A SKETCH OF MORALITY

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BY

M. GUYAU.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THERE can be little doubt that the present moment offers a fit opportunity for introducing to a large circle of English readers this book of Guyau's, which, in his own country, is rightly considered his masterpiece. Guyau is already known in England by his remarkable and suggestive work on *Education and Heredity* and *The Irreligion of the Future;* and another work from him, on so important a subject as Morality, may furnish a much-needed source of inspiration and encouragement, at a time when moral science is evidently entering upon a period of renewed energy and wider interest.

Stimulated by the great difficulties of an ever-increasing complexity of life, under circumstances which render many of the old creeds and religions incompetent to grapple with the problems demanding solution; distressed by a mental chaos which threatens to retard all progressive efforts by fitful reactions; the lovers of freedom and social amelioration turn to Morality for the support and the strength-giving quality without which life is doomed to decay and destruction.

But, in order to make the influence of morality a living reality, instead of a shadowy and conventional dogma, the study of its principles should be approached with a deep

reverence for human nature and truth, and a broad-minded sympathy, which alone can achieve success in so arduous an undertaking.

In this sphere of moral science, which includes all that is of most vital importance to man, the author of *Morality Independent of Sanction or Obligation* is a master-spirit. He merits the study of all men and women who look for the development of the highest and best from germs which lie hidden in the human breast itself.

That Guyau is one of ourselves, born in the central life of the nineteenth century, gives all the more significance and actuality to his thoughts, and fills his writings with a convincing interest which the utterances of authors belonging to earlier times cannot possess in the same degree and intensity. For to each generation the hope and the light of the future must necessarily spring from its own present. The past may give us the eternal essence of human thought, which has an historical and unquestionable value; but the present alone can fully express its own needs, capacities, and forces. The present must work out its own salvation.

Neither Socrates nor Christ, neither Aristotle nor Buddha, neither Luther nor Kant, can give us the keys to the problems of an age which was unknown to them. Our springs of life, the energies of our new birth, take their rise in the most highly-gifted minds of our own era. And among these finely-organized and superior natures Guyau stands one of the foremost.

Born in 1856, a typical offspring of the second part of our century, we find in him a personality specially endued with a genius for reflecting the intellectual and moral evolution of the age. His are the very doubts and negations which we experience, and his are the very hopes and ideals

which shall lift us out of the depths of mechanical materialism. Exclusive attention to physical and external phenomena has occupied our minds, and shut us out from the sphere of reflective and emotional activity, which is none other than the sphere of morality.

Guyau, in no way hampered by an antiquated education, found himself, from the very beginning of his intellectual life, at the point which even now a great many enlightened minds only reach after a severe struggle. He possessed the great advantage of which Emerson speaks in his essay on "Worship": "For a great nature it is a happiness to escape a religious training—religion of character is so apt to be invaded." We should like to add: Religion of thought—that is to say, the loyalty to truth—is so apt to be lost. From this danger Guyau escaped, his first and only religion having been the idealism of a Plato and a Kant. These were the masters from whose lofty conceptions he gradually evolved the standpoint whence the royal road to human self-direction lies open before his vision and his efforts. And his nature was such as to unite the qualities of the thinker and moralist with those of the artist and poet. While acting as the mirror of all the conflicting tendencies and characteristics of his age, it remained a witness to the higher unity which underlies all existence.

The great discoveries of modern science, the works of Darwin and Spencer, only half understood or wrongly applied by many of their would-be followers, found in Guyau an intelligence capable of recognising their golden grains of truth, a mind open to accept some of their fundamental verities, but also a mind aware of their limitations and shortcomings. It was given to this young and aspiring poet-philosopher to add to the sound and healthy naturalism

of his day an idealism without which moral evolution lacks its vital spring and its fullest meaning. In him lived, from him went forth, an idealism which, while rooted firmly in nature, could nevertheless soar upwards into the higher regions of thought and imagination. He believed in the doing of goodness for its own sake; in virtue free from any material or outward obligation or sanction; in duty relying solely upon its own incentives and forces; in a morality living and growing from its own seeds. This belief was inspired by the expansion and development of life itself. This new faith, freed from the bonds and chains which but too often doom lower conceptions of morality or religion to sterility, opened up the prospect of a future in which it should become possible to realize the ideal of a sane, healthy, and strong race directing its powers and capacities to their highest use. Instead of the external authority of a God, or the equally external authority of categorical imperatives *imposed* upon our freedom (as even the great Immanuel Kant still more or less conceived morality), Guyau constructed a kind of natural determinism of impulses and sentiments, which, disciplined through reflection and experience, are a law unto themselves.

Morality is thus conceived as a natural, internal energy for good, translating itself into action by its own exuberance of vitality. It is an abundance of force in natural overflow, and thus the life of a moral agent is mingled with that of its fellow-creatures. Instead of an outer law of restraint, which incessantly struggles with an unwilling individual (and it is this which forms the basis of ordinary morals), we here find a moral power, which may be so trained and increased as to subdue evil tendencies far more successfully than is possible under categorical imperatives or apodictic rules.

The great merit of the book is that it unfolds this ideal of the loveliness of the natural moral ideal, and renders it so vivid as to create the desire for its realization. The display of this ideal as a possibility is an invaluable service in a period which is threatened on the one side by moral dissolution, and on the other by a return to mental chaos and superstition. Guyau perceived that the situation was critical. Morality must justify itself, or it must cease to exist. The latter alternative was not possible to a soul such as his, which loved virtue, and therefore already believed in it, and in the possibility of its realization on earth.

If no ready-made theory, no system, no dogmas, can be got out of this book, there remains the great merit of its bringing home to us the conviction that to our time belongs the task of creating a new mental and moral guidance, which shall enable the individual and the race to steer a happier course.

"This is a great task, and it is our task." So ends a book which gives to the serious and open-minded student many suggestions as to the best way of fulfilling this task. It is thus both a call and a sign-post. Guyau threw light on whatever problem he touched, and, by virtue of his large-hearted sympathy and singularly gifted nature, his soul realized the possibility of ultimate harmony and peace between those conflicting tendencies in human nature which give rise to the riddles of existence.

As an artist he felt, as a thinker he discovered, as a moralist he taught, that only the harmonizing of the different spheres of human thought, emotion, and will could banish sorrow and pain. In him the æsthetic and moral qualities were so mixed that his conception of

morality was lit up by the ardour and enthusiasm of art, and his conception of art was strengthened by steadfast moral aspiration. The intensity of his life-impulse and force drove his nature to go out towards others, thus exemplifying that action and re-action of the individual and his surroundings which may solve the problem of conflicting altruism and egoism.

No nobler task than the one set by Guyau could be given to the twentieth century; and to those who believe in its mission he should no longer be a stranger. In Guyau, who has not unjustly been called "the Spinoza of France," they will find the inspiration needed for the carrying on of all social efforts and reforms. His high-souled sincerity and his ceaseless striving after truth and virtue mark him out as a standard-bearer in the struggle for the emancipation of humanity.

GERTRUDE KAPTEYN.

ERRATA.

Page 44; six lines from bottom. For "antagnostic" read "antagonistic."

Page 135; middle of page. For "κινδυηος" read "κινδυνος."

Page 172; eleven lines from top. Delete "guilty."

MORALITY INDEPENDENT OF OBLIGATION OR SANCTION.

PREFACE.

An ingenious thinker has said that the aim of education was to give to man "a bias towards goodness."* This saying clearly shows the foundation of morality as generally accepted. To the philosopher, on the contrary, there may not be in conduct one single element for the presence of which the mind cannot account, one obligation which does not explain itself, one duty the necessity for which is not clearly shown.

We intend, therefore, to investigate the character and extent of a conception of morality in which "bias" should have no part; in which everything would be supported by reason, and appreciated at its true value, whether with regard to certainties or with regard to merely probable opinions and hypotheses. If the majority of philosophers —even those of the utilitarian, evolutionist, and positive schools—have not completely succeeded in their task, this is because they wanted to put forward their rational moral philosophy as nearly adequate to the ordinary moral philosophy, as having the same scope, and also pretending to have rendered it as *imperative* in its precepts. This is not

* "*Le préjugé du bien*" (Vinet).

possible. When Science has overthrown the dogmas of the different religions, she has not pretended to replace them all, nor to immediately supply a distinct object, a definite food, for the religious need; her position with regard to morality is the same as with regard to religion. Nothing indicates that a conception of morality which is purely scientific—that is to say, based solely on that which is known—must agree with the general conception of morality, composed for the most part of *feelings* and *prejudices*. To make these two conceptions of morality coincide, Bentham and his followers have too often violated facts. They were wrong. One can, moreover, understand very well that the sphere of *intellectual* demonstration does not equal in range the sphere of *moral* action, and that there are cases in which a definite and rational rule happens to fail. Till now, in cases of that kind, habit, instinct, sentiment, have guided man; these may still be followed in the future, provided it is done with clear knowledge, and that, in following them, one is conscious of obeying, not some mysterious obligation, but the most generous impulses of human nature, together with the most just necessities of social life.

One does not undermine the truth of a science—for instance, of moral science—by showing that its object as a science is limited. On the contrary, to limit a science is often to give a greater stamp of certitude; chemistry is but alchemy limited to observable facts. Likewise we believe that a purely scientific morality should not pretend to embrace everything, and that, far from wanting to exaggerate the extent of her domain, it should endeavour to settle its limits itself. It must consent to say, frankly: In such and such a case I am unable to *prescribe* imperatively in the name of *duty*. Thus the sense of obligation

and of sanction can no longer exist. Consult your deepest instincts, your most vivid sympathies, your most normal and most human aversions; after that you may make metaphysical hypotheses about the foundation of things, about your own destiny, and that of your fellow-creatures. Starting from this precise point, you are left to yourself—in other words, to your "self-government." This is freedom in morals—consisting, not in absence of rule, but in absence of scientific rule, wherever such cannot justify itself with sufficient rigour. Here begins in morality the part of philosophic speculation which positive science can neither suppress nor entirely replace. In climbing a mountain there comes a certain moment when we are wrapped in clouds, which hide the summit; we are lost in darkness. It is the same on the heights of thought: one part of morality, which is mingled with metaphysics, may be forever hidden in clouds, but there must also be a solid basis, and we must know with precision the points where man should resign himself to enter cloudland.

Among recent works on morality, the three which, for different reasons, have appeared to us to be the most important are: in England, "The Data of Ethics," by Spencer; in Germany, "The Phenomenology of the Moral Conscience," by Hartmann; in France, "The Criticism of Contemporary Moral Systems," by M. Alfred Fouillée. It seems to us that by the reading of these works, so different in character, two points are brought forward at the same time. On the one hand, the conception of morality of the Naturalist and Positivist schools furnishes no *unchangeable* principles, either in the way of obligation or in the way of sanction; on the other hand, if an idealistic conception of morality can provide any, it is of a purely *hypothetical* and

not of an assertive nature. In other words, what comes within the order of facts is not universal, and whatever is universal is a speculative hypothesis. The result is that the imperative, in so far as it is *absolute* and *categorical*, disappears on both sides. We accept, on our own account, this disappearance; and, instead of regretting the moral variability, which is the result of it within certain limits, we consider it, on the contrary, as the characteristic of the future conception of morality. In many respects this conception will not only be "autonomous," but "anomos." In contrast with the transcendent speculations of M. de Hartmann on the folly of the will to live and on the *nirvana* imposed logically by reason as a *duty*, we admit, with Spencer, that conduct has for motive power the most intense, the fullest, the most varied life; whereas our conception of the conciliation of individual and social life is other than of Spencer. On the other hand, we recognise, with the author of the "Critique des Systèmes de Morale Contemporains" (M. Alfred Fouillée), that the English school and the Positivist school, which admit an "unknowable," have been wrong in expelling every individual hypothesis from this subject; but we do not think, as does this author, that the unknowable itself can contribute a "principle practically limiting and restricting conduct," a principle of mere justice, which would be, as it were, a medium between the categorical imperative of Kant and the free metaphysical hypothesis. The only admissible "equivalents" or "substitutes" of duty, to use the same language as the author of "La Liberté et le Determinisme," appear to us to be:—

1. The consciousness of our inward and superior *power*, to which we see duty practically reduced.

2. The influence exercised by *ideas* over *actions*.

3. The increasing fusion of the *sensibilities*, and the increasingly social character of our pleasures and sorrows.

4. The love of *risk* in action, of which we will show the importance hitherto ignored.

5. The love of metaphysical hypothesis, which is a sort of *risk in thought*.

These different incentives combined are, for us, all that a conception of morality, reduced to facts only and to hypotheses founded upon them, would be able to offer in the place of the categorical obligation of past times. As to the *moral sanction*, so called, distinct from social sanctions, it will be seen that we purely and simply suppress it, because as "atonement" it is fundamentally *immoral*. Our book should, therefore, be regarded as an attempt to determine the compass, the extent, and also the *limits* of an *exclusively scientific* conception of morality. Its value, therefore, exists independently of any opinions which may be held as to the absolute and metaphysical basis of morality.

INTRODUCTION.

CRITICISM OF THE DIFFERENT ATTEMPTS TO JUSTIFY OBLIGATION FROM THE METAPHYSICAL POINT OF VIEW.

CHAPTER I.

The Morality of Metaphysical Dogmatism. I.—The Hypothesis of Optimism. II.—The Hypothesis of Pessimism. III.—The Hypothesis of the Indifference of Nature.

THE morality of realistic metaphysics admits a "*good in itself*" *(un bien en soi)*, a natural good distinct from pleasure and from happiness, a possible hierarchy of what is good in nature, and, for that very reason, a hierarchy of the different beings. It returns to the old maxim, "To conform one's self to nature." Is it not illusive thus to seek in *nature* a type of *good* to be realized by us, and to which we are under *obligation?* Is it possible to know the basis of things, and the true meaning of nature, so as to work in the same direction? Has nature, scientifically considered, any meaning at all? There are three hypotheses before us—optimism, pessimism, the indifference of nature. Let us examine them in turn, to see if they, from the point of view of metaphysics, justify the absolute, imperative, and categorical obligation of moral philosophy as ordinarily accepted.

I.

THE HYPOTHESIS OF OPTIMISM.—PROVIDENCE AND IMMORTALITY.

1. Such men as Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Spinoza, Leibnitz, have supported optimism, and have tried to found an objective morality in conformity with this conception of the world. One knows all the objections to which this system has given rise. In reality, absolute optimism is rather immoral than moral, for it involves the negation of progress. When once it has penetrated the mind, it produces, as correspondent sentiment, satisfaction with things as they are: from the moral point of view, justification of everything; from the political point of view, respect for all authority, passive resignation, voluntary stifling of every feeling of right, and consequently of every feeling of duty. If all that exists is good, no change is wanted; there must be no interference with the work of God—that great artist. Likewise, everything that happens is equally good; every event justifies itself, since it is part of a divine work, complete in all its details. In the end this brings about, not only the exculpation, but the deification, of all injustice. To-day we are astonished at the temples which the ancients raised to men such as Nero and Domitian; not only did they refuse to understand crime, but they adored it. Are we doing anything else, if we shut our eyes to the reality of evil here below in order afterwards to declare this world divine and bless its author? The worshipping of the Cæsars was with the Romans the sign of an inferior moral state; reacting on that very state, it debased and degraded it still more. As much can be said of the worship of a creative god, who should be responsible for everything, and who, in reality, is irresponsibility itself. Devout optimism is a state analogous to that of the slave, who is happy—of the sick man, who is not conscious of his illness; the latter, at least, does not attribute a divine character to his illness.

Charity itself, in order to exist, needs to believe in the reality and indignity of the miseries which it relieves. If poverty, if sorrow, if ignorance (blessed are the poor in spirit !), if all the evils in this world are not real evils, and are, at bottom, wrongs and absurdities of nature, how will charity be able to keep the rational character which is the condition of existence of every virtue ? And if charity, like a flame without food, is extinguished, what will be the value of your world, which you imagine as a work of absolute charity, of absolute and all-powerful goodness ?

Even pessimism can often be superior in moral value to exaggerated optimism : it does not always fetter effort in the direction of progress ; if it is painful to see everything in black, it is sometimes more useful than to see everything in rose colour. Pessimism may be the symptom of an unhealthy over-excitement of the moral sense greatly hurt by the evils of this world ; optimism, on the contrary, too often indicates an apathy, a numbness of all moral feeling. Whoever does not reflect, and is actuated merely by habit, has a strong tendency to optimism ; the people, being ignorant, taken in a mass, are—especially in the country—pretty nearly satisfied with the present state of things ; they live by routine ; the greatest evil in their eyes is change. The more inferior a population is, the more blindly conservative it is : this is the political form of optimism. Nothing is more dangerous than the desire to give to optimism a religious and moral sanction—to thus make it a guiding principle of thought and of conduct ; the human mind may thus be paralyzed in all its activities—man may be demoralized by his God. Permit me to relate a dream. One night —had some angel or seraph taken me on his wings to transport me to the paradise of the Gospels, near the "Creator" ?—one night I felt myself soaring in heaven, far above the earth. As I rose higher and higher, I heard a sad and weary sound ascending from the earth, a sound similar to the monotonous song of the torrents heard amid

the solitude and silence of the mountain summits. I distinguished human voices—sobs, mingled with thanksgiving; groans, interrupted by benedictions; I heard despairing supplications, the sighs of the dying, rising with the fumes of incense. All this melted into one intense groan—into a symphony so heart-rending that my soul filled with pity. The sky seemed obscured by it, and I no longer saw the sun, nor the joy of the earth. I turned round to him who was with me. "Do you not hear?" I asked him. The angel looked at me with a serene and peaceful look. "These are," he said, "the prayers of men, ascending from the earth to God." While he spoke, his white wing glittered in the sun; but it seemed to me quite black, and full of horror. "What tears I should shed were I that God!" I exclaimed; and I began, indeed, to cry like a child. I loosened the hand of the angel, and let myself fall down again to the earth, thinking there remained in me too much humanity to make it possible for me to live in heaven.

If optimism, instead of considering the world as actually good, tried to re-establish the notion of a continual progress, regulated by a Divine law, would it succeed better in solving the problems of this world, and in laying the foundation of human morality? We do not believe it.

If, with the optimists, one postulates a remote aim, which should be the same for all beings, the means of attaining this aim are so opposite in character that the moralist will be unable to deduce from the knowledge of the aim a practical rule of conduct. All roads lead to Rome; perhaps many roads lead to the *universal aim*, and injustice may serve the same purpose as justice. Even for humanity strife is sometimes as sure a means of progress as agreement; and, from a universally optimistic point of view, it is not evident why the human good will should be more conformable than the evil will to the hidden ends of nature or of God. All conscious will is often even useless, and good seems to be able to work itself out—at least partially—

without the intervention of man. A rock on which a child has just split its forehead may be of more service to the future well-being of this globe than that child, since the rock has been concentrating in itself, during thousands of years, a portion of the solar heat, and thus helps in some degree to retard the cooling of the earth.

The morality of optimist dogmatism commands us to contribute to the good of the whole; but there are too many possible ways. Everything can be useful. The teacher of gymnastics, who placed in the same room a portrait of Jesus Christ and of himself, believed that he was doing as much as Jesus for humanity. Perhaps he was not wrong with regard to universal and providential evolution. The greatest nations have been those whose people were strongest and had the most robust appetite. The Romans astonished the world by their gluttony; the English, the Germans, the Russians (who will have so very important a part to play in the future), are great eaters; even the egoist himself can work for universal perfection—he can produce a healthy, vigorous, hardy generation. Egoism has made the English race great. In many respects Erasmus Darwin was a *naïve* egoist—the genius of his grandson has justified it. Everything becomes merely relative, when viewed with regard to the total results for the whole universe. Which point of the Christian teaching do travellers tell us has most strongly impressed the minds of the negroes? The religious law, with which one wanted to inspire them? No; but the propriety of the Sunday. And the African and Asiatic people, what did they adopt from Mohammedanism? The drinking of water.

In the great organism of the universe the microbe of typhoid fever and cholera has a duty to perform, which it cannot, and dare not, cease to perform; man, also, has special functions—the man of evil as well as the man of good. Seen from a certain distance, good comes out of evil. It is thus that great defects, great sacrifices of men,

are often useful to a nation. It is told that Spinoza, when ill, laughed at the sight of his favourite spider devouring the flies which he threw at him. Perhaps then, applying it to himself, he thought of the internal complaint which was destroying him; perhaps he smiled to feel himself likewise enveloped in some invisible spider's web, which paralysed his will, silently devoured by a multitude of infinitely small monsters.

Once more, in the immensity of the universe, the paths and roads followed by each being, instead of running parallel or of being concentric, cross one another—intersect in every way. He who finds himself, by chance, at the point of intersection is naturally bruised. Thus there is at the root of nature—which it is pretended is "as good as possible"—a fundamental immorality, which is caused by the opposition of functions between living beings, by the quality of space and matter. In absolute optimism the universal good is an end which employs and justifies all means.

Moreover, nothing tells us that the line which leads to this universal good passes directly through humanity, and demands of all individuals that devotion to humanity usually considered by moralists as the practical foundation of moral obligation. If a tiger believed that, by saving one of his fellow tigers, he was working for the advancement of the universal good, he might be mistaken; it is better for all that tigers do not spare each other. Thus, everything blends and grows smooth, viewed from the heights of metaphysical contemplation; good and evil, individuals and species, species and environment. Nothing base is left, as Spinoza, the optimist, said, "in the house of Jupiter."

A last hypothesis has been tried to, in a measure, save optimism, to excuse the creating cause or the eternal substance, without compromising the moral sense and the instinct of progress. An effort has been made to point

out in physical evil (suffering) and in intellectual evil (error, doubt, ignorance) a condition *sine quâ non* of moral good. In this way an attempt is made to justify them. It is said that the purpose of the universe is not outside the human will. The purpose of the universe is morality; but morality presupposes choice and struggle—that is to say, it presupposes the reality of evil, physical or intellectual, and the possibility of moral evil. From this it follows that all the evil so liberally diffused in this world has but one object—to place an *alternative* before man. According to that doctrine, in which Platonism is blended with Kantism, the world itself should be nothing but a sort of living formula of the moral problem. Vega in the Lyre or Arcturus, all the suns, the stars, and their satellites might roll for ever in space, in order that here below, on some one day, in one hour (which, perhaps, has never yet come, according to Kant), a small impulse of disinterestedness might be produced, or that a glass of water might be given, with truly kind intention, to some one who is thirsty. That is beautiful; but how to deduce "a categorical duty" from an hypothesis so uncertain, so contrary, it seems, to facts? If the universe has value only as a simple opportunity for charity, its existence seems difficult to justify, and the ways of God are very tortuous.

The hypothesis which we are examining presupposes the existence of freewill, of a power of choice (at least, noumenal). Without absolute liberty there is no absolute responsibility; neither is there merit or demerit. Let us accept, without examination, all these notions. Even then we can prove to their partisans that this world, made according to their opinion with a view to morality, is far from being the best possible world even in this respect. Indeed, if merit stood in direct ratio to suffering, I can very well imagine a world where the suffering would be still much more intense than in this one; where the contest between right and wrong would be much more heartrending; where

duty, meeting more obstacles, would be more meritorious.

Let us even suppose that the Creator heaps up so many obstacles for his creature that it becomes very difficult for him not to give in—not to be carried away by evil. The merit of the creature, if he triumphs in a supreme effort, will be infinitely greater. If that which is most beautiful to God in the world is the resignation of Job or the devotion of Regulus, why are the occasions for those high virtues so rare, and why does progress make them, day by day, still more rare? In our century a general of an army who behaved like Decius would not in the least assist the victory of his soldiers; on the contrary, his heroism would be a mistake in tactics. The level of virtue falls every day. We do not, in these days, experience those powerful temptations which made the vigorous bodies of St. Jerome and St. Antoine tremble. Progress most frequently runs counter to the development of true morality—that morality which is not born ready made, but makes itself. Perhaps I have in me an energy of will which, fifteen centuries ago, might have transformed me into a martyr. In our days I remain willingly or unwillingly an ordinary mortal, for want of hangmen. In short, how poor is our age in true merit; what decline in the eyes of a partisan of liberty and of absolute morality! If the only aim of the world is to *put the moral problem* before us, we must admit that barbarism puts it much more forcibly than civilization. We are too happy to-day to be deeply moral. We are generally able to satisfy our desires so easily while doing good that it is hardly any longer worth while to commit evil—at least, not on a large scale. When Christ was tempted, it was in a desert, on the mountain; he was almost naked, exhausted by fasting. In these days, when the majority of people are well dressed and do not fast any more, the devil is not seen from so near; but then, if there is no longer a tempter, there is no longer a Christ. To explain the world, you establish a sort of contradiction

between perceptible happiness and virtue. You say, the world is all the more perfect as it is less happy, while perfection lies in the will triumphing over grief and desire.* Well, exactly in the terms of this same contradiction it is possible to condemn the world. Each of its steps towards progress may be considered as a step backward. Every hereditary quality which we acquire in course of time suppresses something of the absolute character of the primitive will. For every other being but God the only means of approaching the Absolute is poverty, grief, and labour; all that which limits externally the power of a being enables him more successfully to unfold it inwardly. The Stoics liked to repeat that Eurystheus had not been the enemy of Hercules, neither had he envied him; but that, on the contrary, he had been his friend and benefactor. They said that every one of us has also a divine Eurystheus, who trains us continuously in the contest; they represented the whole world, the great living Being, as a sort of Alcides in labour. It may be so; but, I repeat once more, our Eurystheus is not very ingenious in multiplying our trials and labours. Fate spoils us to-day, as the grandparents of a family spoil their grandchildren. We live in an environment too large, too expansive; and the perpetual growth of our intelligence gradually chokes our will. You must be logical; you can only justify the world by placing the good, or the condition of good, exactly in that which till now everybody has considered an evil. The consequence is that all creatures, labouring to avoid what they consider as an evil, are labouring at the same time against your theory, and the evolution of the universe goes on in a direction diametrically opposed to your pretended good. Thus you condemn the very work which you wanted to exculpate. Everyone is free to find the good where he understands it; but, in whatever way he understands it, he cannot

* See those ideas summed up in Vallier's *De l'intention Morale.* (G. Baillière; 1882.)

make this world truly good. We cannot even console ourselves by thinking that it is the worst possible of worlds, and that it therefore constitutes the supreme trial to our will. The universe is not an extreme, either for evil or for good; it would be something to be absolutely bad—but the absolute is not of this world. Nothing here below causes us to experience that satisfaction of seeing an aim pursued and gained. It is impossible to trace a plan in the universe —not even that of abandoning all to the meritorious *spontaneity* of created beings. The world has not its end in us, any more than we have our end in the world fixed for us beforehand. Nothing is fixed, arranged, or pre-determined; there is no primitive and preconceived mutual adaptation of things. That adaptation would suppose—firstly, a world of ideas pre-existent to the real world; secondly, a *demiurge*, arranging things according to the given plan, as an architect does. The universe would then resemble certain exhibition buildings, of which all parts are constructed separately, so that afterwards they need only to be adjusted to each other. But no; it is more like one of those strange buildings for the construction of which everybody works in his own way, without considering the whole; there are as many ends and plans as there are workmen. It is a superb disorder; but such a work lacks too much unity to be either absolutely blamed or praised. To look upon it as the complete realization of an ideal of any sort is to lower our ideal—consequently to lower ourselves; it is an error which may become a grave mistake. Whoever believes in a God ought to respect him too highly to make him Creator of the world.

2. The refuge of optimism is personal immortality, which would be the great excuse of God. The belief in immortality suppresses all definite sacrifice, or at least reduces that sacrifice to very little. Before the infinity of duration suffering does not seem more than a point, and the whole actual life diminishes strangely in value.

The idea of absolute duty and that of immortality are intimately connected; the consciousness of duty constitutes for the spiritualists the distinctive mark of the individual in the flux of animal generations, his seal of sovereignty, his title to a place apart in the "kingdom of ends." If, on the contrary, absolute duty is brought back to an illusion, immortality loses its principal claim to existence; man becomes a being like any other—his head is no longer enveloped in a mystic light, like Christ on the mountain, who was transfigured in ascending, and seemed on a level with the divine prophets soaring in heaven. Besides, immortality has always been the principal problem in the conception of morality, as well as in that of religion. Hitherto it has been badly presented, being confused with the problem of the existence of God. In reality, humanity cares little enough about God; not one martyr would have sacrificed himself for that recluse of the skies. What was looked for in him was the power to make us immortal. Man has always been wanting to scale the heavens, and he cannot do it quite alone. He has invented God in order that God may stretch out a hand to him; next he attached himself in love to this divine Saviour. But if to-morrow one were to say to the four hundred millions of Christians, "There is no God; there is only a paradise, a man-Christ, a virgin mother, and saints," they would very quickly be consoled.

In reality, immortality is enough for us. As to myself, I do not ask for a "reward." I do not beg to be united with those I have loved—the eternity of love, of friendship, of disinterestedness! I remember my great despair one day when, for the first time, it came into my head that death might be the loss of love, a separation of hearts, an eternal coldness; that the cemetery, with its tombstones and its four walls, might be the truth; that, from day to day, those who were to me like my moral life would be taken from me, or that I should be taken away from them, and

that we should never be given back to one another. There are certain cruelties which we do not believe because they surpass our understanding. We say to ourselves, "It is impossible," because inwardly we think, "How could I do that?" Nature becomes a personality to us; her light seems a favour especially extended to us; there is in all her creatures such a superabundance of youth and hope that we, even we, also are dazed by this flood of universal life. Thus the ancient form of the religious and moral problem of the existence of God is brought back to this new form—immortality. This problem, in its turn, comes back to the question whether from this moment I exist myself, or whether my personality is an illusion, and if, instead of saying *me*, I ought to say *we*—the *world*. In the case of there being in nature a single creature, however mean in appearance, who could say, "I exist," without doubt he would be eternal. Here we are face to face with two great hypotheses. First, real fusion of all apparent *selves* one with the other; real penetrability of all that which possesses consciousness in nature; reduction of all units supposed to be substantial to phenomenal multiplicities; never-ending vistas, in which the eye loses itself, opened within ourselves as well as outside ourselves. Instead of this, there is another hypothesis—nature having an end, the individual. Like an immense tree, the sap of which is finally concentrated in a few kernels, perhaps also the sap of nature collects together at one point, so as to expand later on. In that case, individuals would form lasting groups. Are there not also islets in the ocean? What is more, some of these individuals would keep together, would get so much attached to one another as never to separate. If only to love were sufficient reason for union, such union would be eternity. Love would make us eternal.

Unfortunately there are many objections to immortality. The first, and one of the most serious, may be deduced from the doctrine of evolution. The character of all

integration, of all individuation, must be provisional, serving only to prepare a larger integration, an individuation more rich. For nature an individual is nothing but a phase of halting, a pause, which cannot be definitive, without which nature would be arrested in her course. The ancients, who with Plato imagined nature to be dominated by immovable types to which she eternally conforms her creations, were able to suppose that those works in which she had succeeded most, and which came nearest to the eternal type, participated in eternity; if nature operated according to types, species, ideas, we might hope, by fashioning ourselves according to these ideas, also to become immortal. But in our days a very different conception prevails. In the beginning of this century it was still possible to believe that the immobility of the animal species points to the existence of a preconceived plan—an idea for ever after imposed upon living nature. Since Darwin we see in the species themselves transitory types, which nature transforms through the ages, moulds which she herself accidentally casts, and which she does not hesitate to destroy one after the other. If the species is provisional, what then is the individual? There is between the individual and the species a solidarity which has not always been understood. It has been incessantly repeated that the individual and the species have contrary interests, that Nature sacrifices one to the other. Would it not be equally and more true to say that she sacrifices both, and that whatever condemns the individual is precisely the condemnation of his species? If the species were immovable, we might hope to be saved by our conformity to it. But no; everything is swept away by the same whirlwind, species and individuals; all passes away, rolling on towards infinity. The individual is a compound of a certain number of thoughts, of remembrances, of wills corresponding one to the other, and of forces in equilibrium. This equilibrium can only exist in a certain intellectual and physical environment which is favourable to it. Now,

this environment can only be supplied during a certain time. Man, as he is constituted, cannot predict eternity. There is no indefinite progress in every sense, either for the individual or for the species; individual and species are only middle terms between past and future. The complete triumph of the future requires their disappearance.

Let us pass on to a second objection which can be made to immortality. If thought, if will were immortal, they would possess a power superior to nature, capable of ruling and subjugating it. According to this hypothesis, life becomes a sort of struggle of the spirit against nature; death would be victory. But why, then, do these triumphant souls stand aside, far from the eternal battle, which continues to be fought without them? Why do they forsake us? And while their power cannot be diminished by death, why do they not use that power in serving man, their brother? How profound, although to themselves unconsciously so, was that belief of the ancients, who saw the souls of their forefathers move and act everywhere around them; who felt the dead revive at their sides; who peopled the world with spirits, and endowed these spirits with a more than human power! If thought conquers death, it should become a providence to others. It seems that humanity would have the right to count upon her dead as she counts upon her heroes, her geniuses, upon all those who lead the others. If there are immortals, they ought to stretch out a hand to support and to protect us. Why do they hide themselves from us? What strength would it not give to humanity to be, like the armies of Homer, conscious of a race of gods, ready to fight on her side? And these gods would be their sons, their own sons consecrated by death; their number would continually increase—for the fertile earth never ceases to produce life—and life would blend with immortality. Nature would thus create beings intended to become a providence over her own self.

That conception is perhaps the most primitive, and, at the same time, the most attractive which has ever tempted the human mind. According to our view, it is impossible to separate it from the conception of immortality. If death kills not, it releases; it cannot throw the soul into indifference or impotence. Hence, according to ancient belief, there must be *spirits* scattered everywhere—active, powerful, and providential. The mythology of the ancients and savages, the superstitions of our country people, must be true. Who, nevertheless, would dare to affirm it to-day, or even to consider the thing as probable? Science has never once proved the existence of a good or bad intention behind one phenomenon of nature. It tends to the negation of spirits, of souls, and consequently of immortal life. To believe in science seems to be to believe in death.

There is a third objection—that illusive thing, the familiar induction of life:—I am; therefore I shall be. This illusion is not less natural. Even to-day there are tribes found in Africa who do not seem able to conceive that it is absolutely necessary for man to die. Among this people the induction based on life still outweighs that based on death. We civilized people are no longer at that stage. We know that our present life has an end. We nevertheless always hope that it will be resumed in another form. Life feels repugnance in representing and acknowledging death. Youth is full of hope. It is difficult for an overflowing and vigorous existence to believe in non-existence. Whoever feels in himself treasures of energy and activity, an accumulation of living forces, is inclined to consider that treasure as inexhaustible. Many men are like children; they have not yet felt the limit of their forces. A child said to me—seeing a horse gallop in a cloud of dust: "I could run as fast if I liked"; and he believed it. A child understands with difficulty that what we wish to do with all our heart we, however, cannot do. Astonished at the things he does, he concludes that he can do everything.

There is nothing so rare as the right understanding of what is possible. Yet every man, when he comes to grapple with certain events of life, feels himself suddenly so dominated, so subjugated, that he loses even the consciousness of struggle. Can our fight be against the earth, which carries us round the sun? It is thus that he who approaches death feels himself reduced to nought—becomes the toy of a power incommensurate with his own. His will, the strongest force in him, resists no more, collapses like a broken bow, dissolves gradually, and slips away from him. To understand how weak life is in face of death, we must have passed, not through those violent and brutal illnesses which stun like a heavy blow, but through those recurrent maladies, which do not directly attack consciousness, which advance with slow and measured progress, and follow a sort of rhythm, seem sometimes to retire, allowing us to renew our acquaintance with life in apparent health, but again throw themselves upon us and hold us fast. In this way the patient successively undergoes the impressions of one who is born into life, and of one who goes to meet death. He has, for a time, the ardour of youth, followed by the exhaustion and prostration of an old man. And while he is young, he feels full of faith in himself, and in the power of his will. He thinks himself capable of ruling the future, ready to conquer in the struggle of life. His heart overflows with hopefulness, which is diffused over all things; everything smiles upon him—from the rays of the sun to the foliage of the trees, to the face of men. He sees in Nature the Indifferent, only a friend, an ally, a mysterious will in harmony with his own. He believes no longer in death, for complete death would be a kind of failure of the will; and a will truly strong believes it cannot fail. Thus it seems to him that, through force of will, he will be able to conquer eternity. Then, without his clearly perceiving it, that fulness of life and youth, which was his hope, gradually expends itself, subsides, disappears like water in

a vase, which continually gets lower without our knowing whither it goes. At the same time, his faith in the future grows weaker and becomes dim. He asks himself if faith and hope may not be the fugitive consciousness of an activity, powerful for the moment, but all too quickly subjugated by superior forces. His will then awakens, vainly makes an effort to rise up again, but falls back ere long with all its weight, giving way under the ruined constitution like a broken-down horse under its harness. Then the mind darkens. A kind of twilight seems to descend and to spread over all our thoughts; evening is coming. The slow, sad labour of dissolution, which necessarily follows evolution has set in. Life relaxes, and disappears by degrees. The unity of life is destroyed. The will vainly exhausts itself, trying to re-combine, to maintain under the same law that bundle of life which is being divided, the union of which constituted the individual. Everything is loosened, is dissolved into dust. Then, at last, death becomes less improbable, less inconceivable to the mind. The eye gets used to it, as it does to the darkness, which descends when the sun has set below the horizon.

Death appears only as it really is—an extinction of vitality, a drying up of the internal energy. And death, thus conceived, leaves less hope. We recover from an accidental stupor; but how is it possible to recover from complete exhaustion? If the agony is long enough, it will be sufficient to make us understand that death is eternal. A torch burnt to its very end cannot be re-lighted. That is really what is most sad in those slow diseases which leave us conscious to the end—it is that they first take away all hope; that we feel existence undermined in its very depth; it is that we feel like a tree seeing its very roots torn to pieces—like a mountain assisting at its own overthrow. In this way one acquires a sort of experience of death; one approaches it near enough by this "*passage à la limite*," familiar to mathe-

maticians, to obtain an approximate knowledge. Annihilation—or, at least, dispersion, dissolution—if that is the secret of death, it is, no doubt, heart-rending to know it; but, still, it is better to become aware of it!

Truly eternal life would be that which should not need to disunite itself in order to pass through the divisions of time, which would be in evidence at all the points of duration, and could with one stroke embrace all the differences which, for us, constitute that very duration. We should then be able to imagine a class of beings, immovable, yet constantly changing, in the same way as, on a meteorological chart, we prognosticate, and we represent by fixed lines the cyclone of the passing storm. But this eternal life, now thought enviable, would, perhaps, constitute our greatest sorrow; for the contrast between ourselves and our surroundings would be greater—the anguish would be perpetual. Everything would fly before we could attach ourselves to it. The God of religions—who, himself eternal, imagines human beings swept away by time—could be nothing else but supreme indifference or supreme despair, the realization of moral monstrosity or unhappiness.

Notwithstanding all the objections of philosophers, man will ever aspire, if not to an eternity without limit, at least to one of indefinite duration. The sadness caused by the idea of time will always exist:—to lose one's self, to forget one's self, to leave something behind along the road, as the sheep leave their tufts of wool in the bushes. To feel that all one's possessions are passing away is despair, said Pascal. Turning and looking back, the heart breaks, like that of the traveller carried off upon a never-ending voyage, who watches the coasts of his native country disappear. Poets have felt this hundreds of times. It is not a selfish despair; it concerns the whole of humanity. The desire for immortality is merely the consequence of memory; life, being apprehended by the power of memory, instinctively projects itself into the future. We want to

find ourselves again, and to meet again those whom we have lost; we want to make up for lost time. In the tombs of the ancients everything dear to the dead was gathered together—his arms, his dogs, his wives. Even his friends committed suicide on his grave; they would not allow that affection could be broken off like bonds. Man becomes attached to all his surroundings—to his house, to a piece of land; he attaches himself to living persons—he loves them. Time robs him of all this, thereby cutting him to the quick. And, whereas life continues its course, healing his wounds, as the sap of the tree repairs the ravages of the axe, memory, working in the contrary direction—memory, that thing which, unknown throughout the whole material universe, preserves his bleeding wounds, and from time to time renews them.

In the end this remembrance of past efforts and their uselessness makes us dizzy. Pessimism then succeeds optimism. Pessimism leads back to a feeling of impotence, and time gives us, at last, that feeling. Life, the Stoics pretended, is a great feast. If that is the case, answers the pessimist, a human feast lasts but a day, and the universe is eternal. It is, after all, a sad thing to imagine an everlasting feast, an everlasting game, an everlasting dance like that of the spheres. That which was at first a joy and a reason for hope becomes at last a burden; great fatigue overpowers us; we should like to step aside—to be at peace; we can go on no longer. Yet we must live. Who knows that death even means repose? We are hurried on in the great machine, carried away by the universal movement, like those foolhardy persons who entered the mysterious circle formed by the Korigans. A great ring entwined them, entranced them, fascinated them; so that, panting, they whirled round and round, until both life and death failed them. But the ring was not broken. It formed itself again more quickly; and the unhappy creatures, while dying, still saw through the veil of death the everlasting ring whirling them round.

It is easy to understand how excessive optimism has produced the reaction tending towards pessimism. The germ of pessimism is in every man; to know and to estimate life it is not necessary to have lived long—it is sufficient to have suffered much.

II.

THE HYPOTHESIS OF PESSIMISM.

PESSIMISM is equally difficult to prove as optimism; it is equally impossible to base a sound and objective conception of morality on the one system as on the other. Pessimism has as its principle the possibility of scientific comparison between pain and pleasure—a comparison in which pain would turn the scale. This system can be expressed thus: the sum of sufferings in the whole of human life forms a total higher than that of its pleasures—whence is deduced the moral philosophy of *nirvana*. But this formula, which pretends to be scientific, has hardly any sense. Should one compare the pains and pleasures with respect to their duration, this reckoning would evidently be against the pessimists; for, in a healthy organism, suffering is generally short. Should one compare pain and pleasure with regard to intensity? But these are not fixed values of the same kind—one positive, the other negative; one expressible by the sign +, the other by the sign −.

It is all the more impossible to establish an arithmetical balance between such-and-such a particular pleasure and such-and-such a pain; since pleasure, varying in function with the intensity of desire, is never the same for two moments of life, and since pain varies equally according to the resistance of the will. Besides, when we recall a past sorrow or pleasure—the only ones of which we have had

experience—we can only do it with all kinds of alterations, and with countless psychological illusions.

In general, pessimists are inclined to compare these two extremes—pleasure *(volupté)* and pain ; hence the predominance which this latter takes in their eyes. Pleasure, properly speaking, is after all a rarity and a luxury ; many people prefer to do without it, and thus to avoid suffering. The refined enjoyment of drinking out of a crystal cup cannot be compared with the pain of thirst.

But a pessimistic conception of morality takes no account of the permanent and spontaneous pleasure of living ; that is because this pleasure, being continuous, shrinks, is reduced in remembrance. It is a law of memory that sensations and emotions of the same nature blend confusedly, collect into a vague mass, and at last become nothing but an imperceptible point. I live, I enjoy ; and this enjoyment of living appears to me, at the actual moment, worth the price. But, if I go back in memory, the indefinite series of pleasant moments forming the thread of life become mixed, reduced to insignificance, because they are all alike uninterrupted. On the other hand, in contrast with these, the moments of intense pleasure and pain increase in significance ; they seem isolated, and stand out prominently from the uniform line of existence.

But intense pleasure, thus detached from the general pleasure of living, is not in my remembrance sufficient to counterbalance suffering ; this is also proved by other psychological laws.

Intense pleasure very soon weakens in remembrance (above all, if it no longer awakens the desire, which forms a part of every sensation and pleasant experience). On the contrary, there is in pain an element which does not weaken with time, and often grows stronger—that is, what is called the sentiment of *intolerability*. A violent pain which, after cessation, is proved to have been bearable, may be absolutely unbearable in remembrance, and so much so that, at

the cost of that pain, all preceding and ensuing pleasures lose their value; hence a new optical illusion which has to be taken into consideration. Pain produces a sort of anguish of the whole organism, an instinctive feeling of danger, which re-awakens at the least remembrance. Even a vague representation of pain will, therefore, always affect the organism more deeply than a picture of intense pleasure not actually desired. Fear is in general more easily roused than desire, and in some temperaments fear is so powerful that some people have preferred death to a painful operation. This preference did assuredly not arise from contempt of life, but from the fact that pain sometimes seems unbearable, and beyond human strength to endure; in other respects simply a sign of weakness of character, of cowardice. Even in a brave man the anticipation or the memory of intense pain will re-echo more strongly than that of pleasure. A soldier, recalling his sensations in cold blood, will picture to himself with far more lively emotion the internal laceration of a sword-cut than any great pleasure in his life; yet in the midst of action the wound may have seemed scarcely noticeable, compared to the joy of victory. But the joy of victory was connected with an excitation of mind, which has disappeared; whereas the thought of his wound still makes him tremble even to-day. We are always prepared to suffer; whereas enjoyment demands conditions so much more complex that we can only with difficulty recall them to our mind. In remembrance, therefore, pleasure and pain are not equal.

We must mention another cause of error in the comparison of happy and unhappy times of life. It is this, that the happy days are those which seem shortest and pass most quickly; the unhappy days, on the contrary, lengthen, so to speak, and thus occupy a larger place in our memory. Pessimism, after all, explains itself by psychological laws. Some of these laws make past pleasures, with which we are satiated, seem of less significance than the pains endured.

There are others, however, according to which future pleasures always seem to have a value superior to the pains which we shall have to endure to attain them. These laws balance one another. This explains the fact that mankind in general are not at all pessimistic, and that the most convinced pessimists rarely commit suicide. We always hope something from the future, even when contemplation of the past impels us to despair. There is a pleasure which dies, so to speak, after every accomplished action, which vanishes without leaving a trace in the memory; yet it is nevertheless the pre-eminently fundamental pleasure—it is the very pleasure of action. It constitutes in great measure the attraction of all objects desired by man, only this attraction withdraws itself when once ends are attained, when once the action is accomplished. Hence, the astonishment of him who tries to judge life by his recollections, and who does not find in his past pleasures a cause sufficient to justify his efforts and his trouble. It is in life itself, in the nature of our activity, that we must look for the justification of our efforts. The rain-drops of a cloud do not all fall into the calyx of a rose. Our actions do not all lead to definite and attainable pleasure; but we act for the sake of action, like the raindrop falls by its own weight; the raindrop itself, if it were conscious, would experience a kind of intense pleasure in going through space, to glide into the vast unknown. This pleasure lies at the root of life, only it disappears from memory, which is no longer the unknown, but the known, and which altogether offers us only what is past and passive.

The pessimistic conception of morality rests, therefore, not on scientific reasoning, but on a purely individual appreciation, in which may enter many elements of error. We perpetually exchange pains for pleasures, and pleasures for pains; but, in this exchange, the only rule as to value is that of demand and supply, and we can rarely say *à priori* such-and-such pains are greater than such-and-such plea-

sures—those of love, wealth, glory, etc. There is no end to the number of people offering themselves to undergo suffering and pain, even without being urged thereto by the necessities of life. We may conclude, therefore, that suffering is not the evil most dreaded by man—that *inaction* is often still worse; that there is, moreover, a particular kind of pleasure which springs from conquered sorrow, and, in general, from every expended energy.

Unhappiness, like happiness, is, in a great measure, an afterthought. We should therefore equally mistrust those who boast of having been perfectly happy, and those who maintain that they have been absolutely unhappy. Complete happiness is formed by memory and desire; absolute unhappiness is formed by memory and fear. We rarely ever, consciously, have been perfectly happy, and yet we *remember* having been so. Where, then, is absolute happiness to be found if it is not in our own consciousness? Nowhere; it is a dream in which we dress up reality; it is the embellishment of memory, as absolute unhappiness is the darkening of memory. Happiness, unhappiness is merely the past—that is to say, that which cannot return. It is also everlasting desire, which will never be satisfied, or fear ever ready to reappear at the slightest thrill of alarm.

Hence, happiness or unhappiness, in the accepted sense of the words, results from a comprehensive view of life, which is often an optical illusion. Certain rivers of America seem to roll along a mass of black water, and yet, if one takes some of this water in the hollow of the hand, it is clear as crystal. Its blackness, which almost looked appalling, was an effect due to the mass of water and the bed in which the river runs. In the same way, each moment of our life, taken separately, may have this pleasant lack of cohesion, this fluidity, which scarcely leaves a perceptible trace in the memory. Yet the whole seems gloomy because of certain luminous hours which seem to penetrate all the others.

In all these questions we are thus surrounded by innumerable illusions. Nothing is real and absolutely certain except the sensation of the moment. We should compare only *simultaneous* sensations of pleasure and pain; but each time that the comparison bears upon past or future sensations, it implies error. The preponderance of pain over pleasure cannot therefore be proved either by *experience* or by *calculation;* on the contrary, experience is against the pessimists, for humanity incessantly proves *à posteriori* the value of life, because it incessantly is looking for it.

Does the pessimist conception of morality attempt to prove its principle by some argument drawn, not from mathematical calculation, but from the very nature of pleasure itself? One of the theses of pessimism is that, pleasure presupposing desire, and desire springing chiefly from want and consequently from suffering, pleasure thus implies suffering, and is nothing but a fugitive moment between two painful situations. Hence that condemnation of pleasure which we find again and again, ever since the time of Buddha, in the conception of morality. But it is very incorrect to represent pleasure as thus connected with pain, because it is connected with desire, and even with want. It is only up to a certain point that want becomes suffering. *Hunger*, for instance, is painful, but *appetite* may be a very pleasant sensation. The spur of want is, then, no more than a kind of pleasant irritation. The general law is this—want becomes pleasant to every intelligent being, when it is not too violent, and when there is the *certainty or the hope* of its near satisfaction. It is then accompanied by the anticipation of enjoyment. Certain so-called sufferings, preceding pleasure—like hunger, thirst, the thrill of passion—enter as elements into the idea formed by us of pleasure; without them the enjoyment is incomplete. Nay, more; taken by themselves, they are accompanied by a certain enjoyment, provided they do not last too long. Where the lover recalls his impressions, the

moments of desire seem pleasant to the very highest degree. They encircle the moment of keenest pleasure, which, without them, would be much too short and too fugitive.

Plato was right in saying that pain can enter into the composition of pleasure; but pleasure, on the contrary, does not enter into the composition of pain. The loathing which follows the abuse of certain pleasures is not at all inseparable from their use; it does not appear as an element in the conception we form of them. Pleasure, therefore, has this superiority over pain—that it not always produces the latter; whereas pain, at least physical pain, by its mere disappearance, cannot fail to give rise to pleasure, and, indeed, sometimes is so associated with pleasure that it represents in itself an agreeable moment.

Sufferings of intellectual origin are not themselves absolutely incompatible with intellectual pleasures. When not very vivid, they mingle. The former give only the latter less striking colours—make them paler, so to speak—which is not unbecoming to them. Melancholy may make certain enjoyments keener. From all sides, therefore, notwithstanding gloomy moralists, pleasure surrounds pain, and even mingles therewith.

Besides, those pleasures which rarely correspond to any painful need—*i.e.*, æsthetic and intellectual pleasures—develop, and become more and more an important element in our lives, the longer we live. Art is, in modern life, a considerable source of enjoyment, which has, so to speak, no counter-weight in pain. Its aim is to succeed in filling with pleasure the dullest moments of life—that is to say, those in which we rest from action; it is the great consolation of the idler. Between two expenditures of physical force, the civilized man—instead of sleeping, like the savage does—can enjoy himself in an intellectual and æsthetic manner. And this enjoyment can be prolonged more than any other. We hear, inwardly, certain symphonies of Beethoven a long time after having heard them with our

ears. We enjoy them beforehand by anticipation; we enjoy them at the moment, and afterwards as well.

In order to solve (if this be possible) the question posed by pessimistic morality, we believe that we must address ourselves not only to psychology, but to biology, and find out whether the actual laws of life do not imply a surplus value of welfare over pain. In this case the positive morality which we uphold would be right in wanting to conform human actions to the laws of life, instead of aiming at final annihilation of life, and of the *desire to live*, as pessimistic morality does.

In the first place, how are the different senses affected by pain? The sense of sight is hardly affected at all by it. So also with the sense of hearing, for the discords which reach the ear, and all the ugliness which hurts the eye, are slight mortifications, which we cannot possibly weigh against the keen enjoyments of harmony and beauty. Pleasure also predominates very largely in the sensations springing from taste and smell, as we generally eat that which pleases these two senses; and, as we must eat in order to live, the very conservation of life presupposes a periodical satisfaction of the organs of taste and of smell—the two being intimately connected. Lastly, very few real sufferings are caused by the sense of touch, if we localize that sense in the hand. All, or nearly all, our physical pain, therefore, originates in our tactile feeling, or in our internal sensibility. Even when more pain than joy comes to us from both these sources, we may still ask ourselves if the suffering would counterbalance the pleasures of all kinds given us by our other senses. But the question arises from a biological standpoint: Is it possible, with respect to internal sensibility, that the feelings of discomfort and suffering, on an average, preponderate over those of comfort and well-being?

We believe it is possible to give a decisive answer to this question. If, in living beings, the feelings of discomfort

really prevailed over those of comfort, life would be impossible. In fact, our vital power does but translate into the language of consciousness that which takes place in our organs. The subjective discomfort of suffering is only a symptom of a wrong objective state of disorder, of the beginning of an illness: it is the translation of some functional or organic trouble. On the contrary, the feeling of well-being is like the subjective aspect of a right objective state. In the rhythm of existence well-being thus corresponds to evolution of life, pain to dissolution. Not only is pain the consciousness of a vital trouble, but it tends to increase that very trouble. In illness it is not good to feel our ailment too deeply, or the sensation exaggerates it. Pain may be regarded as the echo of mischief in the brain. A sympathetic trouble carried into the brain itself is then a fresh evil added to the first, re-acting on it, and finally increasing it. In this way pain, which just before appeared only as the *consciousness* of partial disintegration, now herself appears as an *agent* of disintegration. Excess of pain over pleasure is, therefore, incompatible with the conservation of the species. When with certain individuals the balance of suffering and enjoyment is upset, and the former prevails, this is an anomaly, which usually causes death to the individual without delay. A being who suffers too much is unfit for life. It is necessary for the existence of an organism that, taken as a whole, it should keep up a certain regularity in its functions; pain should be banished, or, at least, be reduced to the lowest degree. Besides, the more natural selection works without restraint, the more does it tend to eliminate the sufferers; in killing the diseased it also stamps out the disease. If in these days philanthropy succeeds in saving a certain number of invalids, it has not yet been able to save their race, which generally extinguishes itself. Let us imagine a ship in a storm, rising and falling on the crest of the waves. The line it follows may be indicated by a series of curves, of which one bend marks the direction of the trough, the other that

of the surface of the water. If at one moment of the passage the descending curve bears the ship down, and she does not rise again, it would be a sign that she is sinking deeper and deeper, and beginning to founder. Even so is it with life, tossed about on waves of pleasure and of pain: if one marks these undulations with lines, and if the line of pain lengthens more than the other, it means that we are going down. The outline stamped on our consciousness by sensation is only a figure representing the very course of our life; and life, in order to exist, needs to be a perpetual victory of pleasure over pain.

What we here say of physical life, as revealed by our inner sense, is also true of moral life. In moral as well as in physical life suffering always marks a tendency to dissolution—a partial death. For example, to lose a beloved one is to lose something of one's self, to begin dying oneself. Moral suffering, if really triumphant, kills morally—crushes the intelligence and the will. Besides, he who, after some violent moral crisis, continues to think, to will, to act in every sense, may indeed suffer, but his suffering will soon be counterbalanced—will gradually be stifled. Life will prevail over the dissolving tendencies.

In moral as in physical life the superior being is he who unites the most delicate sensibility with the strongest will. In him, no doubt, suffering is very vivid, but it provokes a still more vivid reaction of the will. He suffers much, but he acts the more; and as action is always a joy, his joy generally exceeds his pain. Excess of suffering over pleasure indicates weakness or exhaustion of the will, consequently of life itself. The reaction within no longer responds to the outward action. All sensation is a sort of demand addressed to each sentient being. Will you be happy or unhappy? Will you accept or reject me? It is the will which must answer; and the will which gives way to weakness condemns itself—begins a sort of suicide.

In moral suffering one must distinguish between the

purely affective and the purely intellectual. One must distinguish between those who are pessimists upon system—*e.g.*, Schopenhauer—and those who are pessimists owing to heartrending anguish. The life of the first-named may resemble that of us all, and they may after all be very happy; for it is possible to be sad intellectually without being so in the very depths of our heart. No tragedy goes on in the intellect only; or, if for some hours it is acted there, it is not long ere the curtain falls softly of itself, as it were, on this scene still too entirely outside our real selves, and we go back into ordinary life which generally has nothing so dramatic to offer. The pessimists upon system may therefore live long and have a long posterity; that is because they are, so to speak, happy in spite of themselves. But it is not the same with those who find the world miserable because they are really miserable—with those whose pessimism is only an abstract of their own sufferings; these deserve the most pity. But they are condemned beforehand by nature, and, so to say, by themselves. The full consciousness of their unhappiness is but the vague consciousness of their unfitness for life. All physical or moral sufferings, hypochondria, disappointed ambitions, broken affections, are like an atmosphere more or less unfit for respiration. Those who are greatly distressed, the sufferers from spleen, from true melancholy (many people are melancholy only as a matter of pose or system), have neither lived nor taken firm root in life. They are sensitivists injured by a slight shock.

The artists of suffering, like de Musset, Chopin, Leopardi, Shelley, Byron, Lenau, were not made for life; and their sorrows, which have given us their masterpieces, were but the result of a bad adaptation to environment, of an almost factitious existence, which could maintain itself for a certain time, but which could not last long. It is possible to lend a kind of artificial life to the head of a decapitated man. If in such a case the mouth could open and articulate

sounds, surely these would be only screams of pain. In our society there is a certain number of people in whom the nervous system predominates to such a degree that they are, so to speak, brains, heads, without body. Such beings live only by deception, by artifice. They can speak only to lament, sing only to sigh, and their wailing is so sincere that it goes straight to our heart.

Yet we cannot judge humanity by such as these—humanity, which is full of life, and from which the future will come forth. Their shrieks of pain are but the beginning of the pangs of death.

We come to this conclusion—that a certain amount of happiness is a necessary condition of existence. M. von Hartmann supposes that, if pessimistic morality one day triumphs among mankind, all people will agree to return to nothingness of their own will. A universal suicide will put an end to life. This naive conception, however, encloses this truth, that if pessimism planted itself deeply enough in the human heart, it would, by degrees, diminish its vitality and lead, not to the rather burlesque theatrical event of which von Hartmann speaks, but to a slow and continuous subsidence of life—a race of pessimists actually realizing its pessimism—that is to say, increasing the sum of its woes by imagination ; such a race could not survive in the struggle for existence. If the human race and the other animal species survive, it is precisely because life is not too bad for them. This world is not the worst of all possible worlds, since definitively it exists and remains in existence. A moral philosophy of annihilation, to whatever living being it is proposed, is like a contradiction. In reality, it is the same reason which makes existence possible and which makes it desirable.

III.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE INDIFFERENCE OF NATURE.

If dogmatic moral philosophy searches for the most probable hypothesis in the present state of science, it will find that it is neither optimism nor pessimism; it is that of the indifference of nature. This nature—to whose end dogmatism wishes us to conform—shows, in fact, an absolute indifference: (1) with regard to sensibility; (2) with regard to the possible directions of the human will.

The optimist and the pessimist, instead of simply trying to understand, feel like poets—are moved, grow angry, rejoice, attribute to nature good or ill, beauty or ugliness—qualities, in short. Listen, on the other hand, to the man of science; for him there are only quantities, always equivalent. Nature, from her standpoint, is neutral—as unconscious of pleasure as of suffering, of good as of evil.

The indifference of nature to our pains or our pleasures is, for the moralist, an hypothesis not to be taken into account, because it is without practical effect. The absence of a Providence relieving our suffering will change nothing in our moral conduct, once we have admitted that the pains of life, taken on an average, do not exceed the joys, and that existence in itself remains desirable for every living being. But it is the indifference of nature to good or to evil which is of interest to morality. Now, a great many reasons can be given for this indifference. The first is the powerlessness of the human will with regard to the whole universe—the direction of which it cannot change in any appreciable way. What will be the result to the universe of such-and-such a human action? We do not know. Good and evil do not appear to nature to be more essentially opposed to one another than cold and heat to the student of physical science; they are degrees of moral temperature, and it is, perhaps, necessary that, like heat and cold, they should balance each other in the

universe. Perhaps good and evil neutralize each other in the world at the end of a certain time, as in the ocean the different movements of the waves neutralize each other. Each one of us makes his own track, but nature little heeds the direction of that track; it is destined to be effaced, to disappear rapidly in the great, aimless tumult of the universe. Is it really true that the sea still heaves with the wash of Pompey's ship? Has the ocean itself one more wave to-day than of yore, in spite of all the ships which now travel over its waves? Is it certain that the consequences of a good action, or of a crime committed a hundred thousand years ago by a man of the tertiary age, can have modified the world in any single respect? Confucius, Buddha, or Jesus Christ—will they have any effect on nature after a thousand million years? Let us imagine the good deed of an ephemera; it dies, together with the insect, in a ray of the sun. Can the good deed retard for the millionth part of a second the coming of the night which will kill the insect?

Once there was a woman whose harmless madness was to believe herself to be a bride, and on the eve of her wedding. Waking up in the morning, she asked for a white dress, and a bride's crown; smiling, she adorned herself. "To-day he will come," she said. In the evening sadness overmastered her, after the idle waiting; she then took off her white dress. But the following morning, with the dawn, her confidence returned. "It is for to-day," she said. And her life passed in this tenacious, although ever-deceiving, certitude—taking off her gown of hope, only to put it on again. Humanity resembles this woman, oblivious of all deception; it awaits each day the coming of its ideal. Probably it has said, for hundreds of centuries: "To-morrow it will come." Every generation in turn puts on its white dress. Faith is eternal, like the spring and the flowers. The whole of nature has, perhaps, such a faith—at least, the whole of conscious and intelligent nature. Perhaps, an infinite number of centuries ago, on some now dissolved planet, the mystical

bridegroom was already expected. Eternity, in whatever way it be conceived, seems to be an everlasting deception. It matters not; faith bridges the infinite chasm. Between the two gulfs of the past and the future it ceases not to delight in its dream; it sings always the same hymn of joy and of appeal, believing it new each time, although it has lost itself already so many times without being heard. It continues to stretch its arms towards the ideal, which is all the more attractive because it is vague; and it puts on its forehead its crown of flowers without noticing that it has been faded for hundreds of thousands of years.

M. Renan has said: "In the pyramid of goodness raised by the successive efforts of living beings every stone counts." The Egyptian of the time of Khephren still exists by means of the stone he laid. Where does he exist? In a desert, in the midst of which his work is reared, as useless in its hugeness as the smallest grain of sand at its base. Will not the "pyramid of goodness" undergo the same fate? Our earth is lost in the desert of the skies; humanity itself becomes lost on earth; our individual action is lost in humanity. How shall we give unity to this universal effort, how concentrate the infinite radiation of life towards the same point? Each work is isolated; there is an infinite number of small, microscopic pyramids, of solitary crystallizations of Lilliputian monuments, which cannot form themselves into a whole. Probably the just man and the unjust man weigh neither one more than the other on this terrestrial globe, which pursues its way through the ether. The particular exercise of their will can no more affect the whole of nature than the beating of the wings of a bird soaring above a cloud can refresh my forehead. The celebrated formula, *ignorabimus*, may be transformed into this one—*illudemur;* humanity speeds on, enveloped in the inviolable veil of its illusions.

A second reason which "indifferentism" can oppose to optimism is that the great whole, whose direction we are

unable to change, has itself no moral direction—there is absence of aim, complete *non-morality* of nature, neutrality of the infinite mechanism. Indeed, the life of the universe shows very little signs of regular labour with an aim. Long ago Heraclitus compared it with a game. This game is that of the see-saw, which calls forth such shouts of laughter from children. Each being counterbalances another. My part in the universe is to paralyze someone whom I do not know—to prevent him from ascending too high, or descending too low. None of us will carry away the world; its tranquillity is assured by our tumult.

At the basis of the universal mechanism we may imagine a sort of moral atomism, an infinite number of egoisms set to struggle each against the other. There might be thus in nature as many centres as there are atoms, as many aims as individuals, or at least as many ends as there are conscious groups or societies; and these ends might be opposed. Egoism would be the essential and universal law of nature. In other words, there would be coincidence between what we call the immoral will in man and the normal will of every being. This, perhaps, would be the deepest moral scepticism. Each individual would then be no more, and worth no more, than a soap-bubble. All the difference between the *you* and *me* would be that in the first case we are outside the bubble, in the second case inside it. Personal interest would only be a point of view; right would be another; but it is natural to prefer the point of view within our compass to that which is not. My soap-bubble is my fatherland; why should I destroy it?

The love of every *limited* being would be, according to this doctrine, as illusive as the love of self may be. *Rationally*, love has no more value than egoism. The egoist, in fact, deceives himself as to his own importance, which he exaggerates; the lover or the friend as to that of the beloved one. Again, from this point of view, moral

good and evil remain for "the indifferentist" things quite human, quite subjective, without fixed relation to the whole of the universe.

Perhaps there is nothing which offers to the eye and the mind a more complete and more sorrowful representation of the world than the sea. In the first place, it is a picture of force in its wildest and most unconquerable form; it is a display, a luxury of power, of which nothing else can give an idea; and it lives, moves, tosses, everlastingly without aim. Sometimes we might say that the sea is animated, that it palpitates and breathes, that it is an immense heart, whose powerful and tumultuous heaving we see; but what makes us despair here is that all this effort, this ardent life, is spent to no purpose. This heart of the world beats without hope; from all this rocking, all this collision of the waves, there results only a little foam stripped off by the wind.

I remember that, sitting on the beach once, I watched the serried waves rolling towards me. They came without interruption from the expanse of the sea, roaring and white. Behind the one dying at my feet I noticed another; and further behind that one, another; and further still, another and another—a multitude. At last, as far as I could see, the whole horizon seemed to rise and roll on towards me. There was a reservoir of infinite, inexhaustible forces there. How deeply I felt the impotency of man to arrest the effort of that whole ocean in movement! A dike might break one of these waves; it could break hundreds and thousands of them; but would not the immense and indefatigable ocean gain the victory?

And this rising tide seemed to me the image of the whole of nature assailing humanity, which vainly wishes to direct its course, to dam it in, to master it. Man struggles bravely; he multiplies his efforts. Sometimes he believes himself to be the conqueror; that is because he does not look far enough ahead, and because he does not notice far out on

the horizon the great waves which, sooner or later, must destroy his work and carry himself away. In this universe, where worlds rise and fall like the waves of the sea, are we not surrounded, unceasingly assailed, by the multitude of beings? Life whirls round us, envelopes us, submerges us. We speak of immortality, of eternity; but only that is eternal which is inexhaustible, that which is blind enough and rich enough to be always giving without measure. That man becomes acquainted with death who feels the need of rest, who after work lets his hands fall in his lap, for the first time learns that his strength has a limit. Only nature is so untiring as to be eternal. We speak in the same way of an ideal; we believe that Nature has an aim, that she is going somewhere; that is because we do not understand her. We take her for a stream which flows towards its mouth, and will arrive there some day; but nature is like the ocean. To give an aim to Nature would be to narrow her; for an aim means an end. That which is immense has no aim. It is often said that "nothing exists in vain." That is true in detail. A grain of corn is made to produce other grains of corn. We cannot imagine a field which should not be fertile. But nature, as a whole, is not compelled to be fertile. It is the great balance between life and death. Perhaps its grandest poetry lies in its superb sterility. A field of corn does not equal the ocean. The ocean neither works nor produces; it moves. It does not give life; it contains it, or rather it gives and takes it with the same indifference. It is the grand, eternal cradle rocking its creatures. If we look down into its fathoms, we see its swarming life. There is not one of its drops of water which does not hold living creatures, and all fight one another, persecute one another, avoid and devour one another. What does it matter to the whole, of what consequence to the deep ocean, are these inhabitants, wandering at random in its briny waves? The ocean itself gives us the spectacle of a war, a struggle

without truce ; its breakers, the strongest of which cover over and sweep away the weaker ones, represent to us the abridged history of the worlds, the history of the earth and of humanity. It is, so to speak, the universe become transparent to our eyes. This tempest of the water is but the continuation, the consequence, of the tempest of the air ; is it not the shudder of the winds which communicates itself to the sea? The air-waves in their turn find the explanation of their movements in the undulations of light and of heat. If our eyes could embrace the immensity of the ether, we should see everywhere nothing but an amazing clash of waves, a struggle without end, because it is without reason—a war of all against all. There is nothing which is not carried away by this whirlpool. Earth itself, man, human intelligence, nothing can offer us anything fixed to which it would be possible to hold on—all these are swept away in slower, but not less irresistible, undulations ; everlasting war also reigns there, and the right of the strongest. As I thus reflect, the ocean seems to rise around me, to invade all, to sweep away all ; it seems that I am no longer myself, but part of the waves, a drop of the water of those waves ; that the earth has disappeared, that man has disappeared, and that there remains only nature with its endless undulations, its ebb and flow, its perpetual changes of surface, which hide its deep and monotonous uniformity.

Between the three hypotheses of a benevolent nature, an antagnostic nature, or an indifferent nature, how can one choose and decide? It is an idle fancy to give man the law : Conform to nature. We do not know what this nature is. Kant was right, therefore, in saying that we must not ask dogmatic metaphysics to give us a sure law of conduct.

CHAPTER II.

Morality of Practical Certitude. Morality of Faith. Morality of Doubt.

I.

MORALITY OF PRACTICAL CERTITUDE.

THE morality of practical certitude is that which admits that we are in possession of a positive, absolute, apodictic, and imperative moral law. Some represent this law to themselves as containing a substance—a good in itself—which we grasp by intuition, and whose value to our mind is superior to everything else. Others, with Kant, represent this law to themselves as purely formal, and as not containing in itself any matter, any good, any definite end; but only bearing a character of universality, which makes it possible to distinguish the ends as conformable or non-conformable to the law. Thus, according to the intuitionists, we discern, by immediate intuition, the worth and the dignity of actions, faculties, virtues—such as temperance, purity, etc. According to the followers of Kant, on the contrary, the moral character of a deed is only proved if we can generalize the principle of that deed, and thus show it to be disinterested in its nature.

Against the first conception of the morality of certitude stands, above all, the old sceptical argument of the contradictions of the moral judgment—of its relativeness and its uncertainty. This argument has a dissolvent influence on the conception of the law itself, so far as it imposes in an absolute way such or such deeds, such or such virtues. It is difficult to remain faithful to the rites of an absolutist

religion if these rites begin to appear supremely indifferent, and if you no longer believe in the particular god which is worshipped by them.

The problem put by Darwin on the changeableness of duty does not cease, therefore, to be alarming to anyone admitting an *absolute*, *imperative*, *certain*, *universal* good. Would the formula of duty change totally for us if we were descendants of the bees?

There is in every society work of different kinds to be done, which implies, in general, division of the common task—of the labour of the community. Now, the duties of one class of workers will surely differ from those of another class, and may become as strange as the morals of men-bees would be. Even in our present society there are neutrals, as in the society of the bees and ants. These are the monks, whose morals were not in the Middle Ages, nor are yet to-day, perhaps, the same as those of the rest of society. Under Charles VII. an act was committed which is the counterpart of the extermination of the males after fecundation. Companies of mercenaries, become useless, were exterminated; it was believed to be a righteous act. Corporations might exist on the planet Mars quite different from ours; they might have mutual duties very contrary to ours, but imposed by an obligation quite as categorical in form. On our planet—on the earth even—we sometimes see conscience change the character of its guidance. There are cases in which the individual feels an obligation in a wrong way—an obligation to commit deeds usually considered to be immoral.

Let us name, among many other examples, that fact related by Darwin of the conception of certain duties in Australia. The people in Australia attribute the death of their kinsmen to a spell cast by some neighbouring tribe; they consider it, moreover, a sacred duty to avenge the death of any relative by killing a member of one of the neighbouring tribes. Dr. Landor, a magistrate in

Western Australia, relates that a native employed on his farm lost one of his wives through illness. He announced to the doctor his intention to start on a journey, in order to go and kill the wife of a man belonging to a far distant tribe. "I answered him that, if he committed such an act, I would put him in prison for the rest of his life." Thereupon he did not depart, but remained on the farm. But, from month to month, he wasted away; remorse consumed him. He could neither eat nor sleep; the spirit of his wife haunted him—reproached him for his neglect. One day he disappeared. At the end of a year he returned, in perfect health; he had fulfilled his duty. Thus one sees that a sentiment more or less similar to moral obligation serves as an incentive to evil, or purely *instinctive* acts. Thieves and murderers may possess the sentiment of professional duty; animals may vaguely feel it. The feeling of having to do a thing penetrates the whole of creation, as far as consciousness and voluntary movement penetrate.

We know what happened to Alfred de Musset when he was young (the same fact is told of Mérimée). Once, being very much scolded for a childish freak, he went away in tears, deeply penitent, when he heard his parents say, after the door was shut: "Poor boy, he thinks himself quite a criminal!" The thought that his misdeed was not so very *serious*, and that his repentance was mere childishness, wounded him deeply. This small matter remained engraved on his memory for ever. The same thing is happening to humanity to-day. If it comes to imagine that its moral ideal is a childish ideal—changeable, according to the whim of custom; that the end and reason of many duties are puerile, superstitious, humanity will become inclined to smile at itself, to bring no longer into its actions that seriousness without which absolute duty disappears. This is one of the reasons why the sentiment of obligation is now losing its sacred character. We find it brought to bear on too many objects; we hear it applied to too many worth-

less creatures (sometimes even to animals). This variability in the objects of duty proves the error of all intuitionist morality, which pretends to be in absolute possession of an unchanging reason for good. This moral philosophy, formerly adopted by V. Cousin, by the Scotch, and the Eclectics, may be considered as untenable in the present state of science.

There remains the formal and subjective moral philosophy of the followers of Kant, which admits as absolute only the imperative, and considers as secondary the idea formed of its object and application. Against a morality of that sort every objection drawn from facts seems to lose its worth; for is it not always possible to find an answer by making a distinction between the *intention* and the act? If the act is practically harmful, the intention may have been morally disinterested, and that is all that the moral philosophy of Kant demands. But a new problem presents itself. Is there attached to the good intention a feeling of obligation truly supra-sensible and supra-intellectual, as Kant will have it?

The *feeling* of obligation, if exclusively considered from the point of view of mental dynamics, is brought back to a feeling of resistance, felt each time that one wants to take such or such a course. This resistance, being of such a nature as to be apprehended by the senses, cannot arise from our relation to a *moral* law, which hypothetically would be quite intelligible and independent of time. It arises from our relation to *natural* and empiric laws.

The feeling of obligation, therefore, is, properly speaking, not moral; it is sensible. Even Kant himself is obliged to acknowledge that the moral sentiment is, like any other, *pathological;* only he believes this sentiment to be roused by the mere *form* of the moral *law*, without regard to its subject-matter. There results from this, in his eyes, a mystery, which he avows—an intelligible and supra-natural law, which, however, produces a pathological and natural sentiment, *respect.*

"It is absolutely impossible to understand *à priori* how a *pure idea*, not containing in itself anything sensible, produces a sensation of pleasure or of pain.....We are absolutely unable to explain why and how the *universality* of a maxim as such, and, consequently, why morality interests us." There is somewhat of a mystery here. The projection of morality into the domain of sensibility under the form of moral sentiment would be possible without a "why," and Kant nevertheless asserts it to be evident *à priori*. "We are obliged," he says, "to be content with thus clearly seeing *à priori* that this sentiment (produced by a pure idea) is inseparably united to the representation of the moral *law* in every reasonable finite creature." The truth is, we believe, that we really do not see at all any reason *à priori* to join *sensible* pleasure or pain to a law which, hypothetically, would be supra-sensible and heterogeneous to nature. Moral sentiment cannot be explained *rationally* and *à priori*. Besides, it is impossible to prove by fact in the human conscience the act of respect for a pure *form*. In the first place, an unapplied and purely formal duty does not exist. The sentiment of obligation, it is clear, can only be seen to arise when there is some subject-matter given for duty, and even the followers of Kant are obliged to acknowledge this. Hence duty is never grasped by consciousness, except as having relation to certain contents from which it cannot be detached. There is no duty independently of the *thing* we have to do, of the doing of the act. Moreover, there is no duty unless it be towards somebody. The theologians were only half wrong in representing duty as addressing itself to the divine will; there, at least, was some one behind the obligation. Now, in this synthesis of the real indissolubility of matter and form, is the sentiment of obligation still only formal? We believe, from experience, that the sentiment of obligation is not connected with the representation of law as formal law, but is connected with law by reason of its evident

subject-matter and of its aim. Law as law can only be grasped by our mind through its *universality;* but to this precept, "Act in such a way that your maxim may become a universal law," no sentiment of obligation whatever will attach itself, so long as there is no question of social life and the deep inclinations awakened by it, so long as we do not conceive the universality of something, some end, some good, which may be the object of a sentiment.

The universal, as universal, can but produce a *logical* satisfaction, which itself is still a satisfaction of the logical instinct in man; and this logical instinct is a *natural* tendency, an expression of life in its higher form, which is intelligent, favourable to order, to symmetry, to similitude, to unity in variety, to law, therefore of universality. Will it be said that the universal law itself contains at bottom will—pure will? The reduction of duty to the will of law, which itself would still be a purely formal will, far from building up morality, seems to us to produce a dissolvent effect on the will itself. The will to do a certain deed cannot be based on any law which is not founded on the practical and logical value of the deed itself. The old doctrine of Ariston, for instance, did not admit any difference of worth, any degree between things; but a human being will never be content to pursue his aim, saying that the aim is entirely indifferent, that its moral value lies only in his will to pursue it. This will would at once give way, and indifference would pass from the object to himself. Man needs to believe always that there is something good not only in the intention, but also in the act. The conception of a morality exclusively formal, independent of everything else, is a demoralizing one; it is the analogy of the labour which the prisoners in English prisons are obliged to do, and which is without aim—to turn a handle merely for the sake of turning it! No one can be resigned to this. It is necessary that the intelligence should approve

of the imperative, and that a feeling should attach itself to its object.

The other day a little girl, whose mother had entrusted her with a penny for some small purchase, was crushed in the streets. She did not drop the penny. Recovering from a fainting fit, dying, she opened her firmly-closed fist, and handed her mother the humble penny, whose small value she did not realize, saying to her, "I have not lost it." There is something sublime in this bit of childishness; for this little one life was of less importance than the penny which had been entrusted to her care. Well, whatever may be the moral merit which a stoic or a follower of Kant can reasonably discover in this fact, he would be absolutely incapable of imitating it—he, the philosopher, knowing the worth of a penny. Faith would fail him, perhaps not the faith in his own possible merit, but faith in the penny.

Hence it is absolutely necessary, where the question of moral merit is concerned, to transfigure in one's own eyes the *subject-matter* of the meritorious act, and often to attribute a value superior to its real one. A comparison is necessary, not only between the will and the law, but also between the moral effort and the value of the object pursued. If the merit itself still seems good, whatever the object, it is because we recognise in it a power capable of being transferred to a superior object, because we see in it a reservoir of living force, which is always precious, even although this force in a particular case may be wrongfully used. It is, therefore, the possible use which we approve of in the actual use; but it is always its use, and not the power in itself, the will in itself, which we approve. The eagle, soaring upwards to the sun, finally sees all things on the earth on a level. Let us suppose that we, from a sufficiently high point of view, could see all our actions become level as far as the universe is concerned: a good many human interests and acts of disinterestedness would then appear to us equally

simple; their object would not seem to us superior to the penny of the child. In spite of Zeno and Kant, we should then no longer have courage to will and to *merit*: we do not use our will for the mere sake of willing.

It is, therefore, very difficult to admit that duty, variable and uncertain in all its applications, remains certain and *apodictical* in its law, in *universality* for the sake of *universality*, or, if one prefers it, in the will for the will's sake only, as an end in itself. The sentiment which, according to Kant, is attached either to pure *reason* or to pure *will* is the quite *natural* interest we experience in our superior faculties or functions, in our intellectual life. We cannot be indifferent to the rational exercise of our reason, which, after all, is a more complex instinct, nor to the exercise of the *will*, which, indeed, is a fuller force and a potentiality of effects anticipated in their cause. The tree is valuable to us, because we think of the many fruits of the tree—at least, if the tree does not already seem to us *beautiful* in itself; but even then the tree itself appears to be a production, a work, a living fruit; it satisfies certain of our tendencies, our love of "unity in variety," our æsthetic instinct. In the impression produced by "pure reason" or "pure will" are found all these elements of pleasure, use, and beauty.

If the *pureness* were pushed to its utmost limit, the result would be the indifference of the senses and the intellect, and not at all that definite state of the intelligence and the senses which is called the *affirmation* of a law and the *respect* of a law. There would be nothing for our judgment and our sentiment to work upon.

II.

MORALITY OF FAITH.

NEXT to the moral dogmatism of Kant, for whom the form of the law in itself is apodictically positive and practical, we find a somewhat altered Kantism, which makes of duty

itself an object of moral *faith*, no longer an object of certitude. Kant made faith begin only with the postulates following the positive affirmation of duty. To-day faith has itself been magnified into duty.

If, in these days, religious faith, properly so-called, has a tendency to disappear, it is replaced in a great many minds by moral faith. The absolute has changed its abode; it has passed from the domain of religion to that of ethics; but it still has lost nothing of the power which it exercises over the human mind. It has remained capable of raising the masses; an example of this is found in the French Revolution. It can call forth the most generous enthusiasm; it may also produce a certain kind of fanaticism, much less dangerous than religious fanaticism, but not without its inconveniences. Fundamentally, there is no essential difference between moral faith and religious faith. They each contain the other; but, in spite of the presumption to the contrary, still too prevalent in these days, moral faith has a more primitive and more universal character than the other. If the idea of God has ever had a metaphysical value and a practical utility, it is in so far as it appeared to unite the ideas of power and justice. In reality, the following affirmation was contained in the deliberate affirmation of the divinity: The highest force is moral force. If we no longer adore the gods of our ancestors—Jupiter, Jehovah, even Christ—it is because, among other reasons, we find ourselves in many respects morally above them. We judge our gods, and, in denying them, we often do no more than condemn them morally. The "irreligion" which seems to predominate to-day is, therefore, in many respects at least, the provisional triumph of a purer faith, of a religion more worthy of the name. In becoming exclusively moral, faith does not alter; on the contrary, it casts off all foreign elements. The old religions appealed not only to inward faith, they invoked fear, the misleading evidence of miracles and of revelation; they pretended to rest in something positive, plain, tangible.

All these means of gaining, of "cadging" for confidence ("*piper*" *la confiance*, as Montaigne would say), have now become useless. Everything becomes simpler. The formula which has had so much influence in the world, "It is a duty to believe in God," resolves itself into this, which it presupposed: It is a duty to believe in duty. The simple and definite expression of faith is thus formulated, and, at the same time, a new religion is founded. The temples having lost their idols, the law takes refuge in the "sanctuary of conscience." The great Pan, the nature-god, is dead; Jesus, the humanity-god, is dead. There remains the inward and ideal god, Duty, whose destiny it is, perhaps, also to die some day.

If we seek to analyze this faith in duty as it is presented by the followers of Kant, and even by those of Jouffroy, we observe in it several assertions which differ widely, although connected with one another, and which are to be found, moreover, in every sort of faith, forming the distinctive character of religion as compared with science—(1) full and complete affirmation of a thing which cannot be positively proved—duty, with its principle of modern freedom, and all its consequences; (2) another assertion confirming the first: namely, that it is better morally to believe this thing rather than any other, or than not to believe at all; (3) a fresh assertion by which belief is placed above discussion, for it would be immoral to hesitate for a moment between the better and the less good. At the same time, one's faith is declared to be immovable, because it is above all discussion. Moral faith, thus defined, rests on this postulate: there are principles which must be asserted, not because they are logically demonstrated or materially evident, but because they are morally good; in other words, goodness is a criterion of objective truth. Such is the postulate contained fundamentally in the moral philosophy of neo-Kantians like MM. Renouvier and Secrétan.

To justify this postulate it should be noted that it is

characteristic of goodness to appear as inviolable, not only in act, but even in thought. Is it not injustice, not only to do evil, but even to think it? Now, evil is in our thought the moment we doubt the good. We must, therefore, believe in what is good more than in anything else; not because it is more evident than anything else, but because not to believe in it would be to commit evil. Between a simply logical proposition and its opposite there is always an alternative; the mind remains free between the two and chooses. In this case the alternative is suppressed; choice would be wrong. The truth can no longer be sought on either side. All *problem* disappears, for a problem would imply many different solutions calling for verification; so one does not verify duty; there are questions which we may not address even to ourselves; there are questions we must not raise. What becomes, for example, of the doctrines of the utilitarian moralists, of the evolutionists, of the partizans of Darwin, in the presence of the belief in absolute duty? They are rejected with the greatest possible energy—sometimes without having been seriously examined. Moral consciousness always takes that side; it represents in the human soul the blindly conservative part. A convinced believer will never ask himself the question: Is not duty merely an empirical generalization? It would seem to him that such a question would cast a doubt on his "conscienceas an honest man"; before doing this, he will declare science incapable of treating this problem. The scientific spirit—which is always ready to examine the For and Against, which sees everywhere a twofold way, a double issue for the mind—has thus, in the case of the believer, to give way to quite another spirit; for him duty in itself is sacred, and commands with so much force that even the thinker himself, face to face with it, can but obey. The belief in duty is, therefore, placed once more above the region in which science, and even nature, moves. He who believes in duty is always such as Horace sang of, *Impavidum ferient ruinæ*. Moral

faith would in this way find itself guarded by its very essence, which is to compel the individual to bow before it.

The belief in duty, however, when attacked, seeks support on various grounds. The most superficial minds invoke a sort of *internal evidence*, others *moral duty*, others a *social necessity*.

1. There is, in the first place, the internal evidence—the "oracle" of our conscience—which will allow no reply or hesitation. We hear duty speak within us with a voice; we believe in duty as in something which lives and palpitates in us as a part of ourselves; even more, as that which is highest in us. The Scotch and the Eclectics tried only a few years ago to found a philosophy on *common sense*—that is, in fact, on *prejudice*. This unscientific philosophy has been opposed with energy by the neo-Kantians; and yet their system is also founded on a simple fact of common sense, on the simple *belief* that the impulse called *duty* is of quite another order than all the natural impulses. These sentences recurring so often in Cousin and his followers, and at which to-day we are inclined to smile—"conscience proclaims," "evidence proves," "common sense requires"—are they much less convincing, each in themselves, or in their generality, than these: "duty commands," "the moral law demands," etc.? This inner evidence of duty proves nothing. Evidence is a subjective state, for which one may often account by subjective reasons. Truth is not only that which is felt and seen, but that which is explained and connected. Truth is a synthesis; therein lies its distinction from sensation—from brute fact. Truth is a bundle of facts. It does not draw its evidence and its proof from a simple state of conscience, but from the whole of the phenomena which hold and support each other. One stone does not make an arch, nor do two nor three stones; all are wanted. They have to rest the one on the other. Even when the arch is constructed, it will fall to pieces completely if a few stones are taken away. It

is the same with truth; it consists in a solidarity of all things. It is not enough that a thing should be evident; it must be explicable, so as to acquire a truly scientific character.

2. As for the "duty to believe in duty," this is a pure tautology, or vicious circle. It might be said as well: It is religious to believe in religion, moral to believe in morality, etc. Very well; but what is understood by duty, by morality, by religion? Is it all true—that is, does it all correspond with reality? That is the question; and we must examine it, for fear of turning everlastingly in the same circle. While I believe it to be my sovereign and self-governed liberty, commanding me to do such and such an act, what if it were hereditary instinct, habit, education, urging me to the pretended duty? Am I, according to Darwin's remark, only a hunting-dog, chasing the game instead of arresting it? Has duty, to which I attach so much importance, after all only so much value as the duty of the dog who fetches, or gives a paw? Can you be indifferent to the analysis which science makes of the object of your faith?

Perhaps science has difficulty in founding an ethical creed on its own account, strictly speaking; but science can destroy every moral creed which believes itself to be positive and absolute. Science has an incalculable power for destruction, although it is not always sufficiently able to reconstruct. The believers in moral faith would not even prove their thesis if they succeeded in proving that their ethical creed is the most complete, is that which responds best to all interrogations of the moral agent, that which has least to fear from the exceptions and subtleties of casuistry, which may push the moral agent, without resistance, to the extreme of absolute devotion.

When the believers in the moral creed shall have proved all this, they will still have done nothing—no more than the believers in such and such a religion, if they could prove

selves there are likewise similar perspectives which may be so only in appearance. As to social life, it rests for the most part on artifice; and by artifice we do not mean anything opposed to nature. Not at all; nothing deceives us better than nature. There we find the great art—that is to say, the deception, the innocent conspiracy of all against one. The relations between different beings are a series of illusions; the eyes, the ears, deceive us—why should the heart alone not deceive us? Moral philosophy, which tries to formulate the most manifold and complex relations existing between the creatures of nature, is, perhaps, also founded on the greatest number of errors. Many beliefs related by history, which have inspired to self-sacrifice, may be compared with those magnificent mausoleums erected in honour of a name. If these mausoleums are opened, nothing is found; they are empty. But their beauty alone is sufficient to justify their existence, and, in passing, you bow before them. You do not ask if the unknown dead is worth these honours; you think that he was loved, and that this love is the real object of our respect. It is the same with the heroes whom faith often urged to great deeds for small causes. They are sublime spendthrifts. These prodigalities have undoubtedly been one of the indispensable elements of progress.

The social necessity for morals and for faith, the sceptics will add, can only be provisional. There was a time when religion was absolutely necessary. It is no longer so—at least for a very great number of people. God has become, and will become more and more, useless. Who knows if it will not be the same with the categorical imperative? The first religions have been imperative, despotic, hard, inflexible. They were systems of iron discipline. God was a violent and cruel chief, checking his subjects by iron and fire. People bowed and trembled before him. At the present time religions are growing milder. Who believes very much in these days in hell? That is a worn-out scarecrow.

Likewise the different conceptions of moralities are softening down. Even disinterestedness will perhaps not always have the character of social necessity which it seems to have to-day. Long ago it was remarked that there existed illusions which were provisionally useful. If Decius had not been as superstitious as his soldiers, if Codrus had been a freethinker, Athens and Rome would probably have been conquered. Religions which, to the philosopher, are only a collection of organized and systematized superstitions, are also made for a time, for an epoch. Their gods are but various forms of that Greek divinity, Kairos, to serve the purpose of the moment. Humanity needs to adore something, then to burn that which it has adored. At present the most elevated minds among us adore duty. Will not this latest religion, this last superstition, disappear like the others?

The brass idol to which the Carthaginians sacrificed their children is for us an object of horror. Perhaps we have kept in our hearts some brass idol from whose dominion our descendants will escape. Already "our rights" have become very much a matter of suspicion in this century. The socialists have maintained that there is no right over against pity, and "rights" can hardly be maintained, except on condition of giving them a new extension, and nearly blending them with the principle of brotherhood. Perhaps, by contrary evolution, duty will have to transform itself and to blend itself more and more with normal and regular development of self. Do we not still conceive duty in the image of our imperfect society? We picture it stained with blood and tears. This still barbaric notion, necessary in our days, is perhaps destined to disappear. Duty will then be equivalent to an epoch of transition.

Such are the doubts which a complete scepticism may oppose to this half-scepticism hidden under the faith which invokes social necessities. The question remains undecided,

and faith cannot get out of it otherwise than by a kind of wager. In fact, the doctrine of moral faith—of duty freely accepted by the will, of incertitude decided by an act of inward energy—recalls to our mind, as has been said, the wager of Pascal. But this wager can no longer have motives such as those of Pascal. We are certain, in these days, that God, if he exists, is not at all the vindictive and cruel being which Port Royal imagined him to be. His existence would necessarily be an advantage to me, and I wish for it with all my heart, while wagering against it. Although improbable in my eyes, it remains infinitely desirable. This is not a reason for sacrificing my whole life to him.

Doubt has long enough been accused of immorality, but the immorality of dogmatic faith can be equally maintained. To believe is to *assert* as real to myself that which I simply conceive as possible in itself, sometimes as impossible. This is seeking to build up an artificial truth, a merely apparent truth. At the same it is shutting one's eyes to the objective truth, thrusting it aside beforehand without knowing anything about it. The greatest enemy of human progress is the *presupposition.* To reject not only the more or less doubtful solutions, which everyone may bring forward, but the problems themselves—that is flatly arresting the forward movement. Faith from that point of view becomes indolence of thought.

Indifference even is often superior to dogmatic faith. One who is indifferent says: "I do not care to know." But he adds: "I will not believe." The believer wants to believe without knowing. The first remains at least perfectly sincere towards himself, while the other tries to ensnare himself. Therefore, whatever may be the question, doubt is better than the perpetual affirmation, better than the renunciation of all personal initiative, which is called faith. This kind of intellectual suicide is inexcusable, and that which is still more strange is the pretension to justify it, as is constantly done, by invoking moral reasons. Morality

should command the mind to search without resting—that is to say, precisely to guard itself against faith. "The dignity of believing!" you reply. Man has too often, all through history, rested his dignity upon errors, and truth has at first appeared to him to be a lessening of himself. The truth is not always so fair as the dream, but its advantage is that it is true. In the domain of thought there is nothing more moral than truth; and when truth cannot be secured through positive knowledge, nothing is more moral than doubt. Doubt is dignity of mind. We must therefore drive out of ourselves the blind respect for certain principles, for certain beliefs. We must be able to question, scrutinize, penetrate everything. Intelligence should not cast down its eyes even before the object of its adoration. A tomb in Geneva bears this inscription: "Truth has a face of brass, and those who have loved truth will have faces of brass like her." But, it will be said, if it is irrational to affirm in our thoughts as true that which is doubtful, still it will sometimes have to be affirmed in *action*. May be; but it is always a provisional situation and a conditional affirmation: I do this, supposing it to be my duty, even supposing that I can have an absolute duty. A thousand acts of that kind cannot establish a truth. A great number of martyrs have made Christianity triumph; a little reason may be sufficient to overthrow it. Besides, how much humanity would gain if all self-sacrifice were done out of regard for science, and not for faith—if one died not to defend a belief, but to discover a truth, however small it might be. That was what Empedocles and Pliny did, and what in our time men of science, physicians, explorers do. How many lives were lost of old to assert objects of an unsound faith, which might have been utilized for humanity and science!

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III.

MORALITY OF DOUBT.

WE have seen the *certitude* of duty, as admitted by Kant, resolve itself into faith, even with the followers of Kant, and faith itself become a *doubt* which will not declare itself. Very well; there remains a third attitude of mind, this time absolutely sincere with itself and with others; it consists in replacing the morality of certitude and the morality of faith by the morality of doubt—in founding morality partly on the very consciousness of our metaphysical ignorance, joined to that which we have learned from positive science.

This attitude of mind has lately been analyzed and put forward as the best (see "La Critique des Systemes de Morale," par A. Fouillée, conclusion and preface).

The author of "l'Idée Moderne du Droit," and of the "Critique des Systemes de Morale Contemporaine," has tried to unite in one synthesis the legitimate results of the philosophy of *evolution* and of the philosophy of *criticism*. Its point of experimental departure, which no doctrine can deny, is the fact that we have *consciousness*. This fact, rightly interpreted, is, according to him, the first foundation of right and the duty of justice. What, in reality, is the object of consciousness in its widest sense, and what is its limit? It realizes itself, realizes the consciousness of others, realizes the whole world; in consequence it has both "an individual character and an universal range"; it does not assume its own consciousness without assuming the consciousness of others similar to its own; it does not grasp itself but in association with others. By this very fact, consciousness "comprehends its own limitation, its own *relativity*, as a means of knowledge," for it cannot completely explain itself, "either its own nature as a thinking *subject*, or the nature of the *object* which it realizes, or the transition of the *subjective* to the *objective*." From this springs the principle of the

"*relativity of knowledge*," which is of a moral import hitherto disregarded.

"A true positivist, like a true critic and a true sceptic, must keep in the depth of his mind a '*what do I know?*' and a '*perhaps.*'.....He must not assert that science or his brain is adequate to comprehend reality, but only that they are adequate to comprehend reality so far as it is known. Our very experience teaches us that our mind is not made so as to always represent all things as they are, independently of that mind.....On the one hand, therefore, the *object*, as felt and pictured, is not conceived as capable of being entirely penetrated by science, or by the feeling and thinking subject; on the other hand, the *subject* is, perhaps, in his turn, not wholly penetrable to himself."

This principle of the relativity of all knowledge, built up by the ideas of our consciousness, is the preliminary *condition* of right, as of the duty of justice. In fact, such a principle is, in the first place, "limitative and restrictive of theoretical egoism," which is intolerant dogmatism; moreover, it is "restrictive of practical egoism," which is injustice. To make of one's egoism and of one's self an absolute formula is to dogmatize in action as well as in thought; it is to act as if one possessed the absolute formula of being; it is as much as to say: "The world mechanically knowable is all; force is all; self-interest is all. Injustice, therefore, is absolutism in action, and hurtful to others.....Now, there will always remain something which cannot be explained mechanically, if it were only movement and sensation, the element of consciousness. Joined to all the other considerations, the idea of that something *irreducible* which constitutes our consciousness, while restricting the knowledge gained by means of our senses *(connaissance sensible)*, also imposes on us *rationally* the limitation of our motives derived from the senses *(mobiles sensibles)*, and that with regard to others, and with regard to everything. *Solipsism*, as the English say, is no more to be admitted in morality than in meta-

physics, although it is, perhaps, logically irrefutable in both spheres."

This doctrine, we must own, contains a great deal of truth. But it is necessary to exactly calculate to what point this morality leads us, and also where it leaves us. It is an attempt to found a primary equivalent to obligation upon doubt itself, or at least upon the relativity of human knowledge, and to rid the assertion of moral justice of a certain metaphysical scepticism. In the first place, we must agree that the practical formula of doubt is really *abstinence*. It is from action in general, not only from injustice, that *complete* doubt would have to abstain. All action is an affirmation; it is also a kind of choice, of election. While acting, I always seize something from the midst of the metaphysical mist, from the thick cloud which envelopes the world and myself. The perfect equilibrium of doubt is, therefore, rather an ideal than a real state—an almost imperceptible moment of transition. If there is no true morality but in action, and if to abstain is still to act, that is, by this very reason, departure from equilibrium. Besides, metaphysical doubt is in most concrete cases not an entire and thorough doubt, a perfect equivalent created in the mind by different possibilities which counterbalance one another; it most often envelopes a vague belief, which is unconscious of itself, or, as M. Fouillée owns, at least one or more hypotheses; hence it can have a practical influence. Man, placed between the different hypotheses concerning the world, has always some instinctive preference for a certain one among them; he does not remain hanging in the ἐποχή of Pyrrho—he chooses according to his own habits of thought. These vary in different individuals, according to their creeds and hopes, not according to their doubts.

But, it will be said, there is in all sincere doubt a precise and lasting element; it is the consciousness of our ignorance of the foundation of things; it is the conception of a simply *possible* reality, which goes beyond our thought, a wholly

negative and *restrictive* conception, being nevertheless of sovereign importance in restricting our "intellectual pride." Quite so; but the question is to know if this conception is of the same importance in restricting our *conduct.* In the first place, be it noted that this conception could not produce an imperative, and this is shown by the very author of the theory which we are examining. That which is in itself indeterminable cannot determine and regulate conduct by a law which commands; an order and a rule are a determination. The unknowable cannot even *limit* conduct in a *categorical* manner; a *limitative* principle, as such, cannot have an absolute character—at least not unless an absolute behind the limit be presupposed.

But let us go further. Would doubt, with regard to the unknowable, *in itself* and in so far as it is a mere suspension of judgment, be able to *limit* conduct in any way? A limit cannot, it seems, have practical influence on us as long as we move inside this limit. Now, we are unable to move outside phenomena. The glass of a bowl has no direct effect on the conduct of the fish, so long as the fish does not hurt itself against the side of the bowl. Even the future has influence on me only in two ways: firstly, in so far as I *picture* it to myself in my mind in pure supposition; secondly, in so far as by my acts I *produce*, or help to produce, or believe to produce, the future. So long as the future is not, in some form or other, represented in my imagination, it remains strange to me, and cannot in any way modify my conduct. It is in the same way necessary, we believe—and M. Fouillée undoubtedly admits this also—that, if the unknowable is to have a positive and determined effect on our conduct, it should not only be *conceived* as *possible*, but be *represented* under some form or other in its relation to my act, and under forms which do not contradict or destroy each other. It is, moreover, necessary that I imagine I can exercise some influence on the unknowable and its realization; in short, it is necessary that it

becomes, as M. Fouillée says, an "ideal" more or less determinable for me, a future which I am more or less able to realize. The idea of a moral rule, even of a restrictive one, presupposes, therefore, as positive principle, not the mere *conception* or the *possibility* of the unknowable, but a *representation* of its nature, an imaginary *determination* of its nature; and, lastly, it presupposes the belief in a possible influence of the will on it, and on its realization in the future.* And once it is clearly shown that these are so many hypotheses, morality—justice and right even included—appears *metaphysically* hypothetical, considerations drawn from positive science, evolution, happiness, utility, etc., being omitted.

The theory of doubt as limiting egoism corresponds to a somewhat subtle point which thought and act pass by without stopping at. Surely it is important to determine this point, to make room in morality for our positive ignorance, our positive doubt, and, so to speak, for the certainty of our incertitude. This M. Fouillée has done. While waiting till he has developed the positive part of his doctrine, we must allow that he has logically reduced the idea of the imperative to its true value. Kant, we have said, saw in it a certainty; his followers raised it to an object of faith; now it is reduced to a formula of our doubt, to a limitation of our conduct by a limitation of our thought. After having been an *imperative* order, the unknowable is nothing but an *interrogation.* This interrogation presents itself to each one of us; but the answer which each one of us can give to it varies with individuals, and is left to their own initiative. One remembers the plank of safety of which Cicero speaks, upon which a man walks trying to save himself. Metaphysical doubt alone would be of little use to prevent me taking, if I can, the place of that

* Besides, the author of the "Critique des Systèmes de Morale" himself makes of the ideal "a hypothetical formula of the unknowable"—an ideal which itself can only have *a conditional influence.*

man. The unknowable, in the midst of which we live and breathe, and which envelopes us, so to speak, intellectually, is very much like the empty space which surrounds us physically. Now, the empty space means for us absolute freedom of direction. It can only act on us and rule our course by the bodies it contains, which are revealed to us by our senses. For him who believes the depth of things to be inaccessible to our thought it will always be doubtful if it be accessible to our acts. The supreme unknowable can, therefore, in relation to our own will, remain without contradiction supreme indifference, as long as it remains for our intelligence a mere object of doubt and of suspension of judgment.

The theory sketched in the "Critique des Systèmes de Morale" will only become sufficiently clear and fruitful when its author shall have succeeded in drawing, as he intends to do, a restrictive rule, and, above all, a "persuasive ideal"—not out of our doubts about the unknowable (mere "preliminary condition" of morality), but out of our knowledge itself, and out of "the known depth of human consciousness." According to his own words, we must be able to make the moral ideal "immanent," and to show that it is derived from *experience* itself.

That is, moreover, what he already tries to do in one of the important pages of his work (Preface, ix.).

In his opinion, there exists, in the very constitution of the intelligence, a kind of altruism, which explains and justifies altruism in conduct. There is, he says, an "intellectual altruism, an intellectual disinterestedness, which makes us able to understand others—to put ourselves in their place; to put ourselves *into them* by thought. Consciousness, projecting itself in this way into other beings, and into the whole, is joined to others, and to the whole, by an idea, which is at the same time a force." We believe, in fact, that a sort of "intellectual altruism" does exist; only, in our opinion, this disinterestedness of

the intelligence is only one of the *aspects* of moral altruism, instead of being its *main principle.* To be able to conceive the consciousness of *others* well—to put ourselves in their place, and enter into their consciousness, so to speak—we must, above all, be in sympathy with them; sympathy of feeling is the germ of the extension of consciousness. To understand is really to feel; to understand others is to feel ourselves in harmony with others. This communicability of emotions and of thoughts—which, on its psychological side, is a phenomenon of nervous contagion—is explained to a great extent by the fecundity of *life*, the expansion of which is almost in direct ratio to its intensity. It is from *life* that we will demand the principle of morality.

FIRST BOOK.

ON THE MOTIVE FORCE OF MORALITY FROM A SCIENTIFIC POINT OF VIEW. FIRST EQUIVALENTS OF DUTY.

CHAPTER I.

Intensity of Life is the Motive Force of Action.

By no means do we reject the part of metaphysical speculation in moral philosophy, provided that it presents itself as it really is—*i.e.*, as speculation, and the importance of it we ourselves will show later on. But a strict method obliges us to examine first what a moral philosophy may be which is founded exclusively on *facts*, and which in consequence does not start from an *à priori* thesis, nor from an *à priori* law, which itself would be a metaphysical thesis. The question which we have to examine is: Which is the point of departure and the goal, and what is the exact domain of *science* in moral philosophy?

A moral philosophy which only invokes *facts* cannot from the very beginning represent to the individual, as first spring of action, the good or the happiness of *society*, for the happiness of society is often in opposition to that of the individual. In these cases of opposition social happiness, as such, can only become for the individual a thought-out end by virtue of pure disinterestedness; but it is impossible to prove this pure disinterestedness as *fact*, and its existence has always been a subject of controversy. Besides, scientific morality, in order not to include

from its very beginning an inverifiable postulate, must be first *individualistic.* It should preoccupy itself with the destiny of society only in so far as it more or less includes that of the individual. The first mistake of utilitarians like Stuart Mill, and even of evolutionists, has been to confuse the social aspect and the individualistic aspect of the moral problem.

It is important to add that an individualistic morality, founded on facts, is not the *negation* of a metaphysical or religious morality, founded, for example, on some impersonal ideal; it does not exclude this latter—it is simply constructed in a different sphere. It is a small house, built at the foot of the Tower of Babel. It does not in the least prevent the Tower of Babel raising itself to heaven, if it can. Nay, more; who knows if the small house will not in the end need shelter itself under the shadow of the tower? Therefore we will not try either to deny or to exclude any of the ends put forward as desirable by metaphysicians; but we will at present leave alone the notion of *the desirable*, and we will limit ourselves to first showing what in reality is *desired.** Before introducing metaphysical speculation into moral philosophy it is, in fact, essential to determine first precisely how far an exclusively scientific conception of morality can go. This is what we now propose to do.

The ends pursued *in reality* by mankind and by all living creatures are extremely numerous. However, in the same way as life everywhere shows characters in common, and of a similar type of organization, it is probable that the ends sought by different individuals can be in reality more or less led back to unity. This unique and profound goal of action could not be the *good*—a vague conception, which, when one wants to determine it, dissolves in metaphysical hypo-

* On the distinction of the *desired* and *desirable* see our "English Contemporary Moral Philosophy," second edition, part ii., "De la Méthode Morale."

theses—nor *duty*, which none the more appears to science as a primitive and irreducible principle ; nor, perhaps, *happiness* in the fullest meaning of the word, which Volney has called an object of luxury, and the conception of which presupposes, moreover, a very advanced development of the intelligent being.

What, then, will be the *natural* aim of human actions? When a marksman has for a long time practised shooting at a target, one sees, in looking at the numerous holes which he has made in the piece of cardboard, that these holes are distributed pretty uniformly round the *white* at which he aimed. Not one of these balls, perhaps, will have hit the geometrical centre of the circle of the target, and some will be grouped round this centre, according to a very regular law, which Quételet has ascertained and named "the binomial law." Even without knowing this law, one would not be deceived by the mere aspect of the holes ; one would put a finger in the centre of the place where these holes are most frequent, and one would say : "That is the point of the target aimed at." This searching for the point aimed at by the marksman may be compared to that which the purely positive science of morals undertakes when it endeavours to determine the ordinary aim of human conduct. Which is the target constantly aimed at by humanity, and which must also have been the target for all human beings, for to-day man is no longer regarded by science as a being separate from the rest of the world, and the laws of life are the same, from the top downwards, on the ladder of animal life? Where is the centre of the universal effort of beings towards which the strokes of the great hazard of things have been directed, perhaps without one perfectly exact stroke, without the aim having ever been fully attained?

According to the "Hedonists," the natural direction of every act would be the minimum of pain and the maximum of pleasure ; in its evolution "conscious life always follows the line of the least suffering." Hardly anyone can dispute

this direction of our desire, and we, for our part, admit it; but the preceding definition is too narrow, for it can only be applied to the *conscious* and more or less voluntary acts, and not to the unconscious and automatic acts, which are simply accomplished according to the line of the least *resistance.* Now, to believe that most of our movements spring from consciousness, and that a scientific analysis of the springs of conduct has only to reckon with conscious motives, would undoubtedly mean being dupe of an illusion. For Dr. Maudsley and Professor Huxley consciousness is, in life, but an epi-phenomenon, in the absence of which everything would go on in the same way. Without wishing to solve, or even to raise, this question—which in England, as well as in France, is a great point of controversy—we must own that consciousness embraces a rather restricted portion of life and action. Even those acts achieved in full consciousness have generally their beginning and first origin in dumb instincts and reflex movements. Consciousness is, therefore, only a luminous point in the great obscure sphere of life; it is a small lens, gathering in bundles some rays of the sun, and imagining too readily that its focus is the very focus from which the rays start. The *natural* spring of action, before appearing in consciousness, must have already acted from underneath in the obscure region of the instincts. The constant end of action must primarily have been a *constant cause* of more or less unconscious movements. In reality, the ends are but *habitual motive causes become conscious of themselves.* Every movement of the will has begun by being a spontaneous movement blindly executed because it presented less resistance. Every conscious desire, therefore, has first been an instinct. The sphere of finality coincides, at least in its centre, with the sphere of causality (even if, with the metaphysicians, one regards finality as primitive). The problem: What is the end, the constant target, of action? becomes, therefore, from another point of view, this problem: What is the

constant cause of action? In the circle of life the point aimed at blends with the very point from which the action springs.

We believe that an exclusively scientific morality must, to be complete, admit that the pursuit of *pleasure* is only itself the consequence of the instinctive effort to maintain and enlarge *life*. The *aim* which, in fact, *determines* every conscious action is also the *cause* which *produces* every unconscious action. It is, then, *life* itself—life in its most intense and, at the same time, its most varied forms. From the first bound of the embryo in the womb of its mother, to the last convulsion of old age, every movement of the creature has, as *cause*, life in its evolution. This universal cause of our acts is, from another point of view, its constant effect and end.

The preceding analysis agrees in its result with the analysis of the evolutionist school, which we will not reproduce here (see our "Morale Anglaise Contemporaine," second edition).

Life, as the motive underlying all our actions, is even admitted by the mystics, for they generally suppose a prolongation of existence beyond this world; and timeless existence itself is but life concentrated in a *punctum stans*. The tendency to persist in life is the necessary law of life, not only for man, but for all living creatures—perhaps even for the last atom of ether; for *force* is probably only an abstract of *life*. This tendency is undoubtedly, as it were, the residuum of the universal consciousnesss, the more so because it goes beyond and envelopes consciousness itself. It is, therefore, both the most radical of realities and the inevitable ideal.

The part of morality founded solely and systematically on positive facts may be thus defined: the science which has for object all the means of *preserving* and *enlarging* material and intellectual life. The supreme laws of this morality will be identical with the deepest laws

of life itself, and in some of its most general theorems, this conception of morality will be of value for all living creatures.

If it be said that the means of *preserving physical* life belong to hygiene more than to morality, we answer that temperance, which for a long time has been placed among the virtues, is practically an application of hygiene; and that, moreover, an exclusively scientific conception of morality can, in its *physical* aspect, oblivious of all other aspects, hardly differ from an enlarged hygiene.

If we are asked what to increase the intensity of life means, we reply that it is to enlarge the range of *activity* under all its forms (in such a measure as is compatible with the renewal of force).

The inferior creatures act only in a certain direction, after which they rest and sink into absolute inertia; as, for example, the hunting dog, which goes to sleep until the very moment when he will again begin to hunt. The superior being, on the contrary, rests by variety of action, like a field by variety of production. The aim pursued in the culture of human activity is, therefore, the reduction to the strict limits of necessity of what might be called the periods of *lying fallow*. To act is to live; to increase action is to increase the fire of inward life. The worst of vices would be, from that point of view, laziness, inertia. The moral ideal will be *activity* in all its *variety of manifestations*—at least, of those which do not contradict each other, or which do not produce a permanent loss of force. To take an example: *thought* is one of the principal forms of human activity, not, as Aristotle believed, because thought would be action when pure and detached from all matter (an unverifiable hypothesis), but because thought is, so to speak, condensed action and life at its maximum development.

It is the same with *love*.

After having stated in very general terms the foundations of a moral philosophy of *life*, let us see what place it allows

within its range to hedonism, or to the moral philosophy of *pleasure*.

Pleasure is a state of consciousness which, according to psychologists and physiologists, is connected with an increase of life (physical or intellectual), from which it follows that the precept, "Persistently increase the intensity of your life," will finally be confounded with this: "Persistently increase the intensity of your pleasure." Hedonism, therefore, may stand, but in *the second place*, and more as consequence than as *principle*. All the English moralists say, "Pleasure is the only lever by which people can be moved." Let us understand one another. There are two kinds of pleasure. At one time pleasure corresponds with a particular and superficial form of activity (the pleasure of eating, drinking, etc.); at another time it is connected with the very root of that activity (the pleasure of living, of willing, of thinking, etc.). In the one case, it is purely a pleasure of the senses; in the other, it is more deeply vital, more independent of exterior objects—it is one with the very consciousness of life. The utilitarians or the hedonists take too great a delight in considering the first sort of pleasure; the other kind has a greater importance. One does not always act with the view of seeking a *particular pleasure*—limited and exterior to the act itself. Sometimes we act for the pleasure of acting; we live for the pleasure of living; we think for the pleasure of thinking. There is in us accumulated force which demands to be used. If its expenditure is impeded, this force becomes desire or aversion: if the desire is satisfied, there is pleasure; if it is opposed, there is pain. But it does not follow from this that the stored-up activity unfolds itself solely *for the sake* of pleasure—with pleasure as motive. Life unfolds and expresses itself in activity because it is life. In all creatures pleasure accompanies, much more than it provokes, the search after life. Before all we must live; enjoyment comes after.

For a long time it was believed that the organ created the function; it was also believed that the pleasure created the function. "A creature goes," said Epicurus, "where his pleasure calls him." These words, according to modern science, contain a very incomplete truth, and are mingled with error. In the beginning the creature did not possess any organ already complete; neither did he possess, in any way, a fully-developed pleasure. He himself, by action, has created his organ and his pleasure. The pleasure, as well as the organ, proceeds from the function. Moreover, afterwards, like the organ itself, it reacts on the function. Finally, one acts in such-and-such a way because one has an organ developed after such a fashion, and because one finds pleasure in going in such a direction. But the pleasure does not come first; that which is first and last is the function, is life. If, for the direction of nature, it is not necessary to appeal to an impulse which is foreign or superior to her; if nature is, so to speak, self-moved and self-governed, neither is it any the more necessary to appeal to an inferior and particular motive, such as any special pleasure.

The point on which we can agree with the Hedonists is that *consciousness* could not exist without some vague pleasure or pain. Pleasure and pain might be considered as the very principle of consciousness; on the other hand, consciousness is the lever necessary to produce all action other than purely reflex action. The English theory is, therefore, true in this sense, that every voluntary action, being, so to speak, always obliged to pass through *consciousness*, necessarily becomes impressed with either a pleasant or an unpleasant character. To act and react is always to enjoy or to suffer; it is, moreover, always to desire or to fear.

But this pleasant or unpleasant character of action is not sufficient to completely explain it. *Enjoyment*, instead of being the deliberate end of action, is often, like conscious-

ness itself, only an attribute of it. Action springs naturally from the working of life, which is, to a considerable extent, unconscious. It enters immediately into the domain of consciousness and enjoyment, but it does not spring from it. The tendency of the creature to continue in existence is at the root of all desire, without forming in itself a determinate desire. A body in motion, carried on through space, ignores its direction, and yet it possesses an acquired speed, ready to transform itself into heat, and even into light, according to the resistant medium through which it passes. It is thus that life becomes desire or fear, pain or pleasure, precisely in virtue of its acquired force, and of the primitive directions in which evolution has flung it. If the intensity of life in a being, having different issues open to its activity, is once fully known, one can predict the direction which this being will feel itself inwardly obliged to take. It is as if an astronomer could predict the course of a star merely by the knowledge of its bulk, its speed, and of the action of the other stars.

One sees now the only position which can be taken up by a science of morals without metaphysics in the question of the moral end, independent of all the hypotheses which metaphysics could add later on. Given on the one hand the unconscious sphere of instincts, habits, and dumb perceptions, on the other hand the conscious sphere of reasoning and of thoughtful will, morality is placed on the limit of these two spheres. It is the only science thus having for its object neither facts purely unconscious nor facts purely conscious. It must, therefore, search for a tendency which should be common to these two orders of facts, and which might be able to connect the two spheres.

Classical psychology was always restricted to conscious phenomena, leaving alone the study of pure mechanism. It was the same with classical moral philosophy. But both supposed it to be proved that mechanical life does not act

upon the conscious region of mind (or thought), does not give rise sometimes in that region to more or less inexplicable disturbances. To suppose that the independence of the conscious with regard to the unconscious was thus demonstrated, was to begin with a postulate which is sanctioned by nothing. We believe that, in order to avoid this postulate, scientific morality must look for a spring of action which should be able to work at the same time in the two spheres, and move in us both the unconscious and the conscious being. The object of the science of morals is to show how action, produced by the mere effort of life, springs incessantly from the unconscious depths of being, to enter into the domain of consciousness; and how, next, action may be weakened in this new sphere, often even be suspended; for example, when there is struggle between the instinct of life and such or such a belief in the rational order. In that case, the sphere of consciousness may furnish a new source of actions, which in their turn may become principles of habit or instincts, and thus re-enter the unconscious depth of the creature, there to undergo numberless alterations. Instinct deviates in becoming consciousness and thought; thought deviates in becoming action and the germ of instinct. Moral science has to reckon with all these deviations. It looks for the meeting point where the two great forces of our being, instinct and reason, touch and mutually transform themselves without ceasing. Moral science has to study the action of these two forces on each other, to regulate the double influence of instinct on thought, of thought and of mind on instinctive and reflex actions. We shall see how life, by becoming conscious of itself, and without rationally contradicting itself, may give rise to an indefinite variety of motives derived from it. The universal instinct of life—now unconscious, now conscious—in the different aspects in which we shall see it clothed, supplies moral science with the only positive end; *which, moreover, does not mean that no other*

end is possible, or that our experience is adequate to every imaginable reality. The moral philosophy, founded on *facts*, let it be said once more, can but "show" one thing—that is, that life has a tendency to maintain itself, and to increase among all beings, first unconsciously, and later with the help of spontaneous and thinking consciousness; that life is thus, *in fact*, the primitive and universal form of every good thing which is desired. It does not follow that the desire of life absolutely exhausts the idea of the *desirable*, with all the metaphysical, and even mystical, notions which can be attached to it. It is a reserved question, which will no longer be properly an object of positive affirmation, but of metaphysical hypothesis. It is important for science to mark the exact point of separation of the certain and the uncertain, in moral philosophy as well as in other branches of science. Certitude has never injured speculation, nor even dreams; neither has the knowledge of the real facts injured the impulse towards the ideal, nor has science injured metaphysics. The reaper, carefully gathering together into his barn sheaves which he has himself collected and counted, has never prevented the sower going round with open hands, his eyes fixed on far-off harvests, throwing out to the winds the present—the known—so as to see a future germinate which he knows not, but hopes for.

CHAPTER II.

The Highest Intensity of Life has for its Necessary Correlative the Greatest Expansion.

From the physiological point of view, existence and life imply *nutrition*, consequently appropriation, transformation for itself of the forces of nature. Life is a kind of *gravitation upon itself*. But a being always needs to accumulate a

surplus of force to ensure the amount necessary to maintain life. Thrift is a very law of nature. What will become of this surplus of force which is accumulated by every healthy being, of this superabundance which nature succeeds in producing?

In the first place, it will be able to expend itself in *generation*, which is simply a case of nutrition. "Reproduction," says Haeckel, "is an excess of nutrition and of growth, in consequence of which a part of the individual is created independent in everything" ("Morphologie," ii. 16). In the elementary cellule generation takes the form of simple division. Later, a kind of distribution of labour takes place, and reproduction becomes a special function, carried out by the germ-cells; this is *sporogony*. Finally, later, two cells—one ovular, the other spermatic—unite and blend together to form a new individual. There is nothing mysterious in this conjunction of two cells. The muscular tissue and the nervous tissue result, to a great extent, from these cellular fusions. Nevertheless, with this sexual generation or *amphigony* begins, we may say, a new moral phase for the world. The individual organism ceases to be isolated, its centre of gravity changes its place by degrees, and it will change its place more and more.

Sexuality is of capital importance in moral life. If against all possibility a non-sexual generation had been prevalent among the animal species, and finally among human beings, society would hardly exist. It was noticed long since that spinsters, bachelors, and eunuchs fall into the habit of being more selfish. Their centre has always remained in the depths of themselves without ever fluctuating. Children also are selfish; they do not yet possess a surplus of life to pour forth from themselves; it is about the period of puberty that their characters transform themselves. The young man is full of enthusiasm; he is ready for every sacrifice because, in point of fact, it is necessary that he should sacrifice something of himself—that he

should diminish himself to a certain extent; he is too full of life to live only for himself. The period of generation is also that of generosity. The old man, on the contrary, is often inclined to become selfish again. People who are ill have the same tendency. Each time that the fount of life is diminished a need is felt in the whole of one's being to save—to spare one's self. One hesitates to allow one drop of internal sap to filter through.

The first effect of generation is to produce a grouping of organisms, to create the family, and, through the family, to create society; but this is only one of its most visible and most evident effects. The sexual instinct, as we have just seen, is a superior but particular form of the general need of fecundity. Now, this need, symptom of a surplus of force, does not only act on the special organs of generation —it acts on the whole organism. It exercises a kind of pressure on our being, the different forms of which we are going to enumerate.

1. *Intellectual Fecundity.*—It is not without reason that the works of a thinker have been compared to his children. The artist also is, by an inward force, driven to cast forth his inmost self, to give us of his innermost, like Musset's pelican.

Let it be added that this fecundity is somewhat in opposition to physical generation. The organism cannot, without suffering, accomplish this double expenditure. It seems that, in the animal species also, physical fecundity decreases with the development of the brain. Very great geniuses have generally had children only under the average, whose race was soon exterminated. These geniuses undoubtedly still live by their ideas in the minds of the human race, but their blood could not mingle with that of mankind.

Intellectual fecundity also admits of a kind of debauchery. The mind can be abused. The young man is sometimes exhausted for the whole of his life by premature excess of intellectual labour. The American girl may, in the same

way, imperil her future maternity, or the fate of the generation which she will bring into the world. It is the duty of morality to restrain here, as elsewhere, the instinct of production. As a general rule, we may say that the expenditure should only be an excitation and not an exhaustion of life. Be that as it may, the need of intellectual fecundity, more even than of sexual fecundity, deeply modifies the conditions of life in humanity. Thought, in fact, is impersonal and disinterested.

2. Fecundity of Emotion and of Sensibility.—Sensibility must be exercised as well as intelligence. Of ourselves, we are not sufficient for ourselves. We have more tears than are wanted for our own sufferings, more joys in reserve than our own happiness would justify. We really need to go out of ourselves to others; we want to multiply ourselves by communion of thoughts and sentiments.

Hence the kind of unrest in a too solitary creature, an unsatisfied desire. If, for instance, we feel some artistic pleasure, we would rather not enjoy it alone. We like others to know that we exist, feel, suffer, love. We would like to tear the veil of individuality. Vanity? No; vanity is far from our thought. It is rather the antithesis of egoism. Very inferior pleasures are sometimes selfish. If there is only one cake, the child wants to be the only one to eat it. But the true artist does not wish to be alone in seeing something beautiful, in discovering something true, in feeling a generous sentiment.* There is in these higher pleasures a force of expansion, ever ready to burst the narrow shell of self. In face of these we are not sufficient to ourselves; we are only made to transfer them, like the vibrating atom of ether transfers from place to place the sideral beam of

* One has, however, here to distinguish between the enjoyment of the *artist*—which is always fruitful, consequently generous—and the enjoyment of the *amateur in art*, which can be narrow and selfish, because it is always barren. See our "Problems of Contemporary Æsthetics."

light which traverses it, and of which it retains nothing but the momentary thrill.

Yet here, also, we have to avoid an exaggerated expansion of life, a kind of altruistic debauchery. There are people, although rare, who have lived too much for others, who have not retained enough of themselves; the English moralists blame these with some reason. Is it quite certain that a great man always has the right to risk his life to save that of an imbecile? The woman—a mother—who forgets herself too much may, in advance, condemn the child she is bearing to a sickly and ailing life. The father of a family who submits himself and his family to daily privations in order to leave the children some small competency will, in the end, really only succeed in leaving a small sum to beings ill-born, and without value to the species.

3. Fecundity of Will.—We need to bring forth and to impress the form of our activity upon the world. Action has become a necessity for the greater part of mankind. The most constant and the most regular form of action is *work*, with the attention which it demands. The savage is incapable of true work—all the more incapable as he is more degraded. These organisms among us which are the still living fragments of ancient man—the criminals—have generally, as a distinctive feature, a horror of work. They do not get tired of doing nothing. We may say that *ennui* is, in man, a sign of superiority—of fecundity of will. The nation which has known "*the spleen*" is the most active nation.

Work will in time become more and more necessary for mankind. Now, work is at the same time the most economical and the most moral phenomenon, in which egoism and altruism are most easily reconciled. To work is to produce, and to produce is to be useful both to one's self and to others. Work can only become dangerous by its accumulation in the form of capital; it may then take a frankly selfish character, and, by virtue of an inherent con-

tradiction, may tend to its own suppression by the very idleness which it allows. But, in its living form, work is always good. It belongs to the domain of social laws to prevent the bad results of the accumulation of work—excess of idleness for oneself and excess of power over others—as one takes care to isolate batteries which are too powerful.

It is necessary for us to will and work, not only for ourselves, but also for others. We want to help others, to give a lift to the coach which toilsomely draws humanity along; in any case, we buzz round it. One of the inferior forms of this need is "ambition," which must be recognised, not merely as a desire for honours and for fame, but as a thing which is also and before all else a need of action or of speech, an abundance of life under its rather coarse form of motive power, of material activity, of nervous tension.

Certain characters have, above all, this fecundity of will; for example, Napoleon I. They upset the surface of the world, with the object of impressing their mark upon it. They want to substitute their will for that of others, but they possess a poor sensibility—an intelligence incapable of creating, in the largest sense of the word; an intelligence which is worth nothing in itself, which does not think for the sake of thinking, and which they make the passive instrument of their ambition. Others, on the contrary, have a highly-developed sensibility, like women (who have played so great a part in human evolution and in the founding of morality); but in these intelligence and will are too often lacking.

Finally, life has two aspects. According to the one, it is nutrition and assimilation; according to the other, production and fecundity. The more it takes in, the more it needs to give out; that is its law. Expenditure is not an evil physiologically; it is one of the conditions of life. It is expiration following inspiration.

Thus, the expenditure for others which social life demands is not—everything taken into account—a loss for the indi-

vidual; it is a desirable enlargement, and even a necessity. Man wishes to become a social and moral being; he remains constantly agitated by that idea. The delicate cells of his mind and his heart aspire to live and to develop in the same way as those "homunculi" of which M. Renan somewhere speaks; every one of us feels in himself a kind of pushing of moral life, like that of the physical sap. Life is fecundity, and, reciprocally, fecundity is abundance of life; that is true existence.

There is a certain generosity which is inseparable from existence, and without which we die—we shrivel up internally. We must put forth blossoms; morality, disinterestedness, is the flower of human life. Charity has always been represented under the guise of a mother, holding out to her children her breast, overflowing with milk. That is so because, in reality, charity is but one with overflowing fecundity; it is like a maternity too large to be confined within the family. The mother's breast needs life eager to empty it; the heart of the truly humane creature needs to be gentle and helpful to all. Within the benefactor himself dwells the incentive towards those who suffer.

We have verified, even in the life of the blind cell, a principle of expansion, which prevents the individual being sufficient unto himself; the richest life is found to be that which most tends to spend itself lavishly, to sacrifice itself within certain limits, to share itself with others. Whence it follows that the most perfect organism will be also the most sociable, and that the ideal of individual life is the life in common. Thus we find replaced in the very depths of our being that spring of all these instincts of sympathy and sociability which the English school has too often shown us as more or less artificially acquired in the course of evolution, and, in consequence, as more or less adventitious. We are far distant from Bentham and the utilitarians, who everywhere try to avoid pain, who see in pain the irreconcilable enemy; it is as if one would not breathe too strongly, for fear of too

great expenditure. Even in Spencer there is still too much utilitarianism. Besides, he too often looks at things from the outside, and does not see in the unselfish instincts anything but a product of society. There is, we believe, in the heart of individual life itself an evolution corresponding to the evolution of social life, which makes the latter possible, and which is the cause of it, instead of the result.*

* "The objection has been made to us that the fecundity of our different inward forces could find its satisfaction as well in the disagreement as in the agreement with others, in the crushing of other personalities as well as in the raising of them. But, in the first place, one forgets that the others do not let themselves be so easily crushed; the will which seeks to impose itself necessarily meets the resistance of others. Even if it conquers this resistance, it cannot conquer it quite alone—it must lean on its allies, and in this way re-constitute a social group, and impose on it, with regard to this friendly group, the very servitudes from which it tried to get free with regard to the other men, its natural allies. Therefore all struggle always in the end externally limits the will; in the second place, it changes it internally. The violent man stifles the whole sympathetic and intellectual part of his being—that is to say, that in him which is most complex and most elevated from the point of view of evolution. By brutalizing others he more or less brutalizes himself. Violence, which thus seemed a victorious expansion of internal power, becomes in the end a restriction of this power; to make the humiliation of others the object of one's will is to give it an inadequate aim, and to impoverish one's self. At last, by a final and deeper disorganization, the will itself loses its equilibrium completely by the use of violence; if the will has become used to meet no obstacle whatever from outside, as happens with despots, every one of its impulses becomes irresistible; the most contradictory inclinations succeed each other; it is a complete ataxy. The despot becomes a child again; he is given up to contradictory whims, and his objective omnipotence ends in bringing about a real subjective impotency" ("Education and Heredity," p. 58).

CHAPTER III.

To what Extent Inward Power creates a Sort of Obligation. Power and Duty. (I "can," therefore I "must.")

After having established this principle of moral fecundity, which to us seems essential, there remains for us to see in what manner, and under what psychological form, it manifests itself. Is a creature impelled, by its very nature and the normal expansion of its will, to spend itself for others? or is it simply prompted thereto by the attraction of a special pleasure—the pleasure of sympathy, of praise, etc.? We see that here, also, the study of "mental dynamics" in the English and Positivist schools has often been elementary and incomplete.

Kantism has this great merit, which no naturalistic theory would be able to dispute, of having considered the primitive impulse, which constitutes one of the essential elements of duty, as anterior to all philosophical reasoning on goodness; in fact, no demonstrative reason could suddenly change either the direction or the intensity of this spontaneous impulse. The theory of the *categorical imperative* is therefore psychologically exact and deep, as the expression of a fact of consciousness; only Kant had no right, without proof, to consider this imperative as transcendental. "A practical internal necessity" can be a more or less instinctive and even mechanical necessity. In morality, as in genius, there can exist a kind of natural *power*, preceding knowledge—a power which impels us to act and to produce. Is it not precisely the characteristic of natural inclinations, habits, customs, to command the individual without giving any reason? Custom is respected in individual consciousness or in the state, as Pascal has said, "for this one reason, that it is accepted."

The authority of the law is sometimes "entirely based upon

itself," without attaching itself to any principle. "The law is law, and nothing more." In the presence of every power which is anterior to it, of every force which is not that of rational ideas, the understanding always plays the secondary part, as Kant's philosophy has so well shown. It feels itself in the presence of a mystery. Yet it does not follow that the understanding gives up trying to explain this mystery, even in a somewhat superficial way. On the contrary, there is nothing for which human intelligence finds so many explanations as for a thing which is for it inexplicable. How many theories on goodness! How many reasons given for this irrational affirmation: *I must*, or, as the ancients used to put it, *it must be*—δεῖ!

In reality, reason in the abstract is incapable of explaining a power, an instinct, of accounting for a force which is infra-rational in its very principle. Observation, experience, is necessary. The fact of *duty* imposing itself on consciousness as a superior force once being admitted with Kant, let us try to clearly show this fact in its essential variations, and in its relations with the other similar facts of consciousness. We will afterwards see if to us it seems to offer anything supernatural. Kant himself has stated the problem in the celebrated prosopopœia—"Duty!.....where is the *root* of thy noble stem to be found which proudly repudiates all alliance with the inclinations?" Kant, however, has not really answered this question; he has not discovered what bond of relationship might, in spite of appearances, connect this "noble" and "proud" duty with the other inclinations.

"The law of duty," Confucius has also said in a sense quite like that of Kant, "is a shoreless ocean; the world cannot hold it." But sometimes a distance of three hours from the shore gives a lesser mass of water the appearance of an ocean. Sailing on the river of the Amazon, one believes oneself on the sea. To distinguish the river from the sea, we must not try to look into the

distance—we must bend over the water and taste it. Inward analysis is also the only way to appreciate the real or imaginary infinity of our moral horizon.

We will place ourselves successively at the three points of view of the will, the intelligence, and the sensibility.

1. *The existence of a certain impersonal duty is created by the power-of-acting itself. First equivalent of duty.*—Firstly, how to move the will without appealing either to a mystic duty, or to such-and-such a particular pleasure? Whatever is true and deep in the badly elucidated notion of moral duty can, we believe, subsist even after the purification which it has undergone by the theory sketched above. Duty will be reduced to the consciousness of a certain inward *power*, by nature superior to all other powers. To feel inwardly the greatest that one is *capable* of doing is really the first consciousness of what it is one's *duty* to do. Duty, from the point of view of facts—metaphysical notions being left on one side—is a superabundance of life which demands to exercise, to impart itself. Duty has been too much interpreted until now as the sentiment of a *necessity* or *compulsion*. It is, above all, the sentiment of a *power*. Every force which accumulates creates a pressure on the obstacles placed before it. Every ability (power), considered separately, produces a kind of obligation which is proportionate to itself. To have the power to act is to be obliged to act. Among inferior beings, whose intellectual life is fettered and smothered, there are few duties; but this means that there is little power. Civilized man has countless duties, because he possesses a very rich activity, to be expended in a thousand ways. From this point of view, which is in no way mystical, moral obligation is reduced to this great law of nature: *life can maintain itself only on the condition of diffusing itself.* It is impossible to compass one's aim with certainty unless one has the power to go beyond it; and if one holds that the self is, in itself, its own aim, this is still a reason why it cannot suffice for

itself. The plant cannot prevent itself from flowering. Sometimes to flower means for it to die. No matter, the sap still rises. Nature does not look back to see what it abandons; it goes its way, always forward, always upward.

2. *The existence of a certain impersonal duty is created by the conception-of-action itself. Second equivalent of duty.*—In the same way as the power of activity creates a kind of natural obligation or imperative impulse, so intelligence has, in itself, a motive-power.

If we raise ourselves high enough, we may find incentives to action which do not only work as springs of action, but which are, in and through themselves, without direct intervention of the sentiments, the moving power of activity and of life. Here again may be applied that important theory of ideas as forces (*les idées forces*) which a contemporary philosopher has broached.*

Intelligence and activity seem no longer separated by an abyss. To understand is already the beginning in us of the realization of that which we understand. To conceive something better than that which exists is the first labour in realizing it. Action is but the extension of the idea. Thought is almost a word; we are urged with so much force to express what we think that the child and the old man, less capable of resisting this compulsion, think aloud; the brain naturally makes the lips move. In the same way, the mind will make the arms and the whole body work and move; it will direct life. Conception of aim, effort to attain—these are not two things. The conception itself, let us repeat it, is a first effort. We think, we feel, and action follows. Hence, there is no need whatever to call for the intermediate agent of outward pleasure, no need of a middle term or bridge to pass from one of these two

* See M. Alfred Fouillée's "La Liberté et le Determinisme" (2nd edition), and "La Critique des Systèmes de Morale Contemporaine."

things to the other. Thought, action—they are fundamentally identical.

That which is called obligation or moral restraint is, in the sphere of intelligence, the sentiment of this radical identity. Obligation is an internal expansion—a need to complete our ideas by converting them into action. He who does not act as he thinks, thinks incompletely. He feels, moreover, that something fails him; he is not complete; he is not himself. Immorality is an internal mutilation. Every movement of the mind lifts the body up. Not to act in accordance with that which we believe to be the best is to be like one who can neither laugh when he is joyful, nor weep when he is sad; who, in short, can neither outwardly express nor translate anything of that which he feels. That would be supreme torture.

The distinction between the will and the intelligence has been made too great, and has been of such a kind as to immediately bring into evidence the need of moving the will exclusively by means of motives of sentiment or feeling. But exterior motives need not be called in so long as the inner mechanism of thought and of life is sufficient. It may be said that will is but a superior degree of intelligence, and that action is but a superior degree of will.

From that moment morality is nothing else than *unity* of being. Immorality, on the contrary, is a dividing into two —an opposition of different faculties, which limit each other. Hypocrisy consists in checking the natural expression of thought, and in substituting a contrary expression for it; in this sense it could be said that, in essence, immorality is hypocrisy, and, consequently, a check on the development of the being.*

3. The existence of a certain impersonal duty created by the

* This theory has been completed by important passages in "Education and Heredity," translated by W. J. Greenstreet, M.A., and published in the Contemporary Science Series. (See pp. 75-79.)

growing fusion of the sensibilities, and by the more sociable character of the higher pleasures. Third equivalent of duty. —A new kind of obligation is derived from the very nature of sensibility, which tends to transform itself by the effect of evolution. The superior pleasures which daily form a greater part of human life—pleasures of art, pleasures of reasoning, of learning, and of understanding, of finding out things, etc.—require far less, as regards external conditions, and are much more accessible to all, than the really selfish pleasures. The happiness of a thinker or of an artist is a happiness which costs little. With a piece of bread, a book, or a landscape, you may taste a pleasure infinitely superior to that of an imbecile in a carriage with armorial bearings, drawn by four horses. The superior pleasures are, therefore, both more intimate, deeper, and more free of expense (without always being completely so). They tend to separate beings far less than do the inferior pleasures.

Thus, by a natural evolution, the origin of a great many of our pleasures seems to ascend from the outward to the inward. The man of feeling possesses, in his own activity, a source of very varied enjoyment, and that sometimes independently of outward things. Does it follow from this that he will shut himself up in himself, and will suffice unto himself, like the stoic sage? Far from it; intellectual pleasures have this remarkable characteristic—that they are both the most *inward* and the most *communicative*, the most *individual* and the most *social*, pleasures of our being. Bring together thinkers, or lovers of the beautiful (as long as there is no personal rivalry between them); they will like each other more quickly, and in any case more truly, than other people; they will at once recognise that they live in the same sphere—that of thought; they will feel themselves as of the same country. This *bond* which will be established between them will also link their conduct, and will impose on them, in their mutual relations, a particular kind of obligation; it is an emotional bond—a union

produced by the complete, or partial, harmony of sentiments and of thoughts.

The higher we rise in the scale of evolution, the more do the pleasures of mankind seem to partake of a social and sociable character. The idea becomes one of the essential sources of pleasure. Now, the idea is a kind of contingent common to all human brains; it is a universal consciousness, more or less made up of individual consciousness. As the part played by ideas in the life of every one of us increases, we find that the part of the universal increases also, and tends to predominate over the individual. Consciousness then becomes more easy of penetration. He who is born to-day is meant for a much more intensely intellectual life than he who was born a hundred thousand years ago; and yet, notwithstanding the intensity of his individual life, his intelligence will be found to be, so to speak, much more *socialized;* precisely because of its being so much richer, it will possess much less for itself alone. It is the same with sensibility. We have already asked, in commenting on Epicurus, what, after all, would a purely personal and selfish pleasure be? Do pleasures of that kind exist, and what share in life do they have? To this ever-present question we answer, as we did before: We see, in descending the scale of beings, that the sphere in which each of them moves is small, and almost shut off; if, on the contrary, we ascend towards superior beings, we see their sphere of action open out, become larger, lose itself in the sphere of action of other beings. The *self* distinguishes itself less and less from the other *selves*—or, rather, it has more and more need of them, in order to form itself and exist. Now, this sort of scale, along which human thought moves, has already been partly travelled over by the human species in its evolution. Its point of departure was, it is true, selfishness; but selfishness, by virtue of the very fecundity of all life, was obliged to enlarge itself, to create outside of itself new centres for its own action. At the same time, sentiments correlative to

this centrifugal tendency are born from time to time, and, so to speak, overlap the selfish sentiments which served them as principles. We are on the way to an epoch in which primitive selfishness will recede more and more, be driven back, and become more and more unknown to us.

In this ideal era a being will, so to speak, no longer be able to enjoy himself alone; his pleasure will be like a concert, in which the pleasure of others must form a part, by virtue of its being a necessary element; and is it not already so in many cases at present? If, in life generally, the part left to mere selfishness is compared with that which belongs to "altruism," it will be seen how relatively small the first is; even the most selfish pleasures, being entirely physical—such as the pleasure of eating and drinking—acquire their full charm only when we share them with others. We shall find this predominant part played by the social sentiments in all our enjoyments and all our pains. Moreover, pure selfishness would not only be, as we have shown, a kind of self-mutilation; it would be an impossibility. Neither my sufferings nor my pleasures are absolutely my own. The thorny leaves of the aloe, before being fully developed and spread out in enormous bands, remain for a long while folded one over the other, forming, as it were, one single heart. In that stage the thorns of every leaf are imprinted on the neighbouring leaf. Later on all these leaves grow freely, and spread themselves out; yet this mark remains, and even grows with their growth. It is a seal of pain, stamped upon them for life. The same thing happens in our heart, in which all the joys and pains of mankind are imprinted from the very moment of its birth. On each one of us, whatever we may do, this mark remains stamped. In the same way, in short, as the *self* is, for contemporary psychology, an illusion; as there is no separate personality; and as we are composed of an infinite number of beings, and of small consciences and states of consciousness; so selfish pleasure may be said to be an illusion. My own

pleasure does not exist without the pleasure of others; I feel that the whole community has, more or less, to contribute to it, from the small family circle which surrounds us to the large community in which I live.*

Thus, then, a truly positive moral science may, to a certain extent, speak of obligation; and that, on the one hand, without intervention of any mystical idea, and on the other without appealing (as Bain does) to an exterior and social compulsion, or to an inward "*fear*." No; it is sufficient to consider the normal directions of psychic life. There will always be found a kind of inner pressure exercised by the activity itself in these directions; the moral agent will, by a both natural and rational inclination, feel itself driven in that sense, and it will recognise that it has to make a kind of inner *coup d'état* to escape that pressure. It is this *coup d'état* which we call fault, or crime. In committing it the individual does wrong to himself; he decreases and voluntarily extinguishes something of his physical or mental life.

Moral obligation, which has its root in the very function of life, therefore happens to come in principle before thinking consciousness, and springs from the obscure and unconscious depths of our being—or, if one prefers to put it so, from the sphere of spontaneous and synthetical consciousness. The sentiment of natural obligation may, in a great measure, be brought back to this formula: I ascertain in myself, by means of reflective consciousness, certain powers and modifications, which, however, do not spring therefrom, but which spring from unconscious and sub-conscious depths in myself, and which urge me in a certain fixed direction. Thus, across the luminous sphere of consciousness are flashing rays of heat from that obscure fire which constitutes the inner life.

* See our "Morale d'Epicure" (second edition), p. 288.

CHAPTER IV.

The Sentiment of Obligation from the Point of View of Mental Dynamics as Impulsive or Repressive Force.

In whatever manner duty may be metaphysically or morally represented, it is not, with regard to other motives and springs of action, without a certain psycho-mechanical power. Dynamically considered, the sentiment of obligation is a force acting in time according to a determinate direction with more or less intensity. We, therefore, have to find out how these powers of action have been born in us—these impulsive forces which are, at the same time, ideas and sentiments. We should like to sketch here the dynamic genesis of the *sentiment* of obligation and of its dynamic action, so that in future we may look upon it, not as a limitation or restriction of activity, but as the very consequence of its expansion. A man celebrated for his courage and integrity (Daumesnil) said, one day, to a minister of Charles X.: "I do not follow my conscience; I am driven by it." According to this very delicate distinction, the impulses of the moral and social order may be divided into two classes. By the one, we are literally driven forward by the *sentiment* of duty without having time to discuss, to deliberate, to reason; by the other, we allow ourselves to be dragged along in its course with a more precise consciousness of a possible and already real resistance of a certain independence.

A characteristic example of impulsive and spontaneous sentiment is given us by some poor labourers in a lime-kiln in the Pyrenees. One of them, having to descend into the kiln to look after something which had gone wrong, fell down suffocated. Another, hurrying to his assistance, also fell. A woman, witnessing the accident, called for help. Other labourers hastened to the spot. For the third time a man went into the burning

kiln and immediately succumbed. A fourth, a fifth man jumped into it, and succumbed. Only one man remained; he approached, and was ready to jump, when the woman, who was standing on the spot, clutched him by his clothes and, half mad with terror, kept him back on the edge. A little later, when the magistrates arrived at the place of the accident to hold an inquest, the only survivor was questioned on his thoughtless self-sacrifice, and one of the magistrates began very gravely to point out to him the irrationality of his conduct. The man gave this admirable answer: "My comrades were dying; I felt driven to go." In this example the sentiment of moral obligation and human solidarity had, in appearance, lost its rational basis. It was, however, still sufficiently powerful to successively drive five men to the useless sacrifice of their lives. It will not be disputed that, in this case, the sentiment of duty appeared more in the form of a spontaneous impulse—of a sudden overflow of inward life towards others, than in the form of a deliberate respect for an abstract "moral law," or of a search for "pleasure" or "utility." Moreover, let it be noted that, with the development of human intelligence and sentiment, it is impossible to discover the moral *impulse* in an almost reflex state without there being mixed up with it general and generous, even metaphysical, ideas.

At other times the spontaneous sentiment of duty, instead of inciting to action, stops it suddenly. Then may develop what Messrs. Maudsley and Ribot, with the physiologists, would call a power of suspension or of "inhibition" not less sudden and violent than the power of impulse. "I was still a little fellow in skirts," the American preacher, Parker, tells us, "and only four years old. I had never killed the smallest creature; yet I had seen other children amuse themselves by killing birds, squirrels, and other little animals.....One day I discovered, in a not very deep pond, a small speckled tortoise warming itself in the sun. I lifted my stick to give it a knock.....Suddenly something

held back my arm, and I heard a strong, clear voice within me saying, That is wicked! Quite surprised at this new sensation, this unknown power which in me, and in spite of me, opposed my actions, I *kept* my stick *lifted up* in the air until I had lost sight of the tortoise.....I must own that no other event of my life has left such a deep and lasting impression upon me." In this second example the sudden action of feeling is still more remarkable than in the preceding one, because it suspends action already begun, and opposes a sudden obstacle to the nervous discharge ready to be sent forth. It is a *coup de théâtre*, a sudden revelation. The power of the sentiment is made more evident by suspension than by impulsion; by prohibition rather than by command. Moreover, after an experience of that kind, the sentiment of what must be done may, to the thoughtful conscience, at once assume a mystic character which it does not always have in other cases. When the intelligence is, in so sudden a way, confronted with a deep, strong instinct, it tends towards a kind of religious respect. Thus, from the restricted point of view of pure mental dynamics which we adopt, duty can already produce a sentiment of respect which it owes, partly to its great power of arrest, partly to its mysterious origin.

The force of the moral sentiment acquires a more and more remarkable character, if it shows itself in the form, not of sudden impulse or repression, but as an inward pressure, a constant *tension*. In most cases, and with most people, the sentiment of what must be done is not violent, but it is *durable*. In default of intensity, it has its advantage in *time*, which is as yet the most powerful of factors.

A tension not very strong, but acting continuously and always in the same direction, must necessarily conquer resistances which are much stronger, but which neutralize each other. When, for the first time, the idea of helping France entered the soul of Joan of Arc, this idea did not

prevent her from bringing her sheep back to the farm; but later on, when this same idea took complete possession of her mind, it altered her whole life as a peasant girl, it changed the fate of France, and thus modified the course of humanity in a very appreciable manner. If, then, we consider the moral sentiment in its analogies, not with the impulsive force, but with the force of tension, we shall be better able to account, first, for its power, and then for the special form which this power will adopt later on in the mind—the sentiment of moral obligation.

The force of tension may belong to every instinct fulfilling the following conditions:—(1) being almost *indestructible;* (2) being very nearly *constant* and without intermissions—for instance, of hunger; (3) finding itself in *harmony* and in *association* with, and not in *opposition* to, those other instincts which promote the maintenance of the species.

Let us first remark that *moral obligation*, properly so-called, neither demands the immediate doing of the act nor even its fulfilment in a general way; it accompanies the idea of an act *possible*, but not necessary. Duty is, in this case, no longer an irresistible, but a lasting impulse; it is a sublime obsession. We soon experience, as Darwin has shown, that an inclination is not destroyed by violating it. The discontent which we feel after having disobeyed it shows us our impotence to uproot the instinct which we have had the power to violate. This instinct may, at each moment of its duration, be inferior to the sum of forces demanded for the accomplishment of the act; but it appears in the conscience as a permanent instinct, and thus gains a quite new kind of power. In this way we have, among the inward forces, the sentiment of a force which is not insurmountable, but which is, for us, *indestructible* (or at least seems to us to be so after a series of experiences). In this respect *obligation* in its most elementary state is the "*prevision of the indefinite duration*

of an impersonal and generous inclination, the experience of its indestructibility." There is, moreover, no *distinct* consciousness of the *bonds* of obligation until there has been more or less a feeling of remorse—that is to say, persistence of the instinct in spite of its violation. Mistake is a necessary element in the formation of thoughtful moral consciousness. In reality, it is the idea of time which begins to give its particular character to that instinct of duty in which Kant saw only the manifestation of the intemporal. Under the sway of passion the actual intensity of the inclinations alone enters into the sum of forces which act on the mind. The future and the past have no influence. Now, the past and the future, remembered or foreshadowed, are a condition of morality. The pressure of the great instincts, useful to the species, grows infinitely greater and greater if in our imagination it becomes multiplied by every moment of time. A being to become moral must possess consciousness of the duration of time.

One knows the examples by which Darwin shows that, if animals had our intelligence, their instinct would be replaced by a *sentiment* of obligation. This sentiment of obligation —*feeling*—from the point of view of dynamics, is independent of effectively moral or non-moral *direction* of the instinct; it depends solely on its intensity, its duration, and on the resistance or assistance which it meets in its environment. "Let us suppose," Darwin says, "to take an extreme case, that, if men had been born under the same conditions of life as the bees, without doubt our non-married females, following the example of the work-bees, would consider it their sacred duty to kill their brothers, and the mothers would try to kill their pregnant daughters, without anyone interfering."*

* See "The Descent of Man" and our "Morale Anglaise Contemporaine." An empirical verification of these theories on the relation of instinct and of obligation may be sought. To accomplish this it would be necessary to continue in a methodical way the experiments

Now, why is it impossible to satisfy the moral instinct—which in man is found to really coincide with the social and humanitarian instinct—and why does it not take the periodical form of the other instincts? There are two sorts of instincts—the one tends to repair the expenditure of force, the other to produce this expenditure. The first are limited by their very object; they disappear when once the want is satisfied; they are periodical and non-continuous. Polyphagy, for instance, is rare. The others tend very often

commenced by Messrs. Charcot and Richet, on what we will call *moral suggestions*, made in a state of somnambulism. According to these experiments, a command given to someone in a state of somnambulism during his sleep is executed by the person, sooner or later, when he wakes up, without his being able to himself interpret the reasons which have urged him to do the action. The magnetizer thus seems to have been able to create at all points an inward tendency, an inclination persistent in the background, and imposing itself on the will of the patient. In these curious examples the dream of the somnambulist still dominates and directs his life after his awakening; it is like an artificial instinct in its birth. Here is, for instance, a curious case observed by Mr. Richet. It deals with a woman who had the mania of not taking sufficient food. One day, during her sleep, Mr. Richet told her that she ought to eat a good deal. When awakened, she had completely forgotten the injunction. However, one of the following days, the nursing sister of the hospital took Mr. Richet aside, to tell him that she could not make out the change which had taken place in the patient. "She now always asks for more food than I give her," the sister said. If these facts were carefully observed, we have here, not only the execution of a particular order, but unconscious impulse, approaching very closely to natural instinct. In short, every natural or moral instinct is derived, as Cuvier remarks, from a sort of somnambulism, because it gives us an order of which we ignore the reason; we hear the "voice of conscience" without knowing whence it comes. To vary the experiment, one ought to order the patient, not only to eat, but, for instance, to get up early every day, to work steadily. One might in this way succeed in modifying the moral character of persons by degrees, and the state of somnambulism might become important as a means of action in the moral hygiene of some sick people. If it were possible thus to create an artificial instinct, undoubtedly a kind of mystical obligation would attach to it—provided it did not meet with resistance

to become continuous and unsatisfied. Thus, in certain depraved organisms the sexual instinct may lose its habitual character of periodicity and regularity, to become nymphomania or satyriasis. Every instinct urging to an expenditure of force may thus become *insatiable*—intellectual debauch, love of money, of play, of fighting, of travel, etc. We have to distinguish, therefore, between instincts demanding varied expenditure of force and those

from other pre-existent and more vivid inclinations. An inverse experiment might also be made, to see if it would not be possible to annul, by a repeated series of orders, such or such a natural instinct. It is said that a somnambulist can be made to lose his memory, for instance, with regard to names; he can even be made to lose his *whole* memory, according to Mr. Richet (*Rev. Philos.*, October 8th, 1880). He adds: "This experiment must only be attempted with the utmost prudence; I have, in such a case, seen so great a terror and such a disorder of the intelligence caused, persisting for about a quarter of an hour, that I should not like to re-commence this dangerous attempt often." If one identifies memory, as most of the psychologists do, with habit and instinct, one would think it would be also possible in a somnambulist to provision ally annihilate, or at least weaken, instincts even of the most fundamental or most obligatory kind, such as the maternal instinct, modesty, etc. It remains to be known if this suppression of instinct would not leave some traces after the awakening. Then the power of resistance of diverse instincts might be tested—for instance, of the moral instincts; and it might be shown which are the deepest and most tenacious, the selfish or the altruistic impulses. Anyway, the experiment of destroying bad habits or hereditary manias might be attempted; it might be seen if a series of orders or advice often repeated during sleep could, for instance, lessen delusions of grandeur and persecutions. The madman, believing himself to be an object of hatred, could be commanded to love his enemies; prayer might be forbidden to the madman who believed he was thus entering into direct communication with God, etc. In other words, one would try to counterbalance a natural mania by an artificial impulse, created during sleep. Somnambulism would thus be found to be a subject of richer psychological and moral observation than insanity. Both are derangements of the mental mechanism; but in the state of somnambulism this derangement can be calculated and regulated by the magnetizer. Since the first edition of this book many experiments of this kind have been made, and with success.

demanding always the same expenditure. Those which belong to one particular organ are very easily exhausted. Those which include a series of indefinite tendencies (as, for instance, love of exercise, of movement, of action) can naturally be satisfied less easily, because the variety of expenditure gives a kind of rest. The social and moral instinct belongs, as mental force, to this kind; it is therefore among those which easily become insatiable and continuous.

What happens if some instinct or other has thus become insatiable? Every time an instinct is exercised which is but little varied in its manifestations there follows such an exhaustion of the organism that it is unable to repair the expenditure. The nymphomaniac has no children. A too great expenditure of brain-force also checks fecundity—even causes untimely death. The exaggerated love of danger and of war multiplies the risks and diminishes the chances of life. But there are some rare tendencies which may become insatiable without checking the multiplication of the species, but, on the contrary, favouring it. First in the list naturally comes the altruistic sentiment—that is, the one which could best produce a strong feeling which persists after a passing gratification. Even from the physiological point of view, it is possible to thus show the necessary formation of the social and moral instinct.

The æsthetic instinct, which prompts the artist to seek beautiful forms, to act according to a certain order and measure, to perfect everything he does—this instinct is very much like moral inclinations, and, like these, can give rise to a certain *sentiment* of rudimentary obligation. The artist feels inwardly obliged to produce, to create, and to create harmonious works; he is as vividly wounded by a mistake in taste as many conscientious people by a mistake in conduct; he incessantly feels, with regard to forms and colours or sounds, this double sentiment of indignation and admiration, which one might believe to belong exclusively to the moral judgment. Even the artizan, the skilled work-

man, does whatever he works at with satisfaction; loves his work; cannot consent to let it remain unfinished and unpolished. This instinct, which is to be traced even in the bird building its nest, and which has burst forth with extraordinary power in certain artistic temperaments, might undoubtedly, in a people like the Greeks, in its development, give rise to an *æsthetic obligation* similar to moral obligation; but the æsthetic instinct was only indirectly connected with the propagation of the species; for this reason it has neither become sufficiently general, nor has it acquired sufficient intensity. It has only become of real importance where it was in touch with sexual selection. In the relation of the sexes the æsthetic inclination becomes something like a moral bond; the aversion, if violated, ends in a kind of remorse. The æsthetic aversion which an individual feels with regard to certain individuals of the other sex is noticed even among animals; it is known that a stallion will disdain to be coupled with too coarse mares.

In man we find that this same sentiment—connected, moreover, with many others, social or moral—will produce far more marked effects. The negro women—whom their masters want to pair like animals, and so marry by force to the males chosen for them—have even gone so far as to strangle the children of this enforced union (and yet promiscuousness is frequent among negroes). A man who tries to gratify his brutal desire with a woman physically and æsthetically too much below him feels afterwards an inward shame; he has the feeling of it being a degradation of the race. The young girl who, in obedience to her parents, marries a man who displeases her, may afterwards feel a disgust strong enough, near enough to moral remorse, to throw herself out of the window of the nuptial chamber. In all these instances the æsthetic sentiment produces the same effect as the moral sentiment. Genius and beauty bring obligations. Like every power discovered in ourselves, they clothe us in our own eyes with a certain dignity,

and they impose on us a duty. If genius were absolutely necessary to every individual in order to conquer in the struggle for life, it would undoubtedly have become general. Art would be to-day a groundwork common to mankind, like virtue.

One of those instincts which, apart from the moral and æsthetic instinct, has been able to so sufficiently develop itself in certain individuals as to make it possible for the English school to regard it as an analogue to the sentiment of obligation is the inclination so often given as an instance by this school—viz., avarice. But, even from this narrow and still gross point of view which we here take, let us notice the inferiority of this impulse in comparison with the moral instinct. Avarice, while diminishing the comfort of life, has the same effect as poverty; it does not promote fecundity, for the miser is afraid of having children. Besides, in the child, whose development has been cramped by the paternal avarice, a reaction is very often produced which prompts it to prodigality. In short—and this is a decisive reason—avarice, not having any social utility, has not been encouraged by opinion. Let us imagine a society of misers. Every one of them will have but one aim—to transform his neighbour into a spendthrift, so as to be able to lay hands on his gold. If, nevertheless, against all possibility, misers could live with perfect mutual understanding and mutual incitement to avarice, it would not be long before we should see a "*duty of parsimony*" spring up—a sentiment as strong as many other duties. Among our French peasants, and especially among the Jews, we find this not very moral obligation raised almost to the level of moral duties. A member of a society of misers would undoubtedly feel the *obligation* of parsimony more strongly than that of temperance or courage, for instance; he would feel deeper remorse for having failed in this obligation than in either of the others.

From the foregoing it may already be concluded, inde-

pendently of many other considerations, that it is impossible that the different moral duties, divers forms of the social or altruistic instinct, should not be born; and hardly any others could spring up. A fresh reason, which ought to assure the triumph of the moral instinct, is the impossibility of satisfying remorse, of satisfying it by a good action —as one satisfies hunger. When once hunger is stilled, the pain felt becomes but a vague remembrance, which we at last completely lose. It is not the same with remorse; the past seems indelible, and is ever smarting. For the rest, no wants which are not too merely animal admit of such compensations as hunger and thirst allow. Thus it is with love. You may everlastingly regret the supreme hour of love which the beloved woman offered you, and which you allowed to slip away, without having ever been able to win it back again. The lover cannot, as in a comedy of Shakespeare, replace one woman by another.

> " Je ne vis qu'elle etait belle
> Qu'en sortant des grands bois sourds.....
> Soit, n'y pensons plus, dit-elle,
> *Et moi, j'y pense tonjours.*"

In short, the most considerable advantage of the moral instincts, as instincts, is that to them belongs the last word. If I have sacrificed myself, I am either dead, or I survive with the satisfaction of duty fulfilled. The selfish instincts are those which are always thwarted in their triumph. To enjoy the satisfaction of fulfilled duty is to forget the trouble we took in fulfilling it. On the contrary, the thought that we have failed in our duty somehow embitters even our pleasure. In general the remembrance of work, of strain, of effort employed for the satisfaction of any instinct, is soon effaced; but the remembrance of the unsatisfied instinct persists as long as the instinct itself. Leander soon forgot with Hero the great effort made in crossing the Hellespont; he would not have been able to forget Hero in the embrace of another lover.

The moral instinct being once established in its generality, with its power in constant application, in what order has it given rise to the different particular moral instincts, the well-considered formula of which will constitute the different duties? In an order often the reverse of the logical order adopted by moralists. Most moralists give the first place to the duties towards ourselves, to the conservation of the inward dignity; next, they place the duties of justice before the duties of charity. This order is by no means an absolute one, and a quite contrary order is often produced in the evolution of moral impulses. The savage generally ignores justice and right properly so-called, but he is susceptible of an impulse of pity; he does not know temperance, shame, etc., and yet, if necessary, he will risk his life for his tribe. Temperance, courage, are, to a great extent, social and derived virtues. Temperance, for instance, is still, among the masses, a social virtue. If a man of the people, at a meal to which he is invited, does not eat or drink so much as in the public-house, it is more from fear of impropriety or from fear of indigestion than from a sentiment of moral refinement. Courage hardly ever exists without a certain desire for praise, for honour; it has been much developed, as Darwin has shown, by means of sexual selection. In short, duties towards ourselves in the way we moderns understand them may, in a great measure, be reduced to duties towards others.

Moralists distinguish between negative duties and positive duties, between abstaining and acting. Abstaining, which pre-supposes self-control, *suî compos*, comes first from the moral point of view; it is justice. But it is much less primitive from the point of view of evolution. One of the most difficult things to obtain from primitive beings is precisely abstention. Moreover, that which is called right and duty in a strict sense is more often posterior to duty in the large sense; this, for primitive people, has often a less

obligatory character. To throw one's self into a fight to help a comrade will seem to a savage (and to many civilized men) more obligatory and more honourable than to abstain from robbing him of his wife. The people in Australia, Cunningham says, think no more of the life of a man than of that of a butterfly; they are, for all that, none the less susceptible, when the moment comes, of charity, or even of heroism. The Polynesians commit child-murder without a shadow of remorse; but they can very tenderly love the children whom they thought fit to spare. There is, in the effort demanded by abstention, an often greater working of the will than in acting, only it is less visible; hence moralists have been inclined to attribute a secondary importance to abstention. One does not see the effort of Hercules in lifting up a heavy burden with outstretched arm, precisely because the arm is motionless, and does not tremble; but this immobility costs more inward energy than many movements.

Up to this point we have considered the moral sentiment only as a sentiment conscious of its relations to the other sentiments of the human soul, but unconscious of its source and its hidden causes—as non-philosophic, in short. What is going to happen when the sentiment becomes reflective, rational—when the moral man wants to explain the causes of its action and to justify it? If we must believe Mr. Spencer, moral obligation, which implies resistance and effort, must some day disappear to make room for a kind of moral spontaneousness. The altruistic instinct will be so incomparably strong that without struggle it will bear us along. We shall not even estimate its power, because we shall not feel tempted to resist it. We might say that at that time the force of tension which the idea of duty possesses will transform itself into a living force as soon as there shall be an opportunity, and we shall, so to speak, only become conscious of it as a living force. Mr. Spencer even says the day will come when the altruistic instinct

will be so powerful that men will vie with each other in finding opportunities of exercising it—opportunities of self-sacrifice and death. Mr. Spencer goes too far. He forgets that while civilization tends to indefinitely develop the altruistic instinct, while it gradually changes the higher rules of morality into mere rules of social *propriety*, of civility almost, on the other hand civilization infinitely developes thoughtful intelligence, habits of inward and outward observation—the scientific spirit, in short. Now, the scientific spirit is the great enemy of all instinct; it is the dissolving force *par excellence* of all that which Nature herself has bound. It is the revolutionary spirit. It incessantly struggles against the spirit of authority which is at the root of societies; it will also struggle against the authority in the depths of conscience. Whatever origin one attributes to the impulse of duty, if this impulse is not justified by reason it will find itself seriously modified by the continuous development of reason in man. Human nature, said a Chinese sceptic to Mencius, the faithful disciple of Confucius, is so pliant and so flexible that it resembles the branch of the willow. Equity and justice are like the basket woven out of this willow. But the moral being needs to believe himself an oak with a sound heart, needs to feel himself not giving way like the willow to the chance stroke of the hand which touches him. If his conscience is but a basket woven by instinct with bending branches, reflection might easily undo what instinct had done. The moral sense will then lose all its resistance and all its solidity. We believe it is possible to scientifically prove the following law: "*Every instinct tends to its own destruction when it becomes conscious.*"*

* See our "Morale Anglaise Contemporaine" (part ii., book iii.). This is what M. Ribot concedes to us ("L'Hérédite Psychologique," second edition, p. 342); but he adds: "Instinct only disappears before a form of mental activity, which takes its place by doing better.....Intelligence could only kill the moral sentiment by finding

In France, as well as in England, a certain number of objections have been brought forward against us, which tend to make out that moral theories are without influence in practical life. We had shown that the moral sense, if hypothetically it is robbed of all truly rational authority, finds itself reduced to the *rôle* of a constant obsession, or hallucination. The answer was made to us that the moral sense has nothing in common with hallucination; for it is in no sense a judgment, neither is it an opinion. "Conscience does not *affirm*, it *commands*; and a command may be wise or foolish, but not true or false."* But we, in our turn, say that what precisely constitutes the dogmatic character of a command is that it does not explain itself at all by plausible reasons—that is to say, that it corresponds with a *false* view of the reality. Every command thus includes an "affirmation," and implies, not only "foolishness" or "wisdom," but error or truth. In the same way, every affirmation implicitly includes a rule of conduct. A mad person is not only "deceived" by the ideas which possess him—he is *directed* by them; our illusions command and rule us. The moral sentiment which keeps me from killing acts on me as a *sentiment*, by means of the same springs as the immoral impulse which urges a maniac to kill; we are both *moved* in the same way, but according to opposite motives or springs. One has, therefore, always to examine if this, my motive, possesses more rational value than that

something better." Assuredly, on the condition that the word *better* be taken in quite a physical and mechanical sense. For example, it is better—it is preferable—for the cuckoo to lay her eggs in the nest of other birds; but this does not seem to be *better*, speaking absolutely, nor, above all, does it seem so for the other birds. An *amelioration* from the point of view of the individual, and even of the species, might therefore not always be identical with what we call "*moral amelioration*." There is here, at least, a question which deserves to be examined; it is precisely this question which we examine in this volume.

* Mr. Pollock, in *Mind* (vol. iv., p. 446).

of the murderer. That is the question. If, now, to appreciate the rational value of motives, one trusts to a purely positive and scientific criterion, a certain number of conflicts will be produced between public utility and personal utility—conflicts which it is right to foresee. As to the hope that instinct will be able to decide in these conflicts quite alone, we do not believe in it; on the contrary, instinct will be more and more altered in man by the progress of reflection.

We should not, therefore, be able to agree with our English critics on this essential point. Has the *science of ethics*, which is a systematization of moral evolution in humanity, no influence on this very evolution; and is it unable to modify its meaning in any important way? In more general words, does not every phenomenon, in becoming conscious of itself, change under the very influence of this consciousness? Elsewhere we have made the remark that the instinct of suckling, so important in mammifers, to-day tends to disappear in many women. There is a still much more essential phenomenon—the most essential of all—that of generation, which tends to modify itself according to the same law. In France (where the majority of the people are not held back by religious considerations) the personal will becomes, in the sexual act, a partial substitute for the instinct of reproduction. Hence, in our country, the very slow increase in population, which causes both numeral inferiority to the other continental nations and our economic superiority (very provisional, however, and already compromised). Here, then, is a striking instance of the intervention of the will in the sphere of instinct. Instinct, being no longer protected by a religious or moral *creed*, becomes powerless to furnish a rule of conduct. The rule is borrowed from purely rational considerations, and generally from considerations of mere personal utility—by no means of social utility. Yet the most important duty of the individual is generation, which assures the duration of

the race. Likewise, in many of the animal species, the individual lives only to breed, and death follows immediately on fecundity. To-day this duty, first in the animal scale, finds itself consigned to the lowest rank in the French nation, which, with deliberate purpose, seems to follow the maxim of in-fecundity. This is not the place to blame, but merely to state. The gradual and necessary disappearance of religion and absolute morality has many such surprises in store for us. If there is nothing in this to terrify us, at least we must try to foresee them in the interest of science.

Another remark. The mere excess of scruples may go so far as to dissolve the moral instinct in the case of confessors and their penitents. Bagehot remarks also that in reasoning excessively about modesty one may weaken, and even gradually lose, that very sentiment. Every time that reflection is steadily fixed on an instinct, on a spontaneous impulse, it tends to alter the same. This fact might, perhaps, be physiologically explained by the moderating action of the grey matter of the brain on the secondary nervous centres, and on every reflex action. For instance, if a pianist plays by heart a piece studied mechanically, it is necessary that he should play with confidence and smoothness, without paying too close an attention to himself, and without wanting to account for the instinctive movement of his fingers. To reason about a system of reflex actions or habits always means to upset them.*

The moral instinct, which evolution tends to strengthen in so many ways, might, therefore, undergo some alteration by the excessive development of thoughtful intelligence. Undoubtedly one has to carefully distinguish, in moral philosophy, between metaphysical theories and practical morality. We have ourselves elsewhere made this distinction; but we cannot agree with the English philosophers

* See on this point the "Problèmes de l'Esthétique Contemporaine," p. 137.

that theories never influence practice, or at least influence it as little as they maintain is the case. Messrs. Pollock and Leslie Stephen compare moral philosophy with geometry. The hypotheses relative to the reality of duty, Mr. Pollock tells us, have no more influence on conduct than the hypotheses relative to the reality of space and its dimensions. Messrs. Pollock and Leslie Stephen forget that, if space has four dimensions instead of three, this is of no interest either to my legs or to my arms, which will always move within the three known dimensions. If, on the contrary, there exists for me the means to move according to new dimensions, and if that might be an advantage to me in some way or other, I should hasten to try, and I should work with all my strength to destroy my primitive intuition of space. This is precisely what happens in moral philosophy; a whole field of activity, closed until now by the phantom of the idea of duty, sometimes opens before me. If I notice that there is no real harm in my exercising myself freely in it, but that, on the contrary, it would be beneficial to me, how should I not take advantage of it? The difference between ordinary scientific speculations and speculations in moral philosophy is, that the first indicate mere alternatives for thought, while the second indicate, at the same time alternatives for action. All the possibilities discovered by science can be here realized for ourselves. It is for me to realize the *hyperspace*.

The result predicted to us by Mr. Spencer—gradual disappearance of the sentiment of obligation—could, therefore, be obtained in a way quite other than the one of which he speaks. Moral obligation would disappear, not because moral instinct would have become irresistible, but, on the contrary, because man, no longer taking into account any instinct, would absolutely conform his conduct to reason—would unfold his life like a series of theorems. It may be said that for Vincent de Paul moral obligation, in so far as it is painful and austere, had disappeared. He

was *spontaneously* good; but it may also be said that for Spinoza it had equally disappeared. He had forced himself to combat every moral prejudice; he did not obey any instinct unless he could accept it after deliberate reasoning. He was more of a rational than a moral being. He submitted, not to the constantly obscure, and, so to speak, opaque obligation springing from his moral nature, but to the clear and transparent obligation springing from his reason. And where this obligation imposed on him any kind of suffering, he must have experienced that stoic sentiment of intellectual origin—resignation—rather than the Christian sentiment of mystic origin, the overflowing joy of duty accomplished.

Anyone analyzing himself to excess is necessarily unhappy. Therefore, if it is possible that the analytical spirit be one day used by some at the cost of their morality, it will, at at the same time, cost them their happiness. These are sacrifices too great ever to tempt a great many people. Yet it is the task of the philosopher to examine even his instincts; he must endeavour to justify obligation, although the very effort to justify the moral sentiment risks its impairment by making the instinct conscious of itself, by making deliberate that which was spontaneous.

Let us search in the domain of facts, to which we have methodically confined ourselves, for all the forces which would contend against moral dissolution, and thus supply the obligation absolute of the ancient moralists.*

* As complement of the above chapters, it is necessary to read the parallel chapters in "Education and Heredity" (by Guyau) on the "Genesis of the Moral Instinct."

SECOND BOOK.

LAST POSSIBLE EQUIVALENTS OF DUTY FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF MORALITY.

CHAPTER I.

Fourth Equivalent of Duty Derived from Love of Risk and of Struggle.

I.

THE PROBLEM.

LET us recall the chief problem which presents itself to every exclusively scientific conception of morality. To how great an extent can deliberate consciousness feel itself bound by an impulse, by an inward pressure which has, hypothetically, only a natural character—not a *mystical* nor even a *metaphysical* one—and which, moreover, is not completed by the prospect of any extra-social sanction? To what extent must deliberate consciousness rationally obey an "obligation" of this sort?

A positive and scientific morality, we have said, can give the individual this commandment only: Develop your life in all directions, be an "individual" as rich as possible in intensive and extensive energy; therefore be the most *social* and *sociable* being. In the name of this general rule, which is the scientific equivalent of the *imperative*, a positive morality can enjoin upon the individual certain partial and moderate sacrifices; it can formulate the whole series of

average duties to which ordinary life is confined. In all this, be it understood, there is nothing categorical, nothing absolute, only excellent hypothetical advice. If you pursue this aim—the highest intensity of life—then do this; in short, it is a good average morality.

How will this morality manage to obtain from the individual, in certain cases, a definite sacrifice—not a mere partial and provisional one? Charity urges us to forget that which the right hand has given—excellent; but reason advises us to watch well what we give. The altruistic instincts invoked by the English school are open to all sort of restrictions and alterations; to rely solely on them for securing disinterestedness is to introduce a kind of struggle between them and the selfish impulses. Now, the latter are sure to get the best of the majority of people, because they have a visible and tangible root; while the others appear to the individual reason as a result of hereditary influences by which the race tries to make the individual its dupe. Selfish reasoning is always ready to intervene, and to paralyze the first spontaneous movements of the social instinct.

It belongs really to the part of the superior nerve-centres to moderate the action of the inferior centres—to regulate the instinctive movements. If I walk along a mountain-path at the top of a precipice, and a noise or a sudden fear makes me start, the mere reflex action will urge me to fling myself again to the other side; but then reason will moderate my movement by warning me that there is a precipice near. The hedonist finds himself in a somewhat similar situation, when it is a question of throwing himself blindly into some sort of self-sacrifice. It is reason's part to show him the abyss, to prevent him throwing himself down without due consideration under the impulse of the first instinctive movement; and the "preventive action" of reason will be, in that case, as logical, as powerful, with regard to the altruistic impulses as it can be with regard to

the merely reflex action. That is what we have elsewhere raised as an objection to the English school.

The self and the not-self, therefore, are both present. They seem, indeed, to be two values without a common measure. There is in the *self* something *sui generis*—irreducible. If the world is, for the hedonist, superior in quantity to his self, his self must always seem to him superior in quality to the world—the quality resting for him in the enjoyment. "I am," he says, "and you exist *for me* only in so far as I exist and as I maintain my existence; this is the principle which dominates both the reason and the senses." So long, therefore, as one keeps to hedonism, one cannot logically be obliged to detach one's interest from one's self. Now, hedonism in its fundamental principle, which is the obstinate conservation of *self*, cannot be refuted from the point of view of facts. Only the metaphysical hypothesis may attempt to make the will overcome the transition of the self to the non-self. From the positive point of view, and with all hypothesis left aside, the problem which we have just presented seems, at first, theoretically insoluble. And yet this problem can receive, in practice, at least an approximate solution.

II.

FOURTH EQUIVALENT OF DUTY, DERIVED FROM THE LOVE OF RISK AND OF STRUGGLE.

It is rare that real sacrifices present themselves in life as certain. The soldier, for instance, is not certain of falling in the fight; far from it: there is here only a mere possibility. In other words, there is *danger*. Now, it is necessary to see if danger, even independently of all idea of moral obligation, is not a medium useful for the development of life itself—a powerful stimulant of all the faculties, capable

of carrying them to their maximum of energy, and capable also of producing a maximum of pleasure.

Primitive humanity lived in the midst of danger, hence there must still exist in many people a natural predisposition to face it. Danger was, so to speak, the sport of primitive men, as sport is to-day, for many people, a kind of sham danger. This taste for peril, faced for its own sake, is to be met with even among animals. We find on this subject a curious tale of a traveller in Cambodia.

As soon as a troup of monkeys notice a crocodile with its body sunk in the water, its mouth wide open, so as to seize anything which may pass within reach, they seem to plan together, approach little by little, and begin their sport, being by turns actors and spectators. One of the most agile, or of the most imprudent, passes from branch to branch, to within a respectful distance of the crocodile, suspends himself by a paw, and with the dexterity of his race advances, goes back, now striking its adversary with its paw, now merely pretending to hit him. Some of the others, amused by this game, want to be of the party; but, the other branches being too high, they form a chain by holding one another hanging by their paws. They balance themselves in that way, while he who is nearest the amphibious animal torments it as much as possible. Sometimes the dreadful jaw shuts itself, but without catching the audacious monkey. There are screams of joy and merry antics; but sometimes also a paw is caught in the vice, and the leaping monkey is drawn down under water with the quickness of lightning. The whole troup then disperses moaning and howling, which, however, does not prevent them beginning again the same sport several days, perhaps even several hours, later."*

The pleasure of danger is derived chiefly from the pleasure of victory. One likes to conquer, no matter whom, even an

* Mouhot, "Voyage dans le Royaume de Siam et de Cambodge."

animal. We like to prove to ourselves our superiority. Baldwin, an Englishman, who went to Africa only with the intention of shooting, one day put this problem to himself, after having been very nearly felled by a lion: "Why does man risk his life without having any interest in doing so?" "It is a question which I will not try to solve," he answered. "All I can say is that in victory one finds an inward satisfaction for which it is worth while to run a risk, even if there is nobody to applaud." Moreover, even after having lost the hope of conquest, one obstinately goes on struggling. Whosoever may be the adversary, every fight degenerates into a desperate duel. Bombonnel, having rolled with a panther close to the edge of a precipice, pulled his head out of the open mouth of the animal, and threw him, by a stupendous effort, into the ravine. He lifted himself up, blinded, spitting quantities of blood, not being able to account clearly for the situation. He thought only of one thing—namely, that probably he must die from his wounds, and that before dying he must revenge himself on the panther. "I did not think of my pain. Being completely carried away by fury, I pulled out my hunting-knife, and, not knowing what had become of the animal, I looked for it everywhere to begin the struggle over again. It was in this condition that the Arabs found me when they arrived."

This need of danger and of victory, which carries away the soldier and the huntsman, is found also in the traveller, the colonist, the engineer. A French manufacturer of dynamite, not long ago, sent an engineer to Panama; he died on arriving there. Another engineer went, arrived safely, but died eight days after. A third immediately set sail. Most professions, like that of medicine, would furnish a great many instances of the same kind. The invincible attraction of the sea lies, to a great extent, in the constant danger which it presents. It tempts in succession each generation which is born on its shores, and if the English nation has acquired an intensity of life and force

of expansion so great that it has spread itself over the whole world, we may say that this is due to its education by the sea—that is to say, to its education by danger.

Let us note that the pleasure of contest alters its form without disappearing, be it in the struggle with an animated being (war or chase), or in the struggle with visible obstacles (sea, mountain), or in the struggle with invisible things (illness to be cured, difficulties of all sorts to be conquered). The struggle always partakes of the same character—that of a passionate duel. In truth, the doctor who starts for Senegal has decided upon a kind of duel with the yellow fever. The struggle passes from the domain of things physical to the intellectual domain, without losing anything of its ardour or of its fascination. The struggle may also pass into the special domain of morals. There is an inward struggle between the will and the passions, as captivating as any other, and in which the victory brings an infinite joy, as was well understood by Corneille.

In short, man needs to feel himself great, in order now and again to have full consciousness of the sublimity of his will. This consciousness he gets in struggle—struggle with himself, with his passions, or with material and intellectual obstacles. Now, this struggle to satisfy our reason must have an aim. Man is too rational a being to fully approve of the monkeys of Cambodia playing for fun with the jaws of the crocodile, or of the Englishman Baldwin going into the heart of Africa for the pleasure of hunting. The intoxication of danger exists at times in everyone of us, even in the most timid; but this instinct of danger requires to be more reasonably exercised. Although, in many cases, there is only a superficial difference between temerity and courage, he who, for instance, dies for his country is conscious of not having accomplished an idle deed. The need of danger and of struggle, on condition of it being thus directed and utilized by reason, assumes a moral importance all the greater, as it is one of the rare instincts which have no fixed

direction. It may be used without resistance for any social end.

There was, therefore, in Pascal's bet an element which he did not bring to light. He saw only the fear of risk; he did not see the pleasure of risk. To well understand the attraction of risk, even when the chances of misfortune are very numerous, many psychological considerations may be brought forward.

1. In calculating we must not take into account only the good and bad chances, but also the pleasure of running these chances—the pleasure of adventure.

2. A pain simply possible and far distant, and, above all, when it has never yet been felt, corresponds to a state quite other than that in which we actually are, while a *desired* pleasure is more in harmony with our present state, and thus acquires, in our imagination, a considerable value. In so far as the *remembrance* of pain may be painful to certain characters, so far may the vague and indeterminate *possibility* of pain leave them indifferent. It is also rare (above all, in youth—that optimistic age *par excellence*) that the chance of pain seems to us equivalent to the chance of great pleasure. This explains, for instance, the fearlessness which lovers have at all times shown in confronting all kinds of peril in order to meet again. One finds this fearlessness also among animals. Pain seen from afar, above all when it has not yet been repeatedly experienced, seems generally negative and abstract to us; pleasure seems positive and palpable. Besides, every time that pleasure responds to a want, the representation of future enjoyment is accompanied by the sensation of an actual pain; the enjoyment seems then not merely a kind of superfluity, but a relief from real pain, and its value still increases. These psychological laws are the very condition of life and activity. As most actions bring both a chance of pain and a chance of pleasure, it is, from a purely mathematical point of view, abstention which ought most often to prevail; but in reality

it is action and hope which prevail—all the more so as the action itself is the foundation of pleasure.

3. Another psychological fact is: He who has twenty times escaped a danger—for instance, a bullet—concludes that he will go on escaping it. In this way a habit of disregarding danger is produced which the calculation of probabilities could not justify, and which nevertheless forms an element in the bravery of veterans. Moreover, the habit of disregarding danger induces a habit of disregarding death itself—a sort of admirable familiarity with this neighbour who has been seen, as the saying is, "very close at hand."*

To the pleasure of risk is often added that of *responsibility*. One likes to be responsible not only for one's own destiny, but for that of others—to manage the world on one's own account. This intoxication of danger mixed with the joy of commanding, this intensity of physical and intellectual life exaggerated by the very presence of death, has been expressed with mystic barbarity by a German marshal, von Manteuffel, in a speech made in Alsace-Lorraine: "War! yes, gentlemen. I am a soldier. War is the element of the soldier, and I should like to taste it. That elevated sentiment of commanding in battle, of knowing that the bullet of the enemy may call you any moment before God's tribunal, of knowing that the fate of the battle, and consequently the destiny of your country, may depend on the orders which you give—this tension of mind and of feelings is divinely great!"

The love of danger and of risk plays its part, more or less degenerated, in a great many social circumstances. It is of considerable importance in the economic sphere. Capitalists who risked their savings in the enterprise of

* Even in the heart of most criminals may be traced an instinct of importance, from a social point of view, and which should be utilized—the instinct of adventure. That instinct might find its use in the colonies, in the return to savage life.

the Suez Canal imitated, in their way, the engineers who risked their lives in it. Speculation has its dangers, and in these very dangers lies its fascination. The simple trade of the shopkeeper at the corner of the street still admits of a certain amount of risk. If we compare the number of failures (bankruptcies) with the number of establishments, we shall find that this risk is of importance. Moreover, danger in endless shades and degrees—from the danger of losing one's life to the danger of losing one's money—remains one of the important features of social existence. There is not a movement in the social body which does not imply a risk. And intelligent boldness to run this risk identifies itself up to a certain point with the very instinct of progress, and liberalism; while the fear of danger identifies itself with the conservative instinct, which, after all, is always doomed to be beaten as long as the world exists and progresses. Thus, in the danger incurred on behalf of somebody (myself or some one else), there is nothing contrary to the deep instincts and laws of life. Far from it; to expose one's self to danger is something normal in a morally well-constituted individual; to expose one's self to danger for the sake of others is but going a step further on the same road.

From this side self-sacrifice again takes its place among the general laws of life, from which it at first seemed to completely escape. The peril confronted for oneself or for others—intrepidity or self-sacrifice—is not a *mere negation of self and of personal life*; it is this life itself raised into sublimity. The sublime in ethics, as well as in æsthetics, at first seems to be in contradiction to the order constituting the beautiful; but this is only a superficial contradiction. The roots of the sublime and the beautiful are the same, and the intensity of feeling which it pre-supposes does not prevent a certain inward rationality.

When we accept *risk* we have also accepted possible death. In every lottery one has to take the bad numbers

as well as the others. Moreover, he who under such circumstances sees death approaching feels himself, so to speak, linked to it. He had foreseen and willed it, although hoping to escape it; he will, therefore, not retreat except from inconsistency, from weakness of character—to which is generally given the name of cowardice. Undoubtedly he who has left his country to escape military service will not necessarily be an object of horror to every one (we must state it, while regretting it); but he who, having agreed to become a soldier—who, having accepted his task, flees from danger and turns his back on it at the supreme moment—he will be called a coward and a worthless wretch. With all the more reason the same will be said of the officer who had consented, not only to meet death face to face, but to be the first to march towards it, to set the example. In the same way, no doctor can morally refuse his services in an epidemic. Moral obligation takes the form of a *professional* obligation, of a *contract* freely undertaken, with all the consequences and all the risks which it implies.* The further we advance, the more will political economy and sociology be brought back to the science of risks, and of the means of *compensating* them—in other words, to the science of *assurance*. And the more will social morality be brought back to the art of using to advantage, and for the good of all, this need of "*risking one's self*," which is experienced by every individual life with any power at all. In other words, we shall endeavour to make those who are *economic of themselves* feel assured and *undisturbed*, and to make those who are, so to speak, *prodigal* of themselves *useful*.

* The risks can be multiplied incessantly in this way, and may surround one with an even tighter ring, from which one can neither logically nor morally retreat. "The exaltation of sentiments of anger and of generosity increases in the same proportion as the danger," rightly remarks M. Espinas in the objections which he has addressed to us without knowing that we were fundamentally of the same opinion on all these points (*Revue Philosophique*, 1882, vol. ii.).

But let us go further. The moral agent may be placed, not face to face with mere risk, but before the *certitude* of definite sacrifice.

In certain countries, if the labourer wants to fertilize his fields, he sometimes uses very energetic means; he takes his horse, opens his veins, and, whip in hand, drives him into the furrows. The bleeding horse drags himself across the field which lies under his tottering legs; the earth becomes red as he passes, each furrow drinking its share of the blood. When, exhausted, he falls down with rattling throat, he is still forced to get up again, to give the last drop of his blood to the greedy earth. At last he sinks down; he is buried in the field, which is still red; his whole life, his whole being, passes to the revived earth. This sowing with blood becomes a source of wealth; the field thus fed will yield corn in abundance—a great benefit to the labourer. Things do not happen differently in the history of humanity. The legion of the great unfortunate ones, of the unknown martyrs—all these men, whose very misfortune has conduced to the welfare of others; all those who have been forced to self-sacrifice, or have freely sought it; all have passed through the world sowing their lives, shedding their blood. They have made the future pregnant. Often they have been mistaken, and the cause defended was not always worth their sacrifices; nothing so sad as to die in vain. But to him who considers the mass, and not the individuals, self-sacrifice is one of the most precious and the most powerful forces in history. To make humanity—this great, indolent body—progress one step, there has always been needed a shock which has crushed individuals. The humblest, the most ordinary of men, may, therefore, find himself placed before the alternative of the certain sacrifice of his life or of an obligation to be fulfilled. He may be, not only soldier, but policeman, fireman, etc.; and these callings, which we designate as *humble*, are of the kind which sometimes demand sublime actions. Now, how can we

demand from anyone the sacrifice of his life, if morality is based only on the regular development of this very life? There is contradiction in the terms. It is the chief objection which we have elsewhere made to all naturalistic moral philosophy, and to which the necessity of things has again brought us.

From the naturalistic point of view at which we place ourselves, even the act of merely watching over the interests of others is superior to the act of watching our own interests only in so far as it indicates a greater *moral capacity*, a surplus of inward life. In any other sense it would only be a kind of monstrosity, as in those plants which have hardly any leaves or roots—nothing but a flower. To be at all able to command self-sacrifice, something more precious than life must be found. Now, empirically speaking, there is nothing more precious; nothing else has the same value as life; everything else acknowledges this, and borrows its value from it. It is impossible to convince the English utilitarian that morality, maintained by the sacrifice of life, is not analogous to a miser dying to save his treasure. Nothing more natural than to ask a person to die for you, or for an idea, when he has entire faith in immortality, and already feels the growing of his angel's wings; but what if he does not believe this? If we had faith, there would be no difficulty; it is so easy to be blindfolded! A man exclaims: "I see, I know, I believe." He sees nothing—he knows still less; but he has the faith which takes the place of it all. He does what faith commands; he goes to the sacrifice, looking up to heaven. Cheerfully he lets oneself be crushed by the wheels of the big social machine—and sometimes even without distinct aim—for a dream, for an error, as the Hindus did, who threw themselves at full length under the bloody wheels of the sacred chariot, happy to die under the weight of their gigantic and empty idols. But how, not having faith, can we demand from the individual a *definite* sacrifice, without basing this demand on

some principle other than the development of this very life which is to be wholly or partly sacrificed?

Let us begin by recognising that in some extreme cases —moreover, very rare ones—this problem has no rational and scientific solution. In those cases in which morality is impotent, morality must leave it wholly to the spontaneity of the individual. The fault of the Jesuits is not so much their having wanted to enlarge morality as their having brought in the detestable element of hypocrisy. Before all, one has to be frank with one's self, and with others; a paradox is not dangerous if it presents itself boldly to all eyes. Every action may be considered as an equation to be solved. Now, there are always, in a practical decision, known terms and unknown terms, which have to be found; but scientific morality cannot always find these. Some equations, therefore, are insoluble—or, at least, do not allow of an undeniable and categorical solution. The mistake of moralists is to pretend to solve in a definite and universal way problems which may have a great many peculiar solutions. Let us add that the fundamental unknown something, the x, to be sought in a certain number of problems is death. The solution of the equation presented depends, therefore, on the variable value attached to the other terms, which are—(1) physical life to be sacrificed; (2) some moral act to be accomplished.

Let us examine these two terms.

The solution depends chiefly, let us say, on the value attached to life. Undoubtedly life is for everyone the most precious of all blessings, because it is the condition of all others; nevertheless, if the others are reduced almost to naught, life itself loses its value—it then becomes a contemptible thing. If there are two individuals, the one having lost those he loved, the other having a large family whose welfare depends on him, these two are not equal before death.

To fairly present this great problem of contempt of life,

it must be compared with another important consideration. Self-sacrifice presents, in more than one point, an analogy with suicide, since in both cases death is consented to, and even desired, by the will of an individual who knows what life means. To explain suicide, we must admit that the *duration* of the average enjoyments of life is of little value compared to the *intensity* of certain sufferings; and the converse will be equally true—viz., that the intensity of certain enjoyments seems preferable to the whole duration of life. Berlioz represents an artist who kills himself after having known the highest æsthetic joy which he thinks it possible to feel once in his life. This is not so mad an action as one might think. Suppose it were granted to you to be for an instant a Newton discovering his law, or a Jesus preaching love on the mountain—the rest of your life will then seem colourless and empty; you would purchase this instant at the price of all the rest. Give anyone the choice between living over again the monotonous round of his whole life, or living over again the small number of hours which he remembers as having been perfectly happy; few people will hesitate. Let us extend the question to the present and the future. There are hours in which the intensity of life is so great that, placed in balance with the whole possible series of years, these hours will turn the scale. One passes three days in climbing to a high summit of the Alps; one finds that the short moment passed on the white summit, in the great calm of the sky, is worth these three days of fatigue. There are also moments in life when we seem to be on a mountain-top—when we soar; compared with these moments, everything else becomes indifferent.

Life, therefore, even from the positive point of view at which we now place ourselves, has not that measureless value which at first it seemed to have. Sometimes, without being irrational, the totality of existence may be sacrificed for one of its moments, as one single verse may be preferred to the whole poem.

So long as suicide persists among men, it would be inexplicable that there should not be self-sacrifice definite and without hope. Only one thing is to be regretted; that is, that society should not try to transform suicide into self-sacrifice as much as possible.*

A certain number of perilous enterprises ought always to be offered to those who are discouraged with life. Human progress will always need for its fulfilment so many individual lives that watch should be kept that no one might lose it in vain. In the philanthropic institution called the *Dames du Calvaire* widows devote themselves to the nursing of repugnant and contagious illnesses. This use, for the advantage of society—of lives more or less broken and become useless by widowhood—is an instance of what might be done, of what certainly will be done in the society of the future. There are thousands of persons for whom life has lost its greatest value. These persons could find a true consolation in self-sacrifice; use should be made of them. In the same way, all capacities should be employed. Now, there are special capacities for perilous and disinterested occupations, temperaments born to self-forgetfulness and always ready to risk themselves. This capacity for self-sacrifice has its source in a superabundance of moral life. Every time that the moral life of an individual is checked or repressed by its environment, another environment must be discovered for it in which it may recover the possibility of its unlimited extension, and of its untiring employment in the service of humanity.

Besides, life not always being an object of *preference*, it

* Lately, on the Place des Invalides, at the very moment when a mad dog was about to attack some children, a man ran up to him, knocked him down, broke his backbone, and threw him into the Seine. As people wanted this man to have the many wounds which he had received attended to, he escaped from the crowd, saying that he wished to die because "his wife had broken his heart." There ought to be no other kind of suicide.

may become, in certain cases, an object of *disgust* and of *horror*. There is a sentiment peculiar to man which has hitherto not been well analyzed. We have already called it the sentiment of *intolerability*. Through the influence of attention and of reflection, certain physical, and, above all, certain moral sufferings, increase in our consciousness to such a degree as to obscure everything else. One single pain is sufficient to efface all the many pleasures of life. Probably man has this privilege of being able, if he chooses, to be the most unhappy animal in creation, because of the tenacity he can communicate to his pains. Now, one of the sentiments which possesses to the highest degree this character of *intolerability* is that of shame, of moral failure. Life, for instance, bought at the cost of shame may seem unbearable. The objection will be made that a truly epicurean or utilitarian philosopher can afford to look with a certain disdain at those sentiments of moral shame which are always rather conventional. But we would reply that they are far less conventional than a great many others—for instance, the lust of money. Daily you see ruined people to whom life becomes unbearable, and philosophy is of small service to them. Besides, there is a kind of moral ruin far more terrible in every way than the other. That which is merely pleasant as this or that pleasure of life, and even as the sum of life's pleasures, can never compensate for that which rightly or wrongly seems to be *intolerable*.

Certain particular spheres of activity become finally so important in life that they cannot be attacked without touching life at its very source. We cannot imagine Chopin without his piano ; to have forbidden him music would have meant killing him. Likewise, existence would probably not have been bearable for Raphael without forms, colours, and a brush to reproduce them. If art becomes in this way as important as life itself, it need not astonish that morality should have, in the eyes of man, a still higher value.

Here there is really a still wider-reaching sphere of activity than in art. If the sceptic finds some vanity and illusion in the moral sentiment, he will find yet more in the artistic sentiment. Those whom art has killed are more completely dead than if they had died for humanity, and nevertheless those whom art has killed and will yet kill are many. There ought to be a greater number of those who sacrifice themselves for a moral ideal. Let us suppose a tree, a branch of which becomes enormously developed, and even takes root in the surrounding earth—as happens in the case of the giant tree of India. In the long run, the branch will even hide the very trunk; it is the branch which seems to support and to sustain the trunk. Likewise the moral and intellectual life is a kind of shoot, a powerful branch of the physical life. It developes to such an extent in the social environment that an individual killed, so to speak, in his moral life seems by that to be more completely crushed; it is like a trunk having lost all its strength and foliage—a true corpse. "To lose, in order to live, the very motives of life!" The lines of Juvenal are eternally true even for him who rejects the stoic doctrines. The most disabused sceptic still imposes on himself a certain rule of conduct which dominates his life—at any rate a practical ideal. Life at certain moments may not seem to him worthy of being preserved by the renunciation of this last trace of the ideal.

If in no single doctrine the moral sentiment, in itself alone, can give true positive happiness to our sensibility, it is nevertheless capable of making happiness without it *impossible*, and this is practically sufficient. For beings who have arrived at a certain degree of moral evolution happiness is no longer desirable outside the sphere of their ideal.

Therefore, the moral sentiment has still greater value by reason of its destructive than of its creative power. It may be compared with a great love extinguishing all other passions; without this love life is intolerable and impossible

to us. On the other hand, we know that it will not be returned, neither can it be, nor should it be so. It is customary to pity those who in their hearts feel such love—a love without hope, which nothing can satisfy; and yet we all cherish quite as powerful a love for our moral ideal, from which we cannot rationally expect any sanction. This love will always seem vain, from an utilitarian point of view, since it must not hope for satisfaction, for reward; but, from a higher point of view, these satisfactions and pretended compensations may, in their turn, disappear as mere vanity.

To sum up, the value of life is something quite variable, which may sometimes be reduced to nought—to less than nought. Moral action, on the contrary, has always a certain value. It is rare that a being falls low enough to do, for instance, an act of cowardice with perfect indifference, or even with pleasure.

Now, to form an idea of the value which the moral act may acquire in certain cases, we must remember that man is a thinking animal—or, as we have said before, a philosophic animal. Positive morality cannot take into account all the metaphysical hypotheses which it pleases man to make on the basis of things. Moreover, an exclusively scientific moral philosophy cannot give a definite and complete solution of moral obligation. One has always to get beyond mere experience. The luminous vibrations of the ether pass from Sirius to my eye, that is a fact; but have I to open my eye or to shut it to receive them? Simply to open it will not reveal the law of the vibrations of light. In the same way, my consciousness gets to understand that of others; but have I to completely open myself to others, or have I to keep myself partly shut up? This is a problem, the practical solution of which will depend on the personal hypothesis which I shall have made of the universe, and of my relation to other beings. Only these hypotheses must remain absolutely free and personal, and

it is impossible to systematize them into a metaphysical doctrine, which would impose itself universally on human reason. We will see how, thanks to the strength of the individual hypothesis, there is no absolute sacrifice which may not become, not only possible, but, in certain cases, almost easy.

CHAPTER II.

Fifth Equivalent of Duty, derived from Metaphysical Risk. The Hypothesis.

I.

METAPHYSICAL RISK IN SPECULATION.

We have shown the considerable practical influence which the pleasure of danger or risk has; there remains for us to see the influence, no less great, of that which Plato called the καλος κινδυνος, of the great metaphysical risk in which the mind loves to disport itself.

In order that I may reason out to the very end certain moral acts which go beyond the average and scientific morality, in order that I may strictly deduct them from philosophical or religious principles, these principles themselves should be settled and determined. But this can only be done by hypothesis; therefore, I myself must establish the metaphysical reasons of my actions. Given the unknowable, the x of the essence of things, I must represent this to myself in some way, and conceive it according to the image of the act which I wish to accomplish. If, for instance, I want to do an act of pure and definite charity, and if I should wish to justify this act rationally, I must imagine an eternal charity inherent in the very heart of things, and of myself; I must render the sentiment which

induces me to act objective. The moral agent here plays the same part as the artist; he must convey to others the tendencies which he inwardly feels, and, out of his love, create a metaphysical poem. The unknowable and neutral x is the counterpart of the marble shaped by the sculptor, of the inert words which, in the poet's stanza, are arranged, and become alive. The artist shapes but the form of things; the moral being—which is always a metaphysician, either spontaneous or deliberate—shapes the very essence of things, builds up eternity upon the model of his conception of the act of one day, and gives to this act, which otherwise would seem to hang in the air, a root in the world of thought.

The *noumenon*, in the moral and not purely negative sense, we ourselves make; it acquires a moral value only by virtue of the type according to which we represent it to ourselves; it is a construction of our mind—of our metaphysical imagination.

Will it be said that there is something like child's play in this effort to give type and form to that which is essentially without form or hold? From a narrowly scientific point of view this is possible. In heroism there is always a kind of simple and grand artlessness. Every human action contains an element of error, of illusion. Perhaps this element increases in proportion as the action rises above the average. The most loving hearts are those which have been most deceived; the greatest geniuses are those which exhibit the most inconsistencies. The martyrs were often sublime children. What childishness in the ideas of the alchemists, who nevertheless, in the end, created a science! It was partly in consequence of an error that Christopher Columbus discovered America. Metaphysical theories must not be judged according to their absolute truth, which can never be verified; but one of the ways of judging them is to appreciate their fecundity. Do not, therefore, ask them *to be true* independently of ourselves and our actions, but *to*

become true. A fertile error may, in this sense, be more true from the point of view of universal evolution than a too narrow and barren truth. It is sad, says M. Renan, to think that M. Homais is right, and that he has recognised the truth from the very beginning, without effort and without merit, by simply looking at his feet. Well, no; M. Homais is not right, shut up as he is in his small circle of positive verities. He may have been quite able to *cultiver son jardin*, but he looked upon his garden as the world, and he was mistaken. It would perhaps have been much better for him if he had fallen in love with a star, or been haunted by some kind of absolutely visionary chimera—which, at least, would have made him realize something great. Undoubtedly Vincent de Paul had his mind filled with more idle dreams than M. Homais; but it has been found that the small portion of truth contained in his dreams was more fruitful than the number of common-sense truths apprehended by M. Homais.

Metaphysics is, in the domain of thought, what luxury and outlay are, with regard to art, in the domain of economics. It is a thing all the more useful, as it seems at first less necessary. We might do without it, but we should lose much by it. We do not know exactly where it begins, still less do we know where it ends; and yet humanity will always move in that direction along an irresistible and easy slope. Moreover, there are certain cases, as economists have shown, in which luxury suddenly becomes a necessity; in which we need, in order to face life, that which before was superfluous. Similarly, there are circumstances in which practice suddenly needs metaphysics. We can neither live, nor, above all, die without it. Reason gives us glimpses of two different worlds—the *real* world, in which we live, and a certain *ideal* world, in which we also live, in which our mind incessantly acquires new vigour, and which it is impossible not to take into account. Only, in regard to the ideal world people no longer agree; everyone has his own

conception of it; some deny it altogether. Yet on the conception we have of the metaphysical essence of things depends the way in which we compel ourselves to act. In fact, a great number of the most noble human actions have been accomplished in the name of religious or metaphysical morality. It is, therefore, impossible to neglect this very fruitful source of activity. But it is none the less impossible to impose upon activity a fixed rule derived from one single doctrine; instead of absolutely *regulating* the application of metaphysical ideas, it is only of importance to fix their boundaries, to assign to them their legitimate sphere, without allowing any encroachment upon that of positive morality. In moral philosophy it is necessary to reckon with metaphysical speculation, as it is necessary in politics and sociology to take economical speculation into account. Only it is, in the first place, necessary to be quite certain that its domain is that of sacrifice, practically *unproductive* for the individual, of absolute devotion, from an earthly point of view. The domain of economic speculation is, on the contrary, that of *reproductive* sacrifice of risk run with some interest as its aim. In the second place, it is necessary to leave it its *hypothetical* character. In fact, I *know* a thing by hypothesis, and according to a *personal* calculation of probability I *infer* from it another thing—for instance, that disinterestedness is the root of my being, and selfishness merely the surface, or *vice versâ*. By deduction I derive from this a rational *law* of conduct. This law is a simple consequence of my hypothesis, and I feel rationally *obliged* to follow it, only as long as the hypothesis seems to me the most probable, the most true *for me*. In this way a kind of rational and non-categorical imperative is obtained, dependent on an hypothesis.

In the third place, it must be admitted that this hypothesis may vary according to individuals and to intellectual temperaments. It is the absence of fixed law which may be designated by the word *anomy*, in opposition to the *autonomy*

of the followers of Kant. By the suppression of the categorical imperative, disinterestedness and self-sacrifice are not suppressed; but their object will vary. One person will devote himself to this cause, another to a different one. Bentham devoted his whole life to the idea of self-interest; that is one way of devoting one's self. He subordinated all his faculties to the study of that which was useful to himself, and necessarily also useful to others. The result is that he has been really very useful—as useful, and even more so, than many an apostle of disinterestedness, such as St. Theresa.

Hypothesis produces practically the same effect as faith —even gives rise to a *subsequent* faith; which, however, is not affirmative and dogmatic like the other. Moral philosophy, which at its bases is naturalistic and positive, rises at its summit into the sphere of free metaphysic. There is one unchangeable moral philosophy—that of facts; and, to complete it, when it is not sufficient, there is a variable and individual moral philosophy—that of hypotheses.

Thus the old apodictic law is shaken. Man, freed by the doubt of all absolute obligation, partly recovers his liberty. Kant began a revolution in moral philosophy when he wanted to make the will "autonomous," instead of making it bow before a law exterior to itself; but he stopped halfway. He believed that the individual liberty of the moral agent could be reconciled with the universality of the law; that everyone must conform to a fixed type; that the ideal "reign" of liberty would be a regular and methodical government. But in the "*reign of liberty*" good order is maintained, simply because no order is imposed beforehand, nor any preconceived arrangement. Consequently, starting from the point where positive moral philosophy stops, there may be the greatest possible diversity of action and the greatest variety of ideals pursued. The true "autonomy" must produce individual originality, and not universal uniformity. If everyone establishes a law for himself, why

should there not be several laws possible—for instance, that of Bentham and that of Kant?*

The greater the number of different doctrines which offer themselves to the choice of humanity, the greater will be the value of the future and final agreement. The evolution of mind, as well as material evolution, is always a transition from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. If the intelligence is reduced to complete uniformity, the intelligence itself will be annihilated. Shape all minds in the same mould, give them the same creeds, the same religion, the same metaphysics, pull the human brain by a string, and you will go precisely against the essential tendency of progress. Nothing is more monotonous and insipid than a town with all its streets alike, and laid out in straight lines; and those who imagine the intellectual city to be of that type suffer from a misconception. It is said: "*Truth is one; the ideal of thought is this very unity, this uniformity.*" Absolute truth is an abstraction, like the perfect triangle or the perfect circle of the mathematicians. In reality, everything is infinitely multiplex. Besides, the greater the number of people who think differently, the greater is the sum of truth which they finally will apprehend, and over which they will at last be reconciled to one another. Diversity of opinion must not be feared, therefore; on the contrary, it must be encouraged. Two men have a different way of thinking, perhaps; all the better, they are much nearer to truth than if they both thought the same. If several persons want to see the whole of a landscape, there is only one way, and

* Let it be well understood that we have never dreamed of considering, as Messrs. Boirac, Lauret, and other critics have reproached us for doing, all metaphysical hypotheses as equal for human thought. There is an abstract logic of the hypotheses from which point of view they may be classified or arranged according to the scale of probabilities. All the same, their practical force will not, for a long time to come, correspond exactly with their theoretical value. (See the chapter on "The Progress of Metaphysical Hypotheses" in our volume, "L'Irreligion de l'Avenir.")

that is, to turn their back to one another. If soldiers are sent out as scouts, and all turn the same way, observing only one point of the horizon, they will most likely return without having discovered anything.

Truth is like light. It does not come to us from one point; it is reflected by all objects at the same time; it strikes us from every direction, and in a thousand ways. We should want a hundred eyes to catch all its beams.

Humanity as a whole has millions of eyes and ears. Do not advise it to shut them, or to listen on one side only. It must open them all at the same time—turn them in all directions. The infinity of the points of view ought to correspond with the infinity of things. The variety of doctrines proves the wealth and the power of thought. Moreover, this variety, far from decreasing with time, must increase in details, so that it may end in chords of harmony. Division of thought and diversity of intellectual labour are as necessary as division and diversity of manual work. This division of labour is the condition of all wealth. In bygone times thought was infinitely less divided than in our days; all had imbibed the same superstitions, the same dogmas, the same falsehoods. If one met an individual, one could beforehand, and, without knowing it, say: "Such is his creed;" one could count up the absurdities of his brain, draw up the balance-sheet of his mind. Even in our days many people, both of the inferior and superior classes, have not got beyond this; their intelligence is of the conventional type. Happily, the number of these minds, inert and without spring, diminishes daily; the *rôle* played by initiative increases; almost everyone shows a tendency to make his own law and his own creed. If only we could once get so far as that, there would no longer be any *orthodoxy* whatever—I mean no general faith, lumping all minds together. Oh, that faith might become wholly *individual*—that heterodoxy might become the true and universal religion!

Religious society (and every absolute moral philosophy seems to be the last form of religion)—this society, united solely by community of superstitions, is a social form belonging to ancient times, which tends to disappear, and which it would be strange to take as ideal. Kings are disappearing; and priests go also. Theocracy may well try to bring about some compromise with the new order of things—to establish *concordats* of some other kind: constitutional theocracy can no more definitely satisfy reason than constitutional monarchy. The French spirit, above all, is not easily satisfied with arrangements of compromise, with half-measures, with anything which is but partially just and true. In any case, it will not look in that direction for its ideal. With regard to religion and to metaphysics, the true ideal is absolute independence of mind and free diversity of doctrines.

To wish to rule minds is still worse than to wish to rule bodies; we must shun every kind of "authority over conscience" or "authority over thought" as a veritable curse. Authoritative metaphysics and religions are leading-strings fit for childish people. It is time that we should walk alone, that we should have a horror of sham apostles, of missionaries, of preachers of all kinds; it is time that we should be our own guides, and that we should look for "revelation" within ourselves. There is no Christ now. Let every one of us be his own Christ, bind himself to God according to his own choice and abilities, or even deny God. Let every one conceive the universe according to a type which appears to him the most probable—monarchy, oligarchy, republic, or chaos. All these hypotheses can be maintained, therefore they must be maintained. It is not absolutely impossible that one of them will some day collect together on its side the greatest probabilities, and, by means of them, turn the scale in the most cultivated human minds; it is not impossible that this privileged doctrine should be a doctrine of negation. But we must not encroach upon so problematic

a future, and believe that, by doing away with revealed religion or categorical duty, humanity will be suddenly thrown into atheism and moral scepticism.

In the intellectual order there can be no violent and sudden revolution, but only an *evolution*, more accentuated every year. It is just this slowness of the mind in running through the whole chain of reasoning from one end to the other which, in the social order, makes too sudden revolutions come to nothing. Likewise, when it concerns pure speculation, the men whom we have to fear least, and who are most useful, are the most revolutionary—those whose thoughts are boldest. We ought to admire them without dread; they can do so little! The storm which they raise in a small corner of the ocean will hardly produce any perceptible undulation on the immense mass. On the other hand, in practical matters the revolutionary spirits always make mistakes, because they always believe truth to be too simple, because they are too confident of themselves, and imagine that they have found and fixed the end and aim of human progress. Whereas real progress is to have no end; is to reach those ends which one has put before one's self, only to transform them; to solve problems only by changing their given terms.

Happy, therefore, are those to-day to whom a Christ would say, "Oh, ye of little faith!" if that means sincere men who do not want to allure their reason and debase their dignity as intelligent beings; men of a truly scientific and philosophic mind, who distrust appearances, who distrust their eyes and their minds, who incessantly begin over again to test their sensations and to examine their reasonings; the only people who might possess some particle of the eternal truth, precisely because they never imagine they have the whole truth; people who have sufficient real *faith* to always go on searching, instead of resting and exclaiming, "I have found it!" brave people, who walk on when others stop or go to sleep. It is such as these who have the future

before them; it is they who will mould the humanity of the ages to come.

The morality of to-day understands its partial impotence to rule the whole of human life absolutely, and in advance; it leaves a larger sphere to individual liberty; it does not threaten except in a sufficiently rare number of cases, and only when the absolutely necessary conditions of all social life are concerned. Philosophers no longer agree with the rigorous moral philosophy of Kant, who regulated everything by the tribunal of conscience, who forbade every transgression, every free interpretation of moral commandments. It was a moral philosophy similar to the ritualist religions, which count any failure in ceremonial as a sacrilege, and which forget the essence for the sake of the form; it was a kind of moral despotism, creeping everywhere, wanting to rule everything.

At present the rigorous law of Kant's philosophy still reigns in many minds, but no longer makes itself felt in details; it is recognised in theory, but in practice it is often necessary to deviate from it. It is no longer the Jupiter whose frown was sufficient to move the world; it is a liberal prince, whom we may disobey without much danger. Is there not something higher than this mock royalty, and must not man, when he reaches the borders of moral philosophy and of metaphysics, reject all absolute supremacy, in order to frankly approach individual speculation?

The coarser a mechanism, the greater the need of a violent and coarse motive-power to set it in motion; in a more delicate mechanism the finger-tip is sufficient to produce considerable effect. It is the same with humanity. To make the ancient nations move, enormous promises had at first to be made by religion, and the veracity of these promises had to be guaranteed. It spoke to them of mountains of gold, and streams of milk and honey. Would Ferdinand Cortez have conquered Mexico if he had not

believed he should see the glitter of the supposed golden domes of Mexico in the distance? In order to excite people, brilliant images, glittering colours, were dangled before their eyes, as scarlet is held out before a bull. At that time a robust faith was needed to conquer the natural inertia.

Something *certain* was wanted. One touched one's god with one's finger; one ate, one drank him. Then one could quietly die for him, and with him. Later on, duty seemed, and still seems to many, a divine thing—a voice from heaven, which is heard within us, which speaks to us, commands us. The Scotch even talked of moral "*sense*," of moral "*tact*." This coarse conception was still needed to conquer coarse instincts. To-day a mere hypothesis, a simple possibility, is sufficient to attract and fascinate us. The martyr no longer requires to know if he will receive palms in heaven, or if a categorical law commands his self-sacrifice. One dies, not to conquer the whole truth, but the least of its elements; a man of science sacrifices himself for a calculation. Ardour in research supplies the place of certainty in the object sought; enthusiasm takes the place of religious *faith* and moral *law*.

The loftiness of the ideal which we want to realize supersedes the energy of faith in its immediate reality. If we hope for something very great, we derive from the beauty of the aim the courage to defy obstacles; if the chances of its attainment decrease, the desire to do so increases in proportion. The further the ideal is removed from reality, the more desirable it seems; and, as the desire itself is the supreme force, it has command over the maximum of force.

The vulgar gifts of life are worth so little that, in comparison with these, the conceived ideal must seem immense; all our little enjoyments become as nothing before the supreme one of realizing a noble thought. This thought, even if it has no meaning with regard to nature or

science, may mean everything with regard to ourselves; it is the farthing of the poor. "To search for Truth"—this action no longer contains anything conditional, doubtful, or fragile. We have got hold of something, not of the truth itself, undoubtedly (who will ever get hold of it completely?), but at least of the spirit which enables us to discover it. If we obstinately stop at some doctrine, which is always too narrow, it is like a shadow, disappearing with every change of light; but always to advance steadily, always to search, always hope—this alone is no mere shadow. The truth is to be found by moving forward, by hoping; and it is not without reason that a "philosophy of hope" has been suggested as a complement to positive moral philosophy.*

A child saw a blue butterfly resting on a blade of grass; the butterfly was benumbed by the north wind. The child picked the blade of grass, and the living flower at the end of it, still benumbed, could not fly away. The child returned, holding up its chance prize. A sunbeam touched the wing of the butterfly, and suddenly, revived and gay, the living blossom flew away towards the light. We all, seekers and workers—we are like the butterfly: our strength is made only of a ray of light; nay, only of the hope of a ray of light. We must, therefore, know how to hope; hope is the force which bears us upward and forward. But it is an illusion! How do we know that? Must we not move a step, for fear that some day the earth will disappear from under our feet? It is not sufficient to look far into the future, or into the past; we must look into ourselves. We must note there the vital forces which demand to be spent; and we must act.

* See M. Fouillée, "La Science Sociale Contemporaine," livre v.

II.

METAPHYSICAL RISK IN ACTION.

"In the beginning was action," says Faust. We find it also at the end. If our actions are in accordance with our thoughts, we may also say that our thoughts correspond exactly to the expansion of our activity. The most abstract metaphysical systems are themselves but formulas of feeling, and feeling corresponds to the greater or lesser tension of inward activity. There is a middle term between doubt and faith, between incertitude and categorical affirmation—it is action. By it only can the uncertain realize itself and become a reality. I do not ask you to blindly believe in an ideal; I ask you to work towards its realization without believing in it, so as to believe in it. You will believe in it if you have striven to produce it.

All the ancient religions have wanted to make us believe by means of our eyes and our ears. They have shown us God in flesh and bone. Saint Thomas and those resembling him have touched him with their fingers, and they have been convinced. In these days we can no longer be convinced in this way. We should look, we should listen, we should even touch with our finger, only to deny yet more obstinately. One is not convinced of an impossible thing because one thinks one sees or touches it. Our reason is now strong enough to scoff at the need to actually see things; and miracles no longer convince anybody. Therefore, a new way of persuasion is wanted, which even religions have already used to their benefit. This way is action; you believe in proportion as you work. But action must not consist of outward practices and coarse rites; it must have a wholly inward source; then only will our faith come truly from within—not from without. Its symbol will be not the routine of a *rite*, but the infinite variety of *invention*, of individual and spontaneous creation.

Humanity has long waited for God to appear, and when

at last he appeared it was not God. The time of waiting is over; now is the time for work. If the idea is not ready built like a house, it depends on us to labour together towards its construction.

Religions all say: "I hope because I believe, and because I believe in an external revelation." We must say: I believe because I hope, and I hope because I feel in myself a wholly internal energy, which will have to be taken into account in the problem. Why look only at one side of the question? If there is the unknown world, there is the known self. I do not know what I am capable of with regard to outward things, and I have received no revelation whatever. I hear no "word" echoing in the deep silence of things, but I do know that which I inwardly will, and it is my will which constitutes my power. It is action alone which gives us confidence in ourselves, in others, and in the world. Abstract meditation, solitary thought, in the end weaken the vital forces. If we remain too long on the mountain-tops, a kind of fever of infinite weariness takes hold of us; we wish never to descend again, we wish to stop where we are, to rest. The eyelids droop; but, if we give way to sleepiness, we cannot easily wake up again. The penetrating cold of the summits freezes the very marrow of our bones. The indolent and painful ecstasy which threatened to take possession of us was really the beginning of death.

Action is the true remedy for a pessimism, which may, after all, have its share of truth and utility, if taken in the highest sense of the word. Pessimism, in reality, consists of complaining, not so much of what life is, as of what life is not. That which exists in life but rarely constitutes the principal object of human sorrow, and life in itself is not an evil. As to death, it is simply the negation of life. It is not death itself that men would ever desire, either for themselves or those dear to them; but through death they seek after truth, and to see God, etc. The

child wishing to reach the moon cries for a quarter-of-an-hour, and then consoles itself. Man, wishing to possess eternity, cries also—at least, inwardly; if he is a philosopher he writes a big book; if he is a poet, he writes a poem; if he is incapable, he does nothing at all. At last he consoles himself, and begins life once more, indifferent to everything. Indifferent—no, for he cares for life; after all, it is in the main pleasant. True pessimism is really but the desire for the infinite; noble despair is but infinite hope; it is precisely because it is infinite and inextinguishable that it changes into despair. What does the consciousness of suffering for the most part amount to in the end? To the thought that it will be possible to escape from it; to the conception of a better state of things—that is to say, to a kind of ideal. Evil is the feeling of impotence. It would prove the impotence of God if one granted the existence of God; but, with regard to man, it, on the contrary, proves his relative power. Suffering becomes the mark of a kind of superiority. The only being who speaks and thinks is also the only one capable of crying. A poet has said "the ideal takes its rise among those who suffer." May it not be this very ideal which gives rise to moral suffering, which gives man full consciousness of his sufferings? In fact, certain sufferings are a mark of superiority; it is not everyone who is thus able to suffer. Great souls with broken hearts resemble the bird struck by an arrow in its highest flight. It gives a shriek which fills the skies; it is dying, and yet it soars. Leopardi, Heine, or Lenau would probably not have exchanged those hours of anguish in which they composed their finest songs for the greatest possible enjoyment. Dante suffered, as much as it is possible to suffer, from pity, when he wrote these lines on Francesca de Rimini. Which of us would not undergo a similar suffering? Some heartaches are infinitely sweet. There is likewise a point at which keen pain and keen pleasure seem to mingle. The spasms of agony and those

of love are not without analogy. The heart *breaks* with joy as well as with pain. Sufferings productive of good are accompanied by ineffable joy; they resemble those sobs which, rendered by the music of a master, become harmony. To suffer and to create is to feel in one's self a new power called forth by pain. It is like the Aurora sculptured by Michael-Angelo which, opening its eyes filled with tears, seems but to see the light through its tears. Yes; but this light of sorrowful days is yet light; it is worth being looked at.

Action, in its productiveness, is also a remedy for scepticism; it forms in itself, as we have seen, its own inward certitude. How do I know if I shall be alive to-morrow, if I shall be alive within an hour, if my hand will be able to finish this line which I begin? Life from all sides is surrounded by the unknown. Nevertheless, I act, I work, I undertake; and in all my acts, in all my thoughts, I presuppose that future upon which nothing gives me a right to count. My activity extends every minute beyond the present instant—projects into the future. I expend my energy without fearing that this expenditure may be pure loss; I impose privations on myself, counting on the future to compensate me for them; I go my way. This incertitude, which is pressing on me equally from all sides, is, for me, equivalent to a certitude, and makes my liberty possible; it is one of the foundations of speculative moral philosophy, with all its risks. My thought goes before it, so does my activity; it sets the world to rights, disposes of the future. It seems to make me master of the infinite, because my power has no equivalent in any other fixed quantity; the more I achieve, the more I hope. Action, in order to possess the advantages which we have just attributed to it, should undertake some precise work, and, to a certain extent, some work which lies near at hand.

To do good, not so much to the whole world or the world of humanity, as to certain definite people; to relieve actual

misery, to lighten someone's burden—such things cannot deceive. We know what we are doing; we know that the aim will be worth our efforts—not in the sense that the result obtained will be of considerable importance in the mighty stream of things, but in the sense that there certainly will be a result, and a good result; that our action will not be lost in the infinite, like a small cloud in the monotonous blue of the atmosphere. To do away with some suffering, that is in itself a sufficient aim for a human being. By so doing we change an infinitesimal part of the total sum of pain in the universe. Pity remains—inherent in the heart of man, vibrating in his deepest instincts—even when purely rational justice and universalized charity sometimes seem to lose their foundations. Even while doubting, one may love; even in the intellectual night, which prevents our pursuing any far-reaching aim, we may stretch out a helping hand to those around us who suffer.

THIRD BOOK.

THE IDEA OF SANCTION.

CHAPTER I.

Criticism of Natural Sanction and of Moral Sanction.

HUMANITY has nearly always considered the moral law as inseparable from its sanction. In the eyes of most moralists vice rationally brings in its train suffering; virtue constitutes a kind of right, or happiness. The idea of sanction, moreover, has, till now, been one of the primitive and essential notions of all morality. According to the Stoics and the followers of Kant, sanction, it is true, does not by any means serve to lay down the law; nevertheless, it is the necessary complement of the law. According to Kant, every reason, being *a priori*, unites by synthetic judgment misfortune to vice, and happiness to virtue. Such is, in the opinion of Kant, the force and the legitimacy of this judgment that, if human society dissolved itself of its own free will, it would first, before the dispersion of its members, have to execute the last criminal shut up in its prisons. It ought to pay off this debt of punishment, which is firstly its own debt and afterwards that of God. Even certain determinist moralists, while in the main denying merit and demerit, seem still to see a legitimate intellectual need in this tendency of humanity to consider every act as followed by sanction. Lastly, the utilitarians—for instance, Mr. Sidgwick—also seem to admit some mystical link between such and such a kind of conduct and such or such a happy,

or unhappy, state of sensibility. Mr. Sidgwick believes it possible, in the name of utilitarianism, to make an appeal to the pains and rewards of a future life. Moral law, without definite sanction, would seem to him to end in a "fundamental contradiction."*

As the idea of sanction is one of the principles of human morality, it is also to be found in the essence of every religion—Christian, Pagan, or Buddhist. There is no religion which has not a Providence; and a Providence is but a kind of distributive justice, which, after having acted incompletely in this world, takes its revenge in another! This distributive justice is what the moralists understand by sanction. It may be said that religion consists essentially of this belief—that it is a sanction metaphysically linked to every moral act; in other terms, that in the profound order of things there must exist a proportion between the good or bad state of will and the good or bad state of the sensibility. On this point, therefore, religion and morality seem to coincide—their mutual demands seem to agree; and, moreover, morality seems to be completed by religion. The idea of distributive justice and of sanction, generally given the first place in our moral conceptions, in fact naturally appeals, under one form or another, to a divine justice.

We wish to sketch here a criticism of this important idea of sanction, so as to purify it of any kind of mystical alliance. Is it true that there exists a natural and rational link between the *morality* of the will and a *reward* or a *suffering* caused to the *sensibility*? In other terms, is it right to associate *merit* with enjoyment, *demerit* with suffering? This is the problem, which can be also put in the form of an example, if we ask: Does there exist any sort of reason (exclusive of social considerations) that the greatest criminal should receive, because of his crime, a simple pin-prick, and the

* See our "Morale Anglaise Contemporaine" (second edition).

virtuous man a *prize* for his virtue? Has the moral agent itself the right (exclusive of questions of utility or moral hygiene), having regard to itself, to punish for the sake of *punishing*, or to reward for the sake of *rewarding*? We should like to show how morally condemnable is the idea which ordinary morality and religion give of sanction. From the social point of view, the truly rational sanction of a law could only be a *defence* of this law, and this defence, useless with regard to every past act, we shall find bears only on the future. From the moral point of view, *sanction* seems simply to mean, according to its actual etymology, *consecration*, *sanctification*. Now, if for those who admit a moral law it is really the holy and *sacred* character of the law which gives it force as law, this must imply, according to the idea which we have to day of holiness and of ideal divinity, a sort of supreme renunciation and of disinterestedness. The more sacred the law, the more disarmed it must be; so that, taken in the absolute and apart from social conventions, true sanction must seem to be the complete *impunity* of the thing done. We shall also see that all penal justice, properly so called, is unjust. Moreover, all *distributive* justice has an exclusively social character, and can only be justified from the point of view of society. In a general way, that which we call *justice* is a completely human and relative notion; only *charity* or *pity* (without the pessimistic significance which Schopenhauer gives it) is a truly universal idea which nothing can limit or restrict.

1.

NATURAL SANCTION.

THE classic moralists are accustomed to see in natural sanction an idea of the same order as that of expiation; nature begins, according to them, that which human con-

science and God have to continue. Whosoever violates natural laws, therefore, finds himself already punished in a way, if we may believe them, which forewarns of, and prepares, the punishment resulting from moral laws.

In our eyes nothing is more inexact than this conception. Nature *punishes* no one (in the sense in which classic moral philosophy uses this word), and nature has nobody to punish, for the reason that nobody is truly guilty with respect to nature. One does not violate a natural law, or it would not be, in that case, any longer a natural law. The pretended *violation* of a natural law is never anything else but a *verification*, a visible demonstration. Nature is a great mechanism which always goes on, and which the will of the individual is unable to impede for a moment. She calmly crushes him who falls between her cog-wheels. To be, or not to be—she hardly knows any other punishment or any other reward. If we attempt to violate the law of gravity while bending too far over on the tower of St. Jacques, we shall at once give the painful verification of this law by falling down with broken bones. If, like a certain personage of a modern novelist, we wish to stop a locomotive at its highest speed by holding an iron spear in front of it, we shall prove, at our own expense, the inferiority of human force to that of steam.

In the same way, the indigestion of a glutton and the drunkenness of a tippler have by nature no kind of moral and penal character whatever; they simply allow the patient to calculate the force of resistance which his stomach or his brain can offer to the hurtful influence of a certain mass of food or a certain quantity of alcohol. It is still a mathematical equation, this time a more complicated one, which serves as verification for the general theorems of hygiene and of physiology. Besides, this force of the resistance of the digestion or the brain varies a great deal according to individuals. Our drinker will learn that he is not able to drink like Socrates, and our glutton that he has not the

digestion of the Emperor Maximin. Let us note that the *natural consequences* of an act are never linked to the *intention* which dictated the act; if you throw yourself into the water without knowing how to swim, whether it be from self-sacrifice or merely from despair, you will be drowned equally quickly. If you have a good digestion and no disposition to gout, you will be able to eat to excess almost with impunity; on the contrary, if you are dyspeptic, you will be condemned to incessantly undergo the torment of comparative starvation. Another example: you have given way to a fit of intemperance, you are awaiting with anxiety the "sanction of nature"; some drops of a medical mixture will turn it off by changing the terms of the equation put before your organism to solve. The justice of *things*, therefore, is at the same time absolutely inflexible from a mathematical point of view, and absolutely corruptible from the moral point of view.

To better express it, the laws of nature, as such, are immoral—or, if you like, a-moral—precisely because they are necessary; they are the less *holy* and *sacred*, they have the less veritable *sanction*, as they are really the more inviolable. Man sees in them only a movable fetter which he tries to remove. All these bold acts against nature are but happy or unhappy experiments, and the result of these experiments has a scientific, but by no means a moral, value.

The attempt has, nevertheless, been made to maintain natural sanction by establishing a kind of secret harmony made visible by æsthetics, between the course of nature and that of the moral will. Morality necessarily imparts to those who possess it a superiority even in the order of nature. "Experience, it has been said, shows such a dependency between the morally and the physically good, between the beautiful and the ugly expressed materially, and between the beautiful and the ugly in the sphere of passions and ideas; one sees the organs become so distinctly modified

and modelled according to their habitual functions, that there is little doubt that prolonged human life *(if it could only be sufficiently prolonged)* would show us, in the long run, on the one side monsters, on the other true human beings; and this, according to the more and more instinctive abandonment of certain people to every vice, and the acquired domination of certain others, or according to their faculties turned to right purposes."*

First of all let it be noted that this law of harmony between nature and morality, to establish which such strenuous efforts have been made, is certainly more valid for the species than for individual life, even if that were prolonged. A succession of generations and of specific modifications is wanted for a moral quality to express itself by a physical quality, and a defect by some deformity. Moreover, the believers in æsthetic sanction seem to entirely confound *immorality* with what may be called *animalism*—that is to say, the absolute abandonment to the coarser instincts, the absence of any elevated idea, of any subtle reasoning. Immorality is not necessarily like this; it may coincide with refinement of mind, and it does not always lower the intelligence. Now, what is expressed by means of the body is rather more the lowering of the intelligence than the degradation of the will. A Cleopatra and a Don Juan do not necessarily cease to be types of physical beauty, nor would they even if their existence were prolonged. The instincts of cunning, anger, and revenge which we find among the Italians of the South have in no wise changed the rare beauty of their race. Besides, many of the types of conduct which to us, in our advanced social state, seem vices are virtues in the state of nature. No really shocking ugliness, no marked alteration of the human type, can therefore be the consequence of it. On the contrary, the qualities, and sometimes the virtues, of civilization, if carried

* M. Renouvier, "Science de la Morale," i. 289.

to excess, may easily become physical monstrosities. It is clear on how frail a basis is built the attempt to deduce moral and religious sanction from natural sanction.*

II.

MORAL SANCTION AND DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.

BENTHAM, Mill, MM. Maudsley, Fouillée, and Lombroso have already grappled with the idea of moral punishment; they wanted to take away from pain all character of expiation, and have reduced it to a simple means of social repression and compensation. To reach this conclusion they have, in general, relied on determinist and materialistic doctrines, which are still under discussion. M. Janet, also, in the name of classical spiritualism, has, notwithstanding all this, thought it to be his duty to maintain, in his last work, the principle of redemptory atonement of freely-committed crimes. "Punishment," he says, "must not only be a *threat*, which assures the execution of the law, but a *reparation*, or an *expiation*, which serves as a corrective to the violation of the law. The *order*, upset by a rebellious will, is *re-established* by the suffering which is the consequence of the fault committed."†

* M. Renouvier, for instance: "It is permissible to see in future reward a natural prolongation of the series of phenomena which, from this very moment, make the fundamental conditions, and *even the physical conditions of happiness*, depend on morality" ("Science de la Morale," p. 290).

† M. Janet, "Traité de Philosophie" (p. 707): "The first *law of order*, V. Cousin has said, is to be faithful to virtue; if one fails in this, the second law of order is to expiate one's fault by punishment.....In the intelligence the idea of pain corresponds to that of injustice." Two of the philosophers who have in France most strongly protested against the doctrine that social laws should be laws of expiation instead of laws of defence, MM. Franck and Renouvier, seem nevertheless to admit as evident the principle of remuneration as attached to the moral law.

Again, it has been said that "it is, above all, the moral law which needs sanction" (M. Marion, "Leçons de Morale," p. 157). "It is a *severe* and *sacred* law only on the condition of *punishment* being attached to its violation, and *happiness* attached to the care taken to observe it."

We believe that this doctrine of tangible reward—above all, that of atonement, is untenable—from whatever point of view it is regarded, even from the point of view of supposing "a moral law" to exist imperatively addressing itself to beings gifted with freedom. It is a materialist doctrine wrongly opposed to the so-called materialism of its opponents.

Let us, free from all prejudice, from all preconceived ideas, try and find what *moral* reason there might be that a being *morally* bad should receive *sensible* suffering, and a righteous being receive a surplus of enjoyment. We shall see that there is no reason, and that, instead of finding ourselves face to face with a proposition evident *à priori*, we are placed before a grossly empirical and physical deduction derived from the principle of well-understood *retaliation* or *interest*. This deduction goes under the disguise of three so-called rational notions—(1) that of *merit*; (2) that of *order*; (3) that of *distributive justice*.

1. In the classical theory of merit, "I have forfeited the esteem," which at first simply expressed the intrinsic value of the will, acquires the following meaning, "I have deserved a punishment," and thenceforth expresses a statement made by the inner nature to the world outside. This

"The question is not," says M. Franck, "to know if the wrong *deserves* to be *punished*, for this proposition is *evident* in itself" ("Philosophie du Droit Pénal," p. 79). "It would be against the nature of things," says also M. Renouvier, "to demand of *virtue* not to expect any *remuneration*" ("Science de la Morale," p. 286). M. Caro goes further, and, in two chapters of "Problèmes de Morale Sociale," he tries hard, while relying on M. de Broglie, to maintain both the moral and the social right of *punishing* the guilty ones.

sudden passing from the moral to the visible, from the depth of our being to the outside, seems to us unjustifiable. It is still more so in the hypothesis of freewill than in the others. According to that hypothesis, the different faculties of man are, in fact, not truly linked together and mutually defined. The will is not the pure product of the intelligence, itself sprung from the sensibility. Sensibility is, then, no longer the true centre of our being, and it becomes difficult to understand how it can be responsible for the will. If the will has freely wanted to commit the evil, it is not the fault of the sensibility, which has only played the part of mover, and not of cause. Join the tangible evil of the punishment to the moral evil of the fault, under pretext of expiation, and you will have doubled the sum of evils without mending anything. You will be like the doctor in Molière who, called in to cure a diseased arm, would have cut off his patient's other arm. Without the grounds of social defence (of which we shall speak later on) the punishment would be as blameworthy as the crime, and the prison would be no better than those who live in it. Let us say further that the lawgivers and the judges, by deliberately condemning the guilty to punishment, would become their fellows.

Theoretically speaking—that is, putting aside the social utility—what difference will there be between the murder committed by the murderer and the murder committed by the executioner? The last-named crime has not even, as an extenuating circumstance, some reason or other of personal interest or revenge; the legal murder becomes more wholly absurd than the illegal murder. The executioner imitates the murderer; other murderers will imitate him; submitting, in their turn, to that kind of fascination which murder exercises, and which practically makes the scaffold a school of crime. It is impossible to see in the "sanction of expiation" anything resembling a rational consequence of the fault. It is simply a mechanical sequence, or, better, a

material repetition, and imitation, the model for which is the fault itself.

2. Shall we, with V. Cousin and M. Janet, invoke this strange principle of order which a "rebellious will" disturbs, and which only suffering can re-establish? Here the distinction between the social and the moral question is forgotten.

Social order has been really the historical origin of punishment, and *pain* was at first, as Littré has shown, but a compensation—a material indemnity—demanded by the victim or by his relatives; but when we place ourselves at the social point of view, can pain really compensate anything? It would be too convenient if a crime could be physically redeemed by punishment, and if it were possible to pay the penalty for a bad act by a certain amount of physical suffering, as the indulgences of the Church may be bought for chinking crowns. No; that which is done remains done. The moral evil persists, notwithstanding all the physical evil which is added to it. It would be as rational to attempt, with the Determinists, the cure of the criminal as it is irrational to look for *punishment* or *compensation* of his crime. This idea is the result of a kind of childish mathematics and infantile judgment. "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."*

* M. Renouvier, one of the principal representatives in France of the moral philosophy of duty, after having himself severely criticised the vulgar idea of punishment, has yet made great efforts to save the principle of retaliation by interpreting it in a better sense. "Taken by itself, and as an expression of a sentiment of the soul with regard to crime, retaliation would be far from deserving the disgust or the indignation with which the publicists regard it, whose penal theories are often worse founded upon the basis of strict justice" ("Science de la Morale," vol. ii., p. 296). According to M. Renouvier, it would not be undesirable that the guilty should undergo the effect of this maxim if turned into a general rule; that which is *impracticable* is the mathematical equivalence which retaliation supposes between the suffering and the wrong done. But, will be our reply, if this equivalence were realizable, the retaliation would not, therefore, be more just; for we cannot, whatever M. Renouvier may say, convert into a general law the

For him who admits the hypothesis of free-will, one of the scales of the balance is in the moral world, the other in the visible world; the one in heaven, the other on earth. In the first is a free will, in the second a wholly limited sensibility. How is equilibrium to be established between them? Free-will, if it exists, is quite intangible to us; it is something absolute, and we have no hold on the absolute. Its resolutions are, therefore, in themselves *irreparable*, *inexpiable*. They have been compared with flashes of lightning; and, in fact, they dazzle us for a moment, and disappear. The good or evil act mysteriously descends from the will into the sphere of the senses; but, after that, it is impossible to re-ascend from this sphere into that of free-will, so as to get hold of it and punish it. The flash of lightning descends, but does not re-ascend. Between free-will and the objects of the visible world there does not exist any other rational link than the will itself of the agent. Therefore it

maxim and the immoral intention of him who has provoked the retaliation; neither can we convert into a general law the maxim of revenge, which *gives back* the blows received—we can only generalize the physical evil and the painful effect. But the generalization of an evil is morally an evil in itself; therefore only personal or social reasons of defence remain—reasons of precaution, of utility. According to M. Renouvier, retaliation, once purified, may be expressed in this formula, which he declares to be acceptable: "Whosoever has violated the freedom of others has *deserved* to suffer in his own." But this very formula is, in our opinion, not admissible from the point of view taken by Kant and his followers with regard to intention. The guilty one must neither be made to suffer, nor be restricted in his liberty, in so far as he has in the past violated the freedom of others, but in so far as he is *capable* of violating it again. It cannot, therefore, be said that *no* act of the past whatever *deserves* suffering, and pain is never justified but by the anticipation of similar acts in the future. It does not cling to *realities*, but to simple *possibilities*, which it tries to modify. If the guilty person went by his own *free will* into exile to a desert island, from which return would be impossible, human society (and, in general, every society of moral beings) would find itself disarmed; no moral law would then possibly demand that, having violated the freedom of others, he should *suffer* in his own.

is necessary, so as to make punishment possible, that free-will itself should desire punishment; and it can only desire it when an already sufficiently deep improvement has taken place, which, in its turn, renders the punishment partly undeserved.

Such is the antinomy in which the doctrine of expiation ends if it undertakes, not only to simply correct, but to punish. As long as a criminal remains really criminal, this very fact places him below any moral sanction. He ought to be converted before being struck; and, if he is converted, what reason is there for striking? Guilty or not, the will endowed with freedom would at this point go so far beyond the visible world that the only way of behaving in regard to it would be to bow down to it. A will of this kind is an irresponsible Cæsar, whom it is well enough to condemn and to execute in effigy, so as to satisfy popular passion, but who really escapes every external action. During the "*Terreur blanche*" live eagles were burned in default of him whom they symbolized. Human judges, in their hypothesis of an expiation to be inflicted on free-will, do nought else; their cruelty is as vain and as irrational. While the innocent body of the accused struggles in their hands, his will, which is the real eagle, the supreme eagle free in flight, soars out of their reach high above them.

3. If one tries to investigate this naïve or cruel principle of *order* brought forward by the spiritualists, which reminds us a little too much of the *order reigning at Warsaw*, it becomes transformed into that of a pretended *distributive* justice. "To everyone according to his works" —such is the social ideal of St. Simon; such is also the moral ideal according to M. Janet ("*La Morale*," p. 577). Sanction in this case is merely a question of the general proportion fixed between all labour and its remuneration: (1) he who does a great deal must receive a great deal; (2) he who does but little must receive little; (3) he who commits evil must receive evil. Let it first be noted that

this last principle can in no way be deduced from the two preceding ones. If a smaller benefit seems to call for smaller recompense, it does not follow that an offence should call for revenge. Besides, the two other principles seem to us to be open to controversy—at least in so far as they pretend to be formulas of the moral ideal.

Here, again, the two points of views—the one moral, the other social—are confounded with one another. The principle, "To each one according to his *works*," is a purely economic principle. It sums up well enough the ideal of equal exchange and of social contracts, but not at all that of an absolute justice which should give to everyone according to his moral *intention*. It means only this: independently of intention, the objects exchanged in society ought to be of the same value, and an individual who produces a thing of considerable value must not receive in exchange an insignificant recompense. This is the rule of exchange; it is that of all self-interested labour; it is not the rule of *disinterested* effort, which virtue should hypothetically demand. There is, and must be, in social relations a certain tariff of the actions, not of the intentions. We all watch that this tariff may be duly observed; that a merchant who gives sham goods, or a citizen who does not fulfil his civic duty, may not receive in exchange the normal quantity of money or of reputation. Nothing can be better; but what tariff can be put on virtue, which should be truly "moral"? Where economic contracts and material exchanges are no longer under consideration, but the will itself, this law loses all its worth. Distributive justice, so far as it is plausible, is therefere a purely social, purely utilitarian rule, which has no longer any sense outside some sort of society. Society rests entirely on the principle of reciprocity —that is to say, if one produces that which is good and useful, one expects good in exchange; and if one produces what is harmful, one expects something harmful. From this entirely *mechanical* reciprocity, which we find in the social

body, as in all other organisms, results a rough proportion between the visible welfare of one individual and the visible welfare of the others, a mutual solidarity which takes the form of a sort of distributive justice. But, once more, this is a natural *equilibrium*, rather than a moral *equity* of distribution. The unrewarded righteous act, which is, so to speak, not valued at its right worth, the evil which is not punished, simply shocks us as an anti-social occurrence, as an economic and political monstrosity, as a *relation* between individuals which is harmful; but, from a *moral* point of view, this is no longer so. The principle—"to everyone according to his works"—is, in fact, an excellent form of social encouragement for the worker or the moral agent. It imposes on him, as his ideal, a kind of "piece-work," which is always much more productive than "day-work," and, above all, more productive than work for "a sum down." It is pre-eminently a practical rule, not a sanction. The essential characteristic of a true moral sanction should really be never to become a fixed end or aim in itself. The child who says his lessons correctly merely for the sake of afterwards receiving some sweets, no longer deserves these sweets from the moral point of view, exactly because he has made them his aim. The sanction must, therefore, be found entirely outside the regions of *finality*, and with still more reason outside the regions of *utility*. Its claim is to reach the will, in so far as it is a cause, without wishing to direct it with reference to an *aim*. Nor can any contrivance alter the practical principle of social justice, "Expect to receive from men in proportion to what you will give to them," into this metaphysical principle: "If the mysterious *cause* acting within you is good in itself and by itself, a pleasant effect will be produced on your sensibility. If it is bad, your sensibility will be made to suffer."

The first formula—proportion in exchange—was rational, because it formed a practical motive for the will, and concerned the *future*. The second, which does not contain

any motive for action, and which, by a retro-active effect, bears on the past, instead of modifying the future, is practically barren and morally empty. The idea of distributive justice is, therefore, only valuable in so far as it expresses an entirely social ideal, the economic laws of which themselves tend to bring about its realization. It becomes an immoral idea if, by giving it an absolute and metaphysical character, one wants to turn it into a principle of punishment or reward.

There certainly is nothing more rational than that the moral judgment of every being should be in favour of virtue and be opposed to crime ; but this judgment cannot pass the limits of the moral world to be transformed into the least kind of coercive and penal action. This affirmation—"You are good, you are bad"—ought never to become this : "You must be made to enjoy or to suffer." The guilty should not be allowed the privilege of forcing the righteous man to do him harm. Both vice and virtue are therefore, responsible only to themselves, and, in many cases, only to the *conscience* of others. After all, vice and virtue are but forms of the will, and under these forms the will itself continues to exist, whose nature it seems to be to aspire to happiness. We do not see why this eternal desire should not, in all of us, find satisfaction. The human wild beasts must be, in the absolute, treated with indulgence and pity, like other beings. It matters little if their ferocity be considered as fatal or free ; they are morally always to be pitied. Why should one want them to become physically pitiful also? A little girl was once shown a large coloured picture representing martyrs. In the arena lions and tigers were feasting on Christian blood. On one side another tiger was left locked up in its cage, and looked on with a woeful air. The child was asked : "Dont you pity these unhappy martyrs?" She answered : "And what about the poor tiger which has no Christian to eat!" A sage, free from all prejudice, would surely have pitied the martyrs ; but this would not have

prevented him likewise pitying the starving tiger. We remember the Hindoo legend which tells us how Buddha gave his own body to a wild animal dying of hunger. This is the supreme pity, the only one which does not conceal some hidden injustice. Such conduct, absurd from the practical and social standpoint, is the only legitimate one from the standpoint of pure morality.

For the narrow and entirely human justice which refuses kindness to him who is already unhappy enough to be guilty must be substituted another larger justice, which gives kindness to all—a justice which not only ignores the hand with which it gives, but will not even know the hand which receives it.

This kind of claim to a happiness which is reserved for the good man only, and to which should correspond a veritable right to unhappiness among all inferior individuals, is the relic (in the etymological sense of the word) of ancient *aristocratic* prejudices. Reason may please itself by supposing a certain relation between sensibility and happiness; for every sentient being, by its very nature and definition, desires enjoyment and hates pain. Reason may also suppose a relation between *all* will and happiness, for every being susceptible of will spontaneously aspires to feel itself happy. The differences in will show themselves only when there is a question of choosing the ways and means of arriving at happiness. Some people believe their happiness to be incompatible with that of others, some try to find their happiness in that of others; this it is which distinguishes good men from bad men.

To this difference in direction of such or such a will would correspond, according to orthodox morality, an essential difference in its very nature, in the deep and independent cause which it manifests outwardly. It may be so; but this difference cannot do away with the permanent relation between the will and happiness. Even now, under our present laws, criminals retain a certain

number of rights; they maintain all these rights in the absolute (for him who admits an absolute). In the same way that a man cannot sell himself as a slave, so he cannot take away from himself this kind of natural title to ultimate happiness which every sentient being believes himself to possess. So long as beings, evil by deliberate choice or forced to it by necessity, will persevere in wishing for happiness, I see no reason which can be urged for withholding it from them.

There is, you will say, this reason—sufficient in itself—that they are bad. Is it, then, only to make them better that you have recourse to pain? No; that is for you but a secondary aim, which might be attained by other means. Your principal aim is to produce *expiation* in them—that is to say, unhappiness, without *utility* and without object. As if it were not enough for them to be wicked! Our moralists have not yet got beyond the arbitrary distribution which the Gospel seems to admit: "To him that hath shall be given; to him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." The Christian idea of *grace* would, however, be acceptable on one condition—that of its being universal, given to all men and all beings. In this way it would become, instead of a *grace*, a kind of divine *debt*. That which is deeply shocking in all morality that is more or less borrowed from Christianity, is the idea of *election*—of choice, of favour, of a *distribution* of grace. A god ought not to choose between beings, to see which he will in the end make happy. Even a human legislator, if he pretended to give an absolute and truly divine worth to his laws, would be forced to renounce everything which would indicate any "election" or "preference," any pretended distribution and sanction. Every *partial* gift is necessarily also *biassed*, and neither on earth nor in heaven ought there to be such a thing as *favour*.

CHAPTER II.

The Principle of Penal or Defensive Justice in Society.

OUR present society can surely not realize the far distant ideal of universal forbearance; but it can far less take as its type of conduct quite the opposite ideal of orthodox morality—namely, the distribution of happiness and unhappiness, according to merit and demerit. As we have seen, there is no purely *moral* reason whatever to suppose any distribution of pain to vice and of reward to virtue. We have to acknowledge with even greater reason that, taken as a pure question of right, there is no social *sanction*, and that the facts called by this name are mere phenomena of social defence.*

Now, we have to come down from the purely theoretical standpoint at which we have hitherto placed ourselves, to the more confused sphere of sentiments and the association of ideas, where our opponents may be able to again take advantage of us. The majority of mankind does not at all agree with the ideas of the Hindus, and of every true philosopher, about absolute justice being identical with universal charity. It has strong prejudices against the starving tiger for which Buddha sacrificed himself; it has natural preferences with regard to sheep. It does not seem satisfactory to them that the wrong action should not be punished, and virtue be quite gratuitous. Mankind is like those children who do not like stories in which the good little boys are

* Doubtless the old objection will be made: "If punishments were, on the part of society, only a means of defence, they would be *blows*, not *punishments*" (M. Janet, "Cours de Philosophie," p. 30). On the contrary, when punishments do not find their justification in defence, it is precisely these punishments which are the real blows, by whatever euphemism they may be called. Outside the reasons, of social *defence*, for instance, the act of administering a hundred strokes of a stick on the soles of the feet as punishment to a thief will never be transformed into a moral act.

eaten up by wolves, and who, on the contrary, would like to hear that the wolves were eaten up. Even on the stage the general demand is that virtue should be rewarded, vice punished; and if this is not the case the spectators go away discontented, with a feeling of disappointed expectation. Why this tenacious sentiment, this persistent need of sanction, in the sociable being—this psychological impossibility of being reconciled to the idea of unpunished evil?

In the first place, it is because man is an essentially practical and active being, who tends to deduce a rule of action from all he sees, and for whom the life of others is a perpetual moral lesson given in examples. With that wonderful social instinct which man possesses, he feels directly that an unpunished crime is an element of social destruction; he feels a presentiment of danger, both to himself and all others, such as a citizen feels in a besieged town when he discovers an open breach.

In the second place, this bad example is like a kind of personal exhortation to evil, whispered in his ear, against which his highest instincts revolt. This is due to the popular common sense, which always believes sanction to enter into the very *formula* of the law, and regards reward and punishment as *motive* forces. Human law has the double character of being *utilitarian* and *obligatory*, which is exactly the opposite of a moral law commanding a free-will without a motive power.

There is a third and still more profound reason for the indignation with which impunity is met. Human intelligence finds it difficult to stop at the idea of moral evil; it is revolted by it to a far higher degree than is possible by a want of material symmetry or mathematical exactitude. Man, being essentially a sociable animal, "Ζῶον πολιτικον" cannot resign himself to the definite success of anti-social actions, when such actions seem, humanly speaking, to be successful. The very nature of man's mind urges him to turn to the superhuman, to demand reparation and compensation. If bees, suddenly

chained, were to see the order of their cells destroyed before their very eyes, without any hope of ever being able to set them right again, their consternation would be extreme, and they would instinctively expect some intervention or other to re-establish that order, which is to them as immutable and sacred as that of the stars would be to a higher intelligence. The very soul of man is penetrated by the idea of sociability. We think, so to speak, within the limit of society, as within that of time and space.

Man, by his moral nature (~~such as is transmitted to him by heredity~~), is thus induced to believe that the last word in the universe cannot remain with the wicked. He is always indignant at the triumph of evil and of injustice. This indignation manifests itself in children even before they can properly talk, and numerous traces may be found of it even among animals. The logical result of this protest against evil is the refusal to believe in the definitive character of its triumph. Completely dominated by the ideal of *progress*, it cannot allow any being to remain for any length of time arrested in its onward course.

Finally, we have also to estimate the work of those æsthetic considerations which are inseparable from social and moral reasons. An immoral being possesses an *ugliness* which is much more repulsive than physical ugliness, and on which our eye does not care to dwell. We, therefore, want to correct, to remove, to improve, or to suppress it. Let us recall the precarious position of the leper and the unclean in ancient society. They were treated as we in these days treat criminals. Novelists and dramatic authors do not generally leave crime too evidently unpunished, neither do they as a rule, be it here noted, represent their principal personages, above all their heroines, as entirely ugly (with *goître*, hump-backed, or one-eyed, etc.). If they sometimes do so, as Victor Hugo in his Quasimodo, their aim in that case is to make us forget the deformity during all the rest of the work, or to make use of it as an antithesis. Most

often, the novel ends with a transformation of the hero or the heroine (as in *Petite Fadette* or *Jane Eyre*). Ugliness, therefore, produces with certainty, although in a less degree, the same effect as immorality, and we feel the need to correct the one as the other; but how are we to correct immorality from outside? The idea of pain inflicted as a re-agent at once presents itself to the mind. Punishment is one of those old popular remedies, like the boiling oil into which, before the time of Ambroise Paré, the limbs of the wounded were plunged. Really the desire to see the guilty ~~guilty~~ one punished comes from good nature. It is chiefly explained by the impossibility for man to remain inactive, indifferent in the presence of any kind of evil. He wants to try and do something, to touch the wound, either to heal it or to apply a revulsive; and his intelligence is enticed by the apparent symmetry offered by the proportionality of moral and physical evil. He does not know that there are certain things which it is better not to touch at all. The first people who made excavations in Italy, and who found statues of Venus with an arm or a leg wanting, felt the same indignation which we still feel in these days in presence of a badly-balanced will. They wanted to mend the evil, to put back an arm borrowed from elsewhere, to put on another leg. Now, more resigned and more timid, we leave the masterpieces as we find them, superbly mutilated. Our very admiration for the great works of art is, in that case, not without some pain; but we prefer to suffer, rather than commit an act of profanation. This suffering, when we are brought face to face with evil, this sentiment of the irreparable, we feel far more deeply still in the presence of moral evil. The inward will can be efficaciously corrected only by its own self, just as it is only the long-departed creators of the marble statues who can mend these smooth, white, broken limbs. We are thus reduced to that which is hardest for man—to await the future. Real progress can only spring from the inner nature of the

individual. The only means which we can use are all indirect—education, for instance. As to the will itself, it ought to be sacred precisely to those who consider it free, or at least spontaneous; they cannot, without contradiction and injustice, attempt to lay hold of it.

Thus the feeling which urges us to desire a sanction is partly immoral. Like many other sentiments, it has a very legitimate principle and wrong applications. Between human instinct and the scientific theory of morality exists, therefore, a certain opposition. We are going to show that this opposition is provisional, and that instinct will, in the end, be conformable to scientific truth. With this object we will try to analyse still more deeply than we have hitherto done that psychological want of sanction which we find in the being living in society. We will sketch the genesis of this want, and we shall see how it is produced, in the first place, by a natural and legitimate instinct, and then tends to restrict and limit itself more and more as the course of human evolution continues.

If there is any general law of life, it is the following:—Every animal (we might extend the law even to the vegetable kingdom) answers to an attack by a defence, which is itself most often an attack in answer, a kind of shock in return. This is a primitive instinct, which has its source in the reflex movement, in the *irritability* of living tissues, and without which life would be impossible. Do not even animals, deprived of their brain, still try to bite him who pinches them? Those beings in which this instinct was keenest and most developed have more easily survived, like the rose-trees provided with thorns. Among the superior animals such as man this instinct is modified, but continues to exist. In us there is a spring ready to unbend against him who touches it, as in those plants which throw darts. This was originally a mechanical, unconscious phenomenon; but this instinct does not, like so many others, weaken when it becomes conscious. (See

on this point "*La Morale Anglaise Contemporaine*," part ii., sec. iii.). It is, in fact, necessary for the life of the individual. In every primitive society one must be able, in order to live, to bite when bitten, to strike when struck. And to-day a child is discontented when he has received a blow, even in play, which he cannot return; he has a feeling of inferiority. On the contrary, when he has returned the blow, with even additional energy, he is satisfied. He feels no longer inferior, no longer unequal to the struggle for life.

We find the same feeling among animals. When we play with a dog, we must from time to time let him take our hand in his mouth, if we do not want him to take it in anger. In the games of grown-up men we also find the same need of a certain equalization of chances, the players always desiring, according to the popular expression, to find themselves even. Undoubtedly, with man new sentiments intervene, and are added to the primitive instinct—self-love, vanity, care about the good opinion of others. It does not much matter what is underneath all this; something deeper may be perceived—the sentiment of the necessities of life.

In uncivilized society a being who is not capable of returning the evil done to him, and of even more than that, is a being badly equipped for existence, meant to disappear sooner or later. Life itself is, in its essence, a *revenge*—a permanent revenge—for the obstacles which fetter it. Revenge is, moreover, a physiological necessity for all living beings, so deeply rooted in them that the brutal instinct remains until the moment of death. There is a well-known story of a Swiss who, mortally wounded, seeing an Austrian chief pass near him, found strength to catch hold of a piece of rock, and to knock his brains out, killing himself by this last effort. A great many more facts of this kind could be related, in which revenge is no longer justified by personal defence, and, so to speak, extends beyond the question of life, by one of those numerous and sometimes fruitful contradictions which produce in the social being

wrongful sentiments, like avarice, or useful sentiments, like the love of glory.

Let it be noted that the moral notion of justice or of merit is still unknown throughout this whole mechanism. If an animal without its brain bites him who hurts it, there is here no idea of sanction. If you ask a child or an uncultured man why he strikes someone, he will think himself fully justified when he tells you that he himself was first struck. Ask him no more. Really, for him who only considers the general laws of life, this is a sufficient reason.

We are here at the very origin, and almost at the point of physical emergence, of this pretended moral need of sanction, which so far does not offer us anything moral, but which will soon modify itself. Let us suppose a man who, instead of being himself the object of an attack, is simply the onlooker. He sees the aggressor vigorously driven back; he cannot fail to applaud, for in his thought he will put himself in the place of the one who defends himself, and, as the English school has demonstrated, he will sympathize with him. Every blow given to the aggressor will, therefore, seem a just compensation, a legitimate revenge, a sanction.*

* Why does he put himself in the place of him who defends himself, and not in the place of the other? For several reasons, which yet do not imply that sentiment of justice which has to be explained: (1) Because the attacked and abused man is always in an unfortunate position, more fit to excite interest and pity. If we are present at a struggle, do we not always take the side of the weakest, even without knowing if it is he who is in the right? (2) The situation of the aggressor is anti-social, contrary to the mutual security which all association allows; and, as we always are part of some society or other, we sympathize all the more with the one of the two adversaries who is in the most similar situation to our own—the most *social*. But let us suppose that the society of which a man is a part may not be the great human association, and happens to be, for instance, an association of thieves. In that case rather strange facts will arise in his conscience. He will approve of a thief defending himself against another thief, and punishing him; but he will not approve of a policeman defending him-

Stuart Mill is, therefore, right in thinking that the desire to see every attack on the individual punished comes back to the mere instinct of personal defence; only he has too decidedly confounded defence with revenge, and he has not shown that this very instinct is reduced to a reflex action, called forth either directly or sympathetically. If this reflex action is roused by sympathy, it seems to adopt a moral character by taking a disinterested character. That which we call penal sanction is therefore fundamentally only a *defence* exercised by individuals *in whose place we can put ourselves* in thought, a defence against others *in whose place we do not want to put ourselves.*

The physical and social need of sanction bears a double aspect—since sanction is at one time punishment, at another reward. If reward seems as natural as pain, this is because it has its origin also in a reflex action, in a primitive instinct of life. Every caress calls for and expects another caress in response; every expression of kindness calls forth in others a similar expression. This is true all up the scale of animal life. A dog which comes softly forward, wagging its tail, to

self against a thief in the name of society at large. He will feel an invincible repugnance to put himself in the place of the policeman, and to sympathize with him, for that will falsify his moral judgments. It is in this way that the people of the lower classes take sides against the police in every squabble, without even inquiring what is going on; and in foreign lands Frenchmen would feel inclined to take the side of the French, etc. Conscience is full of phenomena of this kind, complex to the very point of contradiction—which, however, fall under the one law. Sanction is essentially the conclusion of a struggle which we witness as spectators, and in which we take the part of one or other of the opponents. If we are a policeman or quiet citizen, we shall approve of the handcuffs, the prison, if need be of the gallows. If we are a thief or *lazzaroni*, or, perhaps, simply one of the common people, we shall approve of the pistol-shot fired from behind a bush, of the dagger mysteriously thrust into the back of the *carabinieri*. The only thing that remains identical in all these moral or immoral judgments is the statement of this fact of experience. He who strikes must *naturally* and *socially* expect to be struck in his turn.

lick his mate is indignant if he finds himself received with a growl, just as a good man is indignant when he receives evil in return for his benefactions. By means of sympathy, extend and generalize this impression, which was at first entirely personal, and you will arrive at this theory: it is *natural* that every being working for the happiness of his fellow-creatures should receive, in exchange, the means of being happy. Considering ourselves mutually responsible, we feel ourselves bound by a kind of debt with regard to every benefactor of society. To the natural determinism which connects benefit with benefit is therefore added a feeling of sympathy, and even of gratitude, towards the benefactor. Now, in virtue of an inevitable illusion, happiness seems to us always to be more deserved by those with whom we are in sympathy.*

After this rapid glance at the genesis of the sentiments aroused in man by the punishment of evil or the reward of goodness, we can understand how the notion of a distributive and inflexible justice was formed—a justice which proportions good to good and evil to evil. It is but the metaphysical symbol of a deep-rooted physical instinct, which in reality is part of the instinct of the preservation of life.†

* Will some pessimist, perhaps, deny this natural instinct of gratitude, and object that, on the contrary, man is by nature *ungrateful?* Nothing is more inaccurate. Man is *forgetful;* that is all. Children and animals are still more forgetful. There is a great difference between these two things. The instinct of gratitude exists in all beings, and subsists as long as the remembrance of the benefit remains vivid and intact. But this remembrance changes very rapidly. Far stronger instincts, such as personal interest, pride, etc., fight against it. It is for this reason that, if we put ourselves in the place of others, we are so shocked not to see a good action rewarded; whereas we often feel as little remorse when we ourselves forget to respond to some kind action. The sentiment of gratitude is one of those natural altruistic sentiments which, finding themselves in opposition to an equally strong selfishness, are stronger when the appreciation of somebody else's conduct, and not the ruling of our own, is concerned.

† This instinct, after having created the complex system of social

It remains for us to see how, in the partly artificial environments of human society, this instinct gradually becomes modified in such a way that one day the notion of distributive justice will lose even the practical support which it still derives from popular sentiment.

Let us, in fact, follow the course of penal sanction, together with the evolution of societies. Originally punishment was much greater than the fault; the defence was in excess of the attack. If you provoke a wild animal, it will tear you to pieces; if you attack a man of the world, he will answer you humorously; if you offend a philosopher, he will not answer at all. It is the law of *economy of force*

punishments and rewards, has been fortified by the very existence of this system of protection. We have not been long in recognising that, if we should injure somebody in any way, we must expect a more or less quick repression. In this way a natural and rational association is established (already pointed out by the English school) between a certain kind of conduct and a certain punishment. We find in the *Revue Philosophique* a curious instance of a dawning association of this kind in an animal. "I have not," says M. Delbœuf, "ever seen an account of any fact so significant in its meaning. The hero is a small dog, a cross between a wolf-dog and a spaniel. He was at the age when, among his species, the serious duties of social life begin. As he was allowed to choose my study as a favourite resting-place, he often misbehaved himself there. Being a very strict master, I made him feel each time the horrors of his behaviour, and carried him quickly into the court-yard and made him sit up in a corner. After making him stop there for a longer or shorter time, according to the importance of the offence, I allowed him to come back. This education made him pretty quickly understand certain articles of the code of canine civility—little rascal as he was; so that at last I believed him to be quite cured of his tendency to forget the rules of propriety. Oh deception! One day, coming into my study, I found myself face to face with a fresh instance of his wrongdoing. I looked for my dog to make him feel all the shame of his relapse; he was not there. I called him, but he did not appear. I went down to the court-yard.....there he was, sitting in the corner, holding his front paws pitifully over his chest, looking distressed, ashamed, and full of repentance. I was disarmed" (*Revue Philosophique*, April, 1881). See also in Romanes more or less similar facts.

which produces this growing softening of penal sanction. The animal is a coarsely-regulated spring, the expansion of which is not always proportional to the force which releases it. It is the same with primitive man, and with the penal law of primitive peoples. To defend one's self against an aggressor, it was necessary to crush him. Later on it was seen to be unnecessary to strike so heavily. An attempt is made to exactly balance the reflex action with the attack; it is this stage which is summed up in the precept, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"—a precept which expresses an ideal still infinitely too high for primitive men; an ideal which we ourselves to-day are far from realizing completely, although from other points of view we go beyond it. An eye for an eye, that is the physical law of equality between action and reaction, which must rule a perfectly balanced and steadily working organism. Only as time goes on does man become aware that it does not conduce even to his personal preservation to exactly proportion the pain inflicted to the suffering received. He, therefore, tends, and will always tend in future, to diminish the suffering. He will economize the punishments, the prisons, the sanctions of all kinds. These are perfectly useless expenditures of social force, as soon as they go beyond the only aim which scientifically justifies them—defence of the individual and of the attacked social body. It is in these days more and more recognised that there are two ways of striking the innocent: (1) to strike him who is innocent in every respect; (2) to strike the guilty too hard. Even rancour, hatred, the spirit of revenge (so idle a use of human faculties!), tend to disappear, so as to give place to the statement of fact and the research for more rational means of preventing its renewal.

What is hatred? A mere form of the instinct of physical preservation, the sentiment of a danger ever present in the person of another individual. If a dog thinks of some child who has thrown a stone at him, a succession of natural

images for him immediately associates the action of the throwing of the stone with the thought of the child; which causes the dog to be angry, and to grind his teeth. Hatred has, therefore, had its utility, and is rationally justifiable in a state of society which is but little advanced. It was a valuable stimulant to the nervous system, and, through it, to the muscular system. In the superior social state, in which the individual no longer needs to defend himself, hatred has no longer any sense.

If one is robbed, one complains to the police; if one is struck, one asks for damages and costs. Already, in our own time, only an ambitious or an ignorant man, or a fool, feels hatred. The duel—that piece of absurdity—will disappear; moreover, it is at present treated in its details like the visit of an official, and very often the fighting is mere form. Capital punishment will either disappear, or be only maintained as a means of prevention, for the purpose of mechanically frightening hereditary criminals, or habitual criminals. Prisons and gallows will probably be demolished, to be replaced by transportation, which is elimination in its simplest form; even the rigour of prison-life has already been mitigated.*

More air and light are allowed to enter into the prison. The iron bars, which confine the prisoner without shutting out the rays of sunlight too much, symbolically represent the ideal of penal justice, which may be expressed by this

* For all offences which do not entail transportation M. Le Bon has rightly proposed a *fine*, or *compulsory labour* (industrial or agricultural), or, finally, forced *military service* under severe discipline (*Revue Philos.*, May, 1881). It is known that our prisons are rather places of perversion than of conversion. They are places of reunion and of association for the evil-doers—"anti-social clubs." One of the presidents of the Court of Appeal, M. Béranger, wrote that every year a hundred thousand individuals "there (in prison) plunge deeper into crime." It may be a million in ten years. Hence the considerable increase of relapses. (This increase is, on an average, over two thousand per annum.)

scientific formula—*The maximum of social defence with the minimum of individual suffering.*

In this way, the more we progress the more the theoretical truth imposes itself even on the masses, and lessens the popular need of punishment. If, in these days, society punishes, it is never on account of *the deed which has been committed;* it is because of those which the evil-doer, or others following his example, may commit in the future. Sanction has value only as a promise or a threat preceding the act, and tending mechanically to produce it. If this act is accomplished, it entirely loses its value. It is simply a shield or a simple, deterministic spring, and nothing more. It is really for this reason that, for instance, madmen are no longer punished. The punishment was given up, after it had been recognised that the fear of punishment had no appreciable effect upon them. It was barely a century before the time of Pinel that popular instinct wanted to punish mad people like all other criminals; which proves how vague the ideas of responsibility or irresponsibility are in the vulgar and utilitarian conception of social sanction. When, in bygone times, the people demanded cruel punishments in harmony with the morals of their day, they did so, not in the name of metaphysical ideas, but rather in the name of social interest. Neither ought our legislators, who in the present day are labouring to reduce pain to the strictly necessary amount, to put forward these metaphysical ideas any more. "Free-will" and "absolute responsibility," in themselves, no more justify social punishment than metaphysical irresponsibility and metaphysical determinism. That which alone justifies pain is its efficacy, from the point of view of social defence.*

* We must, therefore, approve of the new school of jurists, which is particularly numerous and brilliant in Italy, and which endeavours to place penal right outside all moral and metaphysical considerations. Let us, however, remark that this school is wrong when, after having put aside every idea of metaphysical responsibility, it considers itself

In the same way as social punishments are in our time being reduced to that which is strictly necessary, social rewards (titles of nobility, honorary posts, etc.) also become

obliged by its own principles to equally put aside "the intentional and voluntary element." According to Messrs. Lombroso, E. Ferri, and Garofalo, legal judgment must only bear upon the action, and the social or anti-social motives which produced it, without even pretending to appreciate the greater or lesser *power* and the intrinsic *quality* of the will. Messrs. Garofalo and Ferri bring forward an example which argues against them; they quote the article of the Italian and French codes which punishes "murder, *involuntary* blows, and wounds" with imprisonment and fines (Garofalo, "Di un Criterio Positivo della Penalità," Naples, 1880; E. Ferri, "Il Diritto di Punire," Turin, 1882). According to them, this article of the law, not taking into account the will of the criminal, considers the brutal act as entirely detached from the intention which dictated it. This law, in their eyes, is one of the types with which the laws of the future should conform. But it is a great omission that the article in question should take no account of the will of the criminal. If the blows and the wounds said to be involuntary (or, rather, said to be committed by *imprudence*) were absolutely so, they would not be punished, because the punishment would be ineffective. The truth is that they are caused by lack of attention. Now, attention, being an act of the will, can be mechanically roused or sustained by the fear of pain, and that is why pain intervenes. Social life demands precisely from man, over and above all other qualities, a certain amount of attention, a power and stability of will, of which the savage, for instance, is incapable. It is the aim of penal law, among other things, to develop the will in this direction. It is, therefore, also wrong that Messrs. Carrara and E. Ferri do not find "any social responsibility" in him who has committed a crime, not on his own initiative or from an anti-social motive, but because somebody else has forced him to strike with a dagger or give the poison. Such a man, whatever modern Italian jurists may think, constitutes a certain danger to society undoubtedly, not because of his passions, or even of his *personal* actions, but simply because of his weakness of will. He is an instrument instead of being a person. Now, it is always dangerous in a State to have instruments instead of citizens. Something anti-social may exist, not only in the exterior motives which act on the will, but even in the nature of this will. Now, in all cases in which something anti-social may be found there is cause for legal sanction. Human penal law, therefore, must not be considered as being absolutely of the same order as the pretended natural sanction

much more rare and more exceptional. Formerly, if a general was conquered, he was sentenced to death; he was even crucified sometimes. If he was the conqueror, he was

which deduces the consequences of a given act—for instance, that of falling into the water—without ever concerning itself about the will and intention which preceded the act (E. Ferri, "Il Diritto di Punire," p. 25). No, the inward determinism of the individual should not entirely escape legal appreciation; and, because a judge is not compelled to ask himself if an act is *morally* or *metaphysically free*, it does not follow that he is in any case whatever right to neglect to examine the amount of *attention* and *intention*—in short, the degree of conscious will—with which this act was accomplished. By degrees punishment has now-a-days become only a measure of social precaution; but this precaution must aim, not only at the act and its motives, but also at the will which is hidden behind these. This will, whatever may be its ultimate and metaphysical nature, is mechanically a force the greater or less intensity of which must be reckoned with in social calculations. It would be absurd for an engineer, wanting to dam in a river, to consider only the volume of its water, without taking into account the force of the current sweeping it along. Let it be well understood, however, that we in no sense make the "will" a mysterious faculty placed behind the motives. The will of which I wished to speak is for us simply *character*—the system of tendencies of all kinds which the individual is accustomed to obey, and which constitute his moral self; in short, the greater or lesser resistance which this fund of inward energy is able to present to anti-social motives. We believe that the appreciation of the courts of justice will always take into consideration, not only the statement of the determinating motives of a *given act*, but also the person himself, and even the *character* of the accused. Not only will the *motives* and *springs* of action have to be more or less judged, but the *persons* (who are themselves but complicated systems of motives and springs, which counterbalance each other, and form a living equilibrium). In other terms, there exists only a *social* responsibility, not in any sense a *moral* one; but I may add that the individual is not only responsible for such or such an anti-social act and passing motives which may have urged him to this act: he is responsible for his very character; and it is, above all, this character which penal law must try to reform. The jurymen always want to judge the person, and allow themselves to be influenced by good or bad antecedents. They often carry this to excess; but I believe they are not wrong in principle, because an act is never isolated, but is simply a symptom; and, therefore, social sanction ought to bear on the individual as a whole.

called *imperator*, and carried about in triumph. In our days a general need not expect either such honours or so lamentable an end. Society is based on a system of exchange. He who renders a service counts upon receiving, by virtue of economic laws, not a sanction, but simply another service; an *honorarium*, or *salary*, takes the place of the reward, properly so called. One good deed calls forth another by a kind of natural equilibrium. In reality, *reward*—as it existed, and still exists to-day, in non-democratic societies—always leads to *privilege*. The author, for instance, formerly chosen by the king to receive a pension, was surely a *privileged* writer; while now-a-days the author whose books sell is simply a writer who is read. Reward was formerly considered so entirely as a privilege that it very often became *hereditary*, like fiefs or titles. In this way pretended distributive justice really produces most shocking injustice. Moreover, the very man who was rewarded lost thereby in moral dignity; for that which he received appeared to himself only as a *gift*, instead of being a legitimate *possession*. It is a remarkable thing that the economic system which tends to predominate among us has, in some respects, a much more moral aspect than the system of pretended distributive justice; for, instead of making us liegemen, it makes us legitimate and absolute possessors of all which we earn by our works and our labour. Everything which in the past was obtained by *reward* or by *favour* will be obtained more and more by *competition*. Competition, in which M. Renan sees a degrading agent in modern society to-day, allows the man of talent to create his own position, and to owe the place which he attains to his own efforts. Now, competition is a means of superseding reward and largess by payment due. The further we go, the more everyone is conscious of what is due to him, and claims it; but that which is due to everyone loses more and more the character of a sanction, and takes that of an engagement binding both on society and on the individual.

In the same way as certain social rewards, which we mentioned just now, so the other more vague rewards of *public esteem* and of *popularity*, also tend to lose their importance as civilization goes on. Among savages a popular man is a god, or at least very nearly one. Among partly-civilized peoples he still is a man of superhuman form, "an instrument of Providence." In time he will become, in the eyes of all, a man and nothing more. The infatuation of nations for Cæsars and Napoleons will gradually pass. Already, in these days, the only truly great and durable fame seems to be that of the men of science; and, these being, above all, admired by people who understand them, who are but a very small number, their glory will always be limited to a small circle. Lost in the rising tide of human heads, men of talent or of genius will, therefore, get accustomed to need only their own esteem and that of a small number to sustain them in their labours. They will pave the way in the world for themselves and for humanity, urged onward more by inward force than by the attraction of rewards. The further we go, the more we feel that the *name* of a man comes to be of little importance—we still cling to it from a kind of conscious childishness; but the *deed*, for ourselves as well as for all others, is the essential thing. The people of high intelligence, while working almost silently in loftier spheres, must rejoice to see the small ones, the lowest, those who are without name or merit, take a growing part in the pre-occupations of humanity. In these days many more efforts are made to alleviate the fate of those who are unhappy, or even guilty, than to overwhelm with benefactions those who are happy enough to be on the top rung of the human ladder. For instance, a new law concerning the masses or the poor has more interest for us than any event which may happen to some high personage; in the past it was just the contrary. Personal questions will be effaced to leave room for the abstract ideas of science, or for the concrete sentiment of

pity and philanthropy. The misery of a social group will more invincibly attract attention and kind deeds than the merit of a certain individual. We shall wish more to help those who suffer than to reward in a brilliant and superficial way those who have acted well. For distributive justice, which is an entirely individual and personal justice, a justice of privilege (if such words are not a paradox), must, therefore, be substituted a justice of a more absolute character, and which at bottom is really charity. Charity for all men, whatever may be their moral, intellectual, or physical worth, should be the final aim to be pursued even by public opinion.

CHAPTER III.

Criticism of Inward Sanction and of Remorse.

EVERY exterior sanction, punishment, or reward, has appeared to us sometimes as a cruelty, sometimes as a privilege. If there is no purely moral reason for thus establishing outside the individual an absolute proportion between happiness and virtue, is there a moral reason for seeing this proportion realized within the individual through his *sensibility?* In other words, must there and can there exist in conscience, to use the words of Kant, a *pathological* state of *pleasure* or *pain*, a kind of moral pathology which sanctions the *moral law;* and must morality *à priori* have consequences in which the passions play a large part? Let us imagine, by hypothesis, a virtue so heterogeneous to nature that it would neither have any perceptible character, nor find itself in conformity with any social or personal *instinct*, or with any natural passion, any πάθος, but only with *pure* reason. Let us imagine, on the other hand, an immoral direction of the will which, while being the negation of the "laws of pure practical reason," would, at the same time, not meet with resistance from any natural

impulse, any natural passion (not even, hypothetically, the natural pleasure of exact reasoning, the pleasant feeling of logical exercise according to rule). Would it, in this case (which, after all, is not to be found in humanity), be rational that to a merit and a demerit having no relation to the visible should be added perceptible pain or pleasure —a *pathology?* Moral satisfaction and remorse also, as much as pleasure, pain, and the passions—that is to say, as much as all the simple phenomena of sensation—seem to Kant not less inexplicable than the idea of duty itself. He sees in it a mystery.*

But this mystery resolves itself into an impossibility. If moral merit were pure conformity to rational *law* as such, pure *rationality*, pure *formalism*, and if it were the deed of pure transcendental liberty foreign to every natural impulse, it would produce no joy in the order of nature, no expansion of the living being, no inward warmth, no throbbing of the heart. In the same way, if the evil will, the source of demerit, could hypothetically find itself, at the same time, not contrary to *any* of the natural impulses of our being, but was serving them all, it could not produce any suffering. Demerit would, in that case, *naturally* have to end in perfect happiness of the senses and of the passions. That this does not happen is because the moral or immoral act, even when one supposes it to be intentionally supra-sensible, still meets aids or obstacles in our pathological nature. If we enjoy or suffer, it is no longer in so far as

* *Crit. de la Raison Pratique*, tr. Barni, p. 121. M. Janet, inspired without doubt by Kant, and perhaps by the theologians, also objects to deducing the sentiment of remorse from immorality. He seems to see in it the proof of a kind of mysterious harmony pre-established between nature and the moral law. "Remorse," he says, "is the smarting pain, the *sting* which tortures the heart after a guilty deed. This suffering has not *any* moral character, and must be considered as a kind of *punishment* inflicted upon crime by *nature* herself" (*Tr. de Philos.*, p. 673).

our intention is conformable or contrary to a rationally fixed law, to a law of supranatural liberty, but in so far as it finds itself, at the same time, conformable or contrary to our always more or less variable sense-nature.

In other words, moral satisfaction or remorse does not proceed entirely *à priori* from our *relation to a moral law*, but from our relation to the *natural* and empirical *laws*.

Even the mere *pleasure* of reasoning, which we may feel in generalizing a maxim of conduct, can yet only be explained by the *natural* tendency of the mind to go beyond every personal limit, and, in a general way, by the tendency of all activity to everlastingly continue a movement once begun. If empirical considerations are not made to intervene, all *moral*, or even rational, or even purely *logical* enjoyment will not only become unexplainable, but *à priori* impossible. A *superiority* of the order of reason over that of sensation and of nature might well enough be admitted, but not a possible *echo* of these two orders, the one mingling with the other echo, which is entirely *à posteriori*.

To render inward sanction truly *moral*, it should have naught of the sensible or the *pathological*—that is to say, it should have nothing which is pleasant and nothing which is painful to the passions. It should be like the *apathy* of the Stoics, which means a perfect serenity, an *ataraxy*, a supra-sensible and supra-passionate satisfaction. It should be, with regard to this world, the *nirvana* of the Buddhists, the complete detachment from all πάθος. It should, therefore, lose all character of sensible sanction. A supra-sensible law can only have a supra-sensible sanction, which is consequently unknown to that which is called natural pleasure and pain ; and this sanction is as indeterminate for us as the supra-sensible order itself.

The sanction called *moral* and truly sensible is really a particular case of that *natural* law according to which *every development of activity is accompanied by pleasure*. This

pleasure diminishes, disappears, or gives place to suffering, according to the *inward* or *outward* resistances which the activity meets. In the *inward* self of the individual the activity may meet this resistance either in the nature of the mind and the *intellectual temperament*, or in the character and the *moral temperament*. Evidently the aptitudes of the mind differ according to the individual. It will be difficult for a poet to be a good lawyer; and one understands the sufferings of Alfred de Musset as a clerk in an office. It will be also difficult for an imaginative poet to be a mathematician; and one understands the protestations of Victor Hugo against the "torture of the X's and Y's." Every intelligence seems to have a certain number of directions, in which hereditary habit pushes it by preference. If it deviates from these directions, it suffers. This suffering may, in certain cases, become truly heartrending, and very nearly "moral" remorse. Let us, for example, think of an artist who feels genius stirring in him, and who is condemned to manual labour for the whole of his life. This feeling of a lost life, of an unfulfilled task, of an unrealized ideal, will beset and haunt his sensibility more or less in the same way as would the consciousness of a moral failure. Here, therefore, we have an instance of the pleasure or pain which attends every development of activity in any environment whatever. Let us now pass on from the intellectual temperament to the moral temperament. Here, again, we are in the presence of a great many instinctive impulses, which will produce joy or pain, according as the will is obedient or resistant—impulses of avarice, of charity, of theft, of sociability, of savagery, of pity, etc. Such diverse impulses may exist in one and the same character, and pull it about first in one direction, then in another. The joy which the righteous man feels in following his social *instincts* will, therefore, find its counterpart in the joy which the evil man feels in following his anti-social *instincts*. The saying of the young evil-doer, whom Maudsley mentions,

is well known : " By Jove ! how nice it is to steal ! Even if I had millions, I should still want to steal !" When this joy in evil-doing is not compensated by any subsequent regret or remorse (and this is what would happen, according to the writers on criminal law, to nine-tenths of the criminals by heredity), a complete derangement follows in the direction of conscience, similar to that which is produced in the magnetic needle. The evil instincts stifling all the others, it is almost entirely from these alone that the *pathological* sanction comes. If the young thief, of whom Maudsley speaks, had missed an opportunity for theft, he would certainly have suffered inwardly ; he would have had a twinge of remorse.

The pathological phenomenon designated by the name of inward sanction may, therefore, be considered as in itself indifferent to the moral quality of actions. Sensibility, in which phenomena of this kind happen, has by no means the stability of reason ; it belongs to those things, "ambiguous and of double usage," of which Plato speaks. It may befriend evil as well as good. Our instincts, our impulses, our passions, do not know what they want—they must be guided by reason ; and the joy or suffering which they may cause us hardly ever arises from their conformity with the end which *reason* proposes to them, but from their conformity with the end towards which they themselves would *naturally* turn. In other words, the joy in well-doing and the remorse for evil-doing are never proportional in us to the triumph of the moral good or evil, but to the struggle which they have had in fighting against the impulses of our physical and psychical temperament.

Although the elements of remorse and of inward joy thus springing from the sensibility are generally variable, there is, however, one which presents a certain fixity, and which may exist in all elevated minds ; we mean that satisfaction which an individual always feels in being classed with superior beings —beings conformable with the normal type of his species, and

adapted, so to speak, to his own ideal. This satisfaction corresponds to the intellectual pain of feeling himself fallen from his rank and his species, sunk to the level of inferior beings. Unfortunately, this kind of satisfaction and this kind of intellectual remorse only clearly manifest themselves in philosophic minds. Moreover, this sanction, limited to a small number of moral beings, admits of a certain provisional antinomy. In fact, the pain caused by the contrast between our ideal and our real state must be all the greater to us, as we are more fully conscious of the ideal; for in that case we get a clearer perception of the distance separating us from it. Susceptibility of conscience, therefore, increases in proportion to the development of conscience, and the vividness of remorse is a measure of our very efforts towards morality. In the same way, as superior organisms are always more sensitive to all kinds of pain coming from outside, and as, on the average, a white man, for instance, suffers in his life more than a negro, so the more highly organized beings are morally more exposed than others to that suffering arising from inward causes, whose cause is always in action—the suffering from the unrealized ideal. True remorse, with its subtlety, its painful scruples, its inward tortures, may strike men, not in inverse, but in direct, ratio to their perfection.

As a matter of fact, popular morality, and even morality as understood by Kant, tend to turn remorse into *expiation*, a mysterious and inexplicable relation between moral will and nature. They tend, in the same way, to find a reward in moral satisfaction. As to ourselves, we have tried to bring back sensible remorse to a simple natural *resistance* of the deepest impulses of our being, and sensible satisfaction to a natural sentiment of *facility*, of ease, of liberty, which we experience when yielding to these impulses. If there is a supra-sensible sanction, it must be—let us repeat it, it must be—unknown to the senses properly so-called, to the passions, to the πάθος. All the same, we are far from denying the

practical utility of what are called moral pleasures and moral sufferings. Suffering, for instance, if not justifiable as *penal law*, is very often justifiable as utility. Remorse becomes valuable if it can serve some definite purpose, if it is the consciousness of some remaining imperfection, whether in its causes or its effects, of which the past act was simply the sign. It does not then bear upon the act itself, but upon the imperfection revealed by the act, or upon the consequences following in its train; it is an incentive urging us forward. From this point of view, which is not that of sanction in the proper sense, the suffering caused by remorse, even all suffering in general, and every austerity, acquires a *moral* value which must not be neglected, and which has but too often been neglected by pure utilitarians. Bentham's horror of anything reminding him of the "ascetic principle," or of anything which seemed to him the least sacrifice of pleasure, is well known. He was wrong. Suffering may sometimes be morally like bitter medicine—a powerful tonic. The patient himself feels the need of it. He who has abused pleasure is the first to wish for, and to relish, pain. It is for a similar reason that, after having made undue use of sweets, one comes to relish an infusion of quinine. The vicious man will not only get to hate his vice, but also the very enjoyments it yielded him; he despises them so deeply that, in order to give himself evidence of this, he likes to feel himself in pain. Every stain needs a kind of biting remedy to efface it. Pain can be this biting remedy. If it can never constitute a moral *sanction*—pathological evil and moral evil being heterogeneous—it may sometimes become a useful caustic. Under this new aspect sanction has an unquestionable remedial value; but first, for it to be truly moral, the individual himself must consent to it—must demand it. Moreover, it must be remembered that remedial treatment should neither last too long nor, above all, be eternal. All religions and classic morality have understood the value of pain, but they have abused it. They have acted like surgeons who, wonder-struck at the results

of their operations, ask nothing but to cut off arms and legs. "Cutting off" should never be an aim in itself; and to "sew up again" should be the very last resource of all. Remorse is only of value in so far as it leads more surely to definitely good resolution.

We have shown that remorse may be considered under two aspects—sometimes as the painful and relatively *passive* statement of a fact (disobedience to a more or less deeply-rooted impulse of our being, a falling below the ideal of the individual, either with relation to the species or to his own conception), sometimes as an effort still more or less painful, but *active* and *energetic*, an effort to rise out of this state of failure. Under its first aspect remorse may be logically and physically necessary; but it only becomes morally good by assuming its second character. Remorse, therefore, is the more moral the less it resembles true *sanction*. There are temperaments in which the two kinds of remorse are clearly enough divided. There are some which feel a very stinging, and yet a perfectly useless, pain; there are others which (reason and will being predominant in them) need no very acute pain to recognise their evil-doing, and to impose reparation on themselves. These latter are superior from a moral point of view, which proves that the so-called inward *sanction*, like all others, justifies itself only in so far as it is a means of *action*.

CHAPTER IV.

Criticism of Religious and Metaphysical Sanction.

I.

RELIGIOUS SANCTION.

THE further we advance in this criticism, the more does sanction, properly so-called—that is to say, moral "pathology"—seem to us a kind of fence, being of use only when there is a path marked out, and someone walking in it.

Beyond life, in the eternal void, the fences become entirely superfluous. If once the probation of life is ended, there is no coming back to it, unless it be, let it be well understood, for the sake of deriving experience and wise lessons from it, in the case of our having to begin fresh trials. Such is not the idea of the principal human religions. Religions, in so far as they command a certain rule of conduct, obedience to certain rites, faith in such and such a dogma, all need a sanction to strengthen their commands. They all agree in calling upon the most formidable sanction imaginable; to those who have transgressed their orders, in one way or another, they promise eternal suffering, and threaten them with horrors far beyond any which the imagination of the most furious man dreams of inflicting upon his most deadly enemy. In this, as in many other points, religions are in total disagreement with the spirit of our time; but it is strange to think that they are still followed by a great many philosophers and metaphysicians. Imagining God as the most terrible of all powers, one comes to the conclusion that, in his anger, he must inflict the most terrible of punishments. One forgets that God—this supreme ideal—should simply be incapable of hurting anyone, and, with still more reason, be unable to return evil for evil. Precisely because God is conceived as the maximum of power, he should be able to inflict only the minimum of pain; for the greater the force over which one has command, the less need is there to use it to obtain a certain effect. Besides, as he is believed to be the highest goodness, it is impossibile to picture him inflicting even this minimum of pain. The "Heavenly Father" should at least have this superiority over earthly fathers, of not flogging his children. Finally, as he is hypothetically the supreme intelligence, we cannot believe that he would do anything unreasonable. Now, for what reason would he cause the evil-doer to suffer? God is above all insult, and need not defend himself; therefore he should not strike.

Religious systems always have a tendency to represent the bad man as a Titan engaged in a struggle against God himself. It is quite natural that Jupiter, once being the conqueror, should in future guard himself, and crush his opponent under a mountain. But it is a strange idea to imagine God as being thus materially able to fight evil-doers, without losing his majesty and his sanctity. From the moment when the personified "Moral Law" thus undertakes a physical struggle with evil-doers, it inevitably loses its character of law, it lowers itself to the level of its victim—it fails. A god cannot fight with a man; he exposes himself to being overthrown, like the angel by Jacob. Either God, this living law, is all-powerful—and then we cannot truly *offend* him, nor should he *punish* us—or we really can offend him; but in that case we in some way influence him, and he is not all-powerful, not "the absolute," not God. The founders of religions have imagined that the most sacred law should be also the strongest law; it is absolutely the reverse. The idea of force logically resolves itself into the relation between power and resistance; every physical force is, therefore, morally a weakness. What a strange and very anthropomorphic conception to imagine God as keeping a gaol, or a "hell," and having for his servant and gaol-keeper the Devil! In fact, the Devil is more responsible for hell than the executioner is for the instruments of torture which are put into his hands; maybe, he should even be very much pitied for the sort of work he is made to do. The real responsibility is not his. He is only the executioner of high and divine works; and a philosopher might maintain, not without likelihood, that the true Devil here is God. If a human law, if a civil law, cannot do without physical sanction, the reason is—as we have seen—precisely because it is civil and human. It is not the same with the "Moral Law," which is supposed to protect only a principle, and which is represented as immovable, eternal, to a certain extent passive; it is impossible to be *moved*

before an *immovable* law. Force being powerless in the presence of it, it is not necessary that the law should answer by force. He who thinks to have overthrown moral law will always find it confronting him again, as Hercules saw the giant, whom he thought he had finally felled to the ground, rise up time after time from under his grip. To be eternal, that is the only possible revenge of goodness with regard to those who violate it.

If God had created beings with natures so perverse as to always act contrary to his commands, he would, in their presence, be reduced to impotence. He could only pity them, and pity himself for having created them. His duty would not be to strike them, but to alleviate their misfortune as much as possible; to show himself all the more gentle and better, in proportion as they were worse. Those who are doomed, if they were really incurable, would, after all, be more in need of the delights of heaven than the chosen ones themselves. One of two things: either the evil-doers may be converted to goodness—in that case the so-called hell will only be a school on a very large scale, in which an attempt will be made to open the eyes of all the outcasts, and to enable them to ascend to heaven as quickly as possible; or the evil-doers are beyond cure, like incurable maniacs (which is absurd); in that case they also will be everlastingly pitiful, and a supreme goodness must try to compensate them for their misery by all imaginable means, by the sum of all possible happiness. In whatever manner it be understood, the dogma of hell thus appears the very reverse of truth.

Besides, by *damning* a soul—that is to say, by turning it away for ever from his presence, or, in less mysterious words, by shutting it out for ever from the truth—God would turn himself away from his soul, would limit his own power, and would, so to say, damn himself also to a certain extent. The pain of *damnation* recoils on him who inflicts it. As to the physical suffering singled out by theologians,

it is evidently far less bearable when taken in a metaphorical sense. Instead of damning those who have gone wrong, God should only everlastingly call them back to him. We should say, with Michael Angelo, it is, above all, for evil-doers that God opens his two arms so widely on the symbol of the cross. We picture him as looking on everything from so great a height that in his eyes outcasts are never anything but unfortunates. Now, must not those who are unhappy, as such, if not from all other standpoints, be the favourites of the infinite goodness?

II.

THE SANCTION OF LOVE AND OF FRATERNITY.

THUS far we have considered the two aspects of sanction —*punishment* and *reward*—as if bound together; but, perhaps, it is possible to consider them separately. Certain philosophers, for instance, seemed disposed to reject reward properly so-called, and the right to reward; to admit punishment only as being legitimate.*

This first position is, we believe, the most difficult which can be taken up in examining the question. There is a second one, quite opposed to it, which another philosopher has taken up, and which, in order to be thorough, we also must examine. It is to entirely reject punishment, but to try, nevertheless, to maintain a rational relation between

* "We admit without hesitation the stoic maxim—virtue is its own reward.....Could one conceive a geometrical triangle, which, being hypothetically endowed with consciousness and liberty, and which, having succeeded in disengaging its pure essence from the conflict of material causes, which on all sides tend to violate its nature—could one conceive this triangle to require in addition a prize from those exterior things from whose dominion it had already freed itself?" (M. P. Janet, "La Morale," p. 590).

merit and happiness. (M. Fouillée, "La Liberté et le Determinisme.")

This doctrine renounces the idea of Kant, which makes merit conform to an entirely formal law. The universe is represented as an immense community, in which all duty is always a duty towards an active, a living being. In this community "he who loves must be loved"; what is more natural? To say that the virtuous man deserves happiness "is to say that everybody with a good will wishes to do good to him in return for the good which he has tried to do.....The relation of merit to happiness thus becomes a relation of will to will, of person to person, a relation of gratitude, and consequently of fraternity and moral love" *(ibid)*. The link sought for between good actions and happiness would thus be found in the idea of return and gratitude. Loving-kindness would be the new principle of sanction—a principle which, while excluding punishment, would be sufficient to justify a kind of reward, non-material, but moral. Let us note that this sanction is not valid for an individual, who, hypothetically, might be considered absolutely solitary. But, according to the doctrine we are examining, there nowhere exists such an individual. One cannot get outside society, because one cannot get outside the universe. Moral law is, therefore, fundamentally only a social law, and that which we have said with respect to the actual relations between men holds good also for the ideal relations of all beings one with another. From this point of view, reward becomes a kind of "response" of love. Every good action is like an "appeal" addressed to all beings of the vast universe. It seems against all law that this appeal should not be listened to, and that love should not produce gratitude. Love presupposes mutuality of love, consequently co-operation and helpfulness, consequently satisfaction of desire and happiness. As to the evident unhappiness of any one person, it would be explained in accordance with this

doctrine by the presence of some blind will opposing him from the midst of nature, from the midst of universal society. Now, if, hypothetically, a being is truly loving, he will become lovable not only in the eyes of men, but in the eyes of all the elementary wills which make up nature. It will thus acquire a kind of ideal right to be respected and assisted by them—consequently to be made happy by them. All tangible evils—pain, illness, death—may be considered as being brought about by a kind of war and blind hatred of inferior wills. If this will takes for its victim love itself, we become indignant, and what could be more just? If the love of others can be requited only with love, we at least have the consciousness that this must be done with the love of the whole of nature, not only with the love of such or such an individual. This love of the whole of nature thus generalized may become happiness for him who receives it, outward happiness included. The link between goodwill and happiness, which we desired to break, will be re-established.

This hypothesis, we admit, is the last and only resource for metaphysically justifying that empirical sentiment of indignation which pain produces in us if it accompanies goodwill. Only let us note well what the hypothesis involves.

In this doctrine it will finally have to be admitted, without proof, that all the wills constituting nature are analogous in essence and direction, in such a way as to converge towards the same point. If, for instance, the good pursued by a society of wolves were fundamentally as different from the good pursued by human society as it apparently seems to be, the goodness of a man would rationally have no connection with that of a wolf, nor the goodness of a wolf with that of a man. The preceding hypothesis must, therefore, be completed by this other very seductive and hazardous one, which we ourselves have elsewhere defined as possible. "Is there not a tendency, an inward aspiration, eternally the same, and

at work in all beings, which corresponds with that exterior evolution, of which the forms are so varied? Should there not be between them a connection of tendencies and efforts similar to the anatomical connection in organisms pointed out by G. Saint-Hilaire?" (see our "Morale Anglaise Contemporaine," p. 370, and M. Fouillée, "La Science Sociale Contemporaine," book v.).

According to this doctrine, the idea of sanction becomes blended with the moral idea of "co-operation." He who does good universally labours at so great a task that he has ideally a right to the co-operation of all beings, since they are members of the same whole, from the first cell to the grey brain-matter of the highest organism. He, on the contrary, who commits evil ought to receive from all a "refusal of co-operation," which would be a kind of negative punishment; he ought to find himself morally isolated, whereas the other should be in communion with the universe.

Thus—restricted, purified, saved by metaphysics—this idea of final harmony between the morally good and happiness certainly becomes admissible. But, in the first place, it is no longer truly the sanction of a formal *law;* all that remains of the ideas of necessary or imperative law, of equally necessary sanction, properly so-called, has disappeared. It is no longer even the formal law of Kant, nor the synthetical *à priori* judgment by which legality should be united to happiness as reward. In one word, it is no longer a system of *legislation*, nor, consequently, of true *sanction.* We can even say that we are here transported to a sphere higher than that of *justice*, properly so-called; it is the sphere of *brotherhood.* It is no longer the justice of equal exchange, for the idea of brotherhood excludes that of mathematical exchange, of a balance of services exactly measurable, and equal in quantity. Goodwill does not measure its return according to what it has received; it returns two, and even tenfold, for one. It is no longer even

distributive justice in its exact sense, for the idea of an exact, or even *moral*, distribution is no longer that of brotherhood. The prodigal son might be received even more warmly than the good son. An evil-doer might be loved, and perhaps the evil-doer may need to be loved, more than any other. I have two hands—one to clasp the hand of those with whom I go through life, the other to raise those who fall. To the latter I might even stretch forth both my hands together.

Thus, in this sphere, purely *rational* relations, purely intellectual harmonies, and—with even greater reason—legal relations seem to disappear; thus even the truly rational, *logical*, and even *quantitative* relation vanishes, which should bind the good will to a certain proportion of outward good and of inward love. From this results a kind of antinomy. Love is either a particular grace, and an election, which bears hardly any resemblance to sanction, or it is a kind of general grace, and an ideal, far-reaching equality between all beings, which even less resembles sanction. If I love one man better than another, it is not certain that my love must be in direct ratio to his merit; and if I love all men for their humanity—if I love them universally, equally—the proportion between merit and love seems still more to disappear. Besides, men of "goodwill" would undoubtedly themselves dislike, according to ideal justice, to be the object of any mark of preference; the voluntary victims of love would not consent to be placed in any way before others in the case of any redistribution of material goods. They would object that, after all, voluntary suffering is less to be pitied than imposed suffering; to him who admits the superiority of the ideal over the real, the good man is the rich one, even when this supra-sensible wealth has given him material inconvenience and suffering.

Such are the difficulties to which we believe this theory will give rise. These difficulties are, perhaps, not insoluble; but their solution will surely mean a thorough modification

of the traditional idea of sanction—for, as far as pain goes, punishment will have disappeared; and, as to reward, the compensation belonging to pure justice will seem to vanish before more elevated relations of brotherhood, which shall be free from precise limitations. On the one hand, physical suffering (death included) always rouses indignation morally, whatever may be the good or bad character of the will which causes it. Suffering shocks us in itself, independently of its point of application; a distribution of suffering is, therefore, morally unintelligible. On the other hand, as to happiness—we want all to be happy. These notions cause great trouble in the *balance* of sanction. Proportionality, rationality, law, νόμος (derived from νεμῶ, *to allot*), are only applicable to the relations of social order and utility, of defence and of exchange, of commutation and of mathematical distribution. Sanction, properly so-called, is therefore an entirely human idea, which enters as a necessary element into the conception of our society, but which might be expelled without contradiction from a highly-elevated society composed of sages like Buddha and Jesus.

In short, the utilitarians and the followers of Kant, placed at the two opposite poles of moral philosophy, are nevertheless victims of the same error. The utilitarian, who sacrifices as little as may be of his existence in the hope that this sacrifice will bring him something in return in the life beyond, reckons irrationally from his point of view; for, in the absolute, nothing more is due to him for his interested sacrifice than would be due to him for an evil act of self-interest. On the other hand, the disciple of Kant who sacrifices himself, with his eyes shut, for the sake of the law only, without calculating, without demanding anything, has none the more any veritable *right* to compensation or indemnity. Of course, if we have no aim in view, we should give up all reference to aim, and the disciple of Kant does not aim at happiness. It may be objected that, if the moral law constrains us, it is itself bound to do something for us. It

may be said that there may be an "appeal from the agent to the law; that if, for instance, the law demands the annihilation of self without compensation, this is supreme cruelty; and is a cruel law just?" (M. Janet, "La Morale," p. 582). We answer that it is here necessary to distinguish between two things—the fatal circumstances of life, and the law which rules our conduct under these circumstances. The fatal situations of life may be cruel; let nature be accused of this; but a law can never appear *cruel* to him who believes in its *legitimacy*. He who considers every stain a crime cannot feel it cruel to remain chaste. For him who believes in a "moral law" it is impossible to judge this law, while regarding it from a human point of view, because this law is hypothetically unconditional, irresponsible, and is believed to be speaking to us from the very depths of the absolute. It makes no contract with us, the clauses of which we might quietly debate, weighing the advantages and disadvantages. At bottom—even in the moral philosophy of Kant—sanction is really only a supreme expedient to rationally and *materially* justify the *formal* law of sacrifice, the moral law. Sanction is added to the law to render it legitimate.*

* This question-begging, disguised under the name of postulate, is really still more evident in those systems of morality which try more openly to keep the mean between egoistic utilitarianism and the absolute disinterestedness of Stoicism. The moral philosophy of M. Renouvier in France, and of Sidgwick in England, seems to be of this kind. "*Reason*," says M. Renouvier (and the English moralist entirely agrees on this point), "is *only of value* and makes itself only *known* in so far as it is supposed to be conformable with the final cause, the principle of the *passions*, and *happiness*... ...The postulate of a final conformity of the moral law with happiness is the induction, the proper hypothesis of moral philosophy. Is this postulate denied?..... Then the moral agent might oppose to the obligation of justice another *obligation*—that of his own preservation, and to duty the idea of interest such as he represents it to himself.....In the name of *what* shall we urge him to make choice of duty?" ("Science de Morale," vol. i., p. 17). M. Renouvier, very cautious and circumspect, tries afterwards

The doctrine of the disciples of Kant, even more than that of the utilitarians, if pushed to extremes, would logically end in a complete antinomy between the purely "*moral merit*" and the idea of a reward, or even of some sort of tangible hope. It might be summed up in the story of an Eastern woman, told us by the Sieur de Joinville:—Yves, a preaching friar, one day saw at Damascus an old woman

to somewhat diminish the importance of this acknowledgment by a scholastic distinction. Sanction, he says, is less a postulate of moral philosophy than a *postulate of the passions* "necessary to legitimatize them and to make them enter the sphere of science." Unfortunately, he happens to recognise that there cannot exist a moral science independently of the passions, and that the obligation of self-interest is a power *logically* equivalent to moral obligation. If the passions postulate a sanction, on the other hand moral philosophy postulates the passions; it is a circle. In moral philosophy thus conceived, duty finds itself, at least from the logical point of view, put on equal footing with self-interest. Bentham and Kant are placed on the same level; it is owned that both are right, and it is made to appear as if they want the same things in the name of contrary principles. Sanction serves as their common meeting-ground, and the supreme principle of remuneration as magistrate. It is not for us here to appreciate the value of these moral systems. We only state that the formal law of Kant has disappeared in this arrangement; that "the obligation of doing one's duty *solely* from duty" no longer exists, and is considered as a mere paradox ("Science de la Morale," vol. i., p. 178); that sanction is no longer a *consequence* of duty, but simply a *condition*. In that case this idea entirely changes its aspect. Punishment and reward are no longer considered as bound to moral conduct by an *à priori* synthetic judgment; but they are demanded beforehand by the agents, so as to justify the commandment of the "law" from the reasonable point of view. The moral act no longer constitutes in and for itself a right to happiness; but every sensible being is considered as having naturally a right to hope for happiness, and as unwilling to renounce it in the moral act. M. Renouvier and Mr. Sidgwick, no longer maintaining that duty *deserves* a reward, simply say that the moral agent, expecting a reward, would be *duped* if one day it was not rewarded. They invoke, so to speak, as their only argument, the *veracity* of the desire, in the same way as Descartes invoked the veracity of God; but the one, as well as the other, may with good right be suspected by every truly scientific moral philosopher.

carrying in her right hand a brazier containing fire, and in her left a phial of water. Yves asked her: "What are you going to do?" She answered that with the fire she wanted to burn paradise, and with the water to extinguish hell. And he asked her: "Why do you want to do this?" "Because I do not want anybody ever to do good for the sake of gaining paradise as a reward, nor for fear of hell, but simply for love of God."

One thing would seem to reconcile everything; this would be to demonstrate that, analytically, happiness lies enfolded in virtue; that to choose between it and pleasure is still to choose between two joys—the one inferior, the other superior. The Stoics believed this; Stuart Mill also; and even Epicurus himself. This hypothesis may undoubtedly prove true for a small number of elevated souls, but its complete realization is indeed "not of this world." Virtue itself is by no means, here on earth and in itself, a perfect tangible reward, a full compensation *(præmium ipsa virtus)*. There is little likelihood that a soldier, standing at the outpost and struck down by a bullet, would experience, in the *sentiment* of duty fulfilled, a sum of *enjoyment* equivalent to the happiness of a whole life. Let us, therefore, acknowledge it—virtue is not tangible happiness. Nay, more; there is no *natural* reason, nor any purely *moral* reason, that it should ever become so. Besides, when certain alternatives arise, the moral being has the feeling of being caught in a snare; he is bound, he is confined, by "duty." He cannot free himself, and can but await the working of the great social or natural mechanism which must crush him. He gives way—while, perhaps, regretting that he should have been the victim chosen. The necessity of self-sacrifice is, in a good many cases, the drawing of a bad lot. Nevertheless, one draws it, binds it on one's brow—not without some pride—and departs. Duty, in its acute state, forms parts of the tragic events which burst on life. There are lives which very nearly escape it; they are generally considered happy.

If duty can thus make real victims, do these victims acquire *exceptional* rights to a material compensation, rights to a material happiness, superior to that of other unfortunates, of other martyrs of life? It does not appear to be so. *All* suffering, *involuntary* or *voluntary*, always appears to us as demanding an ideal compensation, and this solely because it is *suffering*. Compensation—that is to say, a balancing—is a word which indicates an entirely logical and material, but in no sense a moral, relation. It is the same with the words "reward" and "punishment," which have the same sense. They are terms which belong to the sphere of the passions, and are wrongly transferred to moral language. The ideal compensation of material benefits and evils is all that one can observe in the popular ideas of punishment and reward. We must remember that the ancient Nemesis punished, not only the wicked, but also those who were happy—those who had had more than their share of enjoyment. In the same way, Christianity, in primitive times, considered the poor, the weak in mind or body, as having the best chance of one day being the chosen ones. The rich man of the Gospel is threatened with hell, without any other apparent reason than his very wealth. The first shall be last. Even in the present day the pair-of-scales method seems to us desirable for this world of ours. The ideal seems to be absolute equality of happiness for all beings, whatsoever they may be; life, on the contrary, is a perpetual consecration of inequality. The majority of living beings, good or evil, might, therefore, ideally pretend to a reparation—a sort of balance of joys, a universal levelling. The ocean of things would have to be levelled. No induction whatever drawn from nature leads us to suppose that this would ever happen—quite the contrary; and, on the other hand, from no moral system whatever can one strictly deduce recognition of a true *moral* right to any definite compensation for actual suffering. This compensation, desired by the senses, is by no means *demanded* by

reason. It is entirely doubtful, as far as science is concerned —perhaps even impossible.*

* "We do not think that the belief in religious sanction works any great change in the aspect which a being, morally unsound, presents to every healthy being. Crime can offer man but one single attraction—that of having the chance of procuring wealth for himself. But wealth, whatever may be its popular value, is nevertheless not without common measure as regards everything else. Propose to a poor man to make him a millionaire, at the same time inflicting gout upon him, and he will refuse, if he has any shadow of common sense. Propose to him to be rich upon condition of being bandy-legged or hump-backed, and he will probably refuse this also, especially if he is young; every woman would refuse. The difficulty experienced in filling certain posts, even well paid—posts such as that of executioner—still shows that, in the popular judgment, money is not everything. If it were everything, no religious threats could ever prevent a universal assault upon riches. I know women, and men also, who would refuse a fortune if it had to be gained by becoming a butcher; so strong are certain aversions, even purely sentimental and æsthetic ones. The moral horror of crime—more powerful in most hearts than any other aversion—will, therefore, always drive us away from criminals, whatever may be the prospects of life hereafter. This horror will only become stronger when, for the usual sentiments of hatred, anger, and revenge, which the presence of a criminal causes us, there will, by degrees, be substituted the sentiment of pity—of that pity which we feel for inferior or ill-born beings, for the involuntary monstrosities of nature. The only enduring element worthy of respect in the idea of sanction is neither the notion of pain nor that of reward; it is the conception of the ideal good, as necessarily having a sufficient force of realization to impose itself on nature, to invade the whole world. It would seem to us right that the just and gentle man should one day have the last word in the universe. But this reign of goodness dreamt of by humanity does not need the operations of human legislature in order to establish itself. The moral sentiment may consider itself as being of necessity the great force and the mainspring of the universe. This ambition of morality to progressively invade nature, through the medium of humanity, is the highest thing in the domain of philosophy; it is also that which is most fit to foster the missionary spirit. No myth whatever is here necessary to arouse the ardour for goodness and the sentiment of universal fraternity. That which is great and beautiful suffices in itself—carries in itself its light and its flame" ("L'Irréligion de l'Avenir," p. 358).

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, it will not be without value to sum up the principal ideas which we have developed in this work.

Our aim was to find out what a moral philosophy would be without any absolute obligation, and without any absolute sanction; how far positive science can go in this direction, and where does the sphere of metaphysical speculations begin?

Systematically putting aside every *law* anterior or superior to the *facts*, consequently *à priori* and categorical, we have had to start from the facts themselves in order to deduce a law; to start from reality, to build up an ideal, and to extract a moral philosophy from nature. Now, the essential and constitutive fact of our nature is that we are living, feeling, and thinking beings. It is from life, both in its physical and moral form, that we have had to demand a principle of conduct.

It is indispensable that this principle should present a double character, for life, so to speak, divides itself into two parts in man—into unconscious and conscious life. Most moralists see only the sphere of conscious life. It is, nevertheless, the unconscious or sub-conscious life which is the true source of activity. Conscious life, it is true, may, in the long run, react upon and gradually destroy, by the acuteness of its analysis, that which the obscure synthesis of heredity has accumulated among individuals or nations. Consciousness has a dissolving force, which the utilitarian and even the evolutionist school has not taken sufficiently into account. Hence the necessity of re-establishing the harmony between the reflection of consciousness and the spontaneity of the unconscious instinct. A principle of action must be found which shall be common to the two spheres, and which,

consequently, while becoming conscious of itself, tends more to fortify than to destroy itself. This principle we believe to have found in *life the most intensive and the most extensive possible*, with regard to its physical and mental manifestations. Life, in becoming conscious of itself, of its intensity and its extension, does not tend to its own destruction; it but increases its own force.

However, there are also antinomies in the sphere of life which are produced by the struggle between individualities, by the competition of all beings for happiness, and sometimes for existence. In nature the antinomy of the *struggle for life* is nowhere solved; it is the dream of the moralist to solve it—or, at least, to reduce it as much as possible. For this reason the moralist is tempted to appeal to a law superior to life itself—an *intelligible, eternal, supernatural* law. We have given up appealing to this law—at least as law. We have relegated the intelligible world to the region of hypothesis, and a law cannot spring from an hypothesis. Once more, therefore, we are obliged to appeal to life to regulate life. But then it is a more complete, a larger life, which is able to regulate a less complete and smaller life. Such, in fact, is the only possible rule for an exclusively scientific moral philosophy.

The characteristic of life which has enabled us to unite, *to a certain extent*, egoism and altruism—a union which is the philosopher's stone of morality—is that which we have called *moral fecundity*. The individual life should diffuse itself for others, in others, and, if necessary, should yield itself up; and this expansion is not contrary to its nature; on the contrary, it is in accordance with its nature; nay, more, it is the very condition of true life. The utilitarian school has been obliged to stop short with more or less hesitation before this perpetual antithesis of Me and Thee, of Mine and Thine, of personal interest and general interest. But living nature does not stop short at this cut-and-dried, this logically inflexible division. Individual life

is expansive for others because it is *fruitful*, and it is fruitful by the very reason that it is life. We have seen, with regard to physical life, that it is the need of each individual *to beget another* individual; so much so that this *other* becomes a necessary condition of our being. Life, like fire, only maintains itself by communicating itself; and this is none the less true with regard to the intelligence than with regard to the body. It is as impossible to shut up the intelligence as to shut up flame; it exists in order to radiate. We find the same force of expansion in sensibility. We need to share our joy; we need to share our sorrow. It is our whole nature which is *sociable*. Life does not know the absolute classifications and divisions of the logicians and the metaphysicians; it cannot be entirely *selfish*, even if it wished to be. We are open on all sides, on all sides encroaching and encroached upon. This springs from the fundamental law which biology teaches us: *Life is not only nutrition;* it is *production and fecundity*. To live is *to spend* as well as *to gain*.

After having stated this general law of physical and psychical life, we have tried to find out how some sort of equivalent to obligation might be derived therefrom. What does obligation actually mean to him who does not admit either an absolute imperative or a transcendental law? A certain form of impulsion. In fact, analyse "moral obligation," "duty," "the moral law": that which gives them their character of *action* is the impulsion which is inseparable from it; it is the force demanding exercise. Well, it is this impulsive force which has appeared to us to be the first natural equivalent of supernatural duty. The utilitarians are still too much absorbed by considerations of finality. They think of nothing but the *aim*, which to them is *utility*, itself reducible to *pleasure*. They are Hedonists—that is to say, they make of pleasure, be it in a selfish or sympathetic form, the great spring of mental life. We, on the contrary, place ourselves at the point of view of efficient causality, and not of finality. We declare that there is a cause in us which

operates as an aim, even before any attraction of pleasure; this cause is *life*, tending by its very nature to grow and to diffuse itself, thus finding pleasure as consequence, but not necessarily taking it as an end in itself. The living being is not purely and simply a calculation *à la* Bentham, a banker putting down in his big book the balance of profit and loss. To live is not to calculate, it is to act. There is in the living being an accumulation of force, a reserve of activity, which spends itself not *for the pleasure of spending* itself, but *because spending is a necessity of its very existence.* It is impossible that a cause should not produce its effects, even if there be no consideration of aim or object.

We have thus reached our fundamental formula. *Duty* is but an expression detached from the *power* which necessarily tends to pass into action. By duty we do but designate that power which, passing beyond reality, becomes with respect to it an ideal; becomes that which it ought to be, because it is that which it *can* be, because it is the germ of the future already bursting forth in the present. There is no supernatural principle whatever in our morality; it is from life itself, and from the force inherent in life, that it all springs. Life makes its own law by its aspiration towards incessant development; it makes its own obligation to act by its very power of action.

As we have already explained, instead of saying, *I must, therefore I can*, it is more true to say, *I can, therefore I must.* Hence a certain *impersonal duty is created by the very power to act.* Such is the first natural equivalent of the mystical and transcendental *duty*.

The second equivalent we have found in the theory of the idea-forces upheld by a contemporary philosopher (Fouillée). The *very idea of the superior action*, as that of every action, is *a force tending to its realization.* The *idea* itself is already the commenced *realization* of the superior action. Obligation is, from this point of view, but the sense of the profound *identity* which exists between thought and action. It is, for

this very reason, the sense of the *unity of being*, of the unity of life. He who does not, by his action, conform to his highest thought is at war with himself, is inwardly divided against himself. Here, again, we have got beyond Hedonism. It is not a question of calculating pleasures, of making up accounts, and of finality. It is a question of being and of living, of feeling oneself be, of feeling oneself live ; to act as we are and as we live ; to be, not a sort of lie in action, but a truth in action.

A third equivalent of duty is borrowed from the sensibility ; not, like the preceding ones, from the intelligence and the activity. It is from the *growing fusion of sensibilities*, and *from the increasingly sociable character of elevated pleasures*, that a kind of *duty* or superior necessity springs, which moves us, quite naturally and rationally, towards others. By virtue of evolution our pleasures become wider and more and more impersonal. We cannot enjoy ourselves in ourselves as on an isolated island. Our environment, to which we better adapt ourselves every day, is human society, and we can no more be happy outside this environment than we can breathe beyond the atmosphere of the earth. The purely selfish happiness of certain epicureans is an idle fancy, an abstraction, an impossibility. The truly human pleasures are all, more or less, *social*. Pure selfishness, as we have said, instead of being a real affirmation of self, is a *mutilation of self*. Thus, in our activity, in our intelligence, in our sensibility, there is a pressure which exercises itself in the altruistic sense. There is a force of expansion as powerful as the one which acts on the stars ; and it is this force of expansion which, becoming conscious of *its power*, gives to itself the name of *duty*. This, then, is the treasure of natural spontaneousness, which is life, and which, at the same time, creates moral wealth.

But, as we have seen, reflection may find itself in antithesis with natural spontaneousness ; it may work in such a way as to restrain both the power and the duty of sociability,

when by chance the force of expansion towards others finds itself in opposition to the force of gravitation to self. The struggle for life may be diminished by the progress of evolution; it re-appears under certain circumstances, which are still frequent in our day. In such case, without imperative law, what will urge the individual to definite disinterestedness, and sometimes to self-sacrifice?

Besides these motives, which we have previously examined, and which, under normal conditions, are constantly being brought into action, we have found others, which we called the love of "*physical risk*" and the love of "*moral risk*." Man is a being fond of speculation—not only in theory, but in practice. Neither his thought nor his action stops at the point where his certitude ends. A purely speculative hypothesis can, without danger, be substituted for the categorical law; in the same way, a mere hope can be substituted for dogmatic faith, and action for affirmation. The speculative hypothesis is a risk of the mind; the action which conforms to this hypothesis is a risk of the will. The superior being is he who undertakes and risks the most, either by his thought or by his actions. This superiority springs from a greater treasure of inward force; he has more *power*. For this very reason, he has a higher *duty*.

Even the sacrifice of life may still be, in certain cases, an expansion of life, which has become sufficiently intense to prefer an impulse of sublime exaltation to years of mere grovelling existence. There are hours, as we have seen, in which it is possible to say at one and the same time: "I live; I have lived."

If certain physical and moral agonies last for years, and if one can, so to speak, die to self during a whole existence, the reverse is also true, and it is possible to concentrate a whole life into one moment of love and sacrifice.

Lastly, in the same way that life creates its obligation to act by its very power to act, it also creates its sanction by its very action; for, in acting, it takes joy in its own capacity.

Acting less, it finds less enjoyment; acting more, it enjoys more. Even in sacrificing itself life finds itself again; even in dying it is conscious of its plenitude, which will reappear elsewhere, indestructible under other forms, since nothing in the world is lost.

To sum up, it is *action* and *the power of life* which alone can solve—if not entirely, at least partially—those problems to which abstract thought gives rise. The sceptic, in morality as well as in metaphysics, believes that he deceives himself and all others; believes that humanity will always deceive itself; that the pretended progress is merely a "marking-time." He is wrong. He does not see that our fathers have spared us the very errors into which they fell, and that we will spare those who follow us our own errors; he does not see that, after all, in all errors there is some truth, and that this particle of truth gradually grows and confirms itself. On the other hand, he who has a dogmatic faith believes that he possesses, to the exclusion of all others, the whole definite and imperative truth. He is wrong. He does not see that errors mingle with every truth, that there is nothing as yet in the thought of man which is perfect enough to be final. The first believes that humanity does not advance; the second, that it has already arrived at its goal. There is a mean between these two hypotheses: we must say to ourselves that humanity is marching forward, and we must march forward ourselves. Work, as has been said, is as good as prayer. It is even better than prayer; or, rather, it is the true prayer—the true human providence. Let us act instead of praying. Let us have hope only in ourselves and in other men; let us count on ourselves. Hope, like Providence, sees sometimes far ahead *(providere)*. The difference between supernatural Providence and natural hope is that the one pretends to directly modify nature by supernatural means, like itself; while the other from the first modifies only ourselves. It is a force which is not superior to us, but interior; it is we ourselves whom it carries

onward. It remains to be seen if we are going alone, if the world is following us, if thought will ever be able to carry nature along. Let us go on all the same.

We stand as if upon the deck of some great vessel, whose rudder had been torn away by a wave, and whose mast had been broken by the wind. It had been lost on the sea, as our planet was in space. It went on thus at random, driven on by the storm, like a great wreck carrying people; nevertheless, it arrived at its destination. Perhaps our planet, perhaps humanity, will also arrive at an unknown goal, which it will have created for itself. No hand directs us, no eye looks out for us. The rudder has long since been broken—or, rather, there never was one; it has to be made. This is a great task, and it is our task.