and for states into which he brings others, may *not* be so involved in the flux of visible things as that the dissolution of his body in death must mean the final cessation of his self-conscious life? Is there not, as already suggested, something absolutely unique in the invisible self-conscious personality? Do we not recognise that individual persons are under spiritual relations, as well as under physical relations, and that, by their individual personality, they are distinguished both from the reality implied in theistic faith and from things presented to sense? Can we, with due regard to reason, think of morally responsible persons and of non-moral things as alike in their destiny,—save and except the unique rational consciousness, continuous identity, and moral responsibility, which persons possess during an ephemeral embodied existence? Must we say that men and brutes are at last alike in what befalls them? “As the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity. All go unto one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.”



On the contrary, does theistic faith and hope—in the light of which we seem to find a humanly related interpretation of the universe that assimilates the merely physical or non-moral one—does this final moral trust justify us in prevision, not only of some future events in this life that comes before death, but also of persistent personal consciousness after the dissolution of our bodies? Without implied moral faith in the absolute trustworthiness of the universe, we have no reasonable assurance about *anything that is future*: what we regard as our most reasonable anticipations may all be put to confusion: we cannot even count on order in nature. It is in a moral trust in the worth of the Power finally at work on the universe that we all live now. Does this fundamental faith also involve reasonable hope that physical death will not make an end of personal life, and that something more manifestly divine than the present strangely mixed world may be expected by conscious persons? Our bodies are not our unique invisible personality: they are this revealed to the senses.

It is a question whether an atheist can reasonably believe in a person's life after physical death? I would put a previous question,—Whether atheists, with their unreason at the root of All, can consistently have faith in *any* future event, either before or after death? For faith in God is faith in universally active moral reason or love as the moving life of the universe, and apart from this moral trustworthiness the previsions of science,

Can  
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and the expectations of common life, have no reliable reason. What is called scientific verification presupposes the existence of analogies in nature, and the reasonableness of reposing trust in natural analogies, according to a postulated uniformity in nature. The logical atheist, who virtually rejects this innate trustworthy reasonableness or interpretability of things, is incapable of intelligent prevision; for, at his point of view, the universe may become physically chaotic, and all unfit to be reasoned about or otherwise dealt with. An atheistic universe has no root in ethical reason. All after the present moment may become an experience in which all persons become finally miserable. Physical death would then be naturally welcomed, as a change which should for ever withdraw the conscious person from endless physical and moral chaos. Fear of the incalculable possibilities of the future would make final cessation of conscious life seem the supreme hope, in the nothingness in which alone relief is assured. It was in order to awaken among men this hope that Lucretius recommended a finally anarchic conception of the universe. But under a still more intrepid agnosticism, the negative hope of endless unconsciousness is as little to be depended on for *its* reasonableness as any other expectation about the future, in an untrustworthy universe. Absolutely reliable expectation is essentially theistic, because theism is just the principle of finally operative moral reasonableness or goodness.

The infinite interest of the final question about this life of change in which conscious persons actually find themselves disappears, on the hypothesis that the persons—after an interval of, it may be, a few hours or a hundred years of life on this planet—all dissolve finally, and become unconscious things. Living habitually under this pathetic conception, men subside into hopelessness if they are thoughtful, or into wholly secular indifference if, like the majority, they are unreflecting. It may be true that theistic faith is indispensable for hopeful, or even for expectant, life, during the continuance of the bodily organism, in its natural state of continuous change of its constitutive atoms; and it may also be true that the idea of eternal moral obligation equally remains, whether persons exist, morally obliged to be good, only during the interval between birth and death or for a longer time. On the other hand, the moral or theistic conception of the universe takes its sublime interest for persons in and through their faith that they are *themselves* destined to continue in conscious connection with the realities during more than the short life that now depends on the mortal body. And this continuance seems foreshadowed by man's possessing ideas of the eternal and infinite, and by his moral power of making himself bad or good,—of living during the embodied interval either in harmony or not with his true ideal, even under a distribution of happiness that often seems capricious. Must this intellectual and moral agent be

The relation of all preceptive faith to theistic or moral trust.

annihilated, only because the visible organism through which his conscious life is now signified to other persons disintegrates ?

Suggested natural analogies to a continuance of life after physical death, and their insufficiency.

But while all expectation is essentially faith, and all reasonable and hopeful expectation is essentially theistic faith, there is an obvious difference between physical prevision of the temporal future within this rationally organised world, and a prevision of the persistent life of the unique self-conscious person, after the visible dissolution of the organism through which the person now reveals himself to other persons, and lives incarnate in his place and time. If the conscious and continuous individual ego is a unique sort of being in the universe, the death and disappearance of the organism, in and through which personal life is manifested, is also a unique fact, in the sense that no adequate analogy to death can be found within the experience of any living person. No doubt the life of human persons has persisted through several critical changes : all animal life illustrates this. Life in the womb and life after birth ; life with the body entire, and life after the body has been deprived by accident or by surgical operation of important organs—these are familiar physical changes, after which the personal consciousness is still found persisting continuously. In a dreamless sleep, or in a swoon, the continuity of conscious life seems to be interrupted. “Sleep,” says Sir Thomas More, “is the brother of death, in which we seem to die without really dying.”

With Shakespeare sleep is the "death of each day's life," and "all our little lives are rounded with a sleep." But in all this sufficient analogy with death is wanting: the persistency of the person is here actually verified: the broken consciousness returns in continuity with the past: memory can cross the interval of this temporary death as if it had never occurred: moreover, the organism of the person was undissolved, instead of sharing in the unconsciousness of sleep by a corresponding disappearance, in temporary analogy with the dissolution of the body in death. (That memory *can* now bridge over intervals of unconsciousness in sleep may, however, suggest the possibility of a personal life *before birth*, the memory of which may, in this life, be latent, but ready to be revived in a posthumous life, under more favourable conditions for revival.) The suggested analogies of animal transformations—the caterpillar transformed into the butterfly, for instance—are all inadequate, when compared with the visible consequences of death.

