





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

**THE PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF
INDUSTRIAL PEACE**

Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

**PROTECTIVE AND PREFERENTIAL
IMPORT DUTIES**

Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD., LONDON.

THE PROBLEM OF THEISM
AND OTHER ESSAYS



MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

LONDON • BOMBAY • CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO
ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.

TORONTO

THE
PROBLEM OF THEISM
AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

A. C. PIGOU, M.A.

FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL ECONOMY, CAMBRIDGE;
AUTHOR OF 'ROBERT BROWNING AS A RELIGIOUS TEACHER,'
'THE PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF INDUSTRIAL PEACE,'
'PROTECTIVE AND PREFERENTIAL IMPORT DUTIES,' ETC.



MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1908

BD41
P594

MOFFITT

I love the stillness of the sunset hour,
When golden radiance falls across the hills
And the soft music of a thousand rills
Blends with the song of birds in cadence sure :
Then float before me visions of great power,
Dreams of the victory I would essay,
What I have doubted long grown clear as day,
And every motive touched with something pure.—
Till, in a moment, comes the chill of night ;
The rosy splendour fades, the birds are mute,
The lines grow harsher in the failing light ;
The harmony has fled my broken lute.—
Yet, for that wakening of a nobler soul
I strive more bravely towards a surer goal.

D. W. C.

PREFACE

THE essays contained in this volume were written at various times during the past few years, and were sent to be printed in April last. They are the result, not of my main work, but of a bye-occupation, and they do not pretend to deal with the subjects discussed in them from the standpoint of a professional student. They fall into two divisions. The first four are direct discussions of the problems with which they deal; the other three are critical expositions of important views. All seven are addressed to the general reader, and are written with as little reference as possible to technicalities. The essay on the "General Nature of Reality" is, however, likely to present difficulties to persons who have no acquaintance with philosophy, and—though in some measure the argument of the second essay depends upon the conclusions reached in it—should probably not be read by them. Essays IV., V., and VI. are reprinted, with alterations, from the *International Journal*

of *Ethics*; and Essay VII. from the *Independent Review*. The other three are new.

For the general philosophical standpoint that I have adopted I am chiefly indebted to the writings of the late Professor Sidgwick. The Hon. Bertrand Russell, F.R.S., and Mr. A. H. Moberly have helped me with valuable criticisms in connection with several of the essays—Mr. Russell, in particular, having very kindly read the whole of my manuscript; and Mr. J. M. Keynes and the Rev. J. R. P. Sclater have made useful suggestions upon special points. I need hardly say that the spirit of the whole book is tentative, and the conclusions reached provisional.

A. C. PIGOU.

KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
June 2, 1908.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. THE GENERAL NATURE OF REALITY	1
2. THE PROBLEM OF THEISM	18
3. FREE WILL	65
4. THE PROBLEM OF GOOD	80
5. THE ETHICS OF THE GOSPELS	93
6. THE ETHICS OF NIETZSCHE	109
7. THE OPTIMISM OF BROWNING AND MEREDITH	125



I

THE GENERAL NATURE OF REALITY¹

NAÏVE consciousness naturally, and without questioning, regards the world of appearance as a complete externally existing real thing. In Lotze's phrasing: "It believes that the world lies around us illuminated by its own radiance, and outside of us tones and odours cross and meet one another in the immeasurable space that plays in the colours belonging to things."² But, Lotze proceeds, naïve consciousness is wrong. The world of appearance is not what it is independently of us to whom it appears. "The beauty of colours and tones, warmth and fragrance, are what Nature in itself strives to produce and express, but cannot do so by itself; for this it needs, as its last and noblest instrument, the sentient mind that alone can put into words its mute striving, and, in the glory of sentient intuition, set forth in luminous actuality what all the motions and gestures of the external world were vainly endeavouring to express."³

In these sentences there is at once an explicit

¹ This essay, as is observed in the preface, should probably be omitted by readers unfamiliar with philosophical discussions.

² *Microcosmos*, English translation, i. p. 345. ³ *Loc. cit.* p. 353.

assertion and an implicit question. The assertion is that behind the world of appearance there lies a reality independent of the perceiving mind, or, more simply, that an independent reality exists. The question is, In what does that reality consist? Between these two things there is an intimate connection, for, unless the assertion is accepted, the question becomes void of meaning. Though, therefore, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the question, an essential preliminary to that undertaking is to justify the assertion upon which it is pivoted.

By a reality independent of the perceiving mind is meant, of course, a reality which remains the same whether that mind is in contact with or withdrawn from it. It does not mean, as Mr. Taylor in his *Metaphysics* seems to suppose, a reality whose definition is that it is incapable of contact with that mind.¹ An independent reality is not an eternally and necessarily divorced reality.

There are two lines of reasoning along which the assertion that such an independent reality exists has been opposed. On the one hand, it has been maintained that there is no independent reality at work in co-operation with the percipient to produce the world of appearance, because this world is simply an aspect or part of the perceiving mind itself. On the other hand, it has been held that, though the world of appearance is produced by the percipient and some-

¹ Mr. Taylor appears to be further in error in holding that an independent reality, in his sense, is necessarily identical with unreality. He argues that this must be the case, on the ground that all unreality is, by definition, independent in this sense (*Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 70). From the fact, however, that all not-A is B, it does not follow that no A is B.

thing else, yet that something else is not independent of the percipient, but rather constitutes with it a "thorough-going unity," the analysis of which into parts involves a "false abstraction." These two arguments I now proceed to discuss.

First; the thesis that the world of appearance consists simply of aspects, or parts of the percipient himself, may be defended by three different sorts of appeal: (1) to reflective analysis; (2) to psychogonical analysis; (3) to *a priori* reasoning. All these appeals should, in my opinion, be dismissed.

The appeal to reflective analysis admits that, *prima facie*, the world of appearance presents itself to us as something quite other than a mere state of ourselves. It admits that we *seem* at first sight to perceive both states of ourselves—feelings of pleasure, sensations, and so on—and also something sharply distinguished from these with which the states are connected; nay, further, that Kant *seems* to be right when he asserts that our inner experience is itself possible only under presupposition of an outer experience. But, the appeal proceeds, more careful introspection shows that this seeming is illusory. It is due to the inability of naïve consciousness to distinguish between the given and inferences from the given. As Mill has observed: "What we see is a very minute fragment of what we think we see. We see artificially that one thing is hard, another soft. . . . We see and cannot help seeing what we have learnt to infer even when we know that the inference is erroneous and that the apparent perception is deceptive"—when, for instance, the moon seems larger as it nears the horizon.¹ Hence,—

¹ *Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 221.

the appeal runs,—the only reason that something other than our own states *seems* to be perceived, is that the thought of this other follows directly upon experienced sensations; and this fact expert introspection reveals.

Against this reasoning, I reply that expert introspection does *not* reveal what is here asserted of it. No doubt, as I shall myself presently argue, *some* things that present themselves as independent are found on deeper reflection to be not really so. But this is not true of *all* things. Sidgwick writes: "Certainly I find myself unable to analyse my notion or perception of matter into feelings or ideas of feelings, tactual, visual, or muscular, though I do find that such sensation-elements present themselves as inseparable accompaniments of my notion or perception of matter when attention is directed to it introspectively."¹ For my own part I accept this analysis. If it is accepted, the first of the three appeals that we are discussing must be abandoned.

The second appeal is to psychogonical analysis. This appeal plays a large part in Mill's *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*. It consists in a history of the way in which perceptions of things apparently other than our own states, arose. Mill

¹ *Philosophy of Kant*, p. 389. Dr. McTaggart admits what is here urged, but argues that our belief in the reality of external objects, though not arising as an inference from sensations, can only be *justified* by an appeal to them: we ask whether the sensations we have experienced "can be accounted for on any other hypothesis than the existence of the matter in question" (*Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 87). If, however, it is admitted that we perceive the matter directly, belief in its existence is *ab initio* justified in exactly the same way as belief in the sensations. Neither is before nor after the other.

gives such a history of the perception of matter which, he is concerned to show, is not a primitive element in consciousness, and did not exist in its first manifestations.¹ Professor Ward, in like manner, shows that our conceptions of space and time are evolved from our own motions, and argues from this against their reality. This appeal is, in my opinion, exposed to two fatal objections. First, it is irrelevant. To show *how* a perception grew up can never prove that perception to be either valid or delusive. Mill calls his history of growth *analysis*, and in this is followed, in a celebrated passage, by Browning. But history is a statement of *antecedents*, and differs, *toto coelo*, from analysis, which is a statement of *elements*. If we want to know whether one of Euclid's propositions is valid, the history of the theory in which that proposition was evolved is of no help to us; and exactly the same thing is true in respect of perceptions. But, secondly, the appeal to psychogonical analysis is also, in many of its forms, inconsistent with itself. When Professor Ward speaks of the conception of space and time as evolved from the experience of motion, does not his reference to motion implicitly admit the independent reality of that space which he proceeds to condemn? When other writers deny the validity of the perception of matter on the ground that it arises out of particular qualities of the sense organs, are they not involved in the palpable inconsistency of admitting the material reality of the sense-organs themselves? Nietzsche puts the point very forcibly: "To study physiology," he writes, "with a clear conscience, one

¹ *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 226. Cf. also pp. 160, 266, and chapters xi. and xiii. *passim*.

must insist on the fact that the sense-organs are *not* phenomena in the sense of the idealistic philosophy. . . . What? And others say even that the external world is the work of our organs. But then our body, as a part of this external world, would be the work of our organs! But then our organs themselves would be the work of our organs.”¹ For these reasons this appeal must, like the first, be dismissed.²

The third appeal is to *a priori* reasoning. How, it is asked, can anything other than our own feelings and ideas be present in the mind; surely a real tea-cup cannot be so present? This appeal may appear at first sight plausible. It is easily seen, however, that the plausibility depends entirely upon an illegitimate use of the word *present*. What does this mean? It cannot mean present in space, for, if it does, an acknowledgment of the independent reality of space, which the argument is endeavouring, *inter alia*, to disprove, has been surreptitiously incorporated among the premisses of the argument itself. But, if present to the mind does not mean this, there is nothing left for it to mean except simply knowable. To assert that a real tea-cup cannot be present in this sense is, however, not to argue, but to beg, the question.³ The whole contention is, in short, a delusion. It arises, perhaps, from a confusion between the standpoint of one person perceiving objects and that of another person watching the image on his retina while he is perceiving objects. The watcher drifts into the

¹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 22.

² Cf. for the whole of this paragraph, Sidgwick, *Scope and Relations of Philosophy*, pp. 69, 70.

³ Kant's argument—other than the antinomies—against the reality of space and time seems to embody this fallacy.

notion that this image *is* the object that his companion perceives.

The three appeals directed to show that there is no reality independent of the perceiving mind have all broken down. That, however, is not the whole case against the thesis they were designed to support. For that thesis itself contains two parts that are not necessarily united. It asserts that in the production of the world of appearance there is no independent reality co-operating with the percipient, *because* the world of appearance is merely a part or aspect of the percipient mind. But, even though the world of appearance were thus merely a part or aspect of the mind, still the emergence of this part or aspect might be partially dependent upon something other than the mind, just as in ordinary thought the sensation, say, of pain, is supposed to be. These three appeals, therefore, which we have found reason to reject, might all be valid, and yet the assertion that an independent reality exists would not have been disproved.

The second line of argument along which that assertion has been attacked now demands consideration. The percipient and the factors with which he co-operates in the production of the world of appearance constitute, according to this argument, a unity so close that neither is intelligible,—nay, neither is conceivable,—apart from the other. To attempt to separate them in thought was the root error alike of Rational Cosmology and of Rational Psychology. The one endeavoured to explain the world apart from the self, the other to explain the self apart from the world. Both failed because both treated as a *res completa* what was in fact no more than a single

aspect of reality. The great step forward made by the neo-Kantian idealism is just to recognise that it is not in either separately, but only in the unity of the two, that reality can be found.

The apparent plausibility of this reasoning appears to me to arise solely out of an ambiguity of terms. The percipient is treated as equivalent to the *subject of experience*, and what I have called the independent reality to the *object of experience*. But, in the definition of the term *subject* is involved contact with an *object*, and in the definition of *object* the fact of presentness to a subject—in Dr. Caird's phrase, "relation to the subject is part of the idea of the object."¹ Of course, with these definitions, the conception of an object independent of a subject is inconsistent with itself; and, if the identification of percipient with subject and of independent reality with object were admitted, the conception of an independent reality would be similarly self-contradictory. To make this identification without argument is, however, to beg the whole question in dispute. The only substantial point at issue is to determine whether that identification is legitimate. But, to establish that position not even an attempt is made in the argument. On the contrary, it appears obvious that, however deeply interfused in the concrete the percipient and the factors with which he is alleged to co-operate may be, so soon as it is admitted that any such factors exist, some part of them *must* be recognised as real independently of the percipient.

Both lines of reasoning along which the doctrine of the existence of an independent reality has been

¹ *The Critical Philosophy of Kant*, p. 532.

attacked have thus been shown to fail. Hence, there remains nothing to set against the support accorded to it by direct perception. This circumstance does not, of course, *prove* the doctrine to be true; for all perceptions *may* be deceptive. From this general possibility of error there is no way of escape. We possess no absolute criteria of truth, only methods of verification by which various errors may be eliminated; and it is possible that judgments which successfully pass all our tests may nevertheless be false. If, therefore, on the strength of the preceding argument we hold Lotze's assertion to be true, our ultimate ground for doing this is not a demonstration, but a postulate, —the postulate, namely, that perceptions are innocent of fraud unless they are proved to be guilty. Unless this postulate is accepted, we are reduced, as Sidgwick well shows, to complete scepticism; for, "if we do not know intuitively and cannot prove that what we perceive really exists independently of our perception, still less can we either know intuitively or prove that what we recollect really happened"; and yet, unless the validity of memory in general is granted, all intellectual activity is reduced to an absurdity, for it all depends on memory.¹ Personally I cannot accede to this result, and I provisionally accept the postulate. If I am allowed to do this, Lotze's assertion, unless some further arguments are brought against it, is vindicated. Lying behind the sensible appearance of things there is a reality independent of the perceiving mind.

The way is thus cleared for our question: In what does this independent reality consist? In approaching

¹ *Philosophy of Kant*, p. 427.

that question, however, we have to meet *in limine* the fundamental objection of those who assert that the true answer to it is, in the nature of things, wholly unknowable.

In defence of this agnostic attitude the most general argument commonly employed is as follows. All objects of knowledge, it is said, can be known only in their relation to the knower. The worlds of sense experience, of religious experience, of ethical experience alike are all presented *through* the medium of mind. What they are in themselves independently of mind is, therefore, necessarily and for ever shut off from us.¹ This view is well expressed by Mr. Joachim in his book on *The Nature of Truth*. Speaking of the opposing theory, he writes: "The theory maintains that greenness is what it is in complete independence of any and all forms of experiencing, and indeed of everything other than itself. . . . How under these circumstances greenness can yet sometimes so far depart from its sacred aloofness as to be apprehended (sensated or conceived); and how, when this takes place, the sensating or conceiving subject is assured that its immaculate *perseitas* is still preserved—these are questions to which, apparently, the only answer is the dogmatic reiteration of the supposed fact."²

This reasoning I cannot accept. It appears to me to have been completely refuted in anticipation by the late Professor Sidgwick. It is true, no doubt,

¹ This is at the back of Kant's argument for the thesis that man "makes nature" by imposing subjective categories on things in themselves. It is also substantially the view adopted by Dr. Caird (cf. *The Critical Philosophy of Kant*, p. 532).

² *The Nature of Truth*, p. 42.

says that distinguished authority, that all objects of knowledge must stand in *some* relation to the knower. But, for them to stand in *some* relation does not preclude their being known as they are in themselves apart from our cognition; for, to be known in this way is itself to stand in some relation.¹ Nay, further, the possibility of this simple kind of relation cannot be denied without inconsistency; for, to deny it involves a denial of the independent reality of the negation itself. Hence, it has not been found that our question is in the nature of things unanswerable. We may, therefore, legitimately try to answer it.

Now, in respect of the relation between the percipient, the independent reality, and the world of appearance there exist *a priori* three possibilities. First, the percipient may bring to the independent reality no faculty of perceiving things as they are in themselves. On this view, the independent reality is in no aspect the same as the world of appearance; it is, perhaps, a cause, but it is certainly not a part, of that appearance. Secondly, the percipient may bring no other faculty except that of perceiving things as they are in themselves. On this view, the world of appearance differs from the independent reality solely in the property of being perceived. Lastly, the percipient may bring a faculty of perceiving some things as they are in themselves and other things differently. On this view, some portions of the world of appearance differ from corresponding portions of the independent reality solely in the property of being perceived, and other portions differ from their substratum altogether. These three

¹ *The Philosophy of Kant*, pp. 272 *et seq.*

possibilities give rise respectively to the metaphysical theories of Kantian and other idealisms, of naïve realism, and critical realism.

A defence of the first of these theories is sometimes based upon Mr. Bradley's perfectly general thesis that any relational view of the universe stands condemned because it necessarily leads to an infinite regress. Against this argument, I hold, with Mr. Russell, that the kind of regress here involved is not a regress *within the meaning* of any proposition, and is not, therefore, logically objectionable.¹ Apart from this general controversy, the view that the percipient brings to the independent reality no faculty of perceiving things as they are in themselves is practically equivalent to the view that space and time are not independently real. The whole of the world of appearance is presented to us under the forms of space and time, everything that we know occupying either both points and instants, or instants but not points.² If, therefore, the containing forms are fashioned by the mind, it is obvious that the independent reality is in no aspect or part identical with the sensible appearance contained in them. Let us, therefore, inquire whether the assault upon the independent reality of space and time initiated by Kant has been brought to a successful issue.

The classic case against the reality of space and time is contained, of course, in the Kantian antinomies. These antinomies may be reduced to two. The first is: *Thesis*; the world has a beginning in time and is enclosed within limits of space: *Antithesis*; the world is infinite as regards both space and time.

¹ Cf. Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, p. 99.

² *Ibid.* p. 465.

The second is, *Thesis*; every composite substance in the world is made up of simple parts; for, if not, there is nothing at all, for there can be nothing composite: *Antithesis*; nothing simple exists anywhere in the world; for everything can be imagined further subdivided, and hence we can never find a simple part. According to Kant, thesis and antithesis could be proved for both these antinomies, and hence he concluded that time and space as such could not be real. Recent writers, however, have shown that both antinomies break down. As regards the first, the antithesis is valid, depending, as it does, upon "the self-evident axiom that there is a moment beyond any given moment and a point beyond any given point."¹ The thesis, however, is not valid, for there is nothing self-contradictory in the notion of an infinite series extending either in one or both directions from a given point.² As regards the second antinomy, the thesis is valid. The antithesis, however, as Mr. Russell points out, rests on the assumption "that, if a space does consist of points, it must consist of a finite number of points. When once this is denied, we may admit that no finite number of divisions of a space will lead to points, while yet holding any space to be composed of points. A finite space is a whole consisting of simple parts, but not of any finite number of simple parts."³ Hence, both antinomies being capable

¹ Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, p. 460.

² Sidgwick, while recognising this, nevertheless finds a special difficulty as regards infinite *past* time, since this must be conceived as an infinite series that is nevertheless somehow completely given (*Philosophy of Kant*, pp. 396 and 269). I cannot follow the distinction here taken between past and future. Is not the question begged in the word "completely"?

³ *Principles of Mathematics*, p. 460.

of resolution, they do not afford any valid ground for denying the reality of space and time. We, therefore—in accordance with the principle laid down on p. 9—conclude that these entities, consisting respectively of infinite collections of points and instants, belong to, or constitute a part of, the independent reality.

This conclusion negatives the first of the three possible views that we have distinguished, the Kantian view, namely, that the mind brings to the independent not-self no faculty of perceiving things as they are in themselves. We have, therefore, now only to choose between the two remaining views, those of naïve realism and of critical realism respectively. In other words, we start with the conception of space and time as independently real, and we inquire whether their content is identical with, or in some respects different from, the world of appearance.

The answer to this question is easily reached. The world of appearance varies both with the *position* and with the *condition* of the percipient. First, a "thing looks very differently according to the position which we take up to it in space, and its apparent size changes with changes of the distance between it and us who observe it."¹ In persons whose sight has been recovered, for example, surprise has been caused at the circumstance that a single room is capable of appearing as large as the house which contains it. Further, "the colour of a ray of a single definite wave-length"—and the case is still stronger in respect of sound—"will be different from the normal value when the source of light and the observer are moving relatively

¹ Külpe, *Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 201.

to one another.”¹ Secondly, variations in the *condition* of the percipient are followed by variations in the sensible appearance of things. As Professor Stout observes: “The variable nature of sense-experience corresponds immediately, not with the constitution and changes of the material world in general, but only with the constitution and changes of the small fragment of matter which we call a nervous system. Alter this, let us say, by the use of drugs, and the sensible appearance of perceived things may be profoundly modified without any corresponding alteration in the things themselves.”² In view of these considerations, we are compelled, on pain of self-contradiction, to recognise that the world of appearance is not identical with the independent reality. Naïve realism breaks down, and critical realism is master of the field.

With this conclusion the last stage in our inquiry is reached. Space and Time belong to the independent reality, and the independent content of that envelope is not identical with the world of appearance. The question that remains is: Can anything of a positive nature be laid down concerning that content? To this question two broad answers of an opposite kind have at different times been given. The materialist once asserted that the content consists in body alone; the spiritist still asserts that it consists in spirit alone. Materialisms that deny the independent reality of other minds no longer need refuta-

¹ Whetham, *Recent Developments of Physical Science*, p. 306.

