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THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

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THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

BY

JOSEPH McCABE

(Author of "The Evolution of Mind," "Goethe," "The Story of Evolution," etc.)

[ISSUED FOR THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LIMITED]

LONDON:
WATTS & CO.,
17 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.
1913

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CHAPTER I.

THE CENTRAL PROBLEM OF RELIGION

THE modern inquirer into the truth of religious beliefs usually belongs to one of two large classes. He may say that the existence of God cannot be questioned by a normal mind, and that his task is merely to choose between different forms of theism; or he may dismiss all other doctrines as incapable of serious defence and confine his inquiry to this single issue. In either case the belief in God is regarded as fundamental. We shall find that there are "religions" which do not include anything that can be called a belief in God without violence to language. In religion, as in the material world, the nebula preceded the star. At the other end of the scale we shall find systems, such as Confucianism, some forms of Buddhism, and the Ethical Movement, which have discarded the idea of God, yet are described as religious. I am not, therefore, stipulating from the outset that religion necessarily means belief in a God. That controversy is little more than verbal, and we approach one of deep significance. The common and central element of all the systems which we usually call religions—the thread on which they are all strung—is unquestionably the belief in God or gods.

In a sense, indeed, the problem of the existence of God is one of the most fascinating and most impressive in the whole range of living controversy. A glance at the history of mankind shows us the belief growing in definiteness and confidence with the growth of human intelligence. There are lowly peoples which recall a time when the infant mind of man first began to reflect on the strange powers among which he moved; there are peoples which show how he came to imagine spiritual beings moving, shadow-like, through the forest or dwelling on the cloud-capped hill; there are religions in which some of these spirits become definite personalities of prodigious power, and more or less rule the other spirits; and, with the advent of civilisation, one great omnipresent spirit is traced behind the fading forms of gods and goddesses, and philosophy joins with religion in placing the world and man within "the everlasting arms." But the mind of man grows yet larger, and a new and troubled phase opens. There comes a time in every civilisation when men of keen intelligence arise and say that the whole process has been only the development of a myth. So it was in Greece and in Rome; but Greece and Rome took with them their unsolved problems to their imperial tombs. So it was in China, and in that enduring Empire the disbelief became, and still is, general among educated men.

So it is in modern civilisation. No sooner had the intelligence and culture of the race ascended once more to the level at which Greece and Rome had left it than the scepticism returned. A great dramatist, Wagner, depicted, in his *Twilight of the Gods*, the last struggle of the old Teutonic deities to retain the allegiance of men. Behind those powerful and astute figures of gods and goddesses was a greater power, Fate, and even the gods had in time to lay their sceptre at its feet. Wagner was symbolically representing the struggle which he saw commencing in Europe. In increasing numbers men were discarding their allegiance to God.

Imagine a hilly landscape as it is conceived by the man of science. Once it had a common level, and strata were laid thick on it at the bottom of some ancient sea. Then the land is uplifted, and its surface warped and curved into hills and hollows. Then the rains and frosts eat into the overlying strata, and they are worn to thinness or scoured entirely away at the higher levels, but lie as thick as ever in the sheltered valleys. It is thus with the strata of religious belief in our times. There are broad valleys in which they lie as they lay a thousand years ago. There are lesser elevations on which there now rests only the undermost layer of the religious tradition—the belief in God. And there are areas from which the whole deposit of traditional belief has been denuded.

Religion has occupied so central and commanding a position in the life of man for ages that this process of denudation is of great interest, and the supreme issue is whether those who have discarded belief in God have gone beyond the warrant of our knowledge. It is no longer possible to affect to believe that only a few ill-balanced minds question the existence of God. I dislike counting heads, and will assume that every reader is aware how many men of intellectual eminence in the last generation remained in an Agnostic position. It is, however, necessary to correct the very common and very erroneous belief that this position was almost confined to scientific men, who might conceivably have been dazed by their discoveries of the inner working of nature. Careful reflection will discover that the proportion of Agnostics was not much, if any, higher among scientific men than among other leaders or chief representatives of culture—that is to say, men of large, informed, and trained intelligence. Historians, philosophers, literary men, and poets exhibited the same difference of opinion. We are apt to think the poetical mind antithetic to the scientific mind—more human, more attentive to the claims of the heart. What were, or are, the religious views of Swinburne, Meredith, Clough, Morris, Buchanan, Keats, James Thomson, Massey, George Eliot, Hardy, Watson, Phillpotts, and Stephen Phillips? How firm or definite was even the theism of Arnold, or Tennyson, or Browning?

Let us take it, then, that a grave and widespread scepticism exists in regard to the fundamental religious doctrine: a still graver and wider scepticism prevails as to whether God—if there is a God—can be conceived in terms which will still permit the old practices of prayer and worship. Lightly uttered assurances that this scepticism was an outcome of the robust young manhood of the Victorian period, and that our wiser and more balanced generation is outgrowing it, do not impress us. The statement is often made, but the grounds for making it are provokingly concealed. Men of cultural eminence no longer openly exhibit their opinions. Attempts have been made of recent years, by such bodies as the North London Christian Evidence Association, to induce men of distinction to express their opinions on religion. The results have not been published. Where we do have religious writers, such as Mr. Tabrum and Mr. Manly, publishing the results of such inquiries on a smaller scale, we find that the *proportion* of *living* men of distinction who profess definite religious beliefs is small. We must at least conclude that the assurance of a decay of scepticism has no positive foundation.

The causes of this modern scepticism are clear and manifold. There is a scepticism which is inspired by the spectacle of so great a difference of opinion among those who have more leisure and more competence to examine the question. It has become an "open question," and many men turn from it to more pressing problems. They cannot easily understand the refined and philosophical theism, or Pantheism, of men like Browning and Tennyson, Carlyle and Arnold, and so many scientists and philosophers of our time. They find few eminent men professing a plain belief in the God of the Churches and the schools, and they shrug their shoulders at what seems to be an academic struggle.

This scepticism is encouraged by the attitude now frequently taken by apologists for the belief. The older and easily understood arguments for the existence of God are described as worthless, as we shall see. Men are told that the beauty and order of the universe prove nothing beyond themselves; that the universality of belief in God is not supported by modern inquiries into lower religions, and ought not to weigh with us if it were; that no theistic conclusion can be drawn from conscience, or the feeling of moral constraint. It is now frequently stated that "demonstrations" are not available, and the criterion or test of truth is so far altered that the plain man is inextricably confused. What he does perceive is that to *him* arguments are purveyed which able religious thinkers denounce as radically unsound, while the considerations on which these thinkers themselves rely are unintelligible to him. In brief, he concludes that, as the heavens no longer reflect the glory of God, he will see what he can make of earth.

For the more thoughtful man, or the man or woman with leisure to read, these points are reinforced by two considerations. The first is that this evolution of belief in God shakes one's confidence in arguments. You tell him how Socrates and Plato, Kant and Caird, Carlyle and Browning, Faraday and Kelvin, believed in God, and then confess that they did so on inadequate or fallacious grounds. You tell him that the belief grew up at a time when men's knowledge of the universe was very scanty, and even that the belief grew out of the scantiness of knowledge. Men knew nothing of the hidden energies of nature, and so ascribed its common movements to God. Then came philosophers, who said that the common movements were due to natural forces; it was certain special features—order, beauty, moral feeling—which disclosed the finger of God. Now we have other philosophers who say that the earlier philosophers were wrong, and we have to get to "the heart of reality," or consult our spiritual feelings, rather than infer from the visible features of the universe. We naturally feel diffident about the whole question.

And this diffidence increases when we carefully study the reasons for the apologetic changes. Sir Isaac Newton and Lord Bacon dogmatically say that the order and beauty of nature testify to the

Creator, and the "atheist" is a fool. Kant and Newman see that science is proceeding fast with its interpretation of this order and beauty, and they tell men not to build on it; the phenomena of conscience are, they say, the only firm ground of theistic conviction. But the moment a science of morality is established, or philosophers and sociologists begin a critical study of conscience, we are told that the ground is unsafe. Perhaps the ground you ask us to occupy to-day will be found unsafe to-morrow. Moreover, we do not like the present distribution of arguments, so to say. Among people who are not well acquainted with natural science you still talk of the order and beauty of the universe. To a more cultivated class of men and women you offer the argument from conscience. And to university and divinity students, and others of broad education, you suggest that truth is merely the kind of belief which consoles and inspires us, or that certain abstruse metaphysical considerations point in the direction of theism.

The problem is thus seen to be in a condition of great confusion, and it is not surprising that many turn away with the remark that it is life, not creed, which matters. Very true; but the creed is none the less interesting, and the question of the existence of God remains the most transcendently important of all the religious problems of our time. It is therefore singular that so little is written about it. One will, of course, find chapters on the subject in most works of general apologetics, and a few treatises have been written about it. But it would be difficult to name a recent volume in which the various phases of theistic belief and their arguments are recorded and examined in a plain and convenient form. In fact, fundamental as the question is, there are few books in the English language on the existence of God, to speak of available literature. I therefore propose to write one. A large volume would be needed to describe every shade of theism and every argument in support of it. We shall, however, find it possible to discuss the great question usefully within the limits of this work by attempting to deal fully only with existing beliefs and current arguments.

The confusion or profusion of arguments and beliefs of which I have spoken need not intimidate us for a moment. There are a few permanent or cardinal arguments for theism which do not change substantially in each generation. These will receive full attention. Then more novel and more recent considerations will be discussed, and finally the positions of the most advanced religious thinkers will be described and criticised.

In this proposal will be found the answer to a question which will rise at once to the lips of many readers: Which God do you intend to discuss? The Pantheon, or collection of deities, at Rome did not include more than a fraction of the strange forms in which men conceived God two thousand years ago. Beyond these definite idols of Carthage and Greece, Egypt and Syria, were the animal-gods, the fetiches, the sacred stones and trees, the shapeless powers, of lower peoples. But the notion that this bewildering polytheism has given way to one higher and common conception of deity is far from accurate. How many gods are housed to-day in such a city as London? In some chapels the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the deity who knew jealousy and anger, who could select one small tribe out of the whole of humanity for his favours and assist it to exterminate or enslave others, is still honoured. The majority of Christians, we will suppose, would regard this as a crude anthropomorphic dream of the early Hebrews, and confine themselves to the God of the later Jews and of the New Testament. Yet this implies that a deity conceived as the very embodiment of justice could condemn incalculable millions for the sin of two human beings; that a bloody sacrifice was needed to appease the divine anger at that transgression; that this atonement could be made vicariously by one who was innocent; and that, by an incomprehensible process, God finally atoned to himself for the sins of men. Moral sentiment, no less than reason, rebels, and a new conception of God is evolved—the God who loves all mankind, has no eternal fires for the frail, and gave men an example in Christ only from excess of love.

Still the changes are not exhausted. These more advanced Christian congregations have hymns and prayers, places and ministers of worship, propitiation services. Have they really stripped God of the human attributes that man had ascribed to him? Is not their conception still, in essence, the figure of some old-world oriental monarch, delighting in incense and bowed heads? "A venerable old man with an inordinate lust for propitiation and praise," Mr. H. G. Wells disdainfully says. Or, as William Watson more finely puts it:—

A God like some imperious king,
  Wroth, were his realm not duly awed;
A God for ever hearkening
  Unto his self-commanded laud;

. . . . .

A God whose ghost, in arch and aisle,
  Yet haunts his temple—and his tomb
But follows in a little while
  Odin and Zeus to equal doom;
A God of kindred seed and line;
Man's giant shadow, hailed divine.

There is still a revolt of fine feeling, not merely of the puzzled intellect, and large numbers echo the further words of the poet:—

Myself am scarce so small that I
  Should bow to Deity like this!
This my Begetter? This was what
Man in his violent youth begot.