The probable effect of physical death, and of the disappearance of a person's physical organism upon his self-conscious and percipient life, can hardly be determined by facts like these. For the problem which the final dissolution of the human body presents is absolutely singular in several ways. Persons still living cannot settle it by experiment, as they can determine by experiment the outcome of a dreamless sleep; for in order to do this they would need to die, and then

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natural means of communication with persons who have died.

have personal experience of the issue of death. Nor can the enigma be solved by communication with persons who have died, inasmuch as the effect of death is to withdraw the means of communication between the living and the dead. The issue of death is not physically communicated by the dead; and of course no living person has made the experiment, so as to be independent of the now withdrawn physical means of communication with persons who have died. If faith in the continued consciousness of persons after their death must depend upon either of these two means of forecast, it may be said to have no support in familiar evidence.

Faith in the persistence of personal consciousness after death is not on that account necessarily baseless.

Yet it does not necessarily follow that the hope that physical death is not the final end of individual persons is a baseless expectation. No doubt the case is not sufficiently analogous to physical prevision, as illustrated in the theistically sustained expectations either of common life or of natural science; for its very singularity lies in this — that the physical medium of verification is naturally dissolved in death. But to assume, without further proof, that the invisible conscious person is so dependent for his conscious and continuous life upon an organism that his self-consciousness *must* cease when the organism dissolves, is to beg the question we are meditating about in a very palpable manner. The question is, whether the visible dissolution signifies the invisible dissolution; and it will not serve the interest of reason to assume

—without permitting any questioning, or any other mode of determining the probabilities of the case than the physically scientific—that this *must* be so.

For one thing we find a widespread faith, in all ages, and among various nations and races of mankind, that human persons somehow survive the physical crisis of organic dissolution. The more articulate conception of what follows death doubtless differs widely in the traditions and religions of mankind. But while there has usually been a sceptical minority, the mass of mankind, in the ancient, medieval, and modern world—in the East and in the West, in Egypt, Persia, India, Greece, and Rome, Jews, Mohammedans, Christians—spontaneously entertain the unique and sublime faith that persons persist after death, whether in a lower and more attenuated, or in a nobler personal existence than that consciously experienced before they died physically. Their faith in most cases also implies that the continued existence is not wholly unembodied, but that the person retains, or gains, after death, some intangible ghostly form of embodiment; or else, after an interval of unembodiment, recovers physical relations in some worthier form—a “body spiritual” instead of the present natural body. That there is a spiritual body after the natural body is involved in the theistic faith of Christians.

That the genuine common faith of mankind is to be presumed trustworthy is a postulate on which all natural science tacitly rests, in all the previsive in-

It is, in innumerable forms of conception, a common faith.

The presumed divinity or absolute rationality

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ferences by which the sciences are built up. Scientific verification, as I have throughout argued, is finally theistic faith. One is said to have got it scientifically verified, that the sun will rise to-morrow; but till the sun shall have actually risen the assertion only expresses a faith. All expectation, scientific or common, is so far a leap in the dark; for it is taken without the light of sense. The expected event has not the proof afforded by actual perception, till the event has actually happened. If sense is our only light, it follows that we must remain in the darkness of doubt about *every* future event: all expectation must be unreasonable. To be consistent in insisting upon that only being reasonable into which *no* ingredient of faith enters, we must cease to live; for life depends upon the reasonableness of expectation. Expectation involves faith in the reasonableness of the universe; and the reasonableness or moral reliability of the Universal Power implies that men will not be finally put to confusion by submission to an indispensable faith. If they could, the universe of reality must be essentially deceptive illusion, and therefore undivine.

The widespread faith in personal persistence, through and after physical death, may be incapable of experimental verification to those who have not died. But is it less irrational to resist it, merely on the ground that it is only unverified faith and not actual sight, than it would be to resist the still unfulfilled expectation that the sun will rise to-morrow, or be eclipsed the day

All scientific prevision, as well as the expectations of common life, and even memory, involve faith in what is



after, merely on the ground that this too is as yet only faith and not sight? For no one can *to-day see* the sun rising to-morrow, or its eclipse the day after. The expectation is rested on reasonable faith or trust, which the course of events has not yet confirmed by the actual occurrence of the event believed in. Actual sense, in short, is a wholly inadequate measure of what it is necessary in reason to believe, and so of what it is unreasonable, and therefore unphilosophical, to disbelieve.

It must be granted that there is sufficient reason for the faith implied in ordinary expectations of natural events; notwithstanding that it is only faith, or rather reason in its final human form of moral faith. To refuse this would be to reduce human reason to narrow dimensions indeed, or rather to extinguish it altogether. But a confinement of reason which excludes, as necessarily irrational, the widespread expectation that personal consciousness will persist after its present connection with its visible organism has been dissolved by death, may be due to dogmatic narrowness of mind. It may be neglect to recognise, not only that actual sense is not the measure of reasonable judgments about physical nature, but also that reasonable faith in physical nature is not the measure of reasonable faith regarding the destiny—not of *things*—but of unique self-conscious and morally responsible *persons*. May there not be more in earth and heaven than is recognised in wholly physi-

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cal philosophy? If so, this wholly physical must be unphilosophical philosophy.

Is this larger expectant faith found not unreasonable, when tested by physical, or metaphysical, or moral criteria?

Look a little further into the larger faith or reason. It may be measured by physical, or metaphysical, or moral criteria. Of these three tests one or more may be inadequate, as regards this unique sort of future event, and yet satisfaction may be found in what remains. Or if satisfaction is still wanting, it may be because there is not unanimity about what premisses are legitimate—physical tests alone being recognised as reasonable by the sceptic. None of the criteria need admit as reasonable the crude materialistic fancies so largely mixed up with the idea that the evanescent embodied personal life does not exhaust the individual personality.