² *Things and Sensations*, p. 3. Bacon, for example, believed that cellars were colder in summer than in winter, because they felt so. Cf. for further argument, Sigwart, vol. i. pp. 307 *et seq.*

tion among serious men. The answer of spiritism is better than the answer of materialism, because what it asserts to be fact cannot be denied to be *possible*. Nobody can prove that the independent reality does *not* consist exclusively of spirits, that corpuscles, for example, are *not* spiritual beings. In my opinion, however, the arguments by which spiritism seeks to prove that this *is* the case will not bear investigation. Of these arguments there are two varieties. One, starting from the position that the world is nothing apart from the relations involved in it, proceeds to argue that relations themselves are inconceivable apart from a relating mind. Against this I simply reply that a view which holds space and time to be independently real cannot admit that relations are inconceivable apart from mind; that, of course, for a *conception* of relations to exist, mind is necessary, but that for relations themselves to exist it is not necessary.¹ The other argument asserts that the universe must be intelligible; *therefore* it must either be intelligent or have intelligence behind it. This argument seems to derive whatever plausibility it has from an ambiguous use of the word intelligible. It is true that the universe *must* be intelligible *in the sense of not involving self-contradiction*; and it is also true that it will not be intelligible *in the sense of being imaginatively realised* unless it is conceived as somehow bound up with a consciousness like our own. But there is no reason to suppose that it need be thus bound up in order to be intelligible in the sense in which it *must* be intelligible. This argument, therefore, like the last, breaks down, and the thesis of spiritism remains not proven.

¹ Cf. T. H. Green, *Prolegomena*, p. 36. Cf. also Essay II. p. 23.

To this negation of broad generalisations little that is positive can be added. Ordinary experience indicates that part of the independent reality consists of the spirits of living men and perhaps of animals: physical science suggests that another part consists in planetary systems of corpuscles in perpetual ordered motion through a rigid *plenum* whose strain-forms they are; psychical science hints at the presence within it of discarnate spirits of dead men; and theology claims to find in it the supreme spirit of God. To determine how far these suggestions are warranted by the evidence is the task of special sciences rather than of general philosophy. The last of them—the claim of theology—is the subject-matter of my second paper.

II

THE PROBLEM OF THEISM

I

IN that poem of blended shade and light, *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, there are five lines well suited to stand at the head of any theological discussion :

It is the idea, the feeling and the love
God means mankind should strive for and show forth,
Whatever be the process to that end—
And not historic knowledge, logic sound,
And metaphysical acumen.

With that sentiment as a judgment of values I am in entire accord, and I should not care to put together a discussion such as this without at the outset urging that even the most fundamental problems of theology are of the second and not of the first importance. For, after all, theology represents merely one aspect of the great whole of religion. It holds apart, in abstraction from the rest, the purely intellectual element ; and that element is not the primary one. Does not Harnack even say,¹ "How often does it happen in history that theology is only the instrument by which religion is discarded ?"

¹ *What is Christianity?* p. 48.

No doubt, many persons would judge that to hold true opinions is by itself in some degree good.¹ But, I do not think that, abstracted from the whole of its effects and abstracted from our emotional and volitional attitude in regard to those opinions, they would judge it to be a *great* good. Certainly, for my own part, I am not attracted by the doctrine, or by any modernised counterpart of the doctrine, that a man's worth depends upon what he believes to be true in the most abstruse department of philosophy. And, therefore, I think that our speculative position in these matters, so far as it is regarded in isolation from life and conduct, is a thing of secondary import. It is the relation of will and feeling in which we stand to knowledge, and not the content of knowledge that is central and fundamental.

What think ye of Christ, friend? When all's done and said,
Like you this Christianity or not?
It may be false, but will you wish it true?
Has it your vote to be so if it can?

If you desire faith, then you've faith enough:
What else seeks God—nay, what else seeks ourselves?

But, though among things valuable as ends knowledge of matters of fact may not hold a great, or indeed, may not hold any, place, yet as a means—as a focus of emotion and an object of desire whose attainment yields satisfaction of a high order—its value may be great. Furthermore, as regards the degree of value in this sense that attaches to them, some kinds of knowledge seem to be more important than other kinds. What the most important kinds are would not,

¹ But cf. Essay IV.

of course, always be agreed, but I may perhaps, without fear of serious controversy, suggest that among them should be included knowledge about those three great problems which Kant distinguished—God, Freedom, and Immortality. It is with the first of these, the problem of Theism, that this essay has to do. To Pascal it was the most important of them all. “Il n’y a que deux sortes d’hommes raisonnables,” he wrote, “ceux qui servent Dieu de tout le cœur parce qu’ils le connaissent, et ceux qui cherchent Dieu de tout le cœur parce qu’ils ne le connaissent pas.”

At the outset, it is necessary to define our problem more precisely than is sometimes done. For it is obviously futile to inquire whether existence can be predicated of a particular subject until some content has been given to that subject. Or, in other words, there is no meaning in the question, “Does God exist?” until we have some idea of what we intend to signify by “God.” I do not mean, of course, that we must be able to form a conception in any degree adequate to the reality, if reality there be, but that we must have some positive conception, and not a mere word, in our minds before we can raise the question of existence at all.

What then shall we mean by the word God for the purpose of our present question? I shall mean by it what Harnack tells us the Founder of Christianity would have wished us to mean. There was for Him no question of elaborate metaphysic, no question of the essential unity of the Father and the Son. Harnack is quite explicit when he writes: “The gospel, as Jesus proclaimed it, has to do with the Father only, and not with the Son.”¹ Its object is a

¹ *What is Christianity?* p. 144.

powerful spiritual Being who wills the good, and whom Jesus calls "Our Father which art in heaven." The world-view which declares such a Being to exist I call Christian Theism.

Now, of course, under that general head there fall several subdivisions according to the further definition that we give to this Being. He may be regarded as Omnipotent or as not Omnipotent, and, if not Omnipotent, as the creator or not the creator of the material in which he works. For my present purpose it is sufficient to choose between the Christian Theism of an Omnipotent God and of a God who is not defined as Omnipotent. I shall confine myself to the second form. It is true that many persons verbally assert their belief in a God who is Omnipotent, and that this belief, therefore, has the appearance of being predominant. But those who make such assertions often at the same time follow the example of Milton, and specify certain things which this Omnipotent God cannot do. Hence, despite their professions, it is perhaps not unreasonable to rank them as in reality followers of a God who is not necessarily Omnipotent.¹

¹ The importance which some persons attach to the doctrine of Omnipotence appears to be due in great measure to the opinion that this doctrine affords a guarantee of human immortality, the argument being that an Omnipotent and Good God would not permit the evil of death. Since, however, we know that, as a matter of fact, many evils are permitted, it seems difficult to make this argument cogent.

There has been much controversy as to whether the existence of an Omnipotent and Good God is *incompatible* with the existence of evil. If Omnipotence be interpreted so as to include the power of violating logical laws and making a thing both to exist and not to exist at the same time, it clearly is thus incompatible. But, if Omnipotence be interpreted so as to exclude this power, "it may always be possible that the evil is an essential ingredient in goods of such value as to make it better that they and the evil should both exist than that neither

At the same time we must, I think, if we are to remain in accord with common usage, define the God of Christian Theism as at least sufficiently powerful to make good prevail over evil in the long-run. By abstaining from this we should run counter to the popular acceptance of words. For though, indeed, the ordinary Christian Theist may conceive himself as rowing *against* the stream, his eyes are fixed on the distant light. He assumes, as Mill has it, "the exalted character of a fellow-labourer with the Highest, a fellow-combatant in the great strife, contributing his little which, by the aggregation of many like himself, becomes much, towards that progressive ascendancy, and ultimately complete triumph of good over evil which history points to, and which this doctrine teaches us to regard as planned by the Being to whom we owe all the benevolent contrivances we behold in Nature."¹

It is this sort of Christian Theism, and the arguments which lead towards or up to it, that I shall endeavour in this paper to investigate. These arguments have been numerous and have varied from time to time. At the present day, however, many old controversies are abandoned and the issue is reduced to a narrower compass than it used to occupy. I would should" (Russell, *Independent Review*, 1906, p. 115). In this case there is no incompatibility. The possibility referred to is, however, a very bare one; for, as Lotze well observes in answer to Leibnitz, "Of all imaginable assertions the most indemonstrable is that the evil of the world is due to the validity of eternal truth; on the contrary, to any unprejudiced view of Nature, it appears to depend upon the definite arrangements of reality, beside which other arrangements are thinkable, also based upon the same eternal truth" (*Microcosmos*, English translation, vol. ii. p. 717).

¹ *Essays on Religion*, p. 117.

even suggest that it is on two lines of approach only that the generality of educated persons are now accustomed to concentrate attention. Of these the first is the strictly philosophical approach, the argument to Theism as a presupposition of the possibility of experience at all. The second, less complex, and, for that reason perhaps, to most people more attractive, is the argument from *certain particulars within the articulated whole of experience*. In the course of the preceding essay, the basis of the broader philosophic argument for Theism—the contention, namely, that relations are inconceivable apart from a relating intelligence¹—has already been rejected. I turn at once, therefore, to the second group of arguments. The discussion of these falls into two divisions according as the particulars of experience with which we are concerned relate to facts of the physical world or to facts of what is known as religious experience.

II

The argument from facts of the physical world is known as the physico-theological argument, or the argument from Design. Of this “proof” of the existence of God, Kant wrote in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: “The physico-theological proof must always be mentioned with respect. It is the oldest and simplest proof of all, and never fails to commend itself

¹ Cf. Essay I. p. 16. An argument on these lines in defence of Theism is developed by Dr. Rashdall (following T. H. Green), in *Contentio Veritatis*, and in the *Theory of Good and Evil*. In my opinion Mr. Rashdall’s argument is not cogent even if his basis is accepted. Since, however, I reject the basis I need not discuss the superstructure.

to the popular mind. It imparts life to the study of nature, as it was itself suggested by that study, and receives new vigour from it.”¹

The process of the proof is from apparent adaptations of means to ends in nature to a Being by whom nature was designed. Contemplating the matter of the physical world, we find it arranged in various ways, and we call some of the arrangements works of man and others works of nature. In the works of man we do, in fact, agree to find finality or purpose. The argument from design suggests that purpose is also exhibited in the works of nature. Our problem is to determine whether that suggestion can be sustained; or, to put the point as Mr. Carpenter puts it in his book, *The Art of Creation*: “If this world of civilised life, with its great buildings and bridges and wonderful works of art, is the embodiment and materialisation of the thoughts of Man, how about that other world of the mountains and the trees and the mighty ocean and the sunset sky—the world of Nature—is that also the embodiment and materialisation of the Thoughts of other Beings, or of one other Being?”²

In order to discuss that problem satisfactorily, we need first to make explicit the basis of agreement from which we start. This Mr. Carpenter does in his interesting account of the development of the works of men. At the root of them all he finds a rudimentary desire or need, a purpose or quasi-purpose, which first enfoliates into clear thought, and then, may be, projects itself into those *arrangements* of matter which constitute a house or a printed book, or

¹ Watson's *Selections from Kant*, p. 218.

² *Loc. cit.* p. 25.

the expression of a human face or even the form of a human body. These rudimentary desires he calls, with Plato, ideas,—not concepts, but ideas, the essence of which is purpose,—and he shows how to the “idea” of rest there may be traced all the varied beds of the world—the four-poster, the hammock, the mat, according to the soil in which the idea is sown. So with the idea of justice, and the whole system of law courts and judicial institutions that spring therefrom. So also, according to him, with the great heroic ideas of Strength or of Gentleness or of Pity, from which the Gods of Paganism and of Christianity have sprung; and so of Fear and Hate, with their brood of devils and idols. It is thus, he holds, that social institutions and the forms into which society has wrought the matter lying to its hand have been built up. Wherever the foot of Man has trod, it is the “ideal” that has lain behind and “formed” the real.

So far, the theological side of the argument apart, we may anticipate agreement. Our problem is, first, to determine whether a similar finality can rightly be attributed to nature in view of the apparent adaptations of means to ends that are to be found there, and, secondly, if finality be established, to decide how far the recognition of its presence takes us on the road to Christian Theism. Before, however, that problem can be discussed on its merits, the ground must be cleared of certain illegitimate demurrers with which, in the popular mind, the argument for Design is apt to be confronted.

First, it is often supposed that within the sphere of organisms, where, in the formative, reparative, and reproductive virtues, apparent adaptations of means to

end are most striking, appeals to Design are rendered futile by the presence of an adequate scientific explanation of the facts—an explanation thought to lie in the law of evolution working through natural selection. This demurrer must be pronounced invalid upon the ground that, in the opinion of biologists themselves, natural selection does *not* adequately account for the development of species. It does, indeed, play an important part. The struggle for existence “selects” variations favourable to survival in the environment. The selective process, however, can only operate upon variations which have already been produced, and cannot, therefore, account for the production of the variations themselves. This is the case whether, with Darwin, we hold that the variations which occur in nature are usually small, or, with more recent biologists, assign an important rôle to large mutations. On either theory the cause of the variation (or mutation) is still to seek. In De Vries’ epigrammatic phrase, “Natural selection may explain the survival of the fittest, but it cannot explain the arrival of the fittest.”¹ Or more broadly, as Professor Sorley writes: “Natural selection is not the sole agent in the development of organic life; it cannot be too often enforced that natural selection produces nothing, that its operation is purely negative. It does not properly select at all, it only excludes. What it does is to cut off the unfit specimens of living beings which nature supplies. It would have no field of operation were it not for the variety of nature. . . . It is this which makes possible the operation of natural selection.”²

¹ Quoted by J. A. Thomson, *Heredity*, p. 98.

² *Recent Tendencies in Ethics*, p. 49.

The first demurrer, therefore, that Design has been expelled from the field by explanation through scientific law, cannot be sustained.

But, secondly, it may be replied, and that rightly, that though as yet the region over which science has established the reign of law is narrow, that region is growing and will continue to grow. In this post-Baconian age a fortress for Design can no longer be built on the unstable sands of ignorance. Rather, we must grant the claim that some day the laws by which the *occurrence* of mutations is determined will be established as securely as those determining their manipulation *after occurrence*. To grant this, however, is by no means to admit Design disproved. For what in essence is the character and scope of scientific laws? Is to bring phenomena under these laws really to offer a full explanation of them? No authoritative writer would maintain anything of the kind. Laws of nature are a descriptive apparatus of what is and what becomes, not an *explanation* of it. I do not explain a clock when I discover that its hands, originally supposed to move by arbitrary jumps, in fact move with orderly regularity. I do not explain the industrial life of a people when I state its process in terms of the differential calculus. Nor do I *explain* the present state of anything by describing its antecedent state, or the stages, regular or otherwise, by which it has advanced from then to now. In doing this I am not solving the given problem. I am merely stating a different one. The demand for an explanation, put to me about the product, is merely shifted to the process by which the product was made. In short, so soon as a law is

given, we inevitably find ourselves demanding the cause of the consilience of phenomena which the law describes. It is *possible*, no doubt, that in any particular case there may *be* no cause, that, for instance, Omniscience could only say of biological evolution that variations happen to occur in accordance with the normal law of error, and that those of them that are "unfit" are cut off in the struggle for existence. *If* this is the case the descriptive law is, as a matter of fact, a complete account of the reality; but, from the mere fact of knowing the descriptive law to be true, we can never know this. Hence, whether or not the real constitution of Nature is such as to exclude Design, it is impossible that any extension of the range of known law should prove it to be such. The argument for Design, therefore, however false it may in fact be, cannot be disproved by Science.

The ground thus cleared, we may turn to the merits of the argument itself. At the outset it must be remarked that its persuasiveness is often illegitimately enhanced by a certain inaccuracy in our thinking. There is a natural tendency to concentrate attention on those results of a means that do subserve the end for which we suppose the means to have been designed, and to neglect those results which do not subserve this end. We notice, for instance, that the pollen on the male variety of fir trees serves to fertilise the female variety, and is adapted to that end. But we do not notice that, if this fertilisation is really the end for which the pollen was designed, the design was, at best, wasteful. For, for the few pollen grains which accomplish fertilising work, there are vast quantities that are blown over the country and avail

to fertilise nothing. The excellence of the adaptation is, in fact, exaggerated by neglect of the cases in which the adaptation fails.

Let it be granted, however, that this point is of minor importance, and that, when due allowance has been made for it, there still remain many striking instances of real, and not merely apparent, adaptation. The argument for Design can then be stated in two forms that require separate discussion. The first of these is developed and, in a guarded manner, sanctioned by J. S. Mill in his posthumous *Essays on Religion*. His formulation of it is referred to the classical instance of the eye, and runs in this wise:—All the parts of an eye act together so as to enable an animal to see, and this is the only circumstance that they have in common. The concurrences are too numerous to be due to mere chance; therefore, they must arise out of a common cause. This cause must be *connected* with the common effect, sight, to which they all conspire. But, the fact of sight is subsequent, and not precedent, to the collocation of operating elements. Therefore, it must have been the idea of sight, wherein is implied a purposing mind, by which the collocation was caused.¹ The same reasoning is worked out by M. Janet in his elaborate treatise on *Final Causes*, and is generally admitted to be of importance. In my opinion, however, the reasoning is not valid. All that I can see in the so-called adaptation of means to an end is a convergence of many phenomena to *a result*. The argument avers

¹ *Essays on Religion*, pp. 171-2. Mill admits, it should be noticed, that the theory of natural selection damages the second stage in his argument.

that the result must have been *foreseen*, and is thus rightly called an end, upon the ground that the chances against that particular result occurring by accident are an indefinite number of billions to one. But this reasoning omits to notice that *some* result *must* have occurred—that the particles of matter must have been arranged in some way, and that the chances against any specific arrangement—against a lump of mud no less than against an eye—are equally an indefinite number of billions to one. That Mill should have ignored this point is the more surprising since, in his *Logic*, he carefully distinguishes “between (what we may call) improbability before the fact and improbability after it,” and takes the very ground here relied upon to explain why we do not disbelieve the statement that, in the cast of a perfectly fair die, ace was thrown, though the chances are five to one against throwing ace.¹ Nor is this all. He expressly censures D’Alembert and others for the conclusion “that Nature has greater difficulty in producing regular combinations than irregular ones; or, in other words, that there is some general tendency of things, some law, which prevents regular combinations from occurring, or at least from occurring so often as others.”² It seems, then, that the fact that the actual existing arrangement is an eye proves nothing more than would be proved if it were anything else whatever. This argument for Design, therefore, is untenable. *Quod nimium probat, nihil probat.*

The above reasoning is, however, exposed to a plausible rejoinder. For, it may be replied: “Does not the objection go farther than you intend? If it

¹ *Logic*, vol. ii. p. 169.

² *Ibid.* p. 171.

is really adequate to rebut the argument for finality in Nature, must it not equally forbid us to credit finality to the works of man; for is not our belief in that finality derived in an exactly similar manner from the apparent adaptation of means to ends?"

To a portion of this reasoning I have no objection to make. I grant that, *if* a belief in human finality is based merely upon a contemplation of human works, the defence of it cannot be made more cogent than the defence of natural finality. As a machine for producing sight, it is obvious that an eye exhibits a co-ordination of means to ends not less, but more remarkable than the most intricate machine for the manufacture of sausages or screws. All this I freely grant. But, in doing that, I am not placing myself in a dilemma. For, in my view, belief in human finality does *not* depend upon evidence drawn from human works, and is not, therefore, injured by the failure of that evidence. It is built upon a different foundation. *First*, when we construct machines, we have direct experience of finality in ourselves; *secondly*, we find in many respects a great similarity between other men and ourselves; *thirdly*, we conclude from that that they are probably similar in respect of finality also. This conjecture is confirmed by their informing us that, as a matter of fact, it is a valid one. When, therefore, we see them engaged in machine-making, we have no doubt that their work is purposive. When, without seeing them at work, we find in the world a machine close in place and form to those which we know they sometimes construct, we infer that the machine in question is made by them—unless, indeed, we also know that Nature at times makes

such machines. The argument, in short, is, "Since this object is man-made, it is made for a purpose,"—not, "since it is adapted to an end, it is made with a view to that end." This is certainly the process in regard to the discovery of prehistoric stone implements—not, as Janet suggests, a direct inference to finality.¹ Indeed, on his method, Nature being supposed itself to work by final causes, there would be no need to refer the implements to man at all. The simple fact is that we know from our own experience that men act by plan. Whether Nature does the same is the question we have to answer; and here direct evidence is lacking.

So far the case seems clear. Mill's Design argument can neither be sustained directly nor successfully buttressed by an appeal to our practice in regard to human works. Finality in Nature can, however, be defended in a second way. The old argument can be reconstructed by an inverse application of the rules of probability. The principle of this method is stated by Jevons in his *Principles of Science* thus: "If an event can be produced by any one of a certain number of different causes all equally probable *a priori*, the probabilities of the existence of these causes, as inferred from the event, are proportional to the probabilities of the event as derived from these causes. In other words, the most probable cause of an event which *has* happened is that which would most probably lead to the event supposing the cause to exist."² The application of this method is commonly

¹ Janet, *Final Causes*, p. 31. Mill recognises by anticipation the weakness of Janet's position (*Essays on Religion*, p. 168).

² *Principles of Science*, p. 243. Cf. Sigwart, *Logic*, ii. 229.

illustrated by the case of white and black balls drawn from a bag, the problem being to determine from the relative numbers drawn the probable proportions before the drawing took place. Applied to the case of finality in Nature, the method works out as follows. The given event is an arrangement of means and ends complexly adapted to one another. If there is no finality, the probability of the given event would be unity divided by the total number of possible events. If there is finality, however, though it is not indeed certain to lead to adapted arrangements,—for, as has been well observed in the case of human action, we often infer design from breaches rather than from maintenance of order—it is more *likely*, we may perhaps say, to lead to these than to merely random arrangements. Consequently, on this supposition, the probability of the given event is greater than unity divided by all possible arrangements. It is—so at least the argument would assert—something between this and unity divided by all possible *adapted* arrangements. Hence, by the inverse method it follows that finality is a more probable source of the given event than chance. The argument in this form is open to four rejoinders. These I proceed to state in what appears to me an ascending order of importance.

First, it may be pointed out that the portion of the universe known to us is a very small part of the whole, and that we should expect order to appear by chance in some parts even of a completely chaotic universe. Hence, the order that we do in fact observe is not in the least incompatible with a universe sown by chance. This argument is advanced by Dr.

McTaggart with the aid of the following illustration: "If I cast a die ten times, and threw a six each time, I should have little doubt that it had been loaded. But, if I cast it sixty million times, and got only one run of ten sixes, I should find no difficulty in supposing that it came by chance. . . . The proportion of the amount of the universe which shows such traces (of order) to the amount which does not may be so small as to make the order which we see as explicable by chance as the run of ten sixes in sixty million throws."¹ I cannot admit the force of this reasoning. Of course it is probable that there will be order in some parts of a purely chaotic universe, but it is most improbable that we should happen to be able to observe just that part. The proper analogy is a case in which, of a great number of throws made, I observe twenty *chosen at random* and find ten successive sixes. In such a case, on Dr. McTaggart's own principles, it would be correct to infer design.

Secondly, it may be pointed out that the adaptations we see are *present* adaptations, that these have evolved from earlier conditions, and that, so far as the process of this evolution is concerned, science is bound to assume that explanations can be found within the realm of efficient cause. Consequently, the only arrangements of matter which are relevant to the argument are those primordial arrangements existing when the process of change began. But of those arrangements we can know nothing except by inference from recent arrangements. To establish Design by the inverse method we must, therefore, be able to infer primordial from existing adaptation. When it

¹ *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 244.

was believed that species were immutable, that step was easy enough. Now, however, it cannot be taken. For, on the theory of Natural Selection, a cosmos would evolve though the first things were chaos. Wholes with adapted parts would survive, random aggregates be broken. Consequently, we are not entitled to affirm that the first things did contain adapted arrangements. This objection appears to be valid.

Thirdly, criticism may be directed, as by Mr. Russell, against the initial position of the argument, that more disorderly universes than orderly ones are possible. He answers: "Now, the numbers of both are infinite, and (I think) equal."¹ *Prima facie*, it is natural to suggest against this that the infinity of disorderly is of a higher order than the infinity of orderly universes. That objection, however, does not square with modern mathematical investigations into the properties of transfinite numbers; and the layman, on such a matter, must needs accept Mr. Russell's authority.

Lastly, the whole idea of applying the inverse method to the problem of Design may be attacked *in limine*. In order to apply it, we must assume that finality and chance are, *a priori* and apart from the present argument, equally probable grounds of the known event. This assumption may be rejected. It may be said that finality embraces a narrower range of possibilities than non-finality, and that, therefore, a cause falling within it is *a priori* less and not equally probable. Or it may be said more roundly that non-finality is merely a negative term, and, as

¹ *Independent Review*, 1906, p. 114.

such, "cannot be regarded as any determinate part of a total extension." Sigwart writes: "To speak of an equivalence in the terms of a disjunction or of any relation between their extensions is impossible, when a disjunction merely opposes affirmation and negation; for the bare negation is quite indefinite." It does not contain an extension equal to the affirmation. Hence, there is no meaning "in saying that the [initial] probability that there is iron upon Sirius is equal to the probability that there is none; there is no universal common to both."¹ If this objection is granted, the argument for finality is completely destroyed. For my own part I cannot resist the conclusion that it must be granted.

Where this negative result is accepted, it is, of course, superfluous to add anything as to the Theistic inferences which Finality, if established, would justify.² Those who tend towards a more positive view are, however, concerned to raise our second question: "How far does the establishment of finality in nature carry us on the road to Christian Theism?" I will not dwell on the objection sometimes taken by the opponents of Theism that Finality may perhaps be unconscious and not foreseeing. That objection, I agree with M. Janet, really contradicts itself. Nor will I dwell upon the limitations pointed out by Kant,

¹ *Logic*, ii. p. 221.

² It is interesting to find Sidgwick writing: "I tend to the view that the question of Personality, the point on which the theist as such differs from the atheist, is of no fundamental ethical importance. The question is, *What* is the order of the Cosmos, not whether it is a consciously planned order" (*Memoir*, p. 455). It will be remembered that the argument from the conflict of his fundamental ethical judgments at the close of the *Methods* makes, not for Theism, but merely for a future life for men.

that such an argument cannot in any event yield more than an "architect" of the world, who is not necessarily Omnipotent. It must, however, be observed, first, that the argument could in no case prove that the power of the architect was sufficient to make good win in the end. Secondly, it cannot yield a single architect as distinguished from the plurality postulated in Animism or Polytheism. It is true that there is a large measure of unity and coherence in the natural order. But unity in the cause cannot rightly be inferred from coherence in the effect. The measure of harmony in the economic world—the many-motived machine of industry working not otherwise than it might do under the guidance of a single hand—shows us that, so long as both act constantly, the operation of a single force is indistinguishable from that of a complex of conflicting forces. As Mill observes: "When each agent carries on its own operations according to a uniform law, even the most capricious combination of agencies will generate a regularity of some sort; as we see in the kaleidoscope, where any casual arrangement of coloured bits of glass produces by the laws of reflection a beautiful regularity in the effect."¹ Lastly; it cannot even yield us an architect who is necessarily now alive; for there is no reason of a general kind why a first cause, if an agent, should continue in being after producing its effect. Many buildings long survive the workmen who have built them. Finality in nature might, therefore, be established, and yet we should not be carried forward to a Christian Theism even of that general and undogmatic type for which I have appropriated the name.

¹ *Logic*, vol. ii. p. 41.

III

I turn, therefore, to the second subdivision of the argument from the particulars of experience—the argument, namely, from facts of religious experience. Our problem is to determine whether any and, if so, what Theistic inference can rightly be drawn from these facts.

Before, however, any positive inquiry on those lines can be usefully made, it is necessary to guard against a frequent confusion. It is, in form, quite legitimate to reason from the *content* of people's experience, whether or not we have shared in it, to a particular independent reality. It is not legitimate to argue to such a reality from the *efficacy* of a belief that it exists. If Socrates tells us, "There accompanies me an inner voice, which, when I am proposing to do anything that will bring me ill, opposes me"; if a Christian tells us, "The Spirit of God directs me to the path that I should follow," there are there, if we will, *data* for inference. But, if either Socrates or the Christian adds that, so soon as he grew convinced that the voice or the Spirit was no figment of his brain but a real Being without and beyond himself, his will was strengthened and his fear of the dark destroyed, if he adds that, he tells us nothing more. We cannot argue from that that his conviction is more likely to have been a true one. For it is not solely true opinions that make men strong or brave. False opinions may also do that. If we believe our friend to be loyal, we are always the happier and often, may be, the better for that belief. But we should never cite this effect upon us as any proof to another that

the friend was really loyal. And yet this method—the method, as it is called, of value-judgments—is, in matters theological, at the root of a great mass of modern apologetic literature. Here, for instance, is an example from Dr. Illingworth's *Reason and Revelation*: "It is only those who really appreciate the power of evil, and the impotence of the ordinary human will to overcome it, that are in a position to estimate rightly the *evidential* value of the Christian triumph over sin."¹ And again, in another part of the same book: "The heart with its yearning for God and its sense of sin and separation from Him, feels that this tale of love and atonement, which *answers so profoundly to its own inmost needs*, cannot be a fiction, but must be a fact."² Dr. Caldecott is in the same case: "There can be no doubt that in the individual life at any stage feeling and ethical sentiment may soar beyond what knowledge has to offer. But, when the life is prolonged and becomes fully matured, the suspicion that the constitution of things is really other than natural hopes and aspirations had led one to suppose must give distraction and discord, and in this attitude we cannot rest."³ And again, more definitely: "Dare philosophy and theology openly offer to mankind a denial that Feeling belongs to the Infinite Spirit? Is there not an irrepressible demand by humanity for a Reality which shall be infinitely loving?"⁴ Or, again, let me take a more distinguished name. Let me paraphrase the argument, as I read it, of Ritschl's great work on *Justification and*

¹ *Reason and Revelation*, p. 157.

² *Ibid.* p. 189. The italics are mine.

³ *Cambridge Theological Essays*, p. 119.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 133.

Reconciliation. It is something of this kind. If we look on the world around us, we see just men suffer, unjust men triumphant, heroic sacrifices made in vain. If we look within upon ourselves, we find, on every hand, a futile striving for ideals which cannot be attained. We would live, and the universe threatens us with death; we would know, and things refuse to be mastered by our thought; we would reign over the unconscious realm of inanimate nature, and, in Pascal's phrase, "the eternal silence of infinite space terrifies us." Contemplating these things in their hard outline, unrelieved by any overshadowing of divine purpose, we are led to feel that life has neither value nor meaning. In that mood we are confronted with the appeal of Christianity. To a Christian, we are told, the terrors of the world-disappear. It cannot crush him with the weight of inexorable law, for it is itself dependent upon a spiritual power whose friend he is. He masters it so soon as he regards the checks he experiences in it as the ordinances of a loving God. The conflict within him between belief and desire is finally conciliated, and, in submission to a Father in heaven, he attains to perfect peace of spirit. In fact, as Illingworth prefers to put it, Christianity satisfies his inmost needs.¹

But the argument will not do. It is not merely that peace of spirit or mastery over the world is no exclusive possession of the Christian. To the Stoic also Goethe's phrase applies :

Von der Gewalt, die alle Wesen bindet,
Befreit der Mensch sich, der sich überwindet.

¹ Cf. Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, and Sabatier's *Esquisse d'une philosophie de la religion*.

That is merely an incidental difficulty. The essential one lies deeper. There is a logical lapse in the argument. We should not use such a contention in ordinary affairs. We have no right to use it in theology. The efficacy of a belief, whatever form it may take, whether it operate on feeling or on conduct, has no relevance to the question whether that belief is valid. There is no straight road from efficacy to truth. Mr. Bradley is unanswerable when he writes : " If I am theoretically not satisfied, then what appears must in reality be otherwise ; but, if I am dissatisfied practically, the same conclusion does not hold." ¹ " La science nous a promis la vérité, ou au moins la connaissance des relations que notre intelligence peut saisir ; elle ne nous a jamais promis ni la paix ni le bonheur. Souverainement indifférente à nos sentiments, elle n'entend pas nos lamentations." ²

I have written about this idea of value-judgment at some length, not because I think many persons would adopt the stripped argument, " This proposition is efficacious, therefore it is true," but because that argument, though seldom *explicit*, is continually implicit, and is apt to be mixed,—as indeed it is mixed by Ritschl,—with formally legitimate arguments from the *content* of experience. " In communion with God, the Lord of the world," he tells us, " we gain the spiritual power which reigns in the midst of foes and is strong in the midst of afflictions." This, no doubt, is often true to-day, as it was strikingly true in the early days of the " religion of spirit and power." But it is hopeless to expect scientific treatment of the

¹ *Appearance and Reality*, p. 153.

² Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules*, p. 5.

real evidence, which this record of experienced communion affords, so long as prejudice is introduced by irrelevant appeals to the excellent effects which a particular interpretation of that evidence is likely to have upon our happiness or our character.

In turning, after that preliminary, to concentrate attention on the *content* of religious experience, we are, I think, in a line with the dominant trend of liberal Christian thought. For in what does the characteristic note of religious liberalism consist? Is it not in the very slight emphasis which is laid upon theology as contrasted with religion? There have been places and times in which, if anyone had been asked to explain what Christianity was, he would probably have replied by summarising a series of historical and metaphysical doctrines. To such a question the answer of many thoughtful Christians in all Churches to-day would be given in the phrase that Christianity is a *life*, or that it is "the communion of the soul with God." It is not essentially a creed or a piece of knowledge. The theologies of the schools, so far from *being* the Christian religion, are simply more or less fantastic attempts to describe it. It is an experience; they are reflections about, and comments upon, that experience. They are secondary; it is primary. They are the intellectual body through which Religion, the living spirit, confusedly and dimly endeavours to express itself.

This is the answer of what may be called the liberal school. With them "ratiocination is yielding place to perception," and religion, once the conclusion, has become the premiss of theological inquiry. The

idea of God, as Sabatier says, does not come to us through argument. "Before all reflection and rational determination, it is given to us." The religious man does, indeed, search after God, but he does not arrive at Him as an inference from his need. Rather, as Hermann puts it, "he experiences the revelation of the Almighty in the moment in which he bows himself in deep humility under His power, which is His love." He seeks, and does, as a fact, find; he cries, and does, as a fact, know his Father near. "We feel Him," says Browning's Luria, of certain Eastern races; "we feel Him, not by painful reason know." "He is to me," adds Newman, "supremely and luminously self-evident." To Tennyson at times he came in "visions of the night and of the day"; and Wordsworth's hero knew himself

Rapt into still communion which transcends
The imperfect offices of praise and prayer.

Nor is it in poetry alone that experiences of this kind are recounted. The Hebrew prophets, for example, as Mr. Pratt describes them, "did not so much reason as hear and see; they felt themselves to be merely the channels through which a greater consciousness, with which they made connections, expressed itself. Personally they considered themselves but passive instruments, unable to resist this greater will; 'The Lord Yahveh hath spoken, who can but prophesy.'" ¹ Professor James's book on the *Varieties of Religious Experience* is full of similar instances. Here is one: "God surrounds me like the physical atmosphere. He is closer to me than my own breath.

¹ *Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 141.

In Him literally I live and move and have my being.”¹ Professor Leuba may provide another of the same kind: “I love my Father; I love Him as a little child loves its father. A little child never asks why; I never did. I never can look up at the stars at night, but adoring love and worship fill my soul. The same at early dawn when the beautiful new day comes fresh from the hand of God. Children, flowers, fruit, trees, everything is so full of God’s love; why should I not love Him?”² Yet a third extract from Mr. Starbuck’s collection.³ A woman writes: “I have the sense of a presence, strong and, at the same time, soothing, which hovers over me. Sometimes it seems to enwrap me with sustaining arms.” A man writes: “My soul feels itself alone with God, and resolves to listen to His voice—in the depths of the spirit. My soul and God seek each other. The sublime feeling of a Presence comes over me.” Lastly, I may cite two instances given by Mr. Pratt. One of his correspondents wrote: “His presence was as definite as the sense of touching an external object, but the sensation seemed to come, so to speak, from within instead of from without. Still, the personality was clearly detached from myself—and from any detached segment or substratum of myself. An illustration of this separate action is in the fact that the other personality could *speak to me* in words clearly enunciated but without sound. This silent form of speech . . . had the convincing force of a new revelation to me.”⁴ Another wrote more simply, and

¹ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 71.

² *Monist*, July 1901, p. 547. ³ *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 327.

⁴ *The Psychology of Religious Belief*, p. 257.

perhaps for that reason more strikingly: "I believe in God because I am aware of Him. I cannot conceive of any argument on the existence of God that would not be blinding and confusing."¹

Nor are such experiences mere incidents in the lives of isolated religious persons. On the contrary, they, or something like them, are the centre about which a great part of the life of the Churches revolves. Often their field is society, and their instrument an organised body of believers. Thus Moberly writes: "It is the supernatural life, the life of power, the life which is the meaning of the Church, the life of which Sacraments (spiritually conceived and received) are the normal channels, the life which is the Spirit, and therefore is Christ; it is this, and this alone, which constitutes the possibility of true faith in the Gospel story, and which constitutes the possibility of any real relation, in personal experience, with the moral ideal of Christianity. It is into this that a child is baptized at the first. In the fulness of this he is sealed in confirmation. The devout communicant life is this. This is the faith, which is also the experience, in which, and to which, he is nurtured in the Church. It is this which is administered, in and by the Body, through the divinely authorised ministers of the Body. It is this which is guarded, explained, familiarised, in creeds, catechisms, theologies. And this is the only access into anything else. Cut off this, this living faith, this living experience of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and the Gospel story becomes at most only a very touching and beautiful, but quite unattainable, episode in history; and the

¹ *The Psychology of Religious Belief*, p. 245.

moral and spiritual standard of Christianity becomes, as such, an overwhelming despair.”¹ All those persons,—those whose feeling Moberly thus eloquently expresses as well as the more individualistic mystics,—seem, at least at certain times, to “possess the objects of their belief, not in the form of mere conceptions, which the intellect accepts as true, but rather in the form of quasi-sensible realities directly apprehended.”² So far as they do this, they have religious experience, and their position is that which Myers finely ascribes to St. Paul—

Whoso hath felt the spirit of the Highest
 Cannot confound, nor doubt Him, nor deny ;
 Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
 Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

That experiences such as I have described do, in fact, occur cannot, I think, be seriously disputed. Nor need we quarrel with the view that, to any one to whom such experiences come, at all events in the moments in which he is absorbed in them, criticisms from outside will appear largely irrelevant. Mr. Millard says of such a man: “If the proof of religion lies chiefly in the spiritual experiences of the individual, that proof is unassailable from without. The critic of faith may riddle with his arguments the formal and external proofs of God, he may detect flaws in the logic by which God is demonstrated; but you go on your way untouched by his criticism, for he has not seen what you have seen, he has not heard the things which you have heard. . . . He may have the

¹ *Problems and Principles*, p. 234. Cf. also Tyrrell, *Lex Orandi*, p. 27.

² *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 64.

advantage of you in logic and reasoning, but you have seen, you have heard, you have felt, therefore you know.”¹

That is very earnest, and, as a description of the feelings of some specially endowed men, I should imagine, very true. It suggests naturally the method of approach towards Theistic inquiry that is advocated by many modern apologists. According to them, “it is not possible to prove to the unbeliever the truth of the things which a Christian knows concerning the objective reality.”² It is, however, possible to point him the path by following which he may hope to come to that knowledge. First, he must be true to the voice of conscience within him. He must not quench or turn from the spirit of duty, and then he will enter into that inner state wherein he can (but not necessarily will) see the God who is working upon Him.³ Then he must contemplate the story of the life of Jesus, as told in the Gospels—not necessarily assent to it as historical fact, but contemplate it with his mind open to its moral beauty. Then, says Hermann, he will find the story so work upon him that, guided by it, as it were with a lamp, he will come to a direct and immediate knowledge of, or rather communion with, God. It is not a matter of history or of a criticism. “Help lies for each of us,” he says, “not in what we make of the story, but in what the contents of the story make of us.”⁴ “Our certainty of God has its root in the fact that, within the realm of history to which we ourselves belong, we encounter

¹ *The Quest of the Infinite*, p. 83.

² Hermann, *Communion with God*, p. 12.

³ *Ibid.* p. 166.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 62.

the man Jesus as an undoubted reality." He "compels us to understand the will which is active in His work to be the mind and will of God." "The recognition wherein He and the Father are recognised is our recognition."¹

That is a common method of apologetics. It simply says, "Taste and see how gracious the Lord is." But we cannot, I think, admit it to be adequate. However true Hermann's opinion may be of the psychological effect of certain courses of conduct, it does not really reach the centre of the problem. That is concerned, not with what certain persons under certain circumstances do, as a matter of fact, believe, but with what is really true, and, therefore, *ought* to be believed. The fact that under the immediate spell of an experience men are forced psychologically to adopt a particular theoretic conclusion is not a proof of that conclusion so cogent that it can be proclaimed *a priori* irrefutable by any conceivable objections. And the actual objections are serious. Even the most religious men, when their moments of inspiration have passed, and ordinary men throughout the main part of their lives, will hesitate before the paradox that in the sphere of religion alone, unlike any other sphere of knowledge, criticism and analysis are wholly irrelevant. There are many forces at work to shake dogmatic slumber. Their own experiences, if such they have, may vary in character from time to time. Certainly they are not always and in every respect identical with the experience of all the rest of mankind. Maybe, their formulation in terms is difficult without inconsistency. Maybe, the element

¹ Hermann, *Communion with God*, pp. 52 and 139.

in them of supposed knowledge conflicts with facts of the natural world, especially with the fact of evil. Or, even if no special difficulties emerge above the level of consciousness, still there is always the general fallibility of human faculties. "The immediate and unreflecting consciousness in all its forms is exposed to the assaults of doubt."¹ Everywhere in life there are records of illusion and error, deceptive uprushes from the subliminal self with a false appearance of externality,² hallucinations and confusions between perception and inference. It would be paradoxical to assert that men *never* see through coloured glasses. Rather, in every sphere they daily do so. In visual perception in particular this liability to error can be clearly shown. Mr. Stout, by reference to the stereoscope, has proved that "the perception of a solid object depends on processes which do not involve as their necessary condition the operation on the organ of vision of that solid object itself."³ And the same is true generally:—

Saint and sage and poet's dreams
Divide the light in coloured streams.

Things are not what they seem ; they are always tinged with, and sometimes bathed and submerged in the element of subjectivity. Before the reality can be known, reflection must strip that element from the

¹ Caird, *Critical Philosophy of Kant*, vol. i. p. 75.

² This danger is brought out by the numerous experiments which show how suggestion under hypnotism may cause a man, after awaking, to see things that are not there, or not to see people in the room. These phantoms are clearly the work of the subliminal self, but they have the same *prima facie* force as alleged real experiences of outside spirits.

³ *Manual of Psychology*, p. 12.

appearance. This work in the physical sphere has long been recognised as essential. In the ethical sphere its importance is fully conceded. In the sphere of religion it presents, I believe, the one great task for scientific theology to attempt. Its problem is to determine for what, if any, Theistic inference the many-paged record of religious experience can afford a solid basis.

How then would such a science set about its work? At the outset it would need, I think, to clear the ground for its operations by meeting certain demurrers of popular agnosticism. Those that appear relevant I shall consider in order.

First, the root idea of much critical writing is that, since alleged religious experiences are all capable of a purely subjective explanation, therefore they may be put on one side without more ado. That view I cannot accept. Everything *can* be explained on a subjective basis. The position of the solipsist is logically impregnable. The external world cannot, in the nature of the case, be *proved*. But, though a position of subjective idealism all round is thus inexpugnable, the case is very different with the view which selects *a priori* certain aspects of experience to be referred to subjectivism and certain others to be given an external reference. That is purely arbitrary. Except from the standpoint of solipsism, the burden of proof lies with those who hold that any particular aspect of experience *is* purely subjective, not with those who hold the opposite. *Prima facie* all parts of experience are on a par.¹ I perceive *religious objects*, and not primarily *religious sensations*, in the same way that I

¹ Cf. Essay I. p. 9.

perceive physical objects and not primarily the sensations by which those perceptions are accompanied. In both cases the only positive evidence that we have—a negative test is, of course, afforded by the canon of consistency—is the direct witness of perception, all of which *may* be illusory.

Secondly, there is the anti-theistic inference sometimes drawn from the fact that to many persons religious experience is altogether wanting. This inference is at its crudest when any one, on the strength merely of his own lack of similar perceptions, sweeps aside as worthless the whole history of what religious men have felt and thought. I have no sympathy for so arrogant a pretension. There is no ground for supposing that the experience of any man embraces the whole of reality. In Mill's phrasing, the existence of what is to him a new "kind" is not in the slightest degree incredible.¹ On the contrary, the savage practised to detect distant sounds, the musician or the painter trained each to perceive beauty after his kind, the student of men skilled to read in expression and gesture the flux of thought and feeling, all these grasp a reality and see a light where to the ordinary man is nothing but darkness. These things are facts of common knowledge. Therefore, to any one adopting a theory of subjectivism merely because to him no spiritual vision has come, the religious man may reply, with Martineau, "Every faculty gives insight, every incapacity entails blindness": or, with Victor Hugo, "Some men deny the infinite; some too deny the sun: they are the blind."

But it may be replied, and is replied by an authority

¹ Cf. Mill, *Logic*, ii. 166.

so distinguished as Dr. McTaggart, that though to deny the possibility of experiences of reality, that are shut from us, occurring to other persons, would, no doubt, be arrogant, yet, on the other hand, to base any positive argument on those experiences is equally illegitimate. Even granting, he says, "that A has an immediate conviction of the truth of some religious dogma, it is quite irrelevant to me, though decisive for him."¹ The only way for us to judge of the dogma is to try how far it is more or less consistent with the general fabric of experience than the negation of it. "But to do this," he adds, "is to inquire whether the existence of the object of the immediate belief harmonises better with our experience than the non-existence of it. And, when we make this the test we have really given up all reliance on A's immediate conviction, and passed to that argument on the object itself which I maintain to be the only legitimate way of determining questions of dogma."² Now, passing the point that A's religious experience may be very different from an intimate conviction in regard to the truth of a proposition, being more concrete and more nearly akin to the perception of physical reality, I should still hold that this argument is fallacious. For the fabric of our experience by which dogma is, according to Dr. McTaggart, to be tested, contains as a part of itself A's immediate conviction. It is other than it would be in the absence of this conviction. In view of the general presumption against illusion, which all but complete sceptics necessarily entertain, the presence of this conviction must, therefore, alter our criterion in a sense favourable to the dogma. It is not, therefore, true that A's con-

¹ *Hibbert Journal*, October 1905, p. 121.

² *Ibid.* p. 120.

viction is wholly irrelevant to my judgment. The general demurrer, even in the form given to it by Dr. McTaggart, cannot be sustained.

Nor am I greatly impressed by the modified form of the demurrer, that religious experience can fairly be dismissed because those possessed of it are an insignificant minority. Even granted the alleged fact, which some would not willingly grant, still the presumption that a thing is not there because the majority of people do not see it is not one upon which any reasonable person thinks of acting in ordinary life. Many obvious sequences in mathematics, and I might add, in political economy, are roundly denied by the kind of persons who control our imperial destinies. Or, to take another instance, I gravely doubt if the beauty of great pictures or great literature is seen and recognised by the preponderating mass of British citizens. And again, if perception by the majority is to be taken as the test of reality, it is pertinent to ask the majority of whom or of what? If animals with two legs are to be included, upon what ground are we to exclude those with four? or what consistent objection can be taken to the enfranchisement of oysters or of frogs? Upon the principles I am combating any such distinction is purely arbitrary. The opinion, in short, that A's experience may be treated as subjective merely because it is shared by few can be shown to lead to absurdities.

The fourth and last demurrer rests, not upon the number, but upon the character of the religious experiences that are adduced in evidence. These, it is said, diverge from one another enormously in content. The God with whom the Christian and the Buddhist re-

spectively commune is not the same. Catholic visions and Protestant visions are always what would be expected from the previous beliefs of the percipients. Mohammedans never experience Christ, and Tennyson's trance-vision was of a much Teutonised Nirvana. In writing of the conflict with demons in the early Church, Harnack makes this point particularly clear. "Tertullian," he tells us, "furnishes an excellent example of the way in which morbid spiritual states (especially visions), which befell Christians in the Church assemblies, depended upon the preaching to which they had just listened. One sister, says Tertullian, had a vision of a soul in bodily form, just after Tertullian had preached on the soul (probably, in fact, upon the corporeal nature of the soul). He adds quite ingenuously that the content of a vision was usually derived from the Scriptures which had just been read aloud, from the psalms, or from the sermon."¹ When all those differences that can be shown to be the outgrowth of training and desire are eliminated, there is left, it is said, practically no common element in the religious experiences of different men. How then can any inferences be drawn from them? Can we get beyond a mere mysterious *Something* at the bottom of them all to which no content whatever can be ascribed?

This demurrer is more important than the others. But, even if its statement of the facts is correct, I am not prepared to accept it. For, in other fields, when a number of divergent observations are given, I do not find that the scientist has no method by which to

¹ *Expansion of Christianity*, i. p. 153 ff.; cf. also Höffding, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 168.

guide himself to reality. Rather, I find that he has many such methods. First, if several of the records are made by persons standing in the same relation to the object, he will take account both of their relative power of recording an observation accurately and of their relative power of making it accurately. If, for instance, the records relate to the height of a tree, and vary from 50 to 100 feet, he will not protest ignorance. He will examine the various recorded observations in the mass, noting in particular the way in which they are distributed about the mean. If one observer is known to be more competent than another he will give greater *weight* to his observations. If he knows that observers are standing in different relations to the object, and are therefore not observing the same thing, he will take account of this circumstance. If he did not do this he would, indeed, be impotent. Imagine him, for example, confronted with two observations of an elephant, one made from the front and the other from the rear; or of two observations of a person, one made by some one standing in a relation of friendship and another by some one hostile to him. As a matter of fact, however, he is by no means impotent. He makes use of his reason, and he would laugh at the suggestion that divergences in his observed data must necessarily condemn him to total ignorance.

Exactly the same order of considerations ought, in my opinion, to be applied to the investigation of what may lie behind religious experience. Divergences of record—it may be very wide divergences—are perfectly natural, and no *a priori* sceptical demurrer based upon them can be sustained. The ravings of certain

holy men among primitive peoples do not discredit religious observations in general any more than the ravings of certain modern travellers discredit physical observations in general. "The fact that pathological phenomena belong in the same marginal region as the mystic consciousness should not be permitted to invalidate the latter. It must be remembered that there are also pathological phenomena in the regions of sensation and thought; and the existence of 'devil possession,' for instance, should no more be allowed to discredit all religious feeling than a case of double vision or colour blindness discredits all perception, or a fallacious argument all reasoning."¹

The discussion of this last demurrer has contained implicitly the view that I want to offer of the positive method that scientific theology ought to follow. It should, I think, move along those same lines on which I have suggested that science does, in fact, move. Its method should be the same, but its difficulties will be greater under each one of the heads that I have discussed.

First, natural science, though not, of course, historical science, is not seriously disturbed by the need of guarding against inaccurate recording of observations. It is helped by a technical apparatus, and in most cases it can at will repeat its experiments. To check the records of religious experience no such means are to hand, and it is almost certain that with them there will be interwoven and confused statements of the inferences that the percipient has implicitly built upon the experience. Thus Mill wrote: "In almost every act of our perceiving faculties

¹ Pratt, *Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 297.

observation and inference are intimately blended. What we are said to observe is usually a compound result of which one-tenth may be observation, and the remaining nine-tenths inference.”¹ Such an interweaving occurs, of course, when a person sitting in a room says, “I hear a cab.” He is then combining a record of a particular experienced sound with an inference about its cause. Even, indeed, when inference is absent, there are still present other operations of thought. “Thought is immanent in perception, and perception is implied in all thought. We may say that most characteristic of thought are the scientific processes of classification and explanation; and these are plainly involved in present perception; for I classify in saying that I see oaks, chestnuts, and fir trees; and I explain in saying that I hear the noise of a river that cannot be seen.”² What, then, shall we say of the record, “God tells us that selfishness is wrong”? Is the whole of this really given in direct experience, or is the ethical precept alone given, and the reference to a lawgiver inferred? *A priori* we cannot tell. Dispassionate introspection alone can afford an answer. And herein is one of our great difficulties—not that introspection may yield different results in different men, for that we should expect, but that the persons on whose introspection we must depend for our data are for the most part wholly untrained, and in a high degree incompetent to make the observations that we need. And the difficulty

¹ *Logic*, vol. ii. p. 182. Cf. also Mill, *Logic*, vol. i. p. 6, on our apparent direct consciousness of the distance of objects from us.

² Carveth Read, *Metaphysics of Nature*, p. 20. Cf. also Sidgwick, *Philosophy of Kant*, p. 453.

is enhanced by the fact that in matters connected with religion, as in those related to political controversy, observation is so often biassed by the element of desire : *Tarde creduntur quae credita laedunt* :

O sirs : the truth, the truth, the many eyes
That look on it, the diverse things they see
According to their thirst for fruit or flowers.¹

Secondly, natural science can distinguish more easily than we can expert observers from those who are not expert. Situated similarly, with a given task to do, we find that, with practice, the concordance between the results of different men grows closer. But the true observation is the only one towards which their changing records should converge. If they were merely changing at random, and not with reference to the truth, there would be no reason to expect a closer grouping at the end than at the beginning. Therefore, we may infer that the more practised an observer is the better he becomes. And there are many other tests, which will help us to rank these observers fairly well.

But, in religious experience, how is the keenness of one man's perception to be weighed against another's? Who are the watchmen on the summit on whose message our faith must wait? Some would judge them by quantity of experience, like the scientists, and ask, "Ye that *have* known Him, is He sweet to know?" Others would choose the philosophers, as men trained to reason about these problems. Yet others, the good men : "Whoso willeth to do the will

¹ Cf. the controversy between Sidgwick and Martineau as to whether our perception of rules of right comes to us autonomously or in the form of commands of God.

of God, he shall know of the doctrine." I do not think that quantity of experience will do for a test. It would yield too difficult a conflict of testimony. Nor are the philosophers the experts we require. In art and nature power of abstract thought seldom goes with keenness of perception. Is it more likely to do so in the religious world? As to the good men, it *may* be they on whom, if we knew enough, we should find warrant to pin our faith. But, although there is no positive reason against doing that, at present I can see no positive reason in favour of it. Unless we already hold that there is a God who wills it so—the very question upon which we are asking light—there seems no ground for believing that good men see more accurately than bad. The difficulty which our science has to face in determining its experts is then one for which a solution is still to seek.¹

The third special difficulty of theology is closely connected with the second. One of the causes that chiefly hinders our determining the experts is just the fact that we cannot say in what way and to what extent the relations in which different observers stand to their object differ from one another. It is plain enough that a man deliberately sinning against the light would not be situated similarly to an unswerving follower of duty. Such men, in the ordinary Christian view, would naturally experience different aspects of Deity. But it is obvious that we cannot really understand all the varying relations, and, therefore, are without the means of judging in what way the

¹ The difficulty is exactly the same in ethics, so far as it is admitted that really intuitive judgments clash. Cf. Sidgwick, *Philosophy of Kant*, 464.

data of the various records ought to be combined. There are, in fact, obstacles so serious that it seems certain our science can reach no large positive result.

Must we, however, conclude that it can reach no positive result at all? I am not convinced that we must. If the intellectual content of Christian Theism be taken, as I have taken it, to be merely that there exists a powerful Spiritual Being who wills the good, I am inclined to suggest that the records of religious experience, inadequately sifted though they have been, may, even now, on the whole, point with a doubtful and trembling hand towards the validity of this content. Despite their differences in form, it may well be held that, not in Christian countries merely, there is an important common element of essential experience. That this is in fact the case Mr. Pratt very strongly urges. Examining the *Upanishads*, he finds in them, as regards matters of understanding, frequent disagreement and even contradiction; "but when it is a question of the vital emotional experience of mystic and blissful union with the spirit of the Cosmos, they are at one."¹ So again of the mystics. "With all their variations, there are two things to which, I believe, all the mystics bear testimony: first, the ineffable nature of the experience already referred to; and, second, the absolute assurance that in it they have come into conscious connection with a larger life near to or surrounding them, and continuous with theirs."² The same point is indicated in an interesting letter from one of the same author's correspond-

¹ *Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 103.

² *Ibid.* p. 163.

ents: "I find others have experiences which make them understand mine without explanation. A certain instinctive comprehension exists, though in matters of taste, education, and temperament we may be quite far apart. There seems to be a common language of the soul learned through a life not possible to utter in words."¹ To disregard facts of this kind would, in my opinion, be to follow, not science, but prejudice.²

If, however, we are prepared to grant that the general character of the evidence is on the whole such as to give a slight *prima facie* probability to Christian Theism, it is essential to bear in mind the strictly limited scope of the doctrine that it supports. First, the records do not, I think, show ground for belief in a Spiritual Power who wills the *whole* good, but only such part of it as consists in the carrying out by individual men and women of what they consider to be their duty.³ Secondly, they give no warrant for regarding this Spiritual Power either as Omnipotent, or as the

¹ *Psychology of Religious Experience*, pp. 260-61.

² It may be suggested that reasoning of a type similar to the above might be employed to demonstrate the objective reality of the snakes seen in *delirium tremens*; that there, too, there is unanimity, conviction, and assurance of obtaining the experience by following a particular way of life. I agree that the positive arguments are of equal strength. But the dipsomaniac's snakes occupy space that is visible to other people. Their testimony that the snakes *are* there conflicts with the *positive* testimony of the others that they are not there. There cannot, in the nature of the case, be any corresponding positive testimony adverse to that of the mystics. The fact that their testimony *might* be overthrown if there were adverse testimony forthcoming is not a sufficient reason for rejecting it when such testimony is not forthcoming.

³ Cf. Tyrrell, *Lex Orandi*, p. 15: "We know nothing of that Will in its attitude towards inter-human affairs; we only feel it mingling and conflicting with our own in each concrete action that is submitted to our freedom of choice."

strongest Spiritual Power in the universe. Thirdly, they give no warrant for regarding Him as the *only* Spiritual Power into communion with whom men may come. Indeed, so far as they bear witness to a power of good, they bear witness also to one of evil, and they say nothing of the relative strength of these two. Lastly, the evidence is weak, and the conclusion doubtful.

IV

The preceding sections give the sum of what I have to say. Christian Theism is not proved; it is scarcely even rendered appreciably probable. But the way is not blocked. It is still open for, may be, more prosperous inquiry. To have traversed a stage or two of a road, whereon we had hoped that a city might lie, and not yet to have emerged from the moorland and the mist, is not to have proved that that city will never be reached. At least, if we are to take the "Believe it not, receive it not," of Arthur Clough, we must take also his

*But leave it not,
And wait it out, O man.*

And perhaps, even if at the end of all our searching the same verdict of "not proven" that must be returned now had still to be returned, there would be place for an epilogue. Though, save for the few in moments of spiritual vision there could be no intellectual conviction, might there not be some irradiation of Hope? To many of us, I suspect, the witness of religious men has a stronger real influence than is displayed in the meagre conclusion for which

alone we can find logical justification. We may mistrust the clearness of their thought, and wholly reject the reasons that they offer for what in reality they believe apart from reason. The fetters of authority may seem to enchain, and a multitude of prejudices to blind them. But, even so, there is, at the back of it all, that feeling which Browning somewhere expresses :—

 Their works drop groundwards, but themselves, I know,
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
 Enter and take their place there, sure enough,
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.

And, when the challenge of controversy is absent, when religion is a thing too sacred to be made the sport of argument, when to our friend who never speaks of it, and whom we do not ask to speak, God stands evident and real, are we then so confident that he is deluded and we are *not* the blind? And, when to the witness of our friend is added, at once as inspiration and as archetype, the glowing faith of Him that died on Calvary, there is reached a time for silence. "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We have been told by a great critical thinker, the late Professor Sidgwick, that "humanity will not and cannot acquiesce in a godless world; that the man in men will not do this, whatever individual men may do, whatever they may temporarily feel themselves driven to do by following methods which they cannot abandon to the conclusions to which these methods at present seem to lead."¹ It is *possible* that, in this refusal, the man in men may

¹ *Tennyson, a Memoir*, i. p. 302.

be answering to a reality more deep than the cool transparencies of thought, that, though the first line of Goethe's couplet is right, the second is right also :

Grau, theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie,
Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum.

III

FREE WILL

NEAR the beginning of Browning's *Christmas Eve* the following passage occurs:—

You know what I mean : God's all, man's nought :
But also, God, whose power brought
Man into being, stands away,
As it were a handbreath off, to give
Room for the newly made to live . . .
Man, therefore, stands on his own stock
Of love and power as a pin-point rock.

This view, that the will is free within limits, is held by the majority of "plain men," but rejected by many philosophers. The purpose of the present paper is to offer reasons in its defence.

At the outset it is convenient to state as precisely as possible wherein the essence of the Free Will controversy consists. This can be done most satisfactorily by way of negations.

First ; the question at issue is not whether our conduct is rigidly determined for us every moment by an *external* fate—the kind of fate that Fogazzaro pictures in the story of Mallombra. That this is the case is, indeed, as Mill observes, the doctrine of Asiatic Fatalism. According to that doctrine, a superior

power or abstract destiny, whatever our wishes may be, and no matter how sternly we fight against it, overrules us to a predestined end.¹ The modern philosophers, however, who repudiate Free Will repudiate with at least equal emphasis *this* sort of Determinism. Conduct, they agree, takes place through, and in accordance with, *volition*; they do not dream of denying that we can do *what we choose*.

Secondly, the question is not whether our *volitions* are rigidly determined for us at every moment by the mechanical balancing of the desires that constitute our motives. The philosophers who repudiate Free Will acknowledge that the interaction of a given group of motives would evolve different volitions in different people. Motives do not fight it out among themselves; we select among them, *choosing* to identify ourselves with one and not with another. The choice made depends upon the person choosing as well as upon the motives chosen. The analogy which Determinists find for the wills of different people is not that of similar particles subjected to mechanical forces, but that of dissimilar substances reacting to stimuli.

We are now in a position to define our problem positively. The most obvious way of stating it is to ask: "Is the choice that we make among conflicting motives in any degree free, or is it entirely determined by our character, in the same manner as the reaction of a chemical substance is determined by its character?" This formulation of the problem is, however, ambiguous. For the concept of "a character" may contain as a part of itself the property of willing in a

¹ Examination of *Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 585. Cf. Rashdall, *Theory of Good and Evil*, ii. 330.

particular way in given circumstances at a particular moment; and, if character is used with this meaning, to ask whether our choice is determined by our character is merely to ask whether our choice at any time is what it is,—a futile piece of tautology. Hence, it is desirable to avoid the term character, and to emend our question into the form: "Is the choice that we make among conflicting motives in any degree free, or is it entirely determined by the immediately preceding state of the universe?"

Before proceeding to inquire whether the problem is fairly stated in the question thus emended, it is important to distinguish that question from another with which it is sometimes thought to be identical. The other question is: "Is the choice that we make among conflicting motives in any degree free, or is it capable of being foreknown by a perfect intelligence cognisant of all past and present facts?" The identification of the two questions thus distinguished leads directly to the proposition that, *if* there is a Deity possessing "foreknowledge absolute," the will cannot be free; and this, of course, has been a stumbling-block to theologians. But, identification of the questions is not legitimate, except upon the hypothesis that the only kind of foreknowledge that is possible is knowledge of the future obtained *by way of inference* from knowledge of the past. It is, however, quite conceivable that a person might possess extensive knowledge of the future who had no other knowledge whatever. Hence, though, when an event is determined by the past history of the universe, it must be foreknown by a perfect intelligence cognisant of all facts, the converse of this proposition is not necessary: when an

event is foreknown by such an intelligence, it *does not* follow that it is determined by the past history of the universe. A proof of divine foreknowledge would not *necessarily* involve a disproof of Free Will.

We may now return to the inquiry whether the question, "Is our choice among conflicting motives in any degree free, or is it entirely determined by the immediately preceding state of the universe?" is a fair statement of the Free Will problem. In order to be thus fair, it must, of course, present two mutually exclusive alternatives: if the first is true the second must be false, and *vice versa*. Does the question do this? Is it certain that, if the Determinists are wrong, the advocates of Free Will must be right? That this point is not otiose is easily shown from an analogy. Suppose that *all* the forces—not merely those forces with which we happen to be acquainted—that act upon a particle at a particular moment are of such a sort as to render the position of the particle indeterminate over a defined region. It is, of course, commonly believed that, as a matter of fact, the universe is constituted in such a way that the position of every particle at each moment is determinate at a point. If, however, this is so, it merely *happens* to be so; and no absurdity or inconsistency is involved in the contrary supposition that I am suggesting. If so much be granted, I ask: Is my supposition identical with the supposition that the particle whose position is not determined possesses free will? If these two suppositions are not identical, the denial of Determinism does not involve the affirmation of Free Will. And, plainly, the two suppositions are not identical. The position ultimately assumed by the particle on the

locus assigned to it may be selected in either of two ways. On the one hand, it may be both ultimately and proximately uncaused; on the other hand, it may be ultimately uncaused, but proximately caused by a cause which itself is uncaused. In both cases equally it is not determined by the state of the universe immediately preceding. In the former case, however, there is not, while in the latter there is, scope for the operation of an uncaused *activity* of the self.¹ It is surely an activity of this sort—the activity of a self that *makes* a choice, and not mere indetermination, that we have in mind when we raise the question whether men are free to choose among conflicting motives. Hence, the form in which our problem has been stated requires still further emendation. We must first ask: “Is our choice among conflicting motives at every moment entirely determined by the immediately preceding state of the universe?” If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, Free Will is at once excluded. But, if the answer is in the negative, we must, and, if it is uncertain, we may, ask, secondly: “Is there reason to believe that our choice is in any degree free in the sense of being governed by Free Will?”

Some persons believe that Determinism can be rigidly proved, and to this end they propound three arguments. These are: *First*, that every state of the universe is entirely determined by its immediately preceding state; therefore every volition is thus determined. *Secondly*, the conduct of every group of persons could be inferred by a sufficiently intelligent observer

¹ The fact that the “properties” of this activity cannot be defined is not, I think, a good argument against its reality. It is conceived as a simple kind of activity, just as yellow is a simple kind of colour.

from past and present facts ; therefore every volition is determined. *Thirdly*, the conduct of every individual could be similarly inferred ; therefore every volition is determined. These three arguments are not, of course, all advanced by all Determinists. They are, however, all important enough to deserve investigation.

The first argument, from the premiss that every state of the universe is entirely determined by the immediately preceding state, is, of course, conclusive if once the premiss is admitted. For this premiss simply asserts of everything what the Determinist wishes to assert of the particular thing volition. It is obvious, however, that any one who denies Determinism will also deny this premiss. His contention is of the form that A is not B. It is no *argument* against him—it is merely an elaborated form of counter-assertion—to reply that C, which includes A and other things besides, is B. Hence, there is need to argue the Determinist's premiss itself ; is he entitled to assert that every state of the universe is entirely determined by the immediately preceding state ? There are two ways in which he may arrive at this position : (1) direct intuition ; or (2) inference from his experience of selected portions of the universe.

When a person asserts that he possesses an intuition that every state of the universe is entirely determined by its immediately preceding state, it is not useful to argue with him directly. It is useful, however, to endeavour to elucidate more precisely the content of his intuition. It is possible, in the first place, that what he really intuits is that every state of the universe is *preceded* by some other state, or, in other words, that there is no beginning to time. If

he means only this, his statement is very likely correct; but it has no bearing on the present discussion; for to be preceded in the temporal order is not the same thing as to be the *determined result* of what precedes. It is possible, in the second place, that what the Determinist really intuits is that mere position in the temporal order cannot affect the connection between successive states of the universe, or, in other words, that, if a given state of the universe were exactly repeated, the difference in time between the new state and the old could not affect the character of the new state that would follow it. This again is very likely correct; but, again, it is irrelevant to the present discussion. For the proposition that difference in time between two exactly similar states of the universe cannot affect the new states that follow them is not equivalent to the proposition that the new states must be the same in the two cases. In order to obtain the latter proposition from the former, we should need to *add* the proposition that every state of the universe at any moment is entirely determined by the immediately preceding state. Lastly, it is possible that the Determinist may reject both the above suggestions, and assert that he really intuits precisely what he said at the beginning that he intuited, namely, this last fundamental proposition. If he says this, we may endeavour perhaps to shake him with the authority of Mill. We may quote: "I am convinced that any one accustomed to abstraction and analysis, who will fairly exert his faculties for the purpose, will, when his imagination has once learnt to entertain the notion, find no difficulty in conceiving that in some one, for instance, of the many firmaments

into which sidereal astronomy now divides the universe, events may succeed one another at random without any fixed law; nor can anything in our experience, or in our mental nature, constitute a sufficient, or, indeed, any reason for believing that this is nowhere the case.”¹ If, after this, an opponent continues to assert his intuition, I can only say, first, that I do not share it; and, secondly, that the statements which other persons have made concerning it have not hitherto been sufficiently precise and coherent to persuade me to accept their authority.

The proposition that every state of the universe is entirely determined by the immediately preceding state may, however, also be based upon induction from experience of certain parts of the universe that have come under our observation. Total states of the universe are, indeed, never repeated, and, therefore, we have no direct instances of like states of the whole universe being followed by states that are also like. In many physical and chemical experiments, however, like states of selected portions of the universe are approximately repeated, and the states that follow are so nearly alike that it is reasonable to suppose that exact repetition and exact observation would have yielded consequences exactly alike. Now, if in the region over which these experiments have been tried, states of the universe were not entirely (or, at all events, approximately) determined by the immediately preceding states, it is very improbable that this consilience of results would be obtained; whereas, if they were thus determined, it is certain that it would be obtained. Hence, physicists and chemists are satisfied

¹ *Logic*, ii. 97.

that Determinism does, in fact, prevail in the regions they investigate ; and many other persons are satisfied that it does, in fact, prevail in all regions. But little reflection, however, is required to show that the grounds for this satisfaction are exceedingly slender. Even for the limited conclusion of the physicist and the chemist the facts afford nothing that can be dignified with the name of proof. Their inference is, of course, conducted under the form of an inverse application of the rules of probability. But, in order to make use of these rules, it is essential to know the *a priori* probability of the rival hypotheses between which discrimination is being made. These hypotheses in the present instance are Determinism and non-Determinism respectively. The facts that have been observed would follow much more probably from the former than from the latter of these. But, from this circumstance we can gather nothing unless we can also say how probable *a priori* this hypothesis is relatively to the other ; and on that point it is difficult to say that we know anything at all. In short, even if the case be put at its strongest, it cannot be said that the evidence does more than make Determinism in the observed parts of the physical universe moderately probable. When it is proposed to make that evidence bear the weight of a determinist explanation not merely of the whole physical universe but of the whole psychical universe also, the burden begins to appear excessive. It is true that, if any doctrine of psycho-physical parallelism could be established, the case for this explanation would be strengthened. On such information as is at present available, however, to lay down that universal Determinism is made probable even in



the smallest degree by the physical evidence would seem to be unwarranted presumption.

If, therefore, Determinism in respect of volition is to be established, this must be done—except, indeed, for the intuitionists whose position we have already considered—otherwise than through the establishment of universal Determinism. The Determinist is, in short, driven back upon the other two arguments that I have distinguished, the predictability of the conduct, first, of groups, and, secondly, of individuals. These two arguments, I may say at once, seem to me to possess very different values. The first I regard as plainly fallacious; the second as exceedingly important. I proceed to examine them in turn.

Dr. Hastings Rashdall writes: "If the statistics of desertion in the English army show a rapid and startling change in a certain year, we are not satisfied with accounting for it by a freak of Free Will";¹ on the contrary, we look at once for an explanatory motive. Conversely, if we are aware of some new motive that has been introduced, we can predict the consequent difference in the result. The possibility of such inferred prediction implies, the argument affirms, that volitions are entirely determined. Against this I answer that the only form of predictability that can, on any theory, afford evidence of Determinism is predictability of *individual* events; and that predictability of *collective* events does not in any way imply that sort of predictability. This point has been excellently put by Mill in another connection: "The collective experiment, as it may be termed, exactly separates the effect of the general from that of the

¹ *The Theory of Good and Evil*, ii. 315.

special causes, and shows the net result of the former ; but it declares nothing at all respecting the amount of influence of the special causes, be it greater or smaller, since the scale of the experiment extends to the number of cases within which the effects of the special causes balance one another, and disappear in that of the general causes.”¹ Dr. Rashdall does, indeed, attempt a kind of answer to this. He points out that, on the indeterminist hypothesis, we have to do with a group of events, in respect of which individual variations are not due to the influence of special causes, but are strictly uncaused ; and he questions whether *in this case* we have any rational ground for expecting that the variations will tend to cancel one another over a wide area.² This objection does not seem to me convincing. Suppose a large number of particles constrained by general causes to lie upon a linear locus of finite length. On the determinist hypothesis the position on the locus occupied by each particle is determined by a different independent special cause ; on the indeterminist hypothesis it is not determined at all. It is surely as true on the second hypothesis as on the first that, on the evidence, any particle named at random is as likely to lie at any one point on the locus as at any other, and that, therefore, the mean position of all the particles will *probably* be the centre of the locus. In other words, uncaused variations, equally with variations due to independent special causes, tend to balance one another over a wide area. Hence, predictability of properties and conduct in respect of a group does not imply predictability in respect of the individual

¹ *Logic*, ii. 531.

² *Theory of Good and Evil*, ii. 316.

members of the group, and is therefore no evidence for Determinism.

The remaining argument—that the volitions of individuals are predictable, is, of course, in an entirely different position. It is the most important of all the arguments for Determinism. Mill writes: “No one who believed that he knew thoroughly the circumstances of any case, and the characters of the different persons concerned, would hesitate to foretell how all of them would act. Whatever degree of doubt he may in fact feel, arises from the uncertainty whether he really knows the circumstances or the character of some one or other of the persons with the degree of accuracy required.”¹ Sidgwick adds in the same strain: “We infer generally the future actions of those whom we know from their past actions; and, if our forecast turns out in any case to be erroneous, we do not attribute the discrepancy to the arbitrary influence of Free Will, but to our incomplete acquaintance with the character and motives.”² Both these statements of the argument seem to me to be impaired by the ambiguity which I have already noticed in respect of the concept “character.” This defect, however, is not fundamental. The substance of the argument falls into two parts: *first*, we *do* predict more or less correctly; *secondly*, if we knew enough, we *could* predict quite correctly. Now, if we grant that desires and so on have *any* considerable effect upon volitions we should naturally expect to be able to predict *more or less* correctly. The fact that we find ourselves doing this proves that volitions are *partially* determined. It does not, however, go any way whatever towards proving—and this is the point

¹ Mill, *Logic*, ii. 416.

² *Methods of Ethics*, p. 64.

at issue—that they are *entirely* determined. To support that contention resort must be had to the second part of the argument—our conviction that, if we knew enough, we should be able to predict quite correctly. To assert this conviction is, however, to claim an intuition that Determinism is true. As already observed, I do not share that intuition, and am not at present convinced by the statements about it that have been made by other people. Predictability with sufficient knowledge seems to me to partake of the nature of a postulate rather than of an axiom.

The result of the preceding discussion is twofold: first, what was, indeed, obvious from the first—that Determinism is not *proved*; secondly, that the evidence that can be adduced in defence of it does not make it in any important degree probable. The proposition that our choice among conflicting motives is at every moment entirely determined by the immediately preceding state of the universe *may* be true; but we have not at present any sufficient ground for believing it to be true. The road is, therefore, open for our second question: “Is there reason to believe that our choice is in any degree free in the sense of being governed by Free Will?”

There is only one court to which this question can be appealed—that of introspection. The believer in Free Will points to the immediate awareness of freedom that is present to us at certain times. In Sidgwick’s opinion, this awareness is particularly distinct when we are confronted with a choice between inclination and a judgment of duty. He writes: “The question remains, Can I choose what—if I can choose—I judge to be right to do? Here my own view is

that, within the limits above explained, I inevitably conceive that I *can* choose.”¹

To this argument disbelievers in Free Will reply by offering a different analysis of what is given in that feeling of freedom, the reality of which they are constrained to admit. Mill writes: “I feel (or am convinced) that I could and even should have chosen the other course if I had preferred it, that is, if I had liked it better; but not that I could have chosen one course while I preferred the other.”² Again, “When we think of ourselves hypothetically as having acted otherwise than we did, we always suppose a difference in the antecedents: we picture ourselves as having known something that we did not know, or not known something that we did know; which is a difference in the external inducements: or as having desired something, or disliked something, more or less than we did; which is a difference in the internal inducements.”³ In other words, our feeling of freedom is merely the feeling that we could have willed something different if we had desired something different. Dr. McTaggart’s analysis is subtler. “My sense of freedom,” he writes, “is proportionate to the extent to which my action is determined by my will. . . . The feeling of freedom which we experience is a feeling that constraint is absent. And constraint is absent in all cases where a man only acts because he wills to do so.”⁴ In other words, our feeling of freedom is merely the feeling that we could have willed something different if we had willed something different.

¹ *Methods of Ethics*, p. 67.

² *Examination of Sir W. Hamilton’s Philosophy*, p. 566.

³ *Ibid.* p. 567.

⁴ *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 148.

Now I fully grant that the verdict of introspection upon points of this kind is one that it is exceedingly difficult to discern. Nevertheless, provisionally at all events, I reject both Mill's and McTaggart's psychological analysis. In our experience of freedom we are not, I think, confronted exclusively either with the obvious proposition that we could have willed something different if we had desired something different, or with the otiose proposition that we could have willed something different if we had willed something different. I, at all events, conceive that I could have willed something different though I had desired the same things. I conceive myself as a centre of conflicting desires, with any one of which I am free within limits to identify myself in will.¹ I can, indeed, with Sidgwick, "suppose myself to regard this conception as illusory";² and, if there were any strong evidence in favour of Determinism, I should be driven to do this. As things are at present, however, I am subjected to no such coercion. I fall back on my fundamental postulate that, unless they are proved to be guilty, the apparent data of consciousness are innocent of fraud.³ On this slender basis I accept the workaday conclusion of uninstructed common sense and credit the will with a limited freedom.

¹ There is reason to suppose that Mill failed to distinguish properly between desire and volition. Speaking of the practical effects of a belief in Determinism, he wrote: "A person who does not wish to alter his character, cannot be the person who is supposed to feel discouraged and paralysed by thinking himself unable to do it" (*Logic*, ii. 420-21). Surely, however, we may often wish or desire to do things which we cannot bring ourselves to will.

² *Methods of Ethics*, p. 67.

³ Cf. Essay I. p. 9.

IV

THE PROBLEM OF GOOD

THE word "Good" is applied in ordinary life to two entirely distinct classes of things. It is sometimes used for "good absolutely and in itself," and sometimes for "useful as a means to promote something thus absolutely good." My paper has nothing to do with good in this second sense. It is concerned exclusively with certain points of controversy touching things "good in themselves."

The points selected for discussion fall under three heads. First, there is disagreement among experts as to the method by which ethical inquiry ought to be pursued. Secondly, even among those who follow the same method, there is disagreement as to the qualities and so on which make up the goodness of any conscious being. Lastly, there is disagreement as to the way in which the goodness of one being is related to that of others. Among these three classes of questions there is a certain degree of interdependence, but they can be roughly separated for purposes of discussion.

I

First, as to method :

There are two principal methods by which ethical

writers have sought an answer to the question, "What is good?" The one is the *a priori* method of deduction from the nature of things: the other, the method of direct perception.

The *a priori* method is best explained by example. T. H. Green, in his *Prolegomena*, advances a metaphysical argument to prove that the human spirit is timeless; and he proceeds to infer from this that a temporal thing like happiness cannot be good from the standpoint of that spirit, or, more broadly, that nothing can be good which is not timeless also. In a similar vein, Tennyson suggests that a thing cannot be good unless it lasts for ever:

The good, the true, the pure, the just,
Take the charm "For ever" from them, and they crumble into
dust.

Finally, certain persons, directly and without argument, assert that the Good must be One.

The method of inquiry of which these three examples are typical, despite the authority of some of its advocates, is not, I think, a fruitful one. As applied by Green, it seems to contain a definite formal fallacy; for, even if it be true that the spirit of man is timeless, is there not a logical chasm between the premiss that something *is* and the supposed inference that something else *is good*? As applied by Tennyson, the method involves a violent paradox: "If it be that the good and beautiful must perish, is it, therefore, less good and beautiful?"

I do but ask good things may pass,
I quarrel not with Time.

Nor is the assertion that the good must be *one* in the

least more persuasive. It might equally well be *two* or, since seven is a sacred number, perhaps we may suggest *seven*. In sum, then, the whole method of inquiry which seeks to determine *a priori* what things must be good seems to me mischievous and idle. "What is good and evil remains just as incapable of being reached by mere thought as what is blue or sweet."¹ The only way to know whether anything is good is by looking at it. We are confronted with the world of reality and of imagination. We turn the eye of the soul upon it, and we perceive some things to be good and some bad, just as we perceive that some are yellow and others red. That is the only way that can possibly yield results. The truer the eye of the perceiver—not necessarily the intenser his mental power—the better the results will be. On the first of the three controversial points that have been distinguished I conclude, therefore, without reservation in favour of inquiry by the method of perception. The second point of controversy turns on the application of that method.

II

Many ethical thinkers hold that the only good things are states of conscious life. If this view is put forward as a necessary universal proposition, those who believe that our knowledge of what is good is obtained only through particular perceptions cannot accept it. They have no ground for holding that all the good that there is has fallen within their perception, and, apart from such ground, it is impossible for them to make any exclusive statement about good.

¹ Lotze, *Microcosmos*, English translation, vol. ii. p. 357.

They are entitled, however, to say—and in this I am among their disciples—that states of conscious life are the only good things of which we have present knowledge. This view is disputed by Mr. G. E. Moore and other writers who accept his important doctrine of “organic goods.” This doctrine does, indeed, in some instances appear exceedingly plausible. At first sight, for example, it seems obvious that the state of a man who loves a villain believed to be a good man, or a daub believed to be a beautiful picture, is worse than that of one who loves a really good man or a really beautiful picture; and, if this is so, it follows that goodness may belong, not merely to states of consciousness, but to complexes of states of consciousness and of objects, whether themselves conscious or not, to which these states are related. As it seems to me, however, the plausibility of this view is due to an ambiguity. When a man loves a villain believing him to be a good man, he may either (1) know what his qualities really are and falsely judge them to be good, or (2) believe that his qualities are different from what they are and truly judge the imaginary qualities which he has conceived in place of the real qualities to be good. In the first case I agree that things are worse for the man’s error; but here the error belongs entirely to relations within his consciousness, and not at all to the relations between his consciousness and an object. In the second case, where the error does concern this latter sort of relation, I do not agree that things are worse for the error. More generally, I reject the doctrine of organic goods so far as it conflicts with the view that goodness—within the region of present experience—belongs only to states of conscious life. This

conclusion, though I recognise it to be highly disputable, I shall not argue further, but shall take, in what follows, to be common ground.

When we proceed to ask what kinds of conscious life are good, a further formidable conflict of opinion at once presents itself. The only procedure open to us is to look out upon the people we know or can imagine and to try to judge directly of their goodness as concrete wholes. When we have brought to bear on this task a sufficiently wide experience, it is possible that we may be able to disentangle the various elements in their consciousness upon which their goodness seems to depend, together with the nature of this dependence. If that could be done, our notions would be to some extent simplified and clarified. The most daring attempts in this direction that have hitherto been made select, from among the various elements of which any total state of consciousness is composed, some single element, and declare that to be the only element affecting the goodness of the state. All the other elements may vary in any direction and to any extent without altering this, but the least variation in the chosen element does alter it.

The Utilitarians declare that the only element upon which the goodness of a conscious state depends is the quantity of pleasant feeling that it contains. Dr. Martineau, finding in the human consciousness a hierarchy of "springs of action," declares that the goodness of a man at any time depends solely on whether or not he wills in accordance with that one of two conflicting springs which he judges to be higher.¹

¹ *Types of Ethical Theory*, ii. pp. 237, 286. Cf., for a similar view, Green, *Political Theories*, p. ix.

It need not, indeed, be judged overtly to be higher; for the good will is present in spontaneous love-motivated, no less than in struggling duty-motivated, volitions; it suffices if conscience is not deliberately stifled or disobeyed. Finally, yet another school believes that the only element upon which goodness depends is the emotion of love:

For what is knowledge, duly weighed?
Knowledge is strong, but love is sweet;
Yea, all the progress he had made
Was but to learn that all is small
Save love, for love is all in all.

Of course, it should be understood that none of the above theories adopts the violent paradox of condemning as worthless *in every sense* all elements of consciousness other than the one which determines for them ultimate good. They recognise freely that some of these other elements are desirable, and ought to be cultivated *as means* to promote good. Sidgwick, for example, regards the good will as indirectly of great importance for the contribution it makes to social order and, hence, to happiness; while the adherents of the good will and of love doubtless recognise that some modicum of pleasant consciousness makes easier the development of the elements in which they are specially interested. The point is that each of these schools regards the goodness-in-itself (not necessarily the goodness as a means) of any total state of consciousness as dependent upon one element alone.

Now, as I have already argued, the only method of testing any proposition about things good in themselves is perception. It is stated in all these theories that, from whatever initial position we start, no effect

is produced on the goodness of a conscious state by variations in the quantity of any element save one. To persuade ourselves of this proposition we should need to contemplate a large number of initial positions and of variations from them on the part of all the elements.

By the application of this process we do, I think, find that some elements in conscious states are irrelevant to their goodness. This, as it seems to me, is true of intellectual power. Such power is, indeed, a means to good, both because of the contribution it makes to material wealth and hence to happiness, and also because its presence renders possible the existence of feelings and volitions in relation to it on the part of persons in whom it is embodied that enhance the goodness of those persons' total states. In itself, however, when its effects are abstracted, it does not seem to me to affect in any way the goodness of the states in which it plays a part. Maeterlinck, I think, is right when he says: "Thought, of itself, is possessed of no vital importance; it is the feelings awakened within us by thought that ennoble and brighten our life."¹

But, in regard to other things, the case seems to me quite different. We cannot vary the amount either of pleasure, or of the good will or of the love present in any state of consciousness without altering the goodness of that state. Nor are these three the only variables upon which goodness depends. I would include also the character of a man's ideals, his attitude towards what he sees (as distinguished from any reality that there may be unknown to him) in persons and things, and, so far as it is not already embraced in love and the good will, his enthusiasm for the purpose he

¹ *Wisdom and Destiny*, p. 279.

sets before himself. In defence of these opinions I cannot offer arguments, and I cannot be presented with valid arguments to refute. For I am merely recounting perceptions; and the only answer that any one is entitled to make is to recount divergent perceptions of his own.

So far, the only conclusion reached is that the goodness of any conscious state is, to use a mathematical phrase, a function of several variables, some of which I have tried to specify. Can anything further be known as to the nature of this function? Is it true, first, that the function always grows when the value of all or any of the variables is increased? Is it true, secondly, that the sign of any of the variables governs in any general way that of the function? And, thirdly, if neither of these things are true, can any general proposition be laid down as to the nature of the function? These questions are difficult, and what I have to say about them is purely critical.

With regard to the first question, the following views, among others, may be maintained:—

(a) It may be held that, under all circumstances, the goodness of a total state is increased by an increase in the quantity of pleasant feeling contained in it. I do not think that this is universally true. States of deliberate evil-doing are conceivable, which would be made worse and not better if they became happier.

(b) It may be held that an addition to the enthusiasm with which a man pursues his ideal always adds to his goodness. Such an addition certainly has this effect if the ideal, as conceived in consciousness, both is worthy and is thought by him to be worthy; it also has it, perhaps, if the ideal is

thought worthy, though it is not really so. But I hesitate to accept Browning's view that it is better to follow deliberately chosen and recognised evil in an enthusiastic than in a half-hearted manner. Was Count Guido really better for the energy of his hatred, "since hate was thus the truth of him?"

(c) It may be held that an addition to the intensity of love always adds to the goodness of a conscious state. It certainly adds to this goodness if the object, as conceived in consciousness, both is and is thought to be worthy. Does it necessarily otherwise?

With regard to the second question, three other general theories have had advocates:—

(a) It may be held that pleasure is essential to a good state in the sense that any predominance, however slight, of pain over pleasure must always render the state as a whole bad. In my phrasing this would read that, whenever the sign of the variable pleasure is negative, that of the function is negative also. I do not accept this view, nor do I believe that it is in accordance with the ethical judgments of "plain men."

(b) It may be held that, when the good will is present, the state as a whole is always good; in my phrasing, that, whenever the sign of the variable good will is positive, that of the function is positive also. This view again I cannot accept. I should hold that, if a person were in extreme pain, or if he were following a peculiarly repulsive ideal, his state as a whole might be bad in spite of the good will.

(c) Lastly, it may be held that, when the good will is absent, *in the sense in which it is absent when a man is deliberately sinning against the light*, the state as a whole is always bad; or, in other words, that whenever

the sign of the variable good will is negative, the sign of the function is negative also. This view is much more plausible than the two preceding. It was something like it, perhaps, that Kant had in mind when he declared that the good will was the *only unconditioned*, though not the *only*, good. Still, extreme cases can be imagined in which even this general proposition becomes doubtful. Imagine, for instance, a man bound to a rigid and perhaps irrational rule of duty, at the basis of whose being, however, a spark of sympathy still lives. If, in a moment of exaltation, sympathy overcomes the mechanical and, *ex hypothesi*, perverted conscience, is the state of that man on the whole bad? I doubt if we could rightly affirm that it always must be so.

There remains the third question: Can any general proposition be laid down as to the nature of the function on which the quantity of goodness present in any state of consciousness depends? I think that it may in some circumstances be said that the greater the quantity present of one element A, the greater, other things equal, is the addition made to the goodness of the whole by any given addition to a given quantity of another element B. I think that this relation holds between the elements happiness and virtue. But I doubt whether any other general proposition can be laid down.

III

I pass to the third of the controversial matters to which I wish to direct attention. This is connected with the circumstance that different people are separate centres of consciousness and, therefore,

separate seats of good. In view of this circumstance, the question arises whether the good of A can compete with that of B or C.

The answer, of course, depends partly upon that given to the previous question, wherein good consists. Some writers, notably T. H. Green, describe the good in such a way that, as it seems to them, competition is impossible. Green's view, for example, is excellently condensed by Dr. A. C. Bradley in the sentence: "The idea of the end or moral good is thus that of the self as realised, and that self is social, *i.e.*, its good includes that of others who are also conceived as ends in themselves."¹ Mr. Lofthouse makes this idea more explicit, when he suggests that love may so bind the goods of the different centres into one that the more the good of A is increased the more of necessity are those of B and C.

This view, however, is not really defensible. Whatever may be the case in a world of "ultimate angels' law," it is evident that, in the actual world, good, even in Green's conception of it, *may be* competitive. The realisation of A's self does sometimes involve diminished opportunities for the realisation of B's; even action according to conscience on the part of A sometimes indirectly involves a temptation to B to act against conscience. When other elements, such as happiness, are reckoned among goods, the case becomes still clearer. There *are* cases in which, so far as experience shows, A's good cannot increase without affecting adversely that of other people.

This circumstance leads to a very important argu-

¹ *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Analytical Table of Contents, p. xxvi. §. 199.

ment. Since the goods of different centres are liable to conflict upon earth, they must also be liable to conflict on the whole, unless there is a world beyond the grave arranged in such a way as to obviate that eventuality. In the opinion of some writers, however, to admit that the goods of different centres conflict on the whole involves assent to two inconsistent propositions. Sidgwick, as he declared, intuited and recognised as of equal authority two moral imperatives, both that he ought to pursue his own good regardless of others' good, and also that he ought to pursue the good of the whole regardless of his own good. The case is the same with those who hold that A is an "end in himself" in the sense that his good ought never to be sacrificed to anything outside himself, and who also maintain a like proposition with regard to B. These propositions are only consistent with one another provided that the pursuit of a man's own and of others' good dictate to him the same course of conduct. We are thus driven to ask whether, apart from other considerations, our need for reconciling these propositions constitutes a sufficient reason for accepting the hypothesis of a future life.¹

Against this argument Mr. Moore directs a vigorous polemic: "That a single man's happiness should be *the sole good*, and that also everybody's happiness should be *the sole good*, is a contradiction which cannot be solved by the assumption that the same conduct will secure both; it would be equally contradictory, however certain we were that that assumption was justified."² I am not convinced that this reasoning

¹ Cf. *Methods of Ethics*, concluding section.

² *Principia Ethica*, p. 103.

fairly meets Sidgwick's point. Would that writer have admitted that "I ought to pursue A's happiness exclusively" is necessarily convertible into "A's happiness is the sole good"? Mr. Russell, who is in general agreement with Mr. Moore, has adversely and, as I think, rightly criticised that writer's logical position in regard to the relation between "good" and "ought."¹

I am not, however, really concerned to defend Sidgwick here. For, from my point of view, the contradiction, for the solution of which he hints that a new world may need to be invoked, does not exist at all. I do not perceive that I ought to pursue my own good regardless of others' good, and I do not regard any man as an end in himself in the sense defined above. Possibly every-man is an end in the sense that he has "claims to possess the good which cannot be altogether cancelled by any amount of good possessed by other people."² But this, if it be true—which I do not myself believe, and which, given that states of consciousness are the only things ultimately good or bad, cannot as a matter of fact be the case—merely asserts that fairness as between people is one element among good things. It does not imply propositions about A and B, which can under any circumstances become inconsistent with one another. Consequently, in my view, to admit that the goods of different people may compete does not involve self-contradiction. Hence, there is no reason for refusing that admission, and on these lines no valid argument can be constructed in proof of a future life.

¹ *Independent Review*, Nov. 6, p. 330.

² McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 17.

V

THE ETHICS OF THE GOSPELS

IN the record of the life of Jesus contained in the Synoptic Gospels two points are fairly plain. First, Jesus regarded himself chiefly as a teacher. He was the bearer of a message, and His vocation was to deliver it.¹ "Let us go elsewhere into the next towns that I may preach there also, for to this end came I forth."² "He went round about the villages teaching."³ "He began to teach them many things."⁴ "And, as He went, He taught them again."⁵ To this great task all else was subordinate. His mother and His brethren may stand without seeking Him, but He cannot leave His Father's business.⁶ His own death may be clearly foreseen, but to the suggestion that he should change His course to avoid it, the answer is: "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men."⁷ In short, the central purpose of His life was the proclamation of His message.

Secondly, among a great body of his contemporaries,

¹ Cf. Luke v. 42, 43.

² Mark i. 38.

³ *Ibid.* vi. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.* vi. 34.

⁵ *Ibid.* x. 1.

⁶ Mark iii. 31-35.

⁷ Matt. xvi. 23.

the acceptance of this message was hindered by doubt as to the authority of the messenger. The scribes and ordinary teachers, of course, supported what they had to say by specific reference to the sacred books of the nation. Jesus' method was entirely different. He came, not to expound ancient records, but as a seer into the heart of truth itself. "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."¹ He relied, not upon argument from premisses already accepted, whether scriptural or otherwise, but upon a direct appeal to religious and moral perception. There was on Him the mantle of the old prophets. He had seen, and He called on men to open their eyes that they might see also.

Thus, for Him His word was, as it were, autonomous, needing no alien support. He cannot understand why any sign should be needed. "Why does this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, there shall no sign be given unto this generation."² To many of the Jews, however, the word of itself did not suffice to bring them where Jesus himself had been. They did not *see* that it was true. Hence, since He would not prove it, they needed for conviction somehow to satisfy themselves that what He taught could rightly be accepted on authority. The consequence was that controversies arose about Jesus' *person*, and that the records which have come down to us tend in some measure to sacrifice accounts of His general teaching to vindications of His Messianic claims. Thus, we read more than once, "And He began to teach," but what He taught

¹ Mark i. 22 ; cf. Matt. vii. 29 ; Luke iv. 32.

² Mark viii. 12.

is not declared. In the 6th chapter of St. Mark's Gospel there are two instances of this: "And when the Sabbath was come He began to teach in the synagogue"; and the verse continues, "And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, Whence hath this man these things?" and so on in a similar strain.¹ And again: "And He came forth and saw a great multitude, and He had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things." Once more the teaching is omitted, and the passage proceeds to the period when the day was far spent, and the miracle of the loaves.² As a result of this tendency, the records of Jesus' general teaching—and the ethical is, of course, a part of the general teaching—that have come down to us are slight. We have, therefore, to determine a body of doctrine from a small collection of sparsely scattered sayings. This problem is one of extreme delicacy. The reconstruction that is required must necessarily be based upon half-conscious analogies whose scope and application are doubtful. In short, the margin of error within which, in such a case as this, the historical imagination has to work is exceedingly wide. It is only on the very broadest aspects of Jesus' teaching that we can hope for reliable conclusions.

This teaching, it will readily be agreed, fell into two main divisions—the theological, about God, and the ethical, about duty. Furthermore, these divisions were not separated into water-tight compartments, but were fused and commingled in almost every parable that Jesus spoke. Time and again we are told, not only that certain things are good, but

¹ Mark vi. 2.

² Mark vi. 34, *seq.*

also that God will reward the righteous and punish the guilty.

With the teaching about God this paper is not concerned. The connection between that teaching and the directly ethical sayings has, however, led, among the less instructed opponents of Christianity, to a serious misconception in regard to these latter sayings. It has been suggested that Jesus' ethics is a mere scheme of means directed toward the personal happiness of the agent, and that for him righteousness is simply a form of prudence whereby we can flee the wrath to come.

Now, this charge is ambiguous. It may mean either of two things: first, that Jesus urged people to be righteous *from the motive* of future happiness; secondly, that he urged them in words to be righteous directly, but at the same time suggested a selfish motive, and thus implied that conduct might be righteous whatever its motive—might, in fact, be righteous if merely prudential.

The first of these charges may be met with a bare denial. Jesus did not urge people to be righteous *from the motive* of future happiness. His teaching was not, *Be righteous in order to be happy*, but (1) *Be righteous*, an ethical precept, and (2) a metaphysical statement, *Righteousness and happiness as a matter of fact lie along the same road*. It was not, Certain things lead to the agent's happiness, therefore they are good as means; but rather, certain things are good as ends, therefore they lead to the agent's happiness. Jesus was, indeed, at one with Nietzsche's Zarathustra: "Speak and stammer: That is my good, that love I, thus it pleaseth me entirely, thus alone.

will I the good. I do not will it as the law of God, I do not will it as the statute or requirement of man; it shall not be a landmark for me to beyond-earths or paradises.”¹

The second form of the charge is more plausible, but it is not, I think, valid. Jesus certainly suggested that righteousness would promote the agent's future happiness. But this does not necessarily mean that conduct may be righteous independently of its motive. There is, in fact, a confusion here. Jesus' suggestion of the selfish motive does, indeed, imply that that motive may be *connected* with righteous conduct without destroying its righteousness; but it does not imply that the motive may be connected with the conduct, *as a motive*, without having this effect. If it be asked: “What other form of connection is possible?” the answer is simple. The motive may stand to the conduct in the relation of *previous stimulus*. So standing, it does not in any way detract from the righteousness of the conduct. That this is so is universally admitted in practice. Nobody, for instance, supposes that a good man is made less good by the fact of his goodness being partly due to fear of the rod in childhood. In like manner, a forgiving spirit is still good even though the stimulus to its growth has been the egoistic motive, “that your Father which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”² The goodness of existing things is, in

¹ *Thus spake Zarathustra*, p. 41.

² Mark xi. 25. In the Lord's prayer, the phrase, “for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us” (Luke xi. 4), does **not** mean that we do this in order to be forgiven. It rather implies that the prayer is intended for the use of those only who have a forgiving spirit.

short, wholly independent of their origin in the past. In this sense men *can* gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles.

Not only, however, is the case of those who hold that Jesus thought true righteousness could be motivated by selfishness not proven; it can further be shown positively that, for Him, righteousness based on bad motives was not righteousness at all. No doubt, to a person who believes that moral goodness and badness belong to actions, there is no incompatibility here. There is no reason why the *conduct* should not be good, while the *motive* is exceedingly bad. But, if there is one thing clearer than another about the teaching of Jesus, it is that, for Him, moral goodness and badness belonged, not to actions, but to agents—not to physical movements in the external world, but to the states of consciousness of which these are manifestations. This view, as against the opposite view of the formalists, He is never tired of emphasising. The whole elaborate array of orthodox observances was to Him an obstruction and a stumbling-block. Washing of hands before meat and other ceremonies, even the strict observance of the Sabbath day, are brushed aside as mere trivialities. “Hear me, all of you, and understand, there is nothing from without the man, that goeth into him, can defile him; but the things that proceed out of the man are those that defile the man.”¹ The Pharisee’s catalogue of churchmanship does not, but the publican’s humility does, have honour in the sight of God.² Behind the letter of the law He goes in every case to the spirit, behind the act to the character displayed in it: “Ye have

¹ Mark vii. 15.

² Luke xviii. 9.

heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you that every one who is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."¹ The servant with two talents who had gained other two has the same commendation as the servant with five who had gained five.² It was not the action, but the agent that Jesus held to be the proper subject of praise or blame. For Him goodness was to *be* and not to *do* something. The act of forgiving my brother was nothing. The number of times that the verbal process was repeated mattered not at all. The category of good and bad applied to the forgiving state of mind.

That this was Jesus' constant teaching there can, I think, be no dispute. But, if so, the idea that He thought conduct could be righteous independently of its motives is completely overthrown. For righteousness based on bad motives would loudly contradict itself. Their operation might, indeed, render action less injurious, but they could only render agents worse. The person whose state of mind is otherwise unaltered, but who refrains from committing murder from such a motive as cowardice, will be worse than an actual murderer. The murderous state is present in both cases, but the non-murderer is also a coward:

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
Is the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice.

¹ Matt. v. 21, 22.

² Matt. xxv. 21-23.

Jesus, then, did not hold, and the conjunction of His theological and ethical teaching does not, when properly understood, suggest that righteousness can be based on selfish motives. Such righteousness, on the contrary, is not righteousness at all, but a blend of vice and hypocrisy. The popular charge against His teaching is, therefore, not sustained.

If, as I think it will and should be, this conclusion is accepted, we naturally proceed to inquire into the actual substance of His teaching. And here the first thing noticeable, and often noticed, is a certain air of paradox about His precepts. If, it is said, the directions that He laid down were literally obeyed, society would break up. Consider, for instance, the words: "If a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also." "Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that borroweth turn thou not away."¹ Are not visions of the old English Poor Law at its worst immediately called up by such a doctrine? The explanation is, I think, rightly given by Wendt. When Jesus gave a precept of this kind, He was not commanding an action, but approving a quality of character. His concern was not with particular ways in which the spirit of love ought to manifest itself, but with the root fact that that spirit ought to reign. "All circumstances and considerations which, from our very recognition of the law of love, require us to punish or repulse an assailant, or to refuse his demand, are kept out of view by Jesus. For, by taking account of such considerations, Jesus would neither have really limited, nor made more fully manifest, the rule that the members of the kingdom of God must be wholly

¹ Matt. v. 42.

free from revenge, and ever ready to show gratuitous kindness, even in the case of an unjust demand or of spoliation on the part of another.”¹ In short, Jesus was concerned with character, the end, not with practice, the means.

Wherein, then, did Jesus teach that goodness, in its sense of “good as end,” resides? We have already seen that it belongs to agents and not to action. Consequently, the question becomes: Wherein did Jesus hold that the goodness of an agent consists?

To this question the answer that immediately suggests itself is that such goodness consists in *complete devotedness* to the ideal that each man sets before him. There must be no compromise between what we should like, and what we think we ought, to do. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”² “Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God.”³ “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”⁴ The denunciation of the hypocrites who make prayers and give alms to be seen of men, the reproof to the man with great possessions,⁵ and the stories of the widow’s mite⁶ and the pot of ointment,⁷ carry the same lesson. It is brought out again in the repudiation of the idea of works of supererogation: “When ye shall have done all those things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.”⁸ And it is driven home with all

¹ Wendt, *The Teaching of Jesus*, vol. i. pp. 134 and 342.

² Cf. the cleansing of the temple, Mark xi. 17.

³ John iii. 3.

⁴ Luke ix. 62.

⁵ Mark x. 21.

⁶ Mark xii. 43, 44.

⁷ Mark xiv. 8, 9.

⁸ Luke xvii. 10.

the force of a vivid illustration in the stern sentences: "If thy hand shall cause thee to stumble, cut it off; . . . if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off; . . . and if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out."¹ "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father and mother, and wife, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."² The light that serves for our ideal must be followed remorselessly; no purpose of reward and no element of self-will must be allowed to intervene.³

Now, if this were the whole of Jesus' teaching, it would clearly approximate to Kant's categorical imperative: Act according to conscience. "Whatsoever is not of faith (*i.e.* moral conviction) is sin."⁴ The practical difficulty in that ethic is, of course, that different men's consciences point to different things; consequently, the doctrine of the good will, though it may afford a valid canon of subjective right, throws no light on what actually ought to be done in any particular case. The theoretical difficulty is that this doctrine places the man who is faithful to a low ideal on a level with one who is faithful to a high one. It is paradoxical to count as of equal goodness a conscientiously murderous dervish and St. Francis of Assisi. It is wrong to neglect the precept, "Take heed that the light which is in you be not darkness."⁵

Both these difficulties, however, may be avoided by an ethic which adds to the Kantian form the doctrine that some particular ideal is true in the sense of being

¹ Mark ix. 45-47.

² Luke xiv. 26.

³ Cf. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, p. 100, on Jesus' own complete devotedness.

⁴ Cf. Boutmy, *Jesus*, p. 139.

⁵ Cf. *Pro Christo et Ecclesia*, p. 104.

the right object of endeavour. There will, indeed, still be difficulty in balancing degrees of faithfulness against degrees of truth in the ideal. It will not be decided whether a man who follows very earnestly a low ideal of what he ought to do is better or worse than one who follows less earnestly an ideal that is somewhat higher. The imperfectly dutiful lover and the imperfectly loving follower of duty will still lack an order of precedence. But at least the picture of the *perfect* man will have been drawn. There will be no indeterminateness about that.

Now, in the Jewish law, the ideal provided where-with to fill the Kantian form was a mingled catalogue of deeds and qualities: Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, but also, Thou shalt not covet. In Greek ethics an advance upon this was made by the elimination of deeds. The ideal became solely one of qualities—justice, benevolence, courage, temperance, and so on. This standpoint was not, of course, in conflict with the other. It did not repudiate the fruit of conduct; it merely traced it to the root of character. It came, in fact, not to destroy, but to fulfil. It did not abandon the primitive creed, but built for it a deeper foundation. The ideal presented by Jesus went beyond the pagan ideal in just this same manner. It did not repudiate the catalogue of virtues, but found for them a new foundation in the pivotal doctrine of love. Love to God and love to man; this was the law and the prophets. Except as the expression of love, even meekness and humility were not virtues.¹

This, I suppose it would be generally agreed, was

¹ Cf. *Pro Christo et Ecclesia*, p. 66.

Jesus' central teaching. So stated, however, it is not entirely free from ambiguities that demand some attempt at further amplification. First, and most fundamental, Is love a means or an end, or both? Clearly, one interpretation of the doctrine might be: "All the old rules of conduct and all the virtues were justified as *media axiomata* to some further end. The new rule of love is justified because it subserves that end still more effectively. On this view, Jesus would be understood to have accepted broadly the common opinion of His time as to what was *ultimately good*, and to have set himself to show that this good could best be reached by love-motivated action. The second interpretation is that Jesus regarded love as good absolutely, and not as a means; and the third, that He regarded it as good in both senses.

Of these interpretations the first is certainly, and the second probably, untenable. The correct interpretation, as it seems to me, is that Jesus regarded love both as a good in itself, and also as a means to good.

This view, it should be noticed, may be accepted without prejudging the further question whether or not love is the only attribute of agents that is ultimately good. The fact that it is good as means may appear, at first sight, to imply a negative conclusion upon that point. But it does not really do so. For the good to which love in one person is a means may be simply more love in other people. It is not necessary that there shall be anything else good ultimately. It may be merely—

One with another, soul with soul,
They kindle fire from fire.

For all we know as yet, Norbert may interpret Jesus rightly when He says:

There is no good on earth but Love, but Love :
What else looks good is some shade flung from Love ;
Love gilds it, gives it worth.

We have, then, to ask that further fundamental question: Were there, as a matter of fact, for Jesus other attributes of agents good in themselves besides love? That many things we superficially call good we only consider good because of the gilding love gives to them is, I think, indisputable. Though I am aware that the circumstance of companionship being an *essential* ingredient in most concrete goods does not prove it to be the *sole* ingredient, yet I hold that in many cases something very much like this does seem to be proved by direct introspection. It is, however, a long step from that conclusion to the broader conclusion that love is the *only good*. I do not think that we can take that step, and I do not believe that Jesus took it. Whether He believed intellect to be good in itself we have no evidence, but the whole course of His ministry goes to show that He did believe this of happiness. He sympathised with pain, and He went about healing sick people. To deny that He really cared for the happiness of others, though He acted as if He cared for it so keenly, is surely straining facts to fit a theory.

If this be so, Jesus' ethical teaching is not a rounded whole. Once grant that there are other things good besides love, and we get repeated within the domain of objective good the difficulty I have already noticed in the relation of objective to

subjective good. What order of precedence have varying degrees of love and amounts of happiness? Is the goodness of the universe increased the more by rather unhappy love or rather happy indifference?

The fact, however, that Jesus omitted certain things is no reason for slackening attention on those other things that He did not omit. Given, then, that love is a part and an important part of good, what exactly does love mean? If any one objects *in limine* to such a question on the ground that love is a simple, unanalysable feeling like pleasure, I can only appeal to introspection. To me it appears that love, as we ordinarily understand it—I do not, of course, mean merely sexual love—is not a simple, but a highly complex state of consciousness. I seem to distinguish in it some seven-distinct elements. It includes—I am not using any special order—(1) a wish for one's friend's good generally; (2) a wish in particular for his happiness; (3) admiration in some sort for some qualities in him, and a sense of one's own inadequacy; (4) a wish to be with one's friend; (5) a wish for reciprocity of affection, and perhaps some sadness at the lack of it, and even, it may be, an element of jealousy; (6) a curious reverence that erects a barrier against further intimacy, a barrier that one both wishes and does not wish to break down;¹ (7) over and above these things, an emotional attitude that does not lend itself to further description, and that may be called, perhaps, the *warmth* of affection.

I do not, of course, stress that particular form of

¹ Thus Tyrrell well writes: "It is at the margin, where the conquering light meets the receding darkness, that love finds its inspiration" (*Lex Orandi*, p. 49).

analysis or suggest that all the elements distinguished are always present. But that love in the widest sense can be split up into parts somehow seems to me certain. And it also seems certain that some of these parts will involve an element of egoism. The desire for reciprocity, at all events, will almost always be there, and in day-dreams may betray itself. No doubt the hero *tries* to keep his heroism secret—that is part of the game—but somehow the secret always leaks out, and the story ends like Enoch Arden.

Now, if love, in our ordinary meaning, is thus complex, are we to hold that Jesus' praise of it included the whole or only a part? Did it in particular include the selfish element, or did it refer to an idealised love from which that should be purged away? I think we must say that the love He envisaged was a love wholly lost in its object, and, like His own love for men, freed from every taint of self.

But, even so, the teaching is not explained. Love, in any interpretation, is not self-contained. It must be directed outward from the self to something conceived as *other* than self. Is it then material in Jesus' teaching what this other is? Is the goodness of love, in short, independent of the object of love as conceived by the lover? ¹ The answer apparently is No. The right object, Jesus tells us, is God and Man, and furthermore, not Man merely, but *every* man, for every man is our neighbour.

The objection commonly urged against this view is that love is not a matter of will and does not come at

¹ The distinction between the object as it really is and the object as conceived is not made explicit in Jesus' teaching, and the problem concerning organic goods, discussed in Essay IV. p. 83, is not raised.

call. This, however, is not valid. It is, indeed, true that it cannot be our *duty* to do the impossible; but still, what it is impossible for us to do may nevertheless be good. The real difficulty seems to me to be a different one, the suggestion, namely, sometimes read into this rule of Jesus, that, as between different men, our love should be *impartial*. It appears to me clear that, if the object of love as conceived by the lover affects the goodness of love at all, this attitude of impartiality cannot be the right one; for all men are not conceived as alike. It may, no doubt, be answered that, in actual fact, Jesus did not counsel impartiality, or at least that there is no clear proof that He did counsel it. Perhaps so; but, in that case, there is another gap in the ethic, for we are without guidance as to the way in which our love were best distributed.

From all this it seems clear that there is not in Jesus' recorded sayings a complete ethical doctrine such as would satisfy a scientific maker of systems. This cannot be found there. But it is also true that this should not be sought there. What we may seek and do find is an unrivalled clearness of moral perception, unregarding of formulas and unfettered by tradition, that throws into bright light broad tracts on the sphere of good. To harden the parables into rules and the sayings into a canon of conduct is mistaken loyalty. It is to confuse intuition with that reflection about intuition which goes to make philosophy. It would imprison the seer in the pedant's robe, and blur "the features of a conception, a life, a character, which the world might reverence more wisely, but can never love too well."¹

¹ Sidgwick's *Review of "Ecce Homo,"*

VI

THE ETHICS OF NIETZSCHE

BETWEEN philosophy and poetry a sharp contrast is sometimes drawn :

Do not all charms fly
At the bare touch of cold philosophy ?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven ;
We know her woof, her texture ; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air and gnomèd mine.

That Keats was right in this even Paracelsus at last confesses. Nevertheless, below the contrast there lies a deeper unity. The spirit of wonder and reverence that prompts the greatest poetry is also the impulse to philosophy. Philosopher and poet confront the same problem. The difference between them is not in attitude, but in method, the one following the hard road of systematisation, the other flying to the same goal on wings of intuition. In some parts of the field of truth, no doubt, men who work by these divergent ways are apt, as men, to represent antithetical types. But over the whole field this need not be so,

for in some parts of it the main work of systematisation is just to cut away obstructions from intuition. This is the case in ethics. Systematic work in that department is, as I conceive it, almost wholly negative; its business is just this, to break down those false systems which our irrational thirst for unity has set up and which, so long as they hold the field, blur and obscure insight. Positive construction in ethics is insight and little else. Here poet and philosopher meet, and that is why Nietzsche, musician and artist to the core as he is, is nevertheless a philosopher also.

The poetical element in him, while it makes his work literature, does not and cannot be expected to permit the comprehension of it as a whole to be easy. His exposition is disjointed, sometimes almost incoherent. Some methodological key we must bring to the task ourselves, if we are to hope to understand him. The key which I propose to employ is the familiar and time-worn distinction between means and end. It is by ignoring this distinction and assuming that Nietzsche is condemning *in themselves* things which he really condemns only *as means*, that the popular conception of his teaching seems to me to have lapsed most signally from truth.

I

Let me begin by stating the general problem of practical ethics. Our ultimate goal, of course, is to promote the greatest possible amount of goodness in itself. Since, however, everything that there is produces effects, we cannot always work with success towards this end by manufacturing things that are

good in that way. For these things may produce other things bad in themselves, and the badness of the effects may outweigh the goodness of the original cause. It is this practical difficulty, stated here of design in very abstract form, which Nietzsche envisaged in the concrete, and from which, as a centre, a great part of his teaching radiates. It is his clear view that certain things, admittedly bad in themselves, are nevertheless desirable on the whole because of the predominating goodness of their effects, and also that certain other things, admittedly good in themselves, ought to be destroyed because their effects are more than equivalently bad. I shall illustrate these two points in turn.

Of things admittedly bad in themselves, suffering or pain is one. Nietzsche, in my opinion, knew this perfectly well; and, *pace* certain paraders of paradox, I can find no ground for attributing to him the opposite opinion. But, while he knew this, he knew also that suffering often produces other states of mind that are good in themselves. Therefore, shaking himself angrily free from that sentimental sympathy which looks to the moment only, he welcomes suffering and will not have it done away. "The discipline of suffering," he writes, "of *great* suffering—know ye not that it is only *this* discipline that has produced all the elevation of humanity hitherto? The tension of soul in misfortune which communicates to it its energy, its shuddering in view of rack and ruin, its inventiveness and bravery in undergoing, enduring, interpreting, and exploiting misfortune, and whatever depth, misery, disguise, spirit, artifice or greatness has been bestowed upon the soul

—has it not been bestowed through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering?"¹ And, as things have been in the past, so in this respect must they always be. Even when beyond-man is perfected, this discipline must continue. The beyond-man must have a beyond-dragon that is worthy of him.²

Nor is suffering the only thing bad in itself that is, in Nietzsche's view, desirable by reason of its effects. He speaks in the same tone of that bondage of the spirit, which, according to him, Christianity produced in Europe during the middle ages. "This tyranny, this arbitrariness, this severe and magnificent stupidity, has *educated* the spirit; slavery, both in the coarser and finer sense, is apparently an indispensable means even of spiritual education and discipline";³ and again, "Many there are who threw away everything they were worth when they threw away their servitude."⁴

In these two instances it will be noticed that the evil which Nietzsche would retain produces its good effects in the persons upon whom it itself impinges, so that each person is better on the whole than he would have been if it had not been there. This condition is, however, by no means essential to his view. If an evil will produce more than equivalent good effects he is indifferent to where these goods are located. He is prepared to sacrifice one man for the good of other men in just the same way as he is prepared to sacrifice one aspect of a man for the good of his other aspects.

¹ *Beyond Good and Evil* (English tr. by Helen Zimmerman), p. 171.

² *Thus spake Zarathustra* (English tr. by Alexander Tille), p. 211.

³ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 109.

⁴ *Thus spake Zarathustra*, p. 85.

Hence his thesis that there are gradations of rank among persons, that "moral systems must be compelled first of all to bow before gradations of rank," and that "it is immoral to say that what is right for one is proper for another."¹ The point is that some persons, being incapable of realising any large good in themselves, contribute best to the goodness of the whole by remaining bad in themselves, and, in their badness, serving merely as means. In this category, apparently, Nietzsche places all the women in the world. No higher education of woman for him. "Her first and last function is that of bearing robust children."² She must not in any way be "cultivated," lest her fitness for that office be impaired. And the same is true of all common people. They too promote goodness best when, at the sacrifice of all chance of goodness located in them, they remain evil and serve as means. "The essential thing in a good and healthy aristocracy is that it should *not* regard itself as a function either of kingship or the commonwealth, but as the *significance* and highest justification thereof—that it should therefore accept with a good conscience the sacrifice of a legion of individuals, who, *for its sake*, must be suppressed and reduced to imperfect men, to slaves and instruments. Its fundamental belief must be precisely that society is *not* allowed to exist for its own sake, but only as a foundation and scaffolding, by means of which a select class of beings may be able to elevate themselves to their higher duties, and in general to a higher *existence*; like those sun-seeking climbing plants in Java—they are called Sipo Matador—which encircle an oak so long and so often with

¹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 165.

² *Ibid.* p. 187.

their arms, until at last, high above it, but supported by it, they can unfold their tops in the open light, and exhibit their happiness.”¹

From this last instance of badness that should be retained for the sake of good effects, we pass easily to cases of goodness that should be destroyed to obviate bad effects. It is here that Nietzsche's great denunciations enter, and here that, through them, he has been widely misunderstood. The point may be put broadly in this way. Among the qualities usually considered virtues sympathy and love for other men occupy a high place. Nietzsche finds, however, that the *actions* to which these qualities prompt are frequently of a kind to produce bad effects. They lead to the preservation of many persons, who, when the good of future generations is taken into account, had, on the whole, better be allowed to perish. Hence, he calls in the first instance for a change of *action* on the part of sympathetic and altruistic persons. “Do I command you to love your neighbour? I rather command you to flee from your neighbour and to love the most remote. Love unto the most remote future-man is higher than love unto your neighbour. And I consider love unto things and ghosts to be higher than love unto men. This ghost which marcheth before thee, my brother, is more beautiful than thou art. Why dost thou not give him thy flesh and thy bones?”² “What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal.”³ “Thus my great love unto the most remote commandeth: ‘Spare not thy neigh-

¹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 225.

² *Thus spake Zarathustra*, p. 81.

³ *Ibid.* p. 8.

bour! Man is something that must be surpassed.’”¹
 “Myself I sacrifice unto my love, and my neighbour as myself, thus runneth the speech of all creators.”²
 That this is not an easy or a light thing Nietzsche, himself tender and pitiful, feels most keenly. “This is hardest,” exclaims Zarathustra, “to shut one’s open hand because of love.”³ “This, this in *my* declivity and my danger, that my glance hurleth upward and my hand would fain clutch and lean upon—depth!

“My will clingeth round man; with chains I bind myself unto man because I am torn upwards unto beyond-man. For thither mine other will is longing.”⁴

“*Love* is the danger of the loneliest one, love unto everything *if it only live*. Laughable, verily, is my folly and my modesty is love.”⁵

“In sparing and pity lay always my greatest danger, and all human kind wisheth to be spared and endured. With truths kept back, with a foolish hand and a befooled heart, and rich with the small lies of pity, thus I have always lived among men.”⁶

This pity could with sternness be beaten down for the wretched and the small, but to beat down pity for the higher man, that was the *last sin* to which the evil announcer summoned Zarathustra. “Then Zarathustra was silent and confused and agitated. At last he asked like one hesitating: ‘And who is it whom thou callest so?’

“‘Thou knowest well,’ answered the fortune-teller, hotly. ‘Why dost thou hide thyself? The *higher man* it is who calleth for thee!’

¹ *Thus spake Zarathustra*, p. 296.

³ *Ibid.* p. 113.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 225.

² *Ibid.* p. 125.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 208.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 274.

“‘The higher man?’ shouted Zarathustra, horror stricken. ‘What wanteth *he*? What wanteth *he*? The higher man! What wanteth he here?’ And sweat brake out all over his skin.¹

“‘Unto my last sin?’ cried Zarathustra, and angrily laughed at his own word. ‘*What* hath been reserved for me as my last sin?’

“And once more Zarathustra sank into himself, and again sat down on the great stone and meditated. Suddenly he jumped up.

“‘*Pity, pity for the higher man!*’” he cried out, and his face turned into brass. ‘Up! *That* hath had its time.’”²

There can, I think, be little doubt that in all this there is a certain confusion between states of mind and conduct resulting from them. It is not really sympathy for his neighbour that Nietzsche condemns, but certain kinds of anti-social action resulting from that sympathy. This, I think, is clearly shown in a passage in *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which he refers to the so-called *paramount* religious. The passage runs:—

“One has to thank them for invaluable services, and who is sufficiently rich in gratitude not to feel poor at the contemplation of all that the ‘spiritual men’ of Christianity have done for Europe hitherto! They have given comfort to the sufferers, courage to the oppressed and despairing, a staff and support to the helpless!”³ This and the spirit that prompted it he does not condemn, but rather praises. What he does condemn in them is that “they have kept the

¹ *Thus spake Zarathustra*, p. 357.

² *Ibid.* p. 488.

³ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 83.

type of 'man' upon a lower level—they have preserved too much *that which should have perished*." For, to work for the preservation of all the sick and suffering "means in deed and in truth to work for the *deterioration of the European race*."¹

It is, thus, a misunderstanding of Nietzsche to assert that he condemns sympathy and love even as means. What he condemns is the direction which they at present take, and it is only when he finds it impossible to alter their direction that he is driven to his sternest cry that the good men who will not change in this must perish for the sake of the greater good of the whole. This is the meaning of Zarathustra's cry:

"Oh, my brethren, understood ye this word? And what I said of the last man?"

"With whom is the greatest danger for the whole human future? Is it not with the good and just?"

"*Break, break the good and just!* Oh, my brethren, understood ye this word?"²

II

This completes the first half of my paper. I now pass away from the problem of practical ethics and turn instead to the fundamental problem of theoretical ethics, the problem of determining what things are good in themselves. Nietzsche's solution of this problem is found in his discussions of Beyond-man. With most modern writers, he holds that ultimate goodness does not belong to anything but conscious

¹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 83.

² *Thus spake Zarathustra*, p. 317.

persons, and in these discussions he tries to display the kind of conscious persons to whom it does belong. Those persons are beyond-men. "Beyond-man is my care; with me, *he* and *not* man is the first and only thing. Not the neighbour, not the poorest one, not the greatest sufferer, not the best one";¹ and again, "I teach you beyond-man; man is something that shall be surpassed; what have ye done to surpass him?"² Our business is to examine this conception of beyond-man who is thus announced as the repository of all good. Before, however, that can be done profitably, the ground must be cleared of certain actual or possible misunderstandings.

It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to say, in the first place, that Nietzsche's conception of the beyond-man has nothing to do with any higher form of existence to which actual men may attain after bodily death. He definitely repudiates any such idea. "I love those who do not seek behind the stars for a reason to perish and be sacrificed, but who sacrifice themselves to earth in order that earth may some day become beyond-man's."³ "Remain faithful to earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of super-terrestrial hopes."⁴ It is easy to recognise here a literary kinship with George Meredith. Beyond-earths and Paradises have no place in Nietzsche's philosophy.

The second preliminary point is more difficult. Is beyond-man, in whom alone ultimate good resides, conceived by Nietzsche as future or as present? Comte, it will be remembered, and George Meredith find the goal of their endeavour in the future ex-

¹ *Thus spake Zarathustra*, p. 429.

² *Ibid.* p. 5.

³ *Ibid.* p. 8.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 5.

clusively. The sole function of this generation is, in their view, to sacrifice itself for posterity. That far-off divine event commands their lives :

The young generation ! Ah, there is the child
Of our souls down the ages.

Nor is Nietzsche without analogous passages. Angered by the pettiness of the men around him, he often seems to say that beyond-man is in no sense to be found among them. "Ye become ever smaller, ye small folk ! Ye comfortable ones, ye crumble away."¹ "Strange and a mockery to me are the present ones unto whom my heart hath driven me of late. Banished am I from my fathers' and my mothers' lands. Thus I love only my *children's* land, the undiscovered, in the remotest sea. For it I bid my sails seek and seek."²

I do not think, however, that this passage is really decisive. No doubt, Nietzsche looked to the future as a more secure seat for beyond-man than the present ; but this does not necessarily imply that he regarded it as his *only* seat. There is here an ambiguity analogous to that involved in the Kingdom of God of Christian Theology. That kingdom is regarded by the New Testament writers, sometimes as a future form of world polity, at other times as a state of heart which may exist in people at any period in the world's history. In like manner, it is not entirely clear in Nietzsche's writings whether beyond-man is a kind of man who, it is hoped, will appear in the future, or whether, as we may say, beyond-man is within you

¹ *Thus spake Zarathustra*, p. 251.

² *Ibid.* p. 173. Cf. also p. 303.

now as well as then. Further, it is not only, as I think, the difficulty that is the same in the two cases. The solution also is the same. Beyond-man and the Kingdom of God both mean in their deepest use a state of heart. There is no reason inherent in the nature of things why this state of heart should not be found in greater or less measure among people as they are here and now. As a matter of fact, however, it is not so found to any large extent. Consequently, Christian theology and Nietzsche alike look forward to a future time when this good thing, now rarely and spasmodically seen, will dominate the world. The Kingdom of God and beyond-man—the case is the same with both—are at once present *and* future.

If this be so—if beyond-man is a kind of con-creted whole summarising Nietzsche's views of what qualities are good in themselves and as ends—to promote beyond-man means simply to promote the development of those good qualities whether among present or among future people. We may, therefore, pass to our final question, that of determining what qualities Nietzsche considered to belong to beyond-man and so to be good in themselves.

On this point the evidence in the two books that are reputed to contain the gist of his ethical teaching, *Thus spake Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, is scanty but fairly explicit. We learn that beyond-man is a person of "lofty spirituality." His morality is the noble morality as distinguished from the slave-morality; and "faith in oneself, pride in oneself, a radical enmity and irony towards all 'selflessness' belong to the noble morality."¹ Again:

¹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 229.

"Brave, unconcerned, scornful, violent—thus wisdom would have us to be; she is a woman and ever loveth the warrior only."¹ Again: "What is good, ye ask? To be brave is good."² And yet again: "Free from the happiness of slaves; saved from gods and adorations; fearless and fear-inspiring; great and lonely; this is the will of the trustful ones."³

The same view is implied indirectly in Nietzsche's manifold denunciations of men as they are. "Verily, I laughed many a time over the weaklings that thought themselves good because they had lame paws."⁴ "Not your sin, your moderation crieth unto heaven; your miserliness in sin even crieth unto heaven."⁵ "Oh, that ye would renounce that half-willing and resolve upon idleness as one resolveth upon action! Oh, that ye would understand my word: 'Be sure to do whatever ye like—but first of all be such as *can will*.'"⁶ "Verily, like preachers of penitence and fools, I proclaimed wrath and slaughter against their great and small things. 'Oh, that their best things are so very small! Oh, that their vilest things are so very small!'"⁷ "Not unto *that* stake of torture was I fixed that I know man is wicked. But I cried, as no one hath ever cried: 'Alas, that his wickedness is so very small! Alas, that his best is so very small!'"⁸

Strength and energy then, I take it, is for Nietzsche the primary quality of beyond-man. It is an essential ingredient in all real goodness. But it is not the only

¹ *Thus spake Zarathustra*, p. 49.

³ *Ibid.* p. 145.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 169.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 252.

² *Ibid.* p. 60.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 293.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 326. Cf. also pp. 282, 283.

ingredient. It is also necessary that there be no one-sidedness. This is the theme of Zarathustra's very striking speech about Reversed Cripples :

"And when I came out of my solitude and crossed this bridge for the first time I trusted not mine eyes, and gazed there again and again, and said at last : 'That is an ear, an ear as great as a man !' I gazed there still more thoroughly. And really, under the ear something moved, which was pitifully small and poor and slender. And, truly, that immense ear was carried by a small, thin stalk ; and the stalk was a man ! He who would put a glass before his eye could even recognise a small envious face ; also that a little bloated soul was hanging down from the stalk. The folk, however, informed me that that great ear was not only a man, but a great man, a genius. But I never believed the folk when they spake of great men—and kept my belief that he was a reversed cripple who had too little of all things and too much of one thing."¹

The difficulty about this illustrative statement is its merely negative character. Its positive correlate and the ideal to which it points is, of course, that of wholeness, the full and harmonious development of all our capacities. On this aspect of things, indeed, Nietzsche says little, but enough to reveal his mind. Thus, he tells us that in beyond-man even the evil qualities must be present. "The vilest is necessary for the best of beyond-man."² It may be interesting to note too that sympathy, which as I have already said, is popularly supposed to be totally condemned by Nietzsche, is accorded a place : "Be sure to love

² *Thus spake Zarathustra*, pp. 201, 202.

¹ *Ibid.* p. 430.

your neighbour as yourselves, but first be such as love themselves.”¹ And again: “A man who is *master* by nature; when such a man has sympathy, well! that sympathy has value.”²

The manifold difficulty of this view is well known. Others beside Nietzsche—T. H. Green, for instance, at one of the discordant poles of his thought—have held the good life to consist in the full and harmonious development of all our capacities. But in every case the same objections hold good. It is not merely that human beings possess capacities that, so far as experience goes, are in large measure mutually exclusive; that we do not find the pitiless man also markedly pitiful or the rash man markedly deliberate. For, conceivably, under some “ultimate angels’ law” these psychological incompatibilities might be found lying together in unity. But, what is the precise significance of “fulness” and “harmony” of development? If we try to give clear meaning to these ideas, are we not reduced to saying that our various capacities ought to be developed in “right” or “proper” proportions? Unfortunately, however, an ideal framed in that way is no solution to the ethical problem. It does not answer, but merely states that problem; for the whole difficulty is to determine *what* proportions are right or proper.

To this difficulty Nietzsche, at one place in *Beyond Good and Evil*, does, indeed, suggest an answer. Our capacities ought to be developed, he seems to say, so far as they make for life—serve “as factors which must be present, fundamentally and

¹ *Thus spake Zarathustra*, p. 252.

² *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 259.

essentially, in the general economy of life (which must therefore be further developed if life is to be further developed)."¹ I do not know how far this suggestion is to be taken seriously. Its inadequacy, I think, is obvious. Mere quantity of life does not present itself to our consciousness as the only good thing; it may not even present itself as necessarily good at all. What we want to discover is the nature of the *good life*. It is contrary to our whole ethical experience to believe that the good life is merely life, and that all sorts and conditions of life are equally good. I conclude, therefore, and I suspect that in most moods Nietzsche would have conceded, that the nature and qualities of Beyond-man have not been determined. He is still the ghost that marches before us, more beautiful than we are, but only dimly seen. He does not stand out clear-cut against the sky as an artist in ethics would wish. Still, for Zarathustra, the man of practice, he suffices; for he points him the way to his work.

¹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 33.

VII

THE OPTIMISM OF BROWNING AND MEREDITH

BROWNING and Meredith are both, in some sense, optimists. The word Optimism is, however, so elastic, and embraces so many and various shades of meaning, that the bare use of it conveys but little information. At the outset, therefore, a distinction must be drawn between optimism of feeling and optimism of thought. On the one hand, there is an emotional attitude of buoyancy and expansion, and, on the other, a philosophical view of the universe. Logically these two things are distinct, however true it may be that psychologically they are connected. It is with optimism as a theory, and not as a constitutional tendency, that this paper is exclusively concerned.

Even when thus restricted, however, the term remains ambiguous. Under it there may be distinguished at least four divergent philosophical opinions :

- (1) That the total amount of good in the universe, either at present or on the whole, exceeds the total amount of evil ;
- (2) That evil is subordinate to good, in the sense

that all evil can be shown to conduce to some good result ;

- (3) That good and evil are at present in conflict, but that evil will ultimately be overcome and disappear ;
- (4) That the universe is completely good, and that evil is a mere illusory appearance.

Under these four heads, I shall try to examine and compare the philosophic outlook implicit in the poetry of Browning and Meredith respectively. Before, however, that task can be attempted, a fundamental objection needs to be overcome. It may be, and indeed is, held by some writers of authority, that any attempt to isolate the reflective elements in poetry from their emotional setting is foredoomed to failure :

Song is not Truth nor Wisdom, but the rose
Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eye.

The thought and the feeling, it is said, constitute an organic whole, which cannot be divided without ruin to its essential character. Save for the words, the tune is idle ; save for the tune, the words are cold and dead.

If this be so, our attitude towards poetry should be receptive and not critical. Attention should be focussed upon the whole as a whole, and not upon the logical links by which the parts are held together. To attempt to wrest from poetry the element of pure meaning is not to analyse, but to destroy it. As Martineau has well said : " Under the torture of analysis, that great engine of logical power, beauty, gives up the ghost and dies." Poetry, in short, from the nature of the case, cannot be *vivisected*.

This, no doubt, is true; but it is not the whole truth. The ideas of a poem resemble, as it were, the dry bones round which the living reality is somehow mysteriously woven. Any one who, in search for the secret of life, should pass to and fro among his friends in the spirit of an anatomist, would, indeed, be a comic—and a tragic—spectacle. But, to analyse always is one thing, and to analyse sometimes, quite another. Poetry is much more than, and wholly different from, its dry bones; and yet, on fit occasion, to study the configuration of these is not necessarily an occupation to be frowned on.

So far in general justification of attempts to distil the meaning out of poetry. It remains to inquire whether, in the case of the two poets who form the subject of this paper, any special difficulties have to be encountered. So far as Meredith is concerned, the answer is clearly in the negative. His attitude is frankly didactic. Poetry to him is a vehicle for the expression of his reflections upon life and duty. If, therefore, any scheme of philosophy can be extracted from his writings, there need be no hesitation in treating that scheme as his own. With Browning, however, the case is different. On more than one occasion he has protested, both in poetry and in prose, against the practice of attributing to himself the opinions expressed by his characters. These opinions, he declares, in the preface to *Pauline*, “are always dramatic in principle, so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine”; and in *House and Shop*, written much later, the same protest is repeated. In view of so explicit a caution, it cannot be assumed that even those opinions which occur in the mouths of

characters to whom they are not natural, are endorsed by the poet. For there is often a cleavage between what a person does believe, and what he would like to believe; and, in such a case, he may be tempted, especially if writing in dramatic form, to let his imagination play about the good rather than the true, and to represent in his writings the universe, not of his knowledge, but of his desire. In some degree this was probably the case with Browning. At all events, we cannot rule out the possibility in the same absolute way that we can in regard to Meredith. It is well, therefore, to recollect that the sharp contrasts of view which appear in the works of the two poets might be softened in an indefinite degree if we could compare the men themselves.

With this caution in mind we may proceed to our main problem. What is the relation towards the various forms of philosophic optimism displayed in the poetical works of Browning and George Meredith?

In the first place, neither of them tries to blind himself to obvious facts. *Prima facie*, they both recognise, in the world of external experience, that vast circle of pain and failure and doubt, which to Newman was the source of so eloquent a grief. "I apprehend," says Browning, "the monstrous fact" of evil. There is

Evil and good irreconcilable,
Above, beneath, about my every side.

Francis Furini.

To Meredith, the sadness in life and the bitterness of death are no whit less vivid:

Her ebbing adieu, her adieu !

The word of the world is adieu :
 Her word, and the torrents are round,
 The jawed wolf-waters of prey.
 We stand upon isles, who stand :
 A Shadow before us, and back,
 A phantom the habited land.
 We may cry to the Sunderer, spare
 That dearest ! he loosens his pack.
 Arrows we breathe, not air.
 The memories tenderly bound
 To us are a drifting crew,
 Amid grey-gapped waters for ground.
 Alone do we stand, each one,
 Till, rootless as they, we strew
 Those deeps of the corselike stare
 At a foreign and stony sun.

A Faith on Trial.

In the face of these pessimistic premisses, what precisely for our poets does optimism mean? That form of it, which merely states that the total of evil is less than the total of good, *statistical* optimism, if one may so say, does not seem especially to interest either of them. It is with the other three forms that their writings chiefly deal.

To begin with, they are both optimists in the sense of holding that evil conduces to some good result. Both insist that conflict and struggle are necessary factors in the development of character. Even, therefore, though bad as ends, they are good as means. Thus Meredith writes :

Behold the life at ease ; it drifts.
 The sharpened life commands its course.

Contention is the vital force.

Hard Weather.

And Browning in the same strain :

We garland us, we mount from earth to heaven,
Just because exist what once we estimated
Hindrances, which better taught, are helps we now confess.

And again, in *A Death in the Desert* :

And as I saw the sin and death, even so
See I the need yet transiency of both,
The good and glory consummated thence.

Optimism of this order, though it does not logically imply, is very apt to pass into that third variety which looks to the ultimate triumph of good over evil; and, in the case both of Browning and of Meredith, it is, in fact, carried forward to this consummation. But the manner in which the two poets picture to themselves that far-off divine event is not the same. For Browning, the final victory of good is intimately bound up with a belief in the survival of personality after death. For Meredith, on the other hand, the victory belongs, not to the individual, but to humanity at large, and is proclaimed in company with a definite rejection of the doctrine of personal immortality.

I propose to illustrate this difference of view by a few quotations.

There is a well-known passage at the beginning of *The Ring and the Book*, in which Browning, addressing the spirit of his wife, voices his hope of an eventual reunion :

Never let me commence my song, my due
To God, who first taught song by gift of thee,
Except with bent head and beseeching hand
That still, despite the distance and the dark,
What was again may be ; some interchange
Of grace, some splendour, once thy very thought,
Some benediction anciently thy smile.

For him, beyond the river of death the country is not undiscovered. Rather, he believes of it, that whatever of knowledge, or of character, or of Love, has been gained in the battle of life, will there live on in every individual soul :

O lover of my life, O soldier saint,
No work begun shall ever pause for death,
Love will be helpful to me more and more
I' the coming course, the new path I must tread,
My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong for that.

The Ring and the Book (Pompilia).

Because he regards earthly life as a mere stage in a journey—a training ground and pupil's place—his grief is small at the leaving of it, "I count," he says,

Life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on, educe the man."

In a Balcony.

"So take and use thy work :
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain of the stuff, what warpings past the aim !
My times be in thy hand !
Perfect the cup as planned,
Let age approve of youth and death complete the same !"

Rabbi Ben Ezra.

For Meredith, on the other hand, so far as the individual is concerned, death closes all. The dream of immortality is a symbol conjured of fear and hope. Wisdom is stern, and bears no promise in her hand. No :

Cry we for permanence fast,
Permanence hangs by the grave ;
Sits on the grave green-grassed,
On the roll of the heaved grass-mound.

A Faith on Trial.

Not differently from any other fruit or child of Nature, the individual human spirit comes from the void and returns to it again :

The pine tree drops its dead ;
 They are quiet as under the sea.
 Overhead, overhead,
 Rushes life in a race,
 As the clouds the clouds chase ;
 And we go,
 And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
 Even we,
 Even so.

Dirge in Woods.

This opposition of view concerning human immortality affects fundamentally the content of the two poets' optimistic creeds. In Browning's view, the victory of good, when it comes, will be shared by each several human soul. In the attainment of general good there will be no loss of private good ; but rational self-interest, equally with rational benevolence, will find its satisfaction. Consequently, there is no hesitation, at the close of life, for Gerard de Lairese to express

Heart's satisfaction that the past indeed
 Is past, gives way before life's best and last,
 The all-including future.

For whence should regret come, if

There shall never be one lost good ! What was good shall be
 good as before ;
 The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;
 What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good
 more ;
 On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven the perfect
 round !

Abt Vogler.

In Meredith's version of the third variety of optimism there is not this concurrence between the individual and the universal end. There is in it no promise that he that sows in tears to-day will be among those that hereafter reap in gladness :

Full lasting is the song, though be
The singer passes.

The Thrush in February.

The City of God will descend from the clouds ; but we shall not rise up to welcome it. Rather :

The dream of the blossom of Good
Is your banner of battle unrolled,
In its waver and current and curve

With the hopes of my offspring enscrolled :

A Faith on Trial.

The young generation ! Ah, there is the child
Of our souls down the Ages ! to bleed for it, proof
That souls we have.

The Empty Purse.

It is among a far-off perfected humanity, known to us only through imagination, that this blossom, in whose fragrance we shall not share, will come to flower. Our private end will not be realised, rational self-interest not satisfied. The good of Meredith's optimism belongs to a future from which *we* are excluded. Then—not now—

Then the meaning of Earth in her Children behold ;
Glad eyes, frank hands, and a fellowship real,
And laughter on lips as the bird's outburst
At the flooding of light.

The Empty Purse.

The fourth variety of optimism declares that the universe is already perfect, or, in the words of a

sentiment which the late Professor Sidgwick, in his *Practical Ethics*, attributes to "the general man," "that the world with all its evil is somehow good, as the outcome and manifestation of ideal goodness." To Browning, with his faith in an omnipotent and beneficent Ruler of the universe, this view comes with commanding force. He is not even content with the doctrine which Mr. Bradley suggests when he writes, that "our one-sidedness, our insistence, and our disappointments may somehow all subserve a harmony, and go to perfect it."¹ Rather, for him evil simply cannot be at all, neither in the whole nor in any separate part. No:

Man's fancy makes the fault !
 Man, with the narrow mind, would cram inside
 His finite God's infinitude.

Bernard de Mandeville.

Standing beneath Guercino's picture at Florence, and praying for the angel's benediction, he dreams of the wonderful results that would follow the touch of that divine hand:

I think how I should view the earth and skies
 And sea, when once again my brow was bared
 After thy healing, with such different eyes.
 O world as God has made it ! all is beauty,
 And knowing this is love, and love is duty.
 What further may be sought for or desired ?

The Guardian Angel.

The view which Browning thus eloquently expresses is not required by Meredith's philosophy. In his writings, therefore, the fourth variety of optimism is not to be found.

¹ *Appearance and Reality*, p. 201.

It only remains briefly to criticise the series of opinions which I have been endeavouring to expound. What are we to think of the philosophic doctrines thus presented? Does either group of them fulfil the first requirement of philosophy, internal consistency? There can be little doubt that the answer must be in the negative.

In Browning's *Weltanschauung* the main difficulty is introduced by his attitude towards the last variety of optimism. It is of a twofold character. In the first place, the proposition that evil is illusory strikes at the very root of morality. For, obviously, if it is valid, all conduct, howsoever vicious and debased in appearance, is in reality good. In the second place, this proposition must, if sincerely held, render the second and third varieties of optimism, which, as we have seen, Browning strenuously maintains, wholly meaningless. Evil being declared unreal, it becomes futile to speak of it either as a means to good, or as in process of being overcome by good.

These results the poet, under the guidance of certain idealist philosophers, does, indeed, make an effort to avoid. His solution is to declare that Time is a mode of man. Though real to him, it is not real to God. Evil, however, falls within the domain of Time. Consequently, it is both real from the standpoint of man and unreal absolutely. In this way we are enabled, it might seem, to maintain without contradiction at once a vigorous ethical system and all the three varieties of optimism. Such reasoning, however, crumbles under analysis. In the first place, if applied to evil, it cannot but be applied to good also, for that too is known to us only in and through Time. Hence, good as we

conceive it, equally with evil, must be unreal absolutely. Of the *really* good we have no experience and can, therefore, form no conception. And yet the fourth variety of optimism predicates it of the universe! Is not such an optimism blind? In the second place, the distinction upon which this whole fabric of argument rests is not, in the last resort, defensible. How can evil be real from one point of view and unreal from another? Is not the admitted fact that temporary evil exists itself an absolute evil? Must we not conclude that Browning has contrived, not to avoid, but merely to veil a fundamental inconsistency in his thought?

Nor do Meredith's theories fare much better. They are not, indeed, encumbered with the view that evil is illusory. But they involve difficulties of their own scarcely less important. In the first place, they are not in accord with the poet's general epistemological methods. Throughout his writings he is continually condemning attempts to transcend experience:

What is dumb
We question not, nor ask
The silent to give sound,
The hidden to unmask,
The distant to draw near.

Woodland Peace.

His creed that good will finally triumph in a perfected humanity cannot, however, be got from experience. It is a faith just as much, and just as little, susceptible of scientific proof as the doctrine of immortality. In so far as he accepts it, he does transcend experience, and thus violates his own fundamental principle.

In the second place, the Utopia which he postulates is itself difficult to recognise as wholly good. It is confronted with the inevitable question: Can a world in which the fact of death continues really be conceived as a perfect world? Meredith boldly declares that it can. It is not death, according to him, that is bad, but the thirst for individual life. The "dragon of self," the "taint of personality," the "proud letter I," these are the real evils. They it is that press a veil upon man's eyes and hide from him the true "reading of earth."

He will not read her good,
Or wise, but with the passion Self obscures;
Through that old devil of the thousand lures,
Through that dense hood:
Through terror, through distrust,
The greed to touch, to view, to have, to live:
Through all that makes of him a sensitive,
Abhorring dust.

Earth and Man.

It is egoism and not the fact of death that needs to be burnt away that the world may be wholly good. Once let this be done: then the great Mother Earth may still devour her offspring: still, from the individual destined to sacrifice, no cry may touch her, and no prayer appease:

But read her thought to speed the race,
And stars rush forth of blackest night:
You chill not at the cold embrace
To come, nor dread a dubious night.

The Thrush in February.

For love, disrobed of every selfish element, will have come into life; love, free from craving, seeking not its own, "flaming over I and me"; and, beneath the light

of that crowning sun, the shadow of death will have lost its form.

This is very eloquent and very persuasive; but is it true? No doubt, if I become perfectly unselfish, I shall not wish for continued life for myself for my own sake. But does the fact that in Meredith's Utopia every one is perfectly unselfish really make it less bad that every one must die? Is it not more reasonable to say that the better people are the greater, and not the less, is the evil of their extinction? I cannot see that Meredith's very just condemnation of selfishness really touches this point. I agree that selfishness is bad; but I think that the death of an unselfish person is bad too. Unless death is done away, evil will not be overcome and disappear. Meredith's optimism, equally with Browning's, fails to make good a claim to be considered a consistent articulated whole.

To this disappointing twofold conclusion there are at once a positive and a negative side. Positively, it may stand as a protest against a practice, now not uncommon, of accepting one's favourite poet as an inspired teacher of philosophic doctrine. From this point of view Browning has long been, and Meredith is now becoming, the centre of a cult. But, the hope to find a stable view of the universe in the writings of either of them is a delusion of dilettantism:

O Raphael, when men the fiend do fight,
They conquer not upon such easy terms!

The riddle of the universe is burked and is not solved, if we are content to find an answer in the warmth and glow of melodious verse.

But the negative side of the conclusion is at least

equally important. It does not follow that, because poetry in general, and that of these poets in particular, fails to teach philosophy, it is therefore irrelevant and useless to would-be philosophers. On the contrary, a poet's ear is often attuned to experiences beyond the grasp of common men. He has an insight and a power of perception, and a hold upon concrete reality, which the thinker in his study often lacks. His "visions of the night and of the day" have in them, therefore, something beyond their immediate value as lofty expressions of art. Embodiments of beauty, they are also means to knowledge—the marble and the silver and the gold, wherefrom, with toil and pain, the temple of Truth is reared.



THE END



THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW

AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS

WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN
THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY
WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH
DAY AND TO \$1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY
OVERDUE.

JUN 27 1939

18 Nov '62 CL

REC'D LD

NOV 12 1962

YB 23034

BD4

P54

Figure

189172