And so there is an exodus from the "places of worship," and men and women set up more refined conceptions of deity in the shrines of their own consciences. The enormous decay of church-going in our cities does not mean only a growth of indifference or Agnosticism. It means also that many are too religious to go to "places of worship." They remember that Christ urged worship "in spirit and in truth."

But we are not yet at the end of the new Pantheon. Among these refined theists, who have discarded revelation and priests and worship, another disturbing consideration arises. In protest against the cruelty attributed to God in the Churches they have glorified his love and tenderness. God is an infinite Francis of Assisi or Ralph Waldo Emerson. But would an Emerson, endowed with infinite power, have produced humanity by the long and sanguinary process by which we know man was evolved? Would such a God leave men to struggle, as they do, towards a better earth, trampling, in the meantime, on the millions of bodies of the weak? The shades gather again about the clear conception of God; there must be another surrender. God is impersonal, and we must refrain from giving him even such human qualities as love and tenderness: God is not omnipotent, but is working for good to the extent of his power; God is not distinct from the universe, and cannot play with the stars and planets as a child does with balls; God is the unknown and unknowable Power which animates the dead frame of things. These are conceptions of God held widely in our time by thoughtful men and women. Personality is surrendered, and God becomes a "tendency-not-ourselves," the Absolute of the philosopher, a divine energy—an abstraction.

This great variety of opinions can be met. In the first place, we have nothing to do here with the qualities of the Jehovah of the Old Testament, or the doctrine of atonement, or the practices of prayer and worship. We may return in the end to these considerations, but for the moment we need only regard the element which is common to all forms of personal theism. If we find the evidence for the existence of an infinite being, endowed with mind and love, unsatisfactory, it will not be important to examine more closely the qualities ascribed to him. Other volumes in this series will deal with the Old and the New Testament, and the worth of the ideas of God derived from them. We are concerned with the common element of all systems of worship, and of the beliefs of most of the theists who do not worship; the existence of an infinite and intelligent God, personally and substantially distinct from man and the universe.

The more advanced theist is apt to be impatient of a serious discussion of this theme. His impatience is wholly unjustified. This is the belief of millions of people in England and every other civilised country. This is the doctrine regarded as fundamental in nearly every church and chapel, and included in nearly every national scheme of education. It merits the most serious and respectful attention. As yet impersonal theism is confined to a comparatively few cultivated people. The question of the existence of God is not a question of *their* belief, but of the creed of the millions. When, however, we have examined all the evidence that is offered to us for the belief in a personal God—the phrase will be more closely examined later—we shall consider the pleas of more advanced theists. It would, therefore, be merely pedantic to linger here in determining what we mean by God. We shall deal with every form of theism.

It is, however, advisable to premise a short sketch of the evolution of the belief in God. We may recognise that our age might conceivably find valid ground for the belief, although all past ages had held it on invalid grounds. This historical study is none the less important. Hardly any subject is now studied without some attention to its evolutionary aspect. We do not fully understand ideas or institutions until we see them grow. This is particularly true of the belief in God. We find it so widespread that it seems at first sight to be the spontaneous expression of human reason in face of the cosmos, or the dictate of some universal religious instinct. This superficial estimate is corrected when we find that the belief is imposed on us by one of the oldest of human traditions, enforced by myriads of priestly organisations, and when we at last dimly trace the idea taking shape in the child-like minds of early men.

CHAPTER II.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE BELIEF

UNTIL the eighteenth century it was generally held that God had himself revealed his existence to the whole human race in very early times. All tribes and peoples were descended from Adam and Eve, later from Noah and his family, and had preserved in some form a knowledge of the great Power that had dealt with their fathers. The tradition degenerated into a thousand grotesque forms, as they sank to savagery, but amid all their idols and fetiches and witchcraft they retained the fundamental idea of a superhuman power or powers. All the earlier empires had recognised gods, and all the peoples with which missionaries or travellers came in contact had their gods. Even the early Deists, who assailed Christianity and rejected the legends of Adam and Noah, retained the belief in a primitive revelation.

In the eighteenth century more radical scepticism began, and it was claimed that there were tribes without any belief in gods, or without religion. In the nineteenth century a much wider and more accurate knowledge of primitive peoples was obtained, and many ethnologists confidently stated that there were peoples without religious ideas and practices. This led to a spirited controversy. It had long been the custom to claim that the universality of the belief in God ranked as an argument in favour of his existence. If the earlier revelation were not admitted, it would have to be granted that human reason was fundamentally and universally fallacious in drawing that conclusion. Error, it was said, is local, occasional; if the reason of the whole race agrees upon a certain point, we must consider that reason is working normally and discovering a truth.

This argument is little used to-day, but since the basis of it concerns us here, a few words should be said about it. Error may certainly be universal until a certain stage of culture is reached. Once, undoubtedly, the belief that the sun circled round the earth, or moved across the sky, was universal. Numbers of errors in the interpretation of nature were universal until science corrected them, in civilised nations, in the nineteenth century. Moreover, this argument was seriously disturbed by the growth of scepticism precisely where reason was most cultivated. It was learned that when China reached a certain stage of culture, its educated men rejected the belief in God or gods as a popular fallacy. Whatever concessions Kung-fu-tse made in order to avert prejudice—in a phrase which is now familiar he bade his followers "respect spiritual beings and keep aloof from them"—the Chinese educated class is, and has been for ages, Agnostic. The same thing is happening in Europe. The cultivated class is outgrowing religion. It is therefore futile to speak of religion as a genuine and universal pronouncement of reason when religion becomes weaker as reason becomes stronger, if we look to races rather than individuals.

Most religious teachers now recognise that the discovery of idols and fetiches among savages hardly confirms their own belief in God. The main point is, however, that the increase of our knowledge of primitive peoples has made an end of the argument altogether. Whether there are or are not peoples who are without religion (as Lord Avebury and others have said) does not so much concern us. We are now fully acquainted with peoples who cannot in any sense be said to believe in God (or gods), whether or no we speak of their beliefs or practices as "religion." The point is so largely obscured by verbal controversy that we must make it quite clear.

In Professor M. Jastrow's work, *The Study of Religion* (1901), a recent and impartial summary of research, the reader will find that there is no agreement whatever as to the definition of religion. It was formerly held to be "the worship of God" (or gods), but all authorities now recognise that, if we retain this idea of religion, we must refuse that title to the beliefs or practices of large numbers of peoples. They have no gods, and they worship nothing. Travellers have read European ideas into their dim minds, and in places have mistaken ideas implanted by missionaries for native ideas. When, for instance, we read edifying declarations of Red Indians placing a "great father" or "great spirit" in the heavens, we have only to recall that the highest native development of the Amerind mind—in the civilisations of Mexico and Peru—knew nothing of such a being. Mexican religion was polytheistic and barbaric; and Peru, though more refined, knew nothing of a spiritual monotheism. The less advanced Indians of the North are hardly likely to have gone so far beyond their civilised cousins; and, on the other hand, missionaries have been among them for three hundred years. Mr. O. T. Mason, one of the best authorities (*Encyc. Brit.*, article "America"), emphatically refuses such a belief to the American aboriginals. Again, when the very lowly Tasmanians are reported as believing that after death they pass to an island "beyond the sea" and become white men, we are quite clear that here there is no native tradition. They most certainly knew nothing of white men until the Dutch and English reached Tasmania.

It is very difficult to-day to find a tribe in its quite primitive culture, and the first observers were careless and unscientific. We do, however, still find peoples with no recognition of anything that can by any stretch of language be called a God. Most authorities will still declare that there is no people without "religion," but that is because the idea of worshipping a God (or gods) has been omitted from the definition of religion precisely in order to include these peoples. Professor Jastrow, after examining a considerable number of definitions, declares religion to be "the natural belief in a Power or Powers beyond our control, and upon which we feel ourselves dependent."[1] With this definition (except for the unwarranted use of the capital letters) we need not quarrel. The Agnostic recognises a power beyond his control on which he depends, and it would be difficult to show that some of the most primitive peoples recognise more than he does in that respect

[1] *The Study of Religion*, p. 171.

Instead, however, of confusing ourselves with hair-splitting authorities, let us examine the religious phenomena of a few primitive peoples. It must be said that ethnology has not as yet arranged its material in such a way that the evolution of religion and morals can be fairly traced. The ideal scheme would be to classify peoples according to their level of culture, and then see how their religious ideas are graduated. This is, naturally, difficult; but some approach to it is absolutely necessary in dealing with religious phenomena. Tribes at all stages of development are quoted as showing the ideas of primitive man, and most contradictory estimates are made. The Australian blacks are still commonly quoted as among the lowest specimens of humanity known to us, in spite of the fact that their bows and arrows and boomerangs, their shields and spears, their tribal arrangements and complicated marriages, their totems and legends and very numerous ceremonies, put them far above the level of really primitive man. It is possible to define certain stages in culture, and the fragments of humanity should be arranged in these stages when we seek to trace the evolution of religion from contemporary savage ideas. Thus, prehistoric science shows the following development of material culture in early humanity:—

1. Stones so slightly chipped and shaped that the human touches are almost unrecognisable.
2. Stone implements plainly chipped and shaped to be held in the hand.
3. A greater variety of stone implements, more finely worked.
4. Stone and bone implements, hafted weapons, clothing, art, and cave dwellings.

5. Polished implements, bows and arrows, pottery.

6. Primitive agriculture, weaving, house-building, stone monuments, tame animals, boats.

7. The forging of metal.

Other tests (language, tribal organisation, etc.) might be added, and we could obtain a better knowledge of the way to arrange primitive peoples in the order of human development.

It is recognised that these tests enable us to describe certain peoples as really primitive. Their material culture is simple, their language concrete, and they have no tribal organisation. It is further recognised that the aboriginals of Tasmania were one of the most primitive of all branches of the human race, and we may turn to them with interest in connection with our subject.

The Tasmanians died out (half a century ago) before scientific inquiry into the primitive mind was properly organised, and we have the usual conflicting opinions of careless or prejudiced travellers about their religious beliefs. These opinions are collected in H. Ling Roth's valuable work, *The Aborigines of Tasmania* (1899), and should be examined by the interested student. The author shows how very reckless and unreliable many of the older statements are. Some have attributed to the Tasmanians the opinions of the much higher aboriginals of Australia; some have regarded as native elements ideas which were clearly imported; and some have made merely superficial guesses at their meaning, or the meaning of their practices. It is, at all events, clear that they have no ceremonies of worship and no idols, but that they believe in the existence of spirits, especially malignant spirits, and have magical dances and chants for the purpose of warding off evil influences. It is, in other words, clear that they have no gods, and the statements of the best observers do not necessarily imply a belief in personal spirits. We have, therefore, what is now called religion—a mixture of animism and magic, and possibly a belief in survival after death—without any approach to the idea of gods.

When we pass from Tasmania to Australia we have, as I said, to deal with a more developed people. The Australians have a less strictly concrete language than the Tasmanians, besides the institutions I have mentioned. We are therefore prepared to find religious ideas or practices more developed. Yet they are still so primitive that competent authorities (with some of whom I discussed the question in Australia) deny the existence of religion altogether. Let us look at the facts ourselves. In Spencer and Gillen's *Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899) we have one of the most authoritative studies of the tribes of the interior, which are less likely to have been affected by foreign influence. They show that there is a very definite belief in spirits and in survival after death. Every man has a spirit-part, which survives the body, and may be associated with a particular spot, or even re-incarnated. The world of the black teems with spirits, and magic is very common. The medicine-man is practically a wizard, because an obscure disease is attributed to a hostile spirit. There are other gifted men, besides the medicine-men, who are believed to have the power of communicating with the spirits. The blacks also cherish sacred pieces of wood which have been associated with the spirits, when they were in the flesh, and they have a great regard for the spirits of the legendary ancestors of the tribes.