An exclusively physical conception of death, as visibly presented in the dissolution of the organism, affords, *per se*, no reason for expecting survival of the invisible person.

The *physical* presumption that self-conscious personal life finally ceases, when it ceases to *manifest* its continuance, in consequence of the withdrawal by death of the manifesting medium, seems strong, so that if trust in its continuance is wholly dependent on what we see, or on what can be inferred merely from what is seen, the idea of personal persistence looks baseless and illusory—a widespread human delusion and anachronism, which may be expected to disappear with the gradual increase of human intelligence and culture. A generation in which leading men are physically scientific in their habits of reasoning is therefore

naturally sceptical about what cannot be tested by visible experiments, distrustful of metaphysical postulates, and of the moral faith on which their physical faith itself, perhaps unconsciously to themselves, virtually depends. If one dogmatically assumes that all questions of fact, whether about visible things or invisible self-conscious persons, must be decided by physical arguments only, and that all hyper-physical arguments must be abstract and therefore wholly hypothetical,—the issue of the death of persons is of course removed from the list of reasonable questions, along with the removal of the only element in it that *is* physical and perceptible to the senses—the visible and tangible organism. Only, as I have said, the same dogmatic assumption is bound to remove, along with this question, all scientific questions together; for they all at last depend upon a faith that is hyper-physical. Unless we hyper-physically assume the rationality and trustworthiness of external nature, external nature must remain scientifically uninterpretable, beyond the momentary datum of actual sense, which datum *per se* is meaningless.

But let us look further into some of the *physical* difficulties that lie in the way of faith in a posthumous conscious persistence of the individual and invisible person. For one thing, human experience of the present relation between the organism and the invisible conscious life is, that changes in the one are

Physical difficulties that beset faith in posthumous personal consciousness, which are apt to in-

duce its decay, in a physically scientific age like the present.

found in a constant corresponding connection with changes in the other: the ordinary course of experimental inference would, accordingly, lead to the conclusion, that greater changes in the body must, under physical law, be followed by correspondingly greater changes in the self-conscious personality; and that the total dissolution of the body must involve the final dissolution of the continuous and invisible personal life that has been made manifest to other persons only in and through the body. Again, an entire separation of the personal consciousness from the organised matter in which it is involved in its present life is physically unimaginable. When the sensuous imagination tries to realise what a self-conscious life must be, after it has ceased to be incarnate, the alteration must be recognised as infinitely more mysterious than any supposable change of locality or date which an embodied spirit could pass through in this material world. To be transported in the body into one of the neighbouring planets in our solar system, still more into one of the immeasurably remote stellar systems, would indeed be an appalling prospect; but it would not be a prospect of life out of all embodied connection with the material world—spaceless, timeless, as it must seem to be; and solitary too, the dissolution of the only known medium of communication between persons. Timeless and spaceless, I have said; for without perception of motion in space, what conceivable measure of duration

remains;—without that reliable measure of duration which the periodic movements of the planets now supply, it would seem that any distinct idea of duration must disappear, leaving the person practically in a placeless and timeless life. Memory, too, in a mind thus emptied of the idea of time, is confronted not only by this obstacle, but by the difficulty of recollecting a continuous personal history spread over millions of years; not to speak of a supposed endlessness, which raises an absolutely inconceivable issue. Language, too, or sensible symbol, is now not only the medium of communication between persons, but also an indispensable condition of solitary thought. Language is an aggregate of visible or audible signs, which needs continued relation of the invisible personal consciousness with the sensible world. The total and final dissolution of this connection seems to involve a withdrawal of an indispensable instrument of intelligent life, without which all living thought must dissolve. The only self-conscious life of which persons on earth have any example, is embodied conscious life. And the commonly assumed unconsciousness or non-existence of persons *before* the gradual organisation of their bodies at birth seems to be in physical analogy with the assumption of their unconsciousness *after* this organisation is seen to dissolve finally in physical death. Then too the merely sensuous imagination sometimes works in another way. An exclusive attention to the visible and tangible phenomena

of things makes the invisible and intangible realities of self-conscious personality look like empty abstractions: so it is assumed that if the conscious spirit persists, after the death of its present visible organism, it must be in and through an organism subject to conditions of place and time too like those with which we are familiar. And this restricted conception of future possibilities gives rise to the physical difficulty of an overcrowded material universe, in which, in the infinite future, with its endless accumulation of personal organisms, room cannot be found, in planetary homes, for the overwhelming number of persons. As they may be supposed to be accumulating in thousands of millions in connection with every star or planet, the accumulation must issue in a lack of places to hold the organisms.

The inadequacy of physical arguments for personal life after death.

These are illustrations of perplexities of the wholly physical or sensuous imagination, when it is dealing with a question that is necessarily foreign to the course of nature, as the course of nature comes within the experience of persons not yet dead. Sceptical silence seems the appropriate mental attitude, on this question, of those who suppose that faithfulness to truth makes it necessary to reject all but physical criteria and sensuous imagination for the determination of concrete questions. They ask with reason what physical analogies, presented in the ordinary course of nature in the present life, can prove the reality of a state of life which no one now can con-

ceive, or is able to verify by natural experiments; which is absolutely abstracted from all that is physical, and which can in no way resemble anything that has been or can now be perceived by human beings. Who can rest upon premisses of ordinary experience an inference so absolutely singular, regarding the invisible destiny of conscious persons, who thus far find themselves always incarnate?

But if continuous personal life after physical death seems incapable of analogical proof through the senses, perhaps it can be shown, nevertheless, to be *metaphysically necessary*. A supposed abstract impossibility of the final extinction of any self-conscious entity has been sometimes offered as a hyper-physical reason for the persistence of conscious personality, notwithstanding the death of the body. But this abstraction can hardly be accepted as a legitimate foundation for a conclusion about a matter of fact; although it may suggest need for so unique a fact as this of personal life being treated differently from all facts in the universe that are presentable to the senses. The dogma of the natural immortality or deathlessness (variously defined) of the self-conscious principle is another form of metaphysical postulate. This "natural immortality" need not mean that the conscious person cannot be finally reduced to nothingness by the Omnipotent Power, but only that continuous personal existence is not found to be so conditioned by the mechanical

Metaphysical arguments show the abstract possibility, rather than the actual fact, of self-conscious survival.

laws of motion, to which the constituent atoms of the body are subject, as that the bodily disintegration naturally involves *its* cessation. "Nothing can be plainer," we are told, "than that the changes, decays, and dissolutions which we are continually seeing in natural bodies cannot possibly affect the active, simple, invisible substance of which we are conscious: such a being is indissoluble by the force of external nature: that is to say, it is naturally immortal." Bishop Butler seems to argue that presumption of death being the destruction of persons must go upon the supposition that they are composed of atoms, and so capable of being dissolved. Referring to the fact that each human person is now an embodied person, he even argues that, upon the supposition that what each man calls *himself* is truly a single being, incapable of being classed with physical things, which are all aggregates of molecules, it follows that "what we call *our bodies* are no more ourselves, or part of ourselves, than any other matter around them." It is, abstractly speaking, as easy to suppose that we can exist without bodies as with them: or that we may after death animate other bodies as that we animate our present ones now: the deaths of our successive bodies may have no more tendency to annihilate the continuous personal consciousness than the dissolution of any material object outside our bodies has. It is in this way easy at least to *imagine* the invisible personal consciousness going on, uninterrupted by the physical dissolution, nay, even



having all its present sensible experiences, without the intervention of what we call "our bodies." It is possible to suppose a living perception of colours without the percipient possessing eyes, and of sounds without ears; for seeing and hearing are invisible states of living consciousness, which may be conceived as going on independently of an organisation of "living matter."

Yet these are only abstract speculations. They tend to show the abstract possibility of much that transcends physical imagination and sensuous experience; but they are too remote from ascertained matter of fact to overcome the sceptical presumption to which the visible dissolution of the personal organism gives rise. Abstract reasonings and "easiness to suppose" leave us still in a hypothetical universe: they may suggest dreams, but without determining the reasonableness of faith in the dream.

Thus experience through the senses seems to afford no evidence that a person persists in conscious life after his visible manifestation of himself has finally ended,—indeed suggests on the whole that the self-conscious person has finally ended too; and metaphysical speculation about the invisible personality only expands speculative vision, yet without being able to sustain a reasonable faith in the speculation, as an actual reality. But are we still left in sceptical helplessness, when we turn from outward phenomena and abstract metaphysical reasonings to the necessary ra-

They fail to overcome the sceptical presumption suggested by the final disappearance of the organism.

The ethical basis of faith in personal life after death.

tional implicates of moral or theistic faith; when we acknowledge the finally reconciling divine existence presupposed in the triplicity of actual reality; and when we reflect upon the spiritual ideas and convictions that are latent in man, although hardly evoked into consciousness in many, and not fully evoked in any? Does not the spiritual constitution of man's self-conscious life suggest that the conditions under which it is maintained in its present physical organisation are inadequate to its moral meaning and purpose; so that the supposition of the cessation of individual personal life, after a continuous existence "in the body" of only a few days, or even a hundred years, would somehow put moral intelligence to confusion, and so raise doubt even about the physical interpretability of external nature, when such a life as the life of man ought to be could be thus hollow and transitory? Is there not something, too, in the involuntary entrance into existence of *persons*, who, unlike *things* and their constant passive metamorphoses, are each of them able to make their own character—who are able to resist as well as to assimilate with their true ideal, and who are therefore morally responsible for their management of themselves—is there not something in those characteristics of individual persons that opposes itself to the idea of *their* being finally withdrawn from moral personality into nonentity, almost as soon as their moral personality begins? Is not the supposition of the annihilation of all beings of this sort, when they had hardly time

enough to become aware of the infinite miraculousness of existence, a supposition that is out of harmony with the implicates of theistic faith and hope in the omnipotent goodness and mercy of God? Does not this so transitory an admission of individual persons into a dangerous moral life, on a planet that seems to have been gradually prepared for them, look like caprice of unreason rather than a revelation of eternally active moral reason or goodness? Can the supposition of the final unconsciousness of conscious persons after the death of their bodies be reconciled with theistic trust and hope in that moral reasonableness of the universe, which I have already urged as at once the tacit assumption in all human experience and the last word of true philosophy? If positive answers to these questions seem presumptuous, at the point of view which the human philosopher has to occupy—so remote intellectually from the infinite or divine centre of intelligence,—does not theistic faith at least imply that absolute trust and hope in the infinite love of God is the eternal and only reasonable principle according to which man can die; and that to live and die in this moral trust and hope may be ethically better for the persons who rest in it than intellectual demonstration, which would supersede the education of moral faith regarding that to which the sensuous imagination is inadequate? To those whose lives are habitually directed in theistic trust towards fulfilment of the divine will, or the realisation of their true spiritual ideal, physical death cannot

be a leap in the dark when it may be taken in this divine light. Faith in the persistence of morally responsible persons, notwithstanding the visible dissolution of their bodily organisms, is not, indeed, like philosophical faith or theistic trust, the indispensable postulate of all reliable intercourse with the evolving universe of things and persons; but its sceptical disintegration may disturb this final faith, and so lead indirectly to universal doubt and pessimism.

An un-  
solved  
Problem.

The enigma of evil leaves us in front of a further question, raised by moral faith in the posthumous persistence of persons, which I do not find that philosophy can answer. Is the existence of those persons who make and keep themselves *bad*, only a transitory episode, or is it an endless element in the universe? Notwithstanding the ambiguous appearances which the world of sentient and moral beings presents in this corner, and the uncertain adjustments of pleasure and pain to their good and evil acts—so apt to paralyse theistic faith and hope,—are pain and error and vice divinely destined in the end to disappear? Are all self-conscious persons in the universe certain at last to become what they ought to be; and are all men destined in the end to realise in their individual personalities the divine ideal of man, or at least to be for ever approaching to this, on the path of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day?

The alternative answers to this grave question are

full of difficulties which seem to be incapable of relief from the resources of reason. That the freedom of persons—their power to put themselves into states that are at variance with the true moral ideal—states deepened and it may seem finally confirmed by habit—*may* become an absolutely final election to evil *by themselves*, which even the moral obligation of omnipotent love *cannot* overcome, consistently with the continued free personality of the persons who thus persist in thus keeping themselves evil, is one supposition: it involves the overwhelming mystery of the existence in the divine universe of persons living endlessly, increasing in number, and always becoming morally worse. On the other hand, that self-conscious persons, as well as the things presented to sense, may be all naturally capable of dissolution; or at least that only the morally progressive, whose determining motive is towards the higher or divine life, are finally to retain conscious personal life, while all others, on the downward grade, are finally annihilated, so that evil naturally dies out of existence, or is continued only in new equally transitory persons, is a second alternative:—the plausible hypothesis of some religious thinkers, including among others the philosopher Locke. It is yet another alternative that, in mysterious consistency with the conditions of free personality, all moral perversion, along with the suffering thus introduced among sentient beings, will in the end disappear, in a final rise into goodness, through God's love of goodness, of all the persons who make

Hypothetical solutions.

themselves bad. A universe that is thus at last and eternally perfect, is the hypothesis which divine love of goodness, and the consequent divine will for its universal prevalence, may seem ethically to require. Yet to assume that this must be the final issue, indeed that it *can* be, consistently with free moral agency, or that it is otherwise possible, may be undue presumption, under our finite intelligence and experience of the realities. Perhaps man's present moral discipline requires that in the now embodied life this mystery should remain unrelieved.

The final meaning of the universe or of man's life and experience, an old yet ever new problem for mankind.

With this cloud resting on mankind, the course of meditative thought, awakened by the final problem of the changing universe and our personal relations to its changes, from which it took our departure at the commencement, comes to an end. It is the perennial question for humanity, which in each successive generation has attracted those who can recognise the pathos of the life and its surroundings in which human beings are incarnated at birth, and in which, within a little interval of time, they disappear at death. The meaning of personal life has more than exhausted the speculative genius of Plato and Aquinas, of Spinoza and Hume, of Leibniz and Hegel, and far transcends the sublime imagination even of Dante or Milton. The theological conception of things and the question of the destiny of persons may always be new, although it has engaged men from the beginning, and it necessarily takes new forms in advancing thought. When

the final problem is approached only in the spirit of speculative curiosity, or with the preconception that it must be intellectually soluble or else an unintelligible contradiction, it seems then to avoid the only human solution. Those again who insist upon the need in reason for the physical method as the only legitimate method logically conclude that the final question is an idle question. But its abstract and its physical insolubility, I have tried to show, need be no insuperable bar to its reasonable treatment in moral trust and hope; unless speculation is able to show that the Power that is supreme in the universe must be intellectually and morally incoherent if not diabolic, and that accordingly self-conscious life is not worth living;—for faith in all the relations of man to his surroundings is bound to dissolve, along with the supreme moral faith, in universal uncertainty and despair. No one can be more aware than I am how inadequately I have delivered myself in these lectures of the true ultimate thought about things and persons. Let me now at the close offer a comprehensive retrospect of the whole.

At the outset of this Gifford enterprise, I sought to evoke our latent sense of the mysterious infinitude of the ever-changing Universe, into which we are ushered—as strangers and without our leave—when we become percipient, and from which, after an uncertain period

Synoptical  
retrospect  
of the theis-  
tic argu-  
ment. The  
starting-  
point.

of morally responsible life, men disappear in the mysterious change called Death, which all organisms of "living matter" are found to undergo.

Meditation upon the predicament in which we thus involuntarily find ourselves, urges final questions about one's self, one's environment, and the Power that is universally operative in the changes that are going on in things and in persons, of all which history (in the largest sense) is the imperfect record. One is moved to ask the meaning of this short term of personal life, so dimly lighted amidst the surrounding darkness? What, too, is the office and significance of its ever fluctuating organic and extra-organic environment? Above all, what means the invisible Power that instinctive faith in all and reflective faith in a few recognise, as the finally synthetic or reconciling principle of the fluctuating universe of things and persons? Are the ever-changing manifestations—the properties and metamorphoses of things, and the self-conscious states and acts of persons—the manifestations of One and only One infinite non-moral Substance and Power? Or must the persistent personality of which I and other men are conscious in the brief interval between birth and death; the world of perceptible things which surrounds and assimilates us all; and the invisible Power revealed in and through persons and things,—must these three be finally or philosophically distinguished from one another, in a threefold articulation of the realities?

Is the reality in which we all find ourselves absolutely One and unethical or an essentially ethical triplicity?



When, in sympathy with monist philosophers — materialistic, panegoistic, and pantheistic—I tried to adopt the former of these two alternatives, I found that even the fragments of interpretation of our surroundings which in daily life we all tacitly assume that we are in possession of, and to which the natural sciences are supposed to be gradually adding,— I found that these seemed to have lost their trustworthy reconciling principle, and that thus even the dim philosophical light of physical science was threatened with extinction. I seemed to be losing myself in purposeless struggle in a meaningless universe—the One infinite Reality reduced to non-moral infinite Thing—a universe empty of persons either moral or immoral — man with all his science only the latest phenomenon in an inexplicable procession of changes, the revelations, if they can be called revelations, of irrationality, but it may be of diabolic power and purpose, or at least of Power concerning which I am forbidden to postulate enough to justify me in concluding anything, or in doing anything. So what we call science and morality become transitory events in a purposeless succession. A resigned despair accordingly appears to be the last issue of man's endeavour, either empirically or by abstract unaided reasoning, to comprehend as One the finally mysterious existence in which we participate when we become percipient and self-conscious. The boundless and endless reality necessarily escapes the grasp of a purely logical intelligence measured by

Neither the data presented to sense, nor the logic of pure intellect, can determine the answer to this question.

mere sense, and of abstract intellect unaided by the moral and spiritual experience of Man. Absolutely unique—"a singular effect"—the infinite universe of change repels as inadequate all physical analogies, and refuses to be contemplated *ab extra*, as if it were only one of the innumerable finite objects of empirical science. For one cannot get outside one's faculties, or compare with other universes the infinite universe of what we call "reality," in the way objects and events are compared with other objects and events in our ordinary interpretations of external nature.

The *homo mensura* method of dealing with the final question about the universe of realities.

But is there not, I proceeded to ask,—is there not another method in which this final question about life and the universe may be dealt with? Although I cannot grasp the infinite reality as if it were a physical fact, or a sufficiently intelligible premiss in a scientific argument, may I not come into sufficient final relation with it as it were *ab intra*? May I not live in intellectual and practical intercourse with it, under the final relations of a knowledge that is human—relations which may be eternally necessary at man's only limited and intermediate point of view? May not the universal reality be sufficiently interpretable finally, by and for man, on this *homo mensura* principle and method? But then it must be the complete ideal Man, not the sensuous intelligence only, nor the purely intellectual intelligence,—unaided by the moral and spiritual experience which is distinctive of Man in his true selfhood. The natural sciences, concerned

with non-moral things, therefore, afford a very inadequate application of the *homo mensura* method to the realities. But by a deeper and truer use of that method, the otherwise unknowable Power, that is now revealed through the universe of things and persons, may be regarded by man as loving righteousness personified,—as Perfect Person, and not merely physically as Boundless Thing, in the way Spinoza according to purely intellectual method, and David Hume in empirical fashion, virtually postulate.

The final conception of the universe of things and persons, worked out on this enlarged *homo mensura* principle, does not logically explicate the infinite reality in its infinitude as Spinoza tries to do, nor does it leave man paralysed in universal uncertainty with the sceptic. But it postulates morally perfect Power as at the root of the physical, æsthetical, and spiritual experience of mankind, although with a background of inevitable mystery,—a revelation this which may become enough for directing life and conduct, while it leaves uneliminated innumerable unanswerable questions. It recognises us on the *via media* which seems alone adapted to man's place, intellectually intermediate between omniscience and mere sense.

Accordingly, in the present series of lectures I have tried to deal with the final questions of existence, neither in the method of sensuous empiricism nor in their abstract rationality, but in their application to

*The via media.*

The moral or theistic postulate which underlies experience

of things  
and per-  
sons.

man as a moral and spiritual being who is in correlation with a moral and spiritual universe. Unable to comprehend our environment as at the centre, I have considered whether an *assumption* of its essential divineness or moral trustworthiness must not be the postulate that always underlies man's personal intercourse with manifested reality—a working postulate found charged with more or less meaning in proportion as the persons who think and act upon it approach in spiritual development to the ideal Man. How has this method fared with us on trial?

The final  
moral  
postulate  
not a capri-  
cious as-  
sumption.

In the first place, the theistic postulate seemed to be justified by the impossibility of even making a beginning in the way of intelligible experience or moral conduct without an absolute, conscious or unconscious, trust and hope in the Power that is manifested in the unceasing change of which life in the universe is made up. All our intercourse with things and persons *presumes* filial faith in the Power that is at work throughout the Whole. To attribute what amounts to dishonesty, deceit, injustice, want of goodness, to the Power supremely at work in the universe, is virtually to forbid all intellectual and practical intercourse with its manifestations presented in experience. We should avoid a finally undivine environment as we should avoid a suspected person. In all calculated activity I practically take for granted the ethical reliability or goodness of the infinite or mysterious Reality that I am obliged to suppose is

being continuously revealed in the universe of change. The timeless necessity of ethical obligation, and the impossibility of at all interpreting ourselves and any of our surroundings, if the universal process is either a prolonged accident, emptied of all moral meaning, or the revelation of a final purpose that may be more or less deluding and diabolical—in any of these ways putting us to intellectual and moral confusion at last—all this justifies the theistic or moral conception as the final one. The sufficient moral reason found for its adoption is, that unless theistic or optimist faith is the final truth about the universe there can be no truth about anything. If the self-conscious life that emerges between birth and death rises at birth out of, and at death subsides in, a morally meaningless, purposeless, and therefore untrustworthy, universe—or if it may be in this way the sport of Power that is essentially diabolic,—then, one is ready to say,—Let me at once escape from conscious existence, and return if it be possible into the unconsciousness out of which I involuntarily emerged when I was born. Personal annihilation becomes the chief end of life, if indeed, after paralysis of the fundamental ethical postulate, I can still be said to have any end, chief or other, to struggle for, and must not rather passively subside in despair into a speechless, motionless agnosticism.

In all my intercourse with the universe let me therefore regard myself as an individual person dealing

For sur-  
render of  
the moral

or theistic  
postulate  
paralyses  
and disin-  
tegrates  
human ex-  
perience.

with the infinite or perfect moral Person therein revealed—not as an individual thing, or conscious automaton, that is only an evanescent phase of the eternal Thing or non-moral Being. Let me take this as virtually the constant postulate in all my interpretations of the experiences, lower and higher, through which I pass—physical, æsthetical, spiritual. But this is just to argue that theistic or ethical faith and expectation is the indispensable basis and rationale of human life—at once its silently accepted preliminary, and the culmination of the deepest and truest human philosophy. Moral faith is therefore deeper than the deepest possible intellectual doubt, and presupposed in all doubt that is reasonable. And the ethical trust that is needed for the progressive interpretation of experience must be more fundamental than the pessimist doubt and despair about everything, into which one found that all strictly monist philosophies at last resolve themselves. However sympathetically one tried to enter into a wholly agnostic conception as final, there was always found below it a germ of theistic trust and expectation—moral confidence in the character of the Power that is universally operative,—a Power that is neither finally indifferent to rational order, nor diabolic in its final ends, but perfectly good, and therefore making for the goodness of all good and all bad agents. Thus the main drift of the time process, as far as man is related to it, may be presumed to be—to make and keep persons in the state in which

they ought to be, or to restore them to their true ideal, if they have made themselves what they ought not to be—so far as their own righteously delegated power to make and keep themselves bad is not in contradiction to the idea of a universe of persons all of whom are kept by God progressively unselfish or good.

This virtually moral and spiritual personification of the universally pervading Power, implied in reason and not capriciously postulated, justifies man when he takes for granted the scientific interpretability of the changing phenomena of the universe, and the ultimate interpretation of things as significant of perfectly reliable, because perfectly good, moral purpose ;—so that the temporal procession may be read throughout as a historical revelation to us of the eternal life of God—save and except the changes for the worse which human or other personal agents are able to make, when they become what they ought not to become, and what there is no divine necessity for their becoming, as when they isolate themselves in selfish separation from the moral universe. To this extent the universe of things and persons presented in human experience, and including of course the eternally necessary intellectual and moral implicates of that experience, becomes (for man) the perpetual progressive revelation of the otherwise unknown and unknowable Universal Power.

The otherwise infinite or mysterious all-pervading Power may in this way be truly said to be on speaking terms with man, in and through a cosmical and

The ever-changing universe, under its moral implicates, the revelation to individual persons of the absolutely perfect moral Person.

The incarnation of God in Nature, through

which the  
Universal  
Power is  
virtually  
on speak-  
ing terms  
with men.

moral order which in all its ramifications is *presumed* to be interpretable because charged with moral purpose. The intelligibility is also presumed to be ideally perfect; the purpose not capricious, but absolutely good—although the human position necessarily leaves much that is by man physically and morally inexplicable. That the infinite Power should be on speaking terms with man, through the sense symbolism of outward nature and the inward light of the spirit—incarnate in the natural order, and, above all, in the ideal Man—this is surely no derogation from the abstract infinity and ultimately inaccessible mysteriousness of the Reality we have continually to do with. A revelation through sensible and spiritual signs, charged with meaning and moral purpose intelligible enough to regulate man's life in an otherwise mysterious universe, seems to be the only way for answering the final questions that is adapted to man's receptive capacity. The presence throughout the whole of latent meaning and moral purpose is not indeed a conclusion that can be logically drawn from the few physical or moral phenomena themselves that are actually offered to us in our experience; but the assumption is warranted if it can be shown to be rationally involved in the phenomena, as the needed condition of our escape from speechless and motionless Pyrrhonist despair. If the universal change—the temporal procession—supposed to be interpretable—may possibly be a lie, faith in the meaning of *any* event presented in that experience



is paralysed, and the world becomes uninterpretable even in part. The only escape from this which I can find is in the preliminary postulate that the cosmical utterances must be morally rational or divine,—not diabolic—not a mixture of good and evil—not wholly chance or purposeless. Thus faith and hope in God is the true motive force of life and conduct, of our scientific reasonings about things and persons, and of our sceptical questionings themselves, so far as they are coherent and not wholly suicidal.

The earlier part of this second course was concerned with the rationale of theistically founded philosophy, as applicable to the ultimate interpretation of Nature, causally and teleologically, so far as man's limited relations and intermediate position permit him to go.

The five remaining lectures were connected with one central fact, obtruded in human experience, which seemed flatly to contradict the finally ethical and spiritual construction of experience. For the Universal Power seems to speak to us, in the divine language of human life, in an ambiguous way, in terms that are apt to give rise to moral distrust. It seems to reveal at the best an uncertain purpose of mingled good and evil, unless we annihilate morality and suppose that good and evil is determined by arbitrary will. This conclusion seems inevitable if the past and present state of sentient beings and persons, as found

The  
Rationale  
of Theism.

The  
Enigma of  
Theism.

on this planet, must be taken as the sole evidence of the character of the Power universally at work. The tragedy that is continually going on here seems to forbid the postulated moral trust and hope which inspires and elevates personal life. How can the universe as we find it be a revelation of omnipotent goodness? This is largely a world of suffering and sin. The unsatisfactory social conditions of mankind on this planet, the irregular distribution of happiness and pain among its sentient inhabitants, the appalling severity of the sufferings, the morally abnormal persons who introduce what ought not and needs not to exist, makes the whole, to a gradually developing and now comparatively refined sense of justice and mercy, more like moral chaos than the moral cosmos which indispensable moral trust in the Power that is speaking to us would require. With this appalling spectacle, daily presented, can we still retain hold of the primary postulate of an essentially trustworthy universe? Must we surrender it, and so cease to have an elevating motive and adequate foundation for intelligent and good life? Or can the suspicious facts be reconciled with the postulate, and this breakdown of experience be avoided—in consideration, let us suppose, of the limited intelligence and experience of Man, whose reason necessarily culminates in what is unimaginable, mysterious, or infinite; so that the enigma of a morally mixed universe, which might seem to precipitate men into speechless and motionless sceptical despair, may,

without *proved* inconsistency, be brought under the optimist or theistic ideal?

In this dilemma between theistic faith in life and final negation various considerations were suggested to mitigate the pressure of the strange facts which threaten to subvert needed initial moral trust in the supreme Power. For one thing, for all that we can show to the contrary, it may be a sign of perfect goodness that there should be in existence, on educational trial, individual persons who, as persons, must have absolute power to make and keep themselves bad, with all the implied *risks*, as we might call them, of this divine experiment in personal responsibility—rather than that there should not be individual persons thus on moral trial at all, and instead a wholly physical, non-moral, and physically necessitated, universe. If one takes account of finite and fallible moral agents, on educational probation, as the humanly regarded purpose which the Whole is making for, seen at the limited human point of view and in relation to Man, it may well be that the universe emptied of persons such as men have made themselves would realise a less perfect ideal than that in which men appear—trusted, for a time at least—if not finally—with their own character or moral destiny; and this although temporary, or even persistent, antagonism or indifference to the higher life, on the part of some or all of them, should seem to darken a universe that may nevertheless be consistent with righteousness.

Considerations which mitigate the pressure of the dilemma of a morally trustworthy universe and seeming signs of its untrustworthiness. Persons can make themselves bad.

Signs of  
progressive im-  
provement.

Moreover, one may well suppose that the enigma of theistic trust in omnipotent goodness immanent in a morally mixed universe, is further relieved by the signs of progressive development which are presented in the history of man, when it is interpreted as the history of a divinely conducted education in individual self-sacrifice and active moral reason of all persons who permit themselves to be divinely educated. Progressive improvement, in a resisting medium which often seems to convert progress into regress, rather than original and endless moral perfection, may be the economy truly adapted to a world that consists of persons.

A larger  
revelation  
than the  
physical  
one, more  
adapted  
to the  
recovery  
of the bad.

Still more when reason leaves room for the reinforcement of the progressive movement by the action of the Divine Power, "at sundry times and in divers manners," according to a rational order more comprehensive than that which men are accustomed to recognise in ordinary physical experience, and which in this sense may be called supernatural or marvellous, determined by its relations especially to persons who have made themselves bad in rejecting their true ideal, so that their theistic faith and hope has to be awakened, vivified, and enlightened, in order to their moral recovery—all through divine incarnation in the perfect Man, in consummation of the divine incarnation in physical nature.

The condi-  
tions of  
human life

Furthermore, sceptical disintegration of theistic faith may be arrested by the consideration that the temporal

drama of personal life on this planet is not extended enough in time to justify or explain its own final meaning and issues. The curtain falls almost at the beginning of the first act. If men are really living in a morally trustworthy universe, in filial confidence that the issues cannot in the end put personal agents to intellectual and moral confusion, this would seem to imply a further development of the initial conditions, and an assimilation of the personal agents themselves in a larger life, in which a manifestly perfect moral government shall be found by the morally tried agents to underlie the apparent indifference, caprice, and cruelty of the present physically organised discipline. More may therefore not unreasonably be expected to follow death, in the personal history and experience of each person; and perhaps more than can now be recollected by him may have preceded, in the pre-natal history of persons who seem disposed, when they enter life, to keep themselves bad. The semblance of moral chaos on this planet, so unsatisfying and disintegrative of moral trust in the Power universally at work, seems to be causally connected with the history of the moral agents after the curtain falls in death, if not also before it was raised at birth.

These, at any rate, are aids to theistic faith, afforded by a larger philosophy than that which is wholly physical and sentient, all tending to sustain the moral trust and hope in the Universal Power at the root of all fruitful experience, without which human life is

on earth seem to ask, under the theistic postulate, for its rectification or explanation.

Aids to perplexed faith.

a hollow illusion,—after suppression of the divine voice otherwise expressed in the sense symbolism of outward nature and in the inner light of moral reason, and in every form of natural or extra-natural revelation,—the whole transformed into an uninterpretable lie, with human consciousness in all its faculties a vain illusion. It is the irrational alternative in this dilemma that makes optimist trust the highest human philosophy, instead of the pessimist doubt that subverts personal life, in subverting the necessary postulates of intelligence and moral obligation: so that we are obliged in reason to accept it, unless moral and intellectual incoherence can be shown to be involved also in theistic trust, dissolving experience and its moral implicates in a common ruin.

The highest end of human life under the theistical interpretation of its existence and meaning.

*Deus illuminatio nostra.* It follows that the highest end of the life of persons on this planet, during the uncertain interval between conscious birth and death, under this final conception of the realities of existence, is the deepening and enlightening of moral or theistic faith and hope, through increasing discernment of spiritual law in the natural world—the elevating emotional expression of this faith in religious gratitude and aspiration—with a practical outcome in that approximation to its divine ideal which those present who “do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God.”

Perverted religion.

*Optimi corruptio pessima.* There is another side of the shield. That morally elevating faith in the Universal

Power, with its implied eternal gospel for mankind, which might sustain the higher life in men, making them more reverential, less intolerant, more charitable, more hopeful, and more helpful to one another, has been perverted into an occasion of some of the most signal instances of the moral evil that makes the whole history of mankind so mysterious. Instead of hopeful trust in God, what man has called Religion has been largely craven fear, or worship of diabolic Power—in the cruel forms it has assumed, and in the degrading customs and frivolous controversies which it has encouraged in the course of its gradual development,—making men more hateful, not more helpful, to one another—so that even Christendom is as noted for the persecutions and sectarian separations by which its unity is broken as for victorious union in the struggle with Evil,—all this perhaps the most memorable and surprising illustration of the great enigma which perplexes us in the history of the world. This corruption and reversal of theistic faith and hope opens a field for meditation hardly less extensive than that which has been travelled over in these lectures; but further consideration of what it contains is foreign to their immediate design.





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