The nearest approach to "gods," therefore, among these central and isolated tribes are the ancestral heroes, whose spirits are regarded as of greater power than the ordinary spirits; the blacks also seem to recognise vague impersonal spirit-agencies in nature, and some of them think that the sun and moon were once spirits. In other words, we have here a religious tendency in the direction of the making of gods, but no gods. Spencer and Gillen do not recognise religion at all in these or other Australian tribes. Mr. Howitt, another high authority, who has studied the South Australian aborigines (*Native Tribes of South-East Australia*), says that he found no religion among them (though they may speak of an "all-father"), and doubts if any of the Australian tribes have any religion.

The inquirer will therefore be puzzled to find an authority like Dr. Jevons speaking repeatedly and confidently of "Australian gods." In his *Idea of God in Early Religions* he says that the Australian myths contain the names of gods which were once worshipped by the natives, though they are worshipped no longer; and he concludes that in Australia we have religion in process of decay, not in process of development. He further says that we recognise "worship" in certain "first-fruit" offerings at fixed seasons. It is not irrelevant to observe that Dr. Jevons seems, for religious reasons, eager to find gods everywhere, and largely follows Mr. A. Lang in describing charms or magic as decayed religious practices rather than early stages.

However, his evidence in this case is entirely unsatisfactory. With regard to the "first-fruit ceremonies," it is enough to say that he has himself remarked, a few pages before, that there is "no satisfactory evidence" that these offerings are made to a god, or to a totem regarded as a god. On the other hand, the supposed names of "gods" in the legends are generally regarded as the names of ancestors. The Dieri of South-East Australia are quoted by him[1] as calling upon the rain-making Mura-muras for rain in time of drought. He himself remarks that these "seem to be ancestral spirits." On the other hand, the Euahlayi of New South Wales implore Baiame to give them long life, and he claims that this is a prayer to a god. This Baiame is generally conceived by the blacks as a very large old man who is lying asleep somewhere in the sand and will one day awake and swallow the earth. Probably enough Baiame is one of the real or legendary ancestors whose memory is preserved by the blacks, and whose spirits are usually considered to have great power. His features are hardly god-like.

Now, whether we say or refuse to say that the Australian aboriginals have gods is a verbal matter. They believe in spirits, and think that some of these spirits are more powerful than others, and can influence their lives. The most reasonable statement of their position seems to be that they admirably illustrate a preliminary stage in the development of gods. The Tasmanians believed in spirits, but certainly not in gods: the intellectually higher Australian is giving prominence to some of these spirits, and we have ample evidence (in higher tribes) that that is at least one of the ways in which gods are made. Beyond this even the Australians do not go. In a recent work (*La Religion des Primitifs*, 1909) Mgr. A. Le Roy represents them as venerating a Supreme Being who created the world. This is merely an example (the book abounds with them) of a "will to believe," and consequent carelessness as to authorities.

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[1] *An Introduction to the Study of Comparative Religion*, 1908.

Returning for a moment to the lower stage, we find that peoples below the tribal level (the really lowest peoples) are in the same condition as the Tasmanians. Dr. Jevons quotes from Fitzroy the statement that the Yahgans of Tierra del Fuego believe that there is a "big man in the woods" who will punish their misdeeds. This sounds like a savage echo of missionary teaching; other authorities (*Encyc. Brit.*) say curtly that "they have no gods." The wild Veddahs of Ceylon, another of these lowest peoples, believe in demons and spirits, apparently the spirits of the dead, and exorcise them with crude dances and songs; they have no gods. The Bushmen, who are usually put in the same class, though they are more intelligent and have a rich (non-religious) mythology, are in the same condition. They believe in spirits, good and evil, and wear amulets to hold them aloof. They add stones to the heaps on graves, in the belief that otherwise the spirits will injure them. They believe, apparently, in survival after death, but they have no special powers (to say nothing of a Supreme Power) that we might call gods.

These facts about the beliefs or practices of very lowly peoples will, it is hoped, be more useful than a citation of conflicting authorities. They show us religion in the making, and most people will admit that it does not yet include a belief in God (or gods). It is difficult to see that the point has more than a faint academic interest, and that any man's belief can be either troubled or confirmed by the issue of this inquiry into the notions of savages. However, we cannot in so small a volume as this ascend the whole scale of savage beliefs, and I must be content to say how the authorities on the subject now conceive the evolution of religion and of the belief in God. What earlier development led to the frame of mind of the Tasmanian or the Veddah? And what was the later course of this primitive religion until it appears as the monotheism of modern Europe?

There is by no means an agreement among the authorities as to the evolution of early religion, and, since the point is not of essential interest to my subject, I will not labour it. Three chief theories have occupied attention until recent years. The first is the theory of Max Müller, who held that a "disease of language," or a degeneration and perversion of more ancient names of natural objects, led to the deification of the powers of nature. So the sun and moon, the sky and earth, came to have divine attributes in such religions as the Hindu and Chinese. It is generally admitted that this theory may throw light on the origin of many myths, but it is by no means a general account of the development of religion. Then there is the view of Herbert Spencer, adopted and modified by Grant Allen, that theism began by the deification of ancestral spirits. It is clear that many gods were deified men, and Grant Allen (*Evolution of the Idea of God*) gives many interesting examples of the process. But his examples are taken without regard to the degree of culture of the tribes, and it is generally recognised that he has emphasised only one element in the making of gods. Mr. Tylor then advanced the theory that religion began by man conceiving the more energetic elements of nature (rivers, storms, sun, etc.) to be animated, and that, as he advanced in intelligence, he assumed that this animation was due to powerful spirits or gods ruling the various departments of his world.

This theory of Animism is generally recognised to be a sound description of a very widespread stage in the evolution of religion, but there are more recent views. The opinion of Mr. A. Lang, that religion was at first monotheistic and degenerated into polytheism, is regarded as paradoxical and devoid of evidence. Mr. J. G. Frazer (*The Golden Bough*, etc.) believes that the first stage was the practice of magic. Man felt himself surrounded by hostile influences, and invented practical schemes for controlling or intimidating them. There is at present a growing tendency to believe that neither animism, nor magic, nor care for ancestors is the first stage, but that all three arise out of an earlier and vaguer phase of the primitive mind. Combining or adjusting the ideas of some of these more recent students, we get something like the following conception of the evolution of religion.[1]

It is essential, though very difficult, to try to look at nature with the low intelligence of a savage—of some being far below the mental level of a Veddah. His power of reasoning would be very feeble, and almost confined to practical uses. It is probable that the ordinary movements of nature would make no more impression on him than on animals. We must beware of taking the child as analogous to the savage, because of its very different environment; and, in any case, we cannot say at what age the child passes through the corresponding phase of mental development.[1] But the extraordinary movements and hostile influences of nature would make a more stimulating impression on primitive man's mind. The eclipse would make him notice the sun or moon as he had never done before. The river at flood and in a mood of devastation would concern him. The outburst of vegetation in the spring and its withering in a drought would be of practical interest. So with the ravages of fire, thunder, or disease. He would *feel* or *sense* certain important influences in his environment.

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[1] **For a fuller study see Mr. Edward Clodd's work in this series.**

We must remember that, when we speak of forces or influences or spirits, we are using a power of abstraction which he had not. These things which impressed him were concrete things. Even the Tasmanian had no abstract ideas, apparently, and there must have been more primitive stages. As a people advanced in intelligence, and individuals of finer brain appeared at times, a crude degree of speculation on these phenomena would begin. It is difficult to think that the practice of magic came first; the practice must have been based on some sort of theory (in the savage sense), or some low degree of reasoning. There is something hostile to him in his surroundings. It is useless to ask if it is personal or impersonal, one or many; the distinctions belong to us, not to the primitive mind. This mysterious, powerful, frequently hostile something, which we moderns have no word to express, must be bullied or intimidated, appeased or enslaved. He begins his magical practices, his exorcising chants and dances, and all the rest. He does not reason that the river and wind and fire are animated; he acts as if they were, at first, and later comes to think it.

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[1] A word may be said on the supposed spontaneous development of religion in children. Men like Cardinal Newman, who urges this, have had little opportunity for real observation. Let the child grow up in a non-religious environment, and there is not the least tendency of that kind. My own observation of such cases is supported by the experience of others. The child never speculates in the way primitive man is supposed to have done, and it regards religious ideas, when they are impartially mentioned, as strange and strained.

Meanwhile he is unconsciously developing a belief which will blend with his animism—the belief that he lives on, in some way, when his body is buried. The prevalence of this belief at the lowest levels of culture, and the very early practice of burying the dead (as prehistoric science teaches), suggest that the idea of survival is very primitive. And, strange as this may seem, it is quite natural. It is death, not continuance of life, which puzzles the savage. At length he discovers a clue to the mystery. The sleeping man breathes, but the man who is not going to awake does not breathe. The breath, which is invisible, leaves the body and survives somewhere, perhaps to plague its enemies. Even in civilised tongues the spirit is the breath (*psuche, spiritus, etc.*). He feels his ancestors living somewhere about him, puts food for them, cares for their remains (in case they wish to come back), or, in cases, buries them deep or chops them up to prevent them from doing evil. When he has got so far as to conceive the "spirit" as a separate thing, he burns the body.

These three tendencies — animism, magic, and belief in human survival—appear, as far as the evidence goes, to have developed together and in co-operation. Magic or incantation becomes an important practical science, and the wizard a power. Ancestor-worship in its first form, ministering to the dead, becomes common. The elements of nature are animated, as his own body is, and the vague *mana* or ill-defined power of the earlier stage crystallises into so many definite invisible powers, guiding the sun and moon (small bodies to him), the rivers and winds, the vegetation and the intangible things which affect his health and prosperity. Every phase of this is exemplified in savage religions or early sacred books. It is in the development of this stage—or stages, since these elements are not equally developed everywhere—that he begins to have what we may call gods.

The peoples I described had no gods, but we can easily conceive gods arising in the further evolution of their beliefs. In the Australians, especially, we see how the spirits of leaders or other strong men survive in legends, and are regarded as particularly powerful. Grant Allen shows this regard turning into practical deification among the African tribes. It is only a question of degree with the savage, who knows nothing of infinity; and therefore it is impossible to say that gods begin at any precise stage. In other peoples it is the animistic element which leads to the making of gods. The spirits or powers which rule the flood and the storm, the fiery or the beneficent sun, the hail and the growth of vegetation, must not only be much more powerful than men, but it begins to be important even to exaggerate their size and power. They must be flattered and coaxed. Magic—a childish attempt at compulsion—gives place to sacrifices and ceremonies: the wizard is replaced by the priest (often the chief). The sun and moon and earth become, like the spirits of powerful dead chiefs or monarchs, objects of worship, praise, and supplication. We see this clearly in the early religion of the Vedas, of the Chinese, of the Babylonians, and others. In other cases we find ancestors deified. The Pantheon of the earth begins to fill.

Some would distinguish a phase of polydæmonism before polytheism, and no doubt these influences in nature at first chiefly interested man by their hostility. However, the next step is to evolve monotheism out of polytheism. As Professor Jastrow says, the idea that the change was suddenly introduced by one particular nation (the Hebrews) is inaccurate. "The monotheistic tendency," he says, "exists among all peoples after they have reached a certain level of culture. There is a difference in the degree in which this tendency is emphasised, but whether we turn to Babylonia, Egypt, India, China, or Greece, there are distinct traces of a trend towards concentrating the varied manifestations of divine powers in a single source."[1] We have only to think of the Babylonian Marduk, the Egyptian Osiris, the Greek Zeus, and the Roman Jupiter. Nationalist feeling would enhance the pride in some glorified ancestor, or more popular cult, and when the nation subdued others their gods would bow to the conquering deity. Marduk was a very local god at first, but the expansion of Babylon expanded him. So it was with Jehovah. There is, perhaps, some truth in the story of the conquest of (a small part of) Palestine by this Semitic tribe from the deserts, and we can imagine the glorification of its deity after the conquest.

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[1] *The Study of Religion*, p. 76.

Here, however, we step upon very unsafe ground. In a later volume of this series Mr. Chilperic Edwards will deal with the Old Testament, and show how little we can tell of the Hebrews before the eighth century. There are, no doubt, fragments of much earlier history in the Old Testament, but they have been so edited, altered, and pieced together at a time when the Jews were under Persian influence (the fifth and fourth centuries) that we cannot trace the evolution of the Hebrew religion with any confidence. A century of investigation has, however, led to certain conclusions which are generally accepted, and the discovery of some interesting papyri relating to a colony of Jews in Egypt in the Persian period confirms these conclusions. The whole story of a sojourn in Egypt (of which Egyptologists find no trace) and wandering in the desert is regarded as late fiction; the reformation under Josiah (624 B.C.) was the first attempt to displace the prevailing polytheism by the single cult of Jahveh; the effort was frustrated by the Babylonian conquest and captivity, and it was under Persian influence that the single cult of Jahveh was finally established.

The Old Testament, in which old and new, fact and fiction, are roughly blended into a singular mosaic, plainly describes the earlier polytheism. There are other gods than Jahveh, and the Hebrews worship them; but the priests of Jahveh press unceasingly the claims of their god. At length they invent the story of Moses and the deliverance and covenant. Whether they imposed monotheism in their own sacerdotal interest, as some think, or were convinced of the moral and national advantage of having a single deity, as others think, does not concern us. What we perceive is the gradual aggrandisement of one local god at the cost of others. The priests of Marduk at Babylon would afford them an example. The Persian religion, on the other hand, was in a sense an ethical monotheism centuries before. It recognised two supreme principles—one of good and one of evil, and it was not an arduous step to retain the supreme principle of light and goodness and leave the evil of the universe to a crowd of demons.

The important feature in the Hebrew development is, as Professor Jastrow says, not the setting up of the cult of one god, but the investing of that god with the attributes of moral ruler. In this the Hebrews had illustrious teachers in Egypt, Persia, and Mesopotamia. Modern research has taught us to appreciate the high moral standards and literature of the older civilisations, and has shown how the Babylonian culture influenced the Hebrews. The finding of the code of laws of King Hammurabi (about 2000 B.C.) has not only revealed a highly moral civilisation, but the precise source of much of the "Mosaic" legislation. In brief, the Hebrews were a small and spirited polytheistic people of Syria, entirely unnoticed by the great civilisations of the time, until the eighth century. Then the cult of Jahveh, the native deity of the Hebrews, is energetically asserted, the adopted deities are denounced as "false" or inferior to

Jahveh, and the prophets invest the deity with moral attributes, as the priests of Egypt had ages before invested Osiris, and the Babylonian priests Marduk, and the Persian priests Ormuzd. The people resist the innovation and cling to their polytheism, and the prophets thunder in vain. Then the Babylonian conquest shatters the little people, and a strong and ambitious priesthood, formed under Babylonian and Persian influence and empowered by the Persian rulers, makes a drastic clearance of "false gods" and sets up the exclusive cult of Jahveh. The Old Testament is then written in such a way as to represent Jahveh as the all-powerful patron of Israel from time immemorial. The opposition is fiercely crushed, and, as the increasing disasters of the Jews scatter them over the civilised world, they bear with them the book which tells of Jahveh, the one God, the creator of the world, the moral legislator.

Thus political accidents enabled the Hebrew priests to crown the monotheistic tendency which was found in the whole religious world of their time. It was, apparently, by no course of philosophic reasoning or religious intuition that they attained monotheism, and the legend of messages to Abraham and Moses is now cherished only by the uneducated. There was no more moral or religious "genius" in Judæa than in Egypt, Babylonia, or Persia, which we now know more fully than they were known in the days of Matthew Arnold. But the Hebrews were a small people, a few thousand strong, occupying a single town and its district, and the priests of Jahveh were not checked by rival priesthoods as were the priests of Marduk, etc. They made their cult exclusive by means of persecution. Meantime, however, the philosophers of new civilisations had reached monotheism by more refined and disinterested methods. Christianity was to combine their speculations with the monotheism of the Jews and become a world-religion. We must therefore turn to the philosophers, and see on what grounds they sustained the essential belief of the popular religions they despised.

CHAPTER III.

GOD IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

WE may feel only a remote and speculative interest in the religious beliefs of savages, or even in the creeds which early civilisations have inherited from their barbaric ancestors; but we must regard with more respect the convictions of those men of high intelligence whom we call philosophers. In the earlier times they were always laymen, and were therefore not restricted by the traditions of the sacerdotal caste. Their sole aim was to attain "wisdom"—to learn the truth in regard to man and the universe. The sole instrument of investigation was human reason disciplined by a profound study of its own laws and its irregularities. The convictions of these men must have weight with us. We are, of course, investigating a question in which authority has no value; no man or woman can be deeply convinced of the existence of God because abler men are convinced of it. We must, moreover, remember that, whether in ancient Greece or medieval Europe, the earlier philosophers were not free entirely to express their conclusions. It is a significant circumstance that the negative attitude has increased among philosophers with the growth of liberty. Yet it is of profound interest to learn what the philosophers of twenty centuries have thought of God, and on what grounds they adhered to the essence of the popular belief.

Omitting the unimpressive speculations of early Hindu sages and the teaching of Lao-Tse and Kung-Fu-Tse, who seem to have rather pushed the question of gods aside as of no practical moment, we find a grave and interesting pre-occupation with the question in the first European civilisation. The conditions of the early Greeks permitted or stimulated the spirit of speculation more than we find in the older civilisations. In the cities of Asia Minor, especially, where Babylonian, Egyptian, and Persian culture met, independent thinkers arose soon after the establishment of Greek civilisation, and the religious traditions of the race were disregarded. This first school, or first series, of Greek thinkers was chiefly occupied with the interpretation of nature, and seems not to have deduced the existence of any supreme spiritual power. They worked out crude evolutionary conceptions of the origin of the world (from water, air, fire, earth, or atoms) which excluded the action of gods. One of them, Anaximander, included the gods themselves as products of evolution; but the reference to gods seems to have been rather a concession to popular belief. The later and abler thinkers of this school, the famous "atomists" Leucippus and Democritus, were clearly materialists.

It is interesting to find that this searching of nature did not lead to any profound or sincere theism. To these men gods were a popular superstition, to which they could lend no support in any shape. One of the most distinguished of them, Heraclitus, expressly denied that the world had been made by a god. In the sixth century, however, there was a remarkable religious revival in the Greek world, and many of its thinkers were influenced. The followers of the mystical Pythagoras, in particular, resented the earlier materialism and cultivated an intense spiritualism. There were now conflicting schools, representing positions which are familiar to us to-day. Materialism survived in Leucippus and Democritus; Empedocles, who derived all from fire, conceived a spiritual or very refined Supreme Being (much as the Persians did) crowning the universe; while others (Xenophanes, etc.) advocated Pantheism, or the identity of God and the world. Anaxagoras, on the other hand, held that a material "mind" was diffused through the universe (with which we might remotely compare Professor Clifford's theory of "mind-stuff"), while a purely Agnostic school, setting strict limit to the power of the human intelligence, had very able representatives.

We cannot, and need not, linger over these early philosophers. Very little of their teaching has survived in the works of later writers, and it is as a rule not stated sympathetically, and perhaps not accurately. It is clear only that, after two hundred years of philosophic investigation, the thinkers of Greece were divided in opinion, on the theistic issue, much as modern thinkers are divided. Then that brilliant triad, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, appeared at Athens, and with their speculations humanity will ever be interested.

As is known, we have no writings of Socrates, and learn his ideas, somewhat unsatisfactorily, from the works of Plato and Xenophon.[1] It seems that the order or purposiveness of natural objects impressed him, and he based his theism on what is now known as "the argument of design." He concluded that there was a supreme mind, or spiritual power; though he contrived to blend the gods of the popular mythology with his higher creed. It is, however, more profitable to examine the opinions of Plato and Aristotle, whose works we have to-day.

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[1] An excellent primer of philosophy for the inexpert is A. W. Benn's two little volumes on *Ancient* and *Modern Philosophy* (1s. net each: Watts & Co.)

Socrates had endeavoured to divert thought from the study of nature to the study of man. His aim was practical—the placing of moral law on an unshakable foundation—and even Plato was far more practical in his aims than is often supposed. But the very diversion of the mind from atoms and stars to ideas and sentiments was fatal to the older materialism. The mind and heart of man seemed to stand in complete antithesis to the material universe, and the "spirit" of religious tradition seemed to be the best expression of their nature. It must be borne in mind that these early thinkers had no inkling of the facts we now know in regard to the evolution of mind and its minute dependence on the body.[1] Even Aristotle, who knew all the scientific lore of his time, believed that the brain was an apparatus for cooling the blood, not the organ of mind. Matter and spirit were thus divided by a wide gulf, and, since spirit (*i.e.*, mind) was immeasurably the greatest thing known to man, Plato's philosophy assumed a preponderantly spiritual complexion.

His idea of God cannot be understood apart from his general theory of reality. Whether or no we may still be impressed by Plato's arguments for personal immortality, it is hardly conceivable that the grounds of his theism should appeal to any in our time. He certainly lifted the conception of God to the greatest height to which it can be raised. What were the noblest and most inspiring things that entered man's experience? Truth, beauty, and goodness: faint rays of light struggling with the darkness of the material universe. In Plato's view these rays came from a distant star. God was the infinite and purely spiritual embodiment of truth, beauty, and goodness; and we know the existence of that star from the rays, just as we know that the sun is below the horizon when the first faint light plays upon the face of the earth.

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[1] On this subject see Mr. E. S. P. Haynes's *Personal Immortality*, in the present series.

This argument cannot, as I said, be understood, and is not valid, apart from Plato's philosophy. There are two universes: a universe of things and a universe of ideas, or prototypes of things. These ideas are self-existent, just as real as material objects. Truth or charity is not merely an expression of experience in your mind; it is a reality in the idea-world, which your mind directly intues. The material world, which Plato despised, could never have engendered ideas or ideals. They are spiritual realities, shining upon the earth like stars on a cloudless night, reminding us of the spirit-world in which the soul once lived (if we take this part of Plato's theory seriously), and to which it will return when freed from the prison of the flesh. In that spirit-world the central luminary is the infinite and pure ideal of truth, beauty, and goodness.

These speculations might well inspire some of the finest literature which philosophy has produced; but the very basis of them has been destroyed in our time. We have precisely inverted Plato's view of reality. Without adopting here any theory of the nature of mind, we may assume that the scientific doctrine of mental evolution is generally accepted; at all events, the few who do not accept it have still a totally different theory (the creation of mind) from that of Plato. We now know that the mind of man slowly grew from a brute level to human proportions. For the moment it does not matter whether or no we regard this mind as a function of the brain. What we do positively know is that all the truth, beauty, and goodness within our perception have been developed on this planet, not introduced from a spirit-world. Primitive man became a moralist, and in the slow experience of ages moral ideals were fashioned by him; the evolution of beauty is even less contested; and truth is so far from being an intued reality that philosophers are seriously divided as to its nature. The only ideas we know are the ideas which have slowly grown in the mind of the race. We shall see that St. Augustine and others entirely altered Plato's system, and said that the ideas existed *in God*. That is an entirely different problem. No one to-day can conceive ideas as self-existing realities; few, indeed, claim that we know any ideas but those which have gradually taken shape in the brain of man; and, therefore, the very foundation of Plato's theism is destroyed, and his speculations have now little more than a literary interest.

When, however, we turn from Plato to his pupil Aristotle—one of the greatest thinkers the world has ever known—we meet at last a promise of rigorous demonstration of the existence of God. Aristotle was no less versed in the physics than the metaphysics of his time, and he proceeded more logically than his great master. The contrast of the two thinkers is, perhaps, often exaggerated. Plato, for instance, would have poets banished from an ideal commonwealth; and, on the other hand, Aristotle had considerable poetical skill. Yet Plato's procedure in regard to the issue which concerns us was more poetical than philosophical. Aristotle entirely rejected his notion of a world of self-existent ideas, and there are traces that Plato himself abandoned or was less attached to that theory in his later years. With that abandonment the proof of theism fell, and Aristotle had to devise new proofs. We may remember that, as the death of Socrates reminds us, Athens had its "Inquisition," and the "atheist" might at any time be compelled to drink the hemlock.

For Aristotle, as for all the Greeks, the material world was eternal. None of them ventured to claim that it had been made out of nothing by a creative word, though some of them believed that the ordering of a material chaos into a cosmos was due to the infinite mind. Aristotle does not even admit this arrangement of the material universe. God is a pure spirit, unconcerned with sublunary matters. He exists outside the outermost heaven—Aristotle, of course, accepted the view that the earth was the centre of a small material universe—and is eternally occupied in self-contemplation. His existence is demonstrable in two ways. In the first place, he is the ultimate cause of all movement in the universe, or the Prime Mover. Aristotle understands this, however, in quite a different sense from thinkers who have more recently sought to deduce the existence of a Prime Mover. To some extent he proceeds on a line that is now familiar. There are things that move, and things that are moved; in the last analysis there must be an eternal something which moves, yet is unmoved. It might be possible to evade this argument by postulating an infinite series of moved and moving bodies; but the real answer is suggested by the researches of the modern physicist. From the movements of bodies we have passed to the movements of atoms, and now on to the movements of electrons; and it is quite conceivable, to say the least, that ether is the ultimate something which causes the movement of all atoms and bodies. There is nothing either in science or philosophy which compels us to go beyond ether.

In any case, a difficulty would arise when we try to conceive how material movement could spring from a spiritual source. In the present form of the argument for a Prime Mover this is left as a mystery, so that at the most we have a mystery substituted for a mystery. Aristotle conceived the matter in a way which we must regard as poetical rather than philosophical. The Supreme Being moves the world by love. This does not mean that Aristotle conceived God as intimately related to all living things in the sublunary sphere, as Christianity afterwards taught; his God was necessarily indifferent to the fortunes of sparrows or of men, wrapped in eternal self-contemplation. The Prime Mover must itself be unmoved. It is the love felt for it by the animating principles of the heavenly bodies which leads to their regular movements and to the control of life on earth. It is enough to say that no one to-day relies on Aristotle's argument, or poetic fancy. We know now that there are no animating principles in the heavenly bodies.

Aristotle's second chief argument is not more acceptable in modern times. In severely metaphysical terms he regards every change we perceive as a transition from potentiality to actuality. The germination of the seed is an obvious example. Now, just as movement implies a mover, the acquisition of actuality implies a previous actuality, and in the long run there must be a pure actuality without any admixture of potentiality—an infinite and perfect spirit. The argument is, in principle, the familiar argument for a First Cause, and we will examine it later in that form. It has this logical weakness, that we can conceive an eternal cycle of causes which dispenses us from regarding any particular cause or actuality as "first." In the main, however, we may reply as to the preceding argument. We regard ether as the fundamental cause or agency in nature, and are not compelled to seek anything beyond it. As far as the argument for a first cause goes, the first cause may be material; indeed, unless it is material we have the insoluble mystery always of the relation of spirit and matter. Aristotle held that, as reason was the highest outcome of his "pure actuality," we must recognise reason in the source, on an infinite scale. This is, however, to proceed on the fallacious principle that the cause must be like in nature to the effect, and we shall see later that this is opposed to experience and in itself an unwarranted statement. Morality, for instance, has been evolved out of a non-moral material.

We thus find that the three supreme Greek thinkers have not contributed a single permanent argument for the existence of God. Socrates, it is true, seems to have pressed the familiar argument from design, but Aristotle rejected it, and we shall see that few modern philosophers attach importance to it. It is only in a materially modified form that the arguments of Plato and Aristotle are accepted by any modern believer. In other words, these earliest and greatest theistic philosophers based their belief on grounds which are generally regarded as unsound, and entirely missed those indications of theism which later ages detected. The circumstance should be carefully considered by those who impatiently exclaim that the marks of God's handiwork on the universe are as plain as the traces of some ancient glacier on the hill-side.

From the later Greek philosophers we get little assistance. The genius of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle had destroyed the earlier sceptical school, but after the death of Aristotle, and during the decay of Athens, thought returned to a hopeless diversity. Three chief schools were distinguished: the Neo-Academic (Arcesilaus and Carneades), the Stoic (founded by Zeno), and the Epicurean. The first school was wholly sceptical or, on the issue we are considering, agnostic; it assailed the competency of reason to attain truth in such matters. The Stoics believed in a Supreme Being, but maintained that he (or it) was material in character and diffused throughout the universe, much as Anaxagoras had said. They considered that the order and purposiveness in nature proved the existence of such a being, but refused to recognise such a thing as spirit; and they removed morality to a purely natural foundation. The brilliant moral triumphs of Stoicism, which later transformed the Roman Empire, were unconnected with its theology and based on a recognition of natural law. Epicurus and his followers, on the other hand, were little else than atheists or agnostics. They acquiesced in the popular idea of gods; neither seeking philosophic support for it nor thinking it worth while to oppose it; but they maintained that these gods were remote and entirely indifferent to the fortunes of men, and denied the immortality of the soul. We may justly conjecture that for Epicurus gods were popular idols which it would be imprudent to disturb, and his great Latin follower Lucretius regarded them as a product of the terrors of primitive man. The common notion, however, that Epicurus and his followers set up pleasure as the supreme good, and may therefore be excluded from the high fraternity of the philosophers, is quite inaccurate. Happiness, not pleasure, was the ideal of Epicurus, and his life and personal standard were sober and elevated.

The Roman civilisation, which succeeded to the Greek, made no advance upon the theistic speculations of the Greeks. The cultivated Romans who took interest in philosophy were either Stoics or Epicureans—the great majority Stoics, though they conceived the Supreme Being as spiritual. Scepticism was well represented among them, and, as we saw, the poet Lucretius rejected even the gods of his master Epicurus. In sum, most of the cultivated Romans were monotheists, but they devised no proofs of theism other than those they selected from their Greek predecessors.

The spirit of speculation had passed from Athens to Alexandria, where the works of Plato were revived, and the system known as Neo-Platonism was developed by Plotinus and others. The theism of this school is of little interest to any other than the student of philosophy. It was a Pantheism of the most mystic and transcendental order, and lies outside the range of the present work. The more sober teachers of the Alexandrian schools, like Hypatia, seem to have been more interested in physics and mathematics, and to have neglected the more metaphysical elements of Greek culture.[1] With the closing of the Alexandrian schools by the Christian authorities in the sixth century the long and imposing line of Greek philosophers came to a close. One of the shortest-lived civilisations in history, Greece had inscribed its name imperishably in the record of culture, and for many a hundred years afterwards philosophers could do little more than repeat, or slightly modify, the thoughts of the Greeks. Yet a comprehensive glance at Greek philosophy discovers that the genius of the race saw no clear indications of God on the face of the world. The majority of the Greeks either do not recognise God or do not recognise his spirituality; very few of them place God in any living relation to mankind, and hardly any of them believed that man was immortal and would one day see God. They broke into a dozen different positions—monotheism, polytheism, materialism, pantheism, agnosticism—and died without finding the solution. And the one or two among them who confidently advocated a spiritual monotheism based it on considerations which are to us unconvincing and fanciful.

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[1] It may not be superfluous to warn the reader to regard Kingsley's description of Hypatia in his famous novel as sheer fiction. Hypatia was not a nervous maiden of twenty-five at the time of her tragic death, but a venerable and highly esteemed lady of about sixty. She was a very able mathematician, and we have no ground for supposing that she accepted the mysticism of the Neo-Platonists.

The attitude of philosophers since that time has been materially changed in one respect. They were no longer surrounded by a polytheistic population, whose gods and goddesses were obvious fictions, but by peoples holding spiritual monotheism as the central truth of religion. Indeed, humanity had now found God—by way of revelation—and the long and arduous search of the philosophers was abandoned. At first, it is true, the Christian theologians had to meet the sceptical questions of cultivated Romans, and were compelled to seek rational arguments. St. Augustine is the chief thinker in this connection, and we find him reviving and modifying the arguments of Plato. He relies, in the first place, on the order of the universe as a proof of an ordering intelligence; but we may defer the consideration of this familiar argument. More characteristic of him is his modification of Plato's doctrine of ideas. There are, he says, truths which are not limited by the accidents of space and time—truths which the mind does not create, but perceives as existing. Mathematical and moral truths are of this order. One may take the simple truth that two and two make four. If the material universe were destroyed, the proposition would remain true; it is not a summary of experience, and its opposite is inconceivable in any world. We must, says St. Augustine, find the eternal home or base of these truths, and they therefore point to the existence of an infinite and eternal intelligence. To-day it is replied that such truths are either tautological or a summary of consistent experience. In either case they are created by the human mind, not intued as having a separate existence; they have a basis in man's mind, and there is no reason why we should seek any other for them.

For the next thousand years philosophical theism makes no advance beyond Augustine's modified Platonism and the modified arguments of Aristotle. Although Boethius, the famous author of *The Consolation of Philosophy*, attempted to revive the doctrines of the younger and more severe Athenian, it was Plato who dominated what philosophy there was in Christian Europe until the thirteenth century; to be more accurate, it was an inaccurate version of Plato modified by Augustine, who had probably read little of Plato, and sometimes confuses the Academicians (followers of Plato) with the Neo-Academicians (sceptics). Even in the thirteenth century, the great age of the schoolmen, some of the chief divines, such as St. Bonaventure, still clung to the quasi-Platonic arguments, and deduced deity from the supposed eternal truths. But by this time the Moors in Spain had created a fine scientific and philosophic culture on the basis of Aristotle's works; and Christian Europe, especially through the mediation of the Jews, was compelled to take it into account.

With the Moorish philosophers (Averroes, Avicenna, etc.) it is unnecessary for us to deal. They did not receive the pure doctrine of Aristotle, and they deduced from his supposed principles a kind of intellectual Pantheism which died with them. But the glamour of their culture and civilisation impressed the less civilised nations of Europe, and the schoolmen gradually transferred their theology, in so far as it was supposed to have the support of reason, from a Platonic to an Aristotelic basis. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest of the medieval thinkers, was chiefly instrumental in this evolution of Catholic theology. He was convinced that, in order to meet unbelievers, the fundamental doctrines (the existence of God and the immortality of the soul) must be proved by purely philosophical arguments, and in proving the existence of God he developed the line of reasoning indicated by Aristotle.

These scholastic arguments, in so far as they are still pressed by Catholic philosophers, will be more fully considered at a later stage. It is the boast of Catholic thinkers that these arguments, which they take chiefly from Aquinas, are more profound and substantial than the usual deductions from the order and beauty of the universe or the phenomena of conscience. Like Aristotle, the schoolmen argued that the changes and potentialities of finite things implied the existence of a Pure Actuality (*purus actus*). They argued also that movement involved the existence of a Prime Mover—not in the poetical sense of Aristotle, but as the active initiator or cause of all movement, bodily and spiritual. They further declared that the contingency of things within our experience—by which they mean that we can easily conceive all finite things as non-existent—implies the existence of a "necessary" being; in other words, since finite things do not contain within themselves the *raison d'être* of their existence, they must ultimately depend on an infinite self-existent being. The argument from design (or order) was also admitted by them, and the more

Platonically disposed schoolmen used the argument we have described in connection with St. Augustine.

It seemed that philosophic theism had advanced a considerable stage in the scholastic movement of the thirteenth century. The more severe or more plausible arguments of Greek culture were gathered and systematised, and the belief in God was, apparently, supported by an ample and rigorous structure of demonstration. But within three centuries the scholastic structure was in turn assailed. The fall of Constantinople in the fifteenth century drove Greek scholars to Italy, and the writings of Plato were restored to honour. The cultural movement which we call the Renaissance was, in Italy, largely a restoration of Plato's principles in opposition to the schoolmen; and other causes were contributing to the downfall of the scholastic system. It is probable that the invention of printing would of itself have sufficed to modify the scholastic *régime*. It was largely the dearth of books and dearness of parchment which held the youths of Europe at the feet of oral teachers. But a greater disturbance was in the veins of Europe. It was developing rapidly in intellect and feeling, and the old system was doomed. In quick succession the Humanist movement was followed by the circumnavigation of the earth, the discovery of the astronomical universe, the spread of the scientific spirit, and the Reformation.

The next phase of philosophic theism is, therefore, the rise of independent lay philosophers, who seek to rescue theistic evidences from the wreck of the scholastic structure. Scotus Erigena had been an early independent thinker of this type, and had fallen into the heresy of Pantheism. Giordano

Bruno, a rebellious monk—a man with, for his age, an astounding appreciation of the real character of the universe—also ended in an identification of Nature and God. Then the spirit of the Renaissance spread to France, England, and, finally, Germany, and a number of philosophic thinkers arose.

Whether Francis Bacon should be included in that category or no may be questioned; but, intent solely on the scientific investigation and mastery of nature, he slighted alike the work of the schoolmen and that of the great Athenians on which it was based. The existence of God was to him a truism, though he disdained the teleological argument, handing over what earlier philosophers called "final causes" to theologians as "sterile virgins." The next great English thinker, Hobbes, was hardly more helpful to philosophic theism. He also regarded the atheist as a fool, but advanced few serious arguments in favour of theism. In fact, when we remember that Hobbes, a vigorous defender of despotism, taught that religion should be enforced for political and moral reasons, and when we attempt to apply the principles of his theory of knowledge to the theistic problem, we are inclined to think that he was not very sincere. His principles seem to lead rather to materialism.

In France during the seventeenth century Descartes and Malebranche framed new theories of philosophy, and Spinoza originated a profound philosophy in Holland. Descartes relied on what is called the "ontological" proof of the existence of God, which might be described as falling at once into disrepute, if it had ever had any repute. He found the germ of it in the early schoolman St. Anselm. In brief, existence is a perfection, and therefore God, as the all-perfect being, must exist. It is no longer necessary to state this argument in full and criticise it. We may also hold ourselves excused from enlarging on the philosophy of Malebranche, which contributed no permanent element to philosophic theism. The system of the far abler Jewish thinker Spinoza was a lofty form of Pantheism. Descartes had strictly severed the two fundamental features of reality which fall within our experience: thought (which he confined to the human soul and God) and extension, the chief attribute of matter. Spinoza re-united these properties in one supreme reality, God-Nature. We shall see later whether the Pantheistic solution is more tenable than personal theism. With these three isolated thinkers we may combine the later German philosopher Leibnitz, whose system of "monads" hardly outlived his generation, and need not concern us.

It will be seen that since the collapse of the scholastic structure no definite and widely received system of philosophic theism was accepted in Europe. Catholics still adhered to the principles of the schoolmen, but the attention of religious men was chiefly absorbed in the Protestant-Catholic controversy, and the existence of God was assumed by all. In the eighteenth century, however, philosophy revived, and thought began once more to examine the very foundations of the religious edifice. The great problem of the nature and validity of knowledge was stated, and two great series of thinkers, English and German, restored the philosophic tradition of ancient Greece.

John Locke, the successor of Hobbes, led English thinkers to the train of thought which (in connection with our present issue) is known as Agnosticism. His fundamental conclusion is well known: "There is nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the senses." In other words, we have no innate ideas, and all our knowledge is the mental elaboration of the data of experience. We have, therefore, no innate idea or direct intuition of God. But our experience, according to Locke, proves to demonstration the existence of God, and he sanctioned the persecution of atheists (and Roman Catholics). His argument is the familiar inference from secondary causes to a First Cause; and, since causes must resemble their effects, and thought or spirituality is part of our experience, the First Cause must be spiritual and moral. Mr. Benn appositely remarks that, if causes must resemble effects, matter must have been created by a material cause.

However, these "empirical" principles (*empeiria* = experience) of Locke were made to yield alarming conclusions in the minds of later thinkers. Bishop Berkeley maintained that, if we restrict ourselves to our experience, we know the existence only of our states of consciousness, and the material world disappears. Since, however, we do perceive things which are not ourselves, they must exist as ideas in the mind of the Infinite. To exist is to be perceived, to live as an idea; hence, if there is a universe at all, it exists (is perceived) in the mind of God.

Then Hume pushed the critical analysis a step further. If we know only states of consciousness, we know nothing of a mind (soul or God) underlying them. Existence is reduced to a stream or bundle of disconnected perceptions. We can no more deduce God from them than material objects. While, therefore, Hume protested that he was a

Deist, he cut the ground from under all arguments for God, and cannot have had a very serious belief in his existence. His idealist principles survived (to a greater or less extent) in the theories of English nineteenth-century Agnostics. Huxley strictly adhered to them, especially when he was rebutting the charge of materialism. J. S. Mill declared that we know only sensations and "permanent possibilities of sensation." Spencer dogmatically affirmed that the fundamental power of the universe is unknown and unknowable.

The theistic philosophers of recent English life have relied rather on the German systems, and to these we must turn in conclusion. Even to summarise the views, on our present issue, of the long line of modern German philosophers (Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Hartmann, and Lotze) would be impossible here. It may be stated at once that most of them have contributed no permanent element to the great controversy, and their systems have to-day only an historical interest. Certain ideas of Kant, Hegel, and Lotze still live, in a modified form, in actual literature, and with these we will deal later. Here it is possible to relate only how Kant, whose fame overshadows all the others, destroyed the current theistic arguments and initiated a new line of reasoning.

Of all the arguments for the existence of God which the thinkers of previous ages had provided, the most popular and enduring were those taken from the actual features of the world. Secondary causes pointed to a first cause, order to an infinite intelligence, beauty to a supreme spirit. Kant cut the very root of these deductions by his analysis of our knowledge into objective and subjective elements.

Not only time and space, but such "categories" as causality, were subjective forms of perception; they are valid only among the phenomena which we build up into our ideas, but not for the "noumena," or things-in-themselves, or realities underlying the phenomena we perceive. I may say at once that I no more recognise the validity of Kant's criticism than I do that of Hume, and will examine on their merits the arguments he discarded. But Kant, a Puritan by birth and environment, only excluded God from the cosmos to find him again in ethics. Heine somewhere caricatures him as restoring the idol to stem the tears of his aged servant. Certain it is that, while Kant's criticism of pure reason has had a profound effect on thought in the nineteenth century, his proof from practical reason has influenced few. The moral law was to Kant so clear and categorical, while the realisation of it in this life is so imperfect, that there *must* be a future life for the soul to work out its task, and there *must* be a supreme moral legislator who has formulated the law, and will provide the opportunity for its triumph.

We will examine the moral argument later. Kant's followers displaced his system, and passed through various shades of Pantheism to atheism. The philosophers had again, as two thousand years before, attempted in vain to scale the empyrean. From all that mighty line of seekers of wisdom and of God there survive only a few greatly modified suggestions, which we will examine in dealing with modern literature. The reflection does not lend much support to the familiar saying of Bacon and of Pope, that deep draughts of learning always lead to God. Philosophy knows no more of him than it did 2,200 years ago.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

THE culmination of so impressive a line of philosophic investigation in a condition of uncertainty and disagreement has led to certain suggestions which we must examine before we enumerate and criticise the arguments current in our own time. In ancient Greece the failure or hopeless disagreement of the philosophers led to scepticism. The age into which Socrates entered was such a period of reasoned scepticism. Truth was at the bottom of so deep a well, to quote a Greek thinker, that man could not reach her. For a time Socrates and his great followers dispelled or intimidated the sceptics; but a fresh system of philosophic doubt ensued at their death (for they, in turn, had contradicted each other, as well as all their predecessors), and even spread to Italy. Such a scepticism was bound to appear in our time, and Agnostic writers have pleaded that the limitations of the human understanding preclude the hope of successfully attacking the problem of the existence of God.

Against this conclusion there was necessarily a wide protest. To a belief in such limitations of the intelligence men are not readily disposed, and, indeed, the foundations of the claim, or of what might be incongruously called positive Agnosticism, are not at all beyond question; they belong themselves to the disputable region of metaphysics. As, however, no new scheme of intellectual argumentation is forthcoming that commands more than a parochial allegiance, the prospect is not encouraging, and certain thinkers of our time are looking for hope in an entirely different quarter. What if this intellectual search for God has been a mistake from the start? Is man all intellect? Has he no other powers, and may it not be the neglect of these other aspects of his nature which has condemned the intellect to sterility? A razor, Cardinal Newman said, is a fine instrument, but it will not cut granite. Possibly we have been attempting to penetrate granite rocks with a razor.

The first issue of this diversion of thought was the system which its founder, Professor William James, called Pragmatism, and his chief English supporter, Dr. Schiller, calls Humanism. They have discovered that man is not merely an intellectual machine, and it was a mistake to suppose that his intellectual machinery alone could achieve tasks which needed the harmonious activity of his whole mental life. Dr. Schiller makes in his works (*Humanism*, 1903, etc.) a spirited attack on the "sterilising pedantry," the "muddy technicality," of the purely intellectual schemes of thought; he calls them "scholastic," as opposed to Humanism. It seems that the "agnostic maunderings of impotent despair" which their failure inspires "are flung aside with a contemptuous smile by the young, the strong, the virile"; though he hardly impresses us when his list of the young, the strong, the virile contains only the names of Mr. Balfour, Professor W. James, and Professor J. Ward—to-day, perhaps, he would add M. Bergson. We are to take "a more humane view of metaphysics," not rely on "pure thought" and passionless logic. We must study how man does think, and we shall then define truth as "that manipulation of objects which turns out upon trial to be useful, primarily for any human end, but ultimately for that perfect harmony of our whole life which forms our final aspiration." In the long run true beliefs are useful beliefs; false beliefs are those which our subjective valuations reject.

The fundamental objection to this theory is that it comes very near to defining truth as, in the old phrase, what each man troweth. Different ideas will have different values for different individuals. Many men, as Dr. Schiller has well shown, do not desire immortality at all; many do desire it, and find the belief helpful. Are the contradictory propositions, mortality and immortality, both true? Many men find the universe more satisfactory without God; many find it (or fancy it would be) intolerable without God. Men cherish contradictory notions in all parts of the world. To many Frenchmen the duel is an imperative moral necessity; to all Englishmen it is a crime. It seems that on this criterion myriads of contradictory propositions will be equally true. Is it not better to say, in plain terms, that they may be equally valuable or helpful to their possessors, and still to regard truth as a statement of fact?

As far as our present question is concerned, the theory of Pragmatism hopelessly fails. We are well aware that large numbers of men and women attain or retain a belief in God on grounds which are not, or not purely, intellectual. But these very men and women do not for a moment admit that the belief is merely useful and helpful. They mean, very emphatically, that a God exists independently of their idea of him. The peculiar and irregular function of Pragmatism is to tell people that their beliefs are "true" because of their value, and leave them under the confused impression that this guarantees the objective validity of their beliefs. This confusion is wholly regrettable. Whatever may be felt in regard to other subjects, the question here is, not do you find a belief in God necessary or helpful, but do you desire to know whether there is a reality corresponding to the idea of God in the minds of men? If it be replied that the second question cannot be answered, the problem of the existence of God is insoluble, and Agnosticism is the right attitude. If, on the other hand, one maintains a belief in God on Pragmatist grounds, one must realise that one does so only because it is of value, not because it is proved to have objective validity.

Our generation had scarcely realised the bearing of this new "psychological" theory of truth (which is merely a theory of how men do often form opinions, not of how they ought to form them) than another system came to console those who deplored the apparent failure of intellectual theism. This is the theory of Professor Bergson. The distinguished French writer has not yet applied his theory of knowledge to the question of the existence of God, and has nowhere (as far as I can find in his works) professed theism. But since his principles emphatically refuse to attach importance to intellectual reasoning in such matters, they must be briefly considered. Intellect was, he says, evolved for practical purposes, such as engineering; instinct is the proper faculty for investigating the problems of life. This conclusion might reconcile us to the comparative failure of philosophy (one of the chief grounds on which Bergson relies), and seems to put at our disposal an instrument, long neglected, which may succeed in finding God where philosophy has failed. But there are very grave objections to this proposal to substitute instinct (or intuition) for intellect.

In the first place, and chiefly, if Bergson means by instinct something quite other than what the biologist means, he neither defines nor vindicates it; and if his "instinct" is an extension or development of that recognised in biology, he has misunderstood its meaning. His works, however, especially his *Creative Evolution*, make it clear that he means the power or process which we recognise in the animal world. Now, the very essence of this, as distinct from reason, is that it is blind to the end of its activity. It is not a perceptive process, but one which acts as if it perceived what it does not perceive. We cannot believe that even the nest-building bird foresees in any degree the purpose of the nest, while the larva of the stag-beetle assuredly does not foresee the horns it is about to develop. Where Bergson detects an intimately perceptive element in instinct, he is wrong about the facts. He clearly builds much on the supposed skill of the Sphex wasp in paralysing spiders or caterpillars and depositing them with the eggs in its nest, so that the young will have living food. But more recent observation of these wasps (by Mr. and Mrs. Peckham) has discredited the old notion (on which Bergson relies) that they always sting their victims in successive ganglia in order to paralyse without killing them. Nowhere does Bergson detect a cognitive element in instinct which would give the slenderest basis for a hope that instinct might become the instrument of philosophy. In earlier natural history it used to be said that instinct was a "faculty" which "told" the animal to do so and so. It seems to be on this discarded "faculty" that Bergson relies. In modern science there is really no such thing as instinct; there is merely an inherited machinery of nerves and muscles, developed by natural selection, which will act (without knowledge) in a certain way on receiving certain stimuli.

Nor is M. Bergson more convincing in his efforts to degrade reason or intellect. The failure of philosophers may mean that it has been applied to the discovery of realities (God, soul, etc.) which do not exist at all, not that reason itself is at fault. The magnificent success of reason in investigating nature, even in its highest or most abstruse aspects, cannot be easily set aside as the triumph of a "faculty for making or using tools"; and we must not forget that history, law, æsthetics, and ethics also use reason alone. M. Bergson again seems to start from a false scientific basis. Because the reason of primitive man was evolved for practical purposes, it does not follow that the higher reason of civilised man had not a larger scope. Even as regards primitive man, his theory is not quite accurate. If the Bushmen had died out a few centuries ago, the only remains we would have of them would be their bones and their utensils. We should know nothing of their rich mythology. We know, in fact, that from an early date reason evolved as a speculative as well as a practical instrument.

In fine, we may notice that M. Bergson himself always reasons out his conclusions instead of relying on intuition. Whether he has made permanent contributions to metaphysics—for instance, by his theory of duration—and whether this has not been done by the use of reason, we need not inquire here. The point of chief interest for us is that he has not as yet made even a beginning of an application of his principles to the problem of the present work. Where he presents a constructive work of interest to the general public, as in his famous theory of the evolution of life, he relies entirely upon reason, and his conclusions are mere poetry or allegory, inacceptable either to science or philosophy. Instead of taking a more profound view of the evolutionary process, he takes a much less profound and less exact view than the modern biologist. As to the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, he does not profess to have made any discovery, and, as far as his published works go, may be an Agnostic. Just as Professor W. James, whose Pragmatism is so often invoked by modern theists to excuse the intellectual quality of their arguments, plainly stated that he saw no evidence for monotheism. As we shall see later, he believed in the existence of spirits, but was not convinced of the existence of a Supreme Spirit.

The truth is that these new "psychological" theories of knowledge are pressed into a use which their originators do not seem to have contemplated, and it is on this account that we have been obliged to examine the theories themselves before we find this application of them in modern theistic arguments. Sometimes the general purport of the theories is vaguely invoked. James and Bergson have shown (it is often wrongly said that "modern philosophy" has shown, which is a most inaccurate expression) that we must not attach too much importance to the pronouncements of the intellect. Hence, if the argumentative reasons put forward for the belief in God are feeble or elusive or open to criticism, we must remember that mere intellect does not matter as much as was formerly supposed. Again, when a man is seriously impressed by the failure of the philosophers of more than two thousand years to find a consistent and generally acceptable proof of the existence of God, we are reminded that they were narrowly intellectual and used only a "bloodless logic." We shall see later how much this vague bearing of the new theories is used in recent theistic literature; though it is rarely added that James and Schiller and Bergson have given no more support to monotheism than their predecessors did.

There is, however, a more specific use of the new theories which it is necessary to consider. There have been in all ages mystics who professed to intue reality directly, without the intermediate aid of reasoning. While the ordinary religious man deduced the power or wisdom or beneficence of God from the features of the visible world, by an act of reasoning, the mystic *saw* them by immediate mental vision. You may legitimately ask the former for proof—you may test the validity of his reasoning—but you cannot ask proof of the latter. He cannot expect his experience to impress you, but it is more convincing than proof to him. This theory has an obvious advantage in a sceptical age, and what we may call a semi-mystic theory of the "religious sense" or religious instinct has been propagated. Besides the internal and external senses there is such a thing as a feeling for art, a preponderant faculty for mathematics or biology, and so on. Why not a religious sense? The supposed universality of religious belief is taken to be a proof of the existence of this sense; and, on the other hand, the decay of religion among highly cultured men is amiably explained. Excessive development of intellect has led to an atrophy of the religious sense, just as it may lead to an atrophy of the olfactory lobes.

This convenient view believes that it now has most impressive support in the theories of James, and especially Bergson; and it clothes itself in the august mantle of "recent philosophy." Those who seek proofs, or criticise proofs, of the existence of God are out of date. The new philosophy, which has arisen on the ruins of the old, has vindicated mysticism. Consult your inner sense or instinct or intuition, and, if it declares that there is a God, you may smile at the increasing success of science in giving a purely mechanical interpretation of the universe and the increasing feebleness of theistic proofs.

It is, therefore, important to realise that Pragmatism and Bergsonism are not "modern philosophy," and have very few followers among modern philosophers. I have already quoted Dr. Schiller's list of the young and virile, and might add that Mr. Balfour and Professor Ward are not very clear or confident champions of theism, to say the least, and certainly do not support Bergson. Even Professor James severely criticised Bergson. The situation really is that a few brilliant writers—Balfour, James, Schiller, and Bergson—have arisen in our generation in the philosophic field, or on the frontiers of it, and seduced many (not of their colleagues, but of the general philosophic public) by the charm or virility of their works. They do not agree with each other, and their theories are regarded as paradoxical and ephemeral. At the same time they do *not* support the supposed religious sense, and are not, apparently, convinced of the existence of God or the immortality of the soul. The candid inquirer will, therefore, leave them out of account in examining and demanding evidence for theism. The culture of the world still relies on intellect and reason, and regards other elements which influence thought as disturbing and adulterating.[1]

We may defer until a later stage the popular claim of a religious sense, and be content, for the moment, to deny the supposed verification in modern philosophy. It follows that the evidence for theism must take the form of reasoning from known and admitted facts. They may be features of the external universe, or features of reality in the metaphysical sense, or features of man's experience, such as moral sentiments. Only by such deductions from recognised phenomena can we validly maintain a belief in God. This is, as we shall see, the real and natural root of the antagonism between a scientific interpretation of reality and religion. It is not certain accidents of religious tradition, such as the legends contained in *Genesis*, that led to a merely temporary conflict. There is a permanent antagonism—not merely between science (rather, the teaching of science) and theology, but between science and theism. This, however, will be seen more clearly in the next chapter.

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[1] I do not mean that there is no such thing as intuition. It is one of the functions of intellect. I intue my states of consciousness and my mental existence. In my opinion, our perception of the external world is, primarily, an intuition, not a deduction from impressions. But intuition does not say whether what it intues is spiritual or material, finite or infinite.

Another confusion of the evidence must, however, be noticed before we proceed to examine it. The ancient question, What is Truth? has been asked again in our time, and new answers are given. For ages men had agreed to define truth as the correspondence of thought and reality. But the train of thought which culminated in Berkeley and Hume, and restricted our knowledge to our states of consciousness (in popular language, to our thoughts), naturally destroyed this definition. Our states of consciousness, so far as we knew, corresponded to nothing. Berkeley was not troubled because he held that our thoughts were finite participations in the thoughts of things in the divine mind, but Hume easily showed that his inference of a divine mind and participation in its thoughts was invalid. And as this Humean doctrine has pervaded English literature ever since, and may still be found even in some scientific works, the question of the nature of truth becomes urgent.

It will be gathered from what has preceded that I intend to take no more notice of this idealist Agnosticism than of the Pragmatist definition of truth. I have expressed elsewhere my inability to regard idealism seriously. Even if it be put in the modified form used by J. S. Mill, it seems to me to take the whole meaning out of scientific and historical research—indeed, out of artistic and all other culture. If there is no objective reality, or if all that we can confidently know are our own states of consciousness, research is not worth making, and social and artistic construction is a delusion. However, we need not enter upon the point here. If we are confined to our states of consciousness, there is no question whatever of discovering the existence of God, whether he be identified with the universe or no. I take it that any man who is interested in the subject believes in objective reality and man's power of knowing it.

But, it is plausibly said, to know that your thought corresponds to reality—to be confident that you are in possession of truth—implies that you can get outside yourself and *see* that the two correspond. This difficulty is therefore met by defining a new criterion or test of truth. Truth is the "coherence" of our mental contents. If an idea does not harmonise with the rest of your ideas, you reject it as false; if, after thorough examination, it does so cohere, you accept it as at least provisionally true. Men, even scientific men and philosophers, have been convinced for ages that certain ideas were true, yet were compelled at last to recognise their falseness. There was, therefore, no intuition of reality, and we can only say that things are provisionally true as tested by their coherence with all we know.

Here again there seems to be some exaggeration. Truth may still be a correspondence of thought and reality, though our vision of reality is not so plain and comprehensive a matter as the unphilosophical person imagines. What we think we directly perceive is very largely a matter of deduction, and the deduction may be fallacious. The limits of perception and deduction are not even yet determined.

Meantime "coherence" is obviously an important test of truth; but it is only valid if some of the contents of our mind are confidently regarded as true. A whole system of false or fictitious concepts might cohere or harmonise together. We are therefore compelled to return to the old definition of truth. The present inquiry is: Is there an objective reality corresponding to man's idea of God? And by what arguments can it be proved?

CHAPTER V.

THE ORDER AND BEAUTY OF NATURE

WE have concluded that any proof of the existence of God must take the form of an inference from one or other feature of the known universe. In a later chapter we shall, of course, consider various attempts to attain a knowledge of God in other ways; but the great majority of believers do, in point of fact, deduce the existence of an invisible creator and ruler from the visible features of nature. And the broadest and most prominent features from which this deduction is drawn are the regularity of movement and structure and the gleams of beauty which we find on every hand in nature. A thoughtful Arab, asked how he knew the existence of God, pointed to the footprint of a bird on the sand, and said that he inferred the action of God as plainly as from that impression he inferred the passage of a bird. That is the feeling of the overwhelming majority of theists, and we must examine it with respect. For two thousand years the heavens have announced to them the glory of God, and the agnostic or atheist has been told with disdain to open his eyes to the plain features of the universe.

It is here, especially, that we find the gravest and most lasting conflict between the teaching of science and the teaching of religion. It is sometimes said in our day that such conflict as there once was between science and the creeds is now amicably abandoned. A learned American writer, J. W. Draper, wrote an account of *The Conflict between Religion and Science.* In the next generation Professor A. D. White recorded the struggle in fuller detail, but significantly called it *The Warfare of Science with* THEOLOGY. It was, people said, merely the opinions of theologians and their personal interpretations of the Old Testament, at the very most the Old Testament itself, and not religion, which stood in the path of advancing science. After a prolonged and bitter warfare, the respective spheres of science and religion had been determined, and they were in future to be amiable neighbours. The Jesuit Father Gerard ventured to trace the frontiers with philosophic precision. Science was concerned with matter, religion with spirit. A very clear antithesis, but an entirely false statement. It does not seem to have occurred to the Jesuit that there are sciences of psychology, ethics, and æsthetics; that science is concerned with life and mind, as well as atoms and stars; and he would hardly acknowledge that they are material. The supposed frontiers disappear the moment you refuse to be satisfied with a plausible phrase; and science and religion are found to deal, in some degree, with the same realities.

The truth is that science and religion are permanent rivals, and will continue to be as long as the belief in God and immortality is based upon realities which also fall under the consideration of science. Their spheres overlap; they are rival interpretations of the same phenomena. Whatever arguments for theism we may afterwards discover which do not enter this class, the arguments from the order and beauty of the universe and from conscience clearly do; and it is on these arguments that the majority of theists rely. Here, they say, are features of nature of which no adequate natural explanation can be found. It may be, as Browning says, "a sunset-touch" or "fancy from a flower-bell"; it may be the starry heavens or the moral law. Always it is something, or a host of somethings, which we are said to be incapable of understanding unless we transcend the order of nature. These fragments of order and beauty are regarded as the effect of mind on matter; and the mind which so ordered this vast material universe, and scattered the seeds of beauty so prodigally over its boundless area, may well be saluted as infinite and eternal. But the essential point of this argument is that no *natural* explanation of these phenomena can be assigned, and modern science is unwilling to accept the limitation. There is not one feature of order or beauty in nature that it does not seek and hope to explain. The whole universe is its province; its ideal is to extend the principles of natural interpretation to all the contents of the universe.

The earlier development of science seemed to confirm the theistic position. Galilei and his successors discovered that we formed part, not merely of a small planetary family, but of a universe of mighty worlds moving majestically through space; Kepler and Newton detected certain laws by which their movements were harmoniously adjusted, and applauded the intelligence of the cosmic legislator; even the stupendous enlargement of the universe by the modern telescope seemed only to enhance the glory of the controlling mind. The progress of physics and chemistry supported this feeling. Dalton and his generation revived the old Greek theory of atoms, and dissolved the vast frame of nature into myriads of tiny particles. A distinguished physicist of the next generation, Balfour Stewart, pronounced that these minute atoms, so shaped as to construct by their unions the infinitely varied bodies of the universe, bore the stamp of "manufactured articles." The early advance of biology and of the microscope seemed to have the same effect. The structure of living things revealed an intricacy and purposiveness of which no natural explanation could be suggested; the report by travellers of hosts of ingenious organic forms in other climes only added to the wonder; and the microscope detected a singular beauty in some of the tiniest specks of living matter. Even geology, while it discredited the legends of *Genesis*, only spread the action of the creator over a hundred million years instead of six thousand.

It is, therefore, not at all surprising that eminent men of science in those days confirmed the fundamental religious beliefs; but it cannot be questioned that the more recent progress of science has gravely disturbed this earlier optimism. The first stage of science was to discover facts and confess its inability to do more than put a superficial or speculative interpretation on them; the next, the modern, stage is to advance in this interpretation and leave an increasingly smaller margin for the theist. The claim that scientific men, because they now rarely speak about religion, are more disposed to yield some province or aspect of nature to its service is the reverse of the truth. It will be found that the religious scientists of our day usually seek evidence, not in that department of nature of which they have expert knowledge, but in some other. Sir O. Lodge is a physicist, and finds evidence in biology; Professor J. A. Thomson and Principal Lloyd Morgan are biologists, yet they advise us to look to metaphysics; and religious metaphysicians refer us to psychology. The truth is that each in his own department cherishes the ideal set up thirty years ago by Tyndall: "We will wrest from theology the whole domain of cosmological theory." Let us see how the recent advance of science has tended to realise this ideal.

The first expansion of astronomy could be represented as a support of the theistic position. Provided the universe was orderly, and its order could not be traced to any natural principle, the vaster you made it the more eloquently it proclaimed the glory of God. These planets circling round the sun, so nicely adjusted to the system that any alteration of their speed or deviation from their paths would involve their disappearance in the molten ocean of the sun, surely told of an intelligent arrangement. To-day there is no ground for this claim. Suppose there had been myriads of bodies, of all sizes, circling round the sun when it first formed from its natal nebula; suppose they travelled at different speeds, in different directions, and at all imaginable distances from the sun; and suppose that a struggle for life and selection of the fittest ensued among the chaotic family, that the larger or better placed planetary bodies (or the sun) absorbed the irregular members, and that our stable and orderly system were the outcome of this age-long process. Such is the theory of science, and it can therefore no longer be said that no natural explanation of the order of the planetary system can be suggested. Indeed, this is more than a suggestion or conjecture. Open a recent astronomical work and study the structure of a spiral nebula (say, that in Ursa Major or that in Canes Venatici). You will find a perfect illustration of the theory.

After establishing natural order in the planetary system, by the elimination of the disorderly, astronomy proceeded to explain the order of the stellar universe. Since the stars are moving at stupendous speeds—at from twenty to three hundred miles a second—it would seem that even the billions of miles of space which separate them could hardly prevent disasters unless a vast mind had appointed their paths. Here again, however, we may apply the principle of selection. The mutual gravitation of the members of the stellar system ensures that they generally pursue orderly paths, or eliminates the disorderly. Modern science, in point of fact, does something more than suggest an explanation. It shows that there is no such thing as a perfect cosmic arrangement, and that disasters frequently occur. The "new stars" which we observe at times lighting up some remote region of space mean cosmic disasters. Two stars have collided or grazed each other, or a star has run into a region of space (possibly full of meteorites or nebulous matter) so dense that the friction melts it to vapour. There are stars which rush at such speeds (more than two hundred miles a second) that we must regard them as anarchists, running amok, as it were, in the stellar community.

In a word, astronomy not only explains such order as we find in the heavens, but shows that there is no universal order, no appointed path. The heavens no longer proclaim the glory of God.

The universe is an ocean of ether in which vast clots of loose matter (nebulæ) form; these condense into stars under the pressure of the ether, and the stars die out, and may again be dissipated into cosmic dust. Given ether, as we know it, the broad features of the universe are naturally explained. But the ether itself! I am merely postponing the question of its origin. For the moment I am concerned to show that the order and beauty of the heavens no longer serve the purpose of the theist; that *astronomy* gives him no assistance, as it once did. It has its problems, like every other science; but it is not to-day confronted with a single feature of the stellar universe which suggests design or control.

When we turn to physics and chemistry, we again find that the theistic claim has been excluded. The progress of astronomy had merely, it was said, transferred the theistic argument from worlds to atoms. The movements and shapes of the heavenly bodies resulted inevitably from the nature of matter and ether, and therefore did not in themselves imply a controlling mind; but the nature of matter had still to be explained. There were more than seventy different species of atoms, each with definite and apparently unchangeable qualities, and it was not unnatural to regard them as "manufactured articles." For several decades, however, physicists and chemists were more disposed to regard them as products of evolution; and, as is well known, the twentieth century has vindicated this hope. The discovery of radium revealed that the atom is not a fixed and unchangeable entity, and the research which followed the discovery has convinced us that the atoms of matter are evolved from ether. Minute centres of disturbance or strain or condensation are formed in the ether, and these "electrons," as they are generally called, gather into the clusters (on the model of solar or stellar systems) which we call atoms. The different kinds of atoms are merely smaller and larger collections of electrons, ranging from a thousand to three hundred thousand in number. In the hottest stars, in fact, the atoms are dissolved into electrons, and the different elements are successively formed as the star cools.

It is sometimes said that this great discovery made an end of "materialism," but the statement is due to confusion of ideas or imperfect knowledge. Materialists had always recognised ether, and had generally felt that it would prove to be the stuff from which atoms were formed. The ether is merely a more subtle kind of matter; it possesses inertia and extension, which are the only fundamental properties of matter. To say that the electrons are "particles of electricity," and that matter has been dissolved into energy, is inaccurate. Electricity and energy are modes or expressions of motion. The substantial and fundamental thing is the ether, and the fact that our visible universe is built of atoms is not in the least altered by the further fact that the atoms were at one time evolved from ether.

But while the new discoveries have only confirmed the anticipations of the materialist, they have made an end of the "manufactured articles" of the theist. Just as the star dissolved into atoms, the atom now dissolves into electrons. A natural explanation of its properties is afforded, and the supernatural explanation is excluded. Physics and chemistry no longer find room for theistic interpretations. Several plausible theories are advanced to explain the formation of the electrons, and it would be quite superfluous to invoke a controlling mind in the evolution of matter. We reduce the whole inorganic universe, in the end, to an invisible and little-known substance called ether, from which ponderable matter is formed. We can no longer trace "the finger of God" in any part of the inorganic world.

Naturally, the theist, who has retreated from stars to atoms, now retires upon the ether itself, and bases his argument upon it. How can we explain the properties which cause the ether to condense into electrons and give rise to the forms of movement which we call gravitation and electricity? Is it here, at last, that we detect the finger of God? A theist who is tempted to frame such an argument has to face two difficulties. In the first place, we are very slightly acquainted with the nature and properties of ether. This prevents us from giving anything like a full natural explanation of the evolution of matter and material energies, but it equally forbids us to invoke the supernatural. We know nothing about ether which compels us to go beyond itself for an explanation. In the next place, it is quite possible that ether and its properties are eternal, and therefore uncaused. There is nothing either in physics or metaphysics (as we shall see) to oppose this supposition, and it completely demolishes the base of the theistic argument as far as the inorganic universe is concerned. Ether exists; if any man supposes that there was a time when it did not exist, it is his place to prove that it had a beginning. We shall see later that the few alleged proofs of this character are worthless, and that, like Plato and Aristotle and many modern theists, we may assume that matter (or ether) is eternal. Until that assumption is broken down by positive evidence, there is no occasion to speculate on the source of the properties of ether.

It is thus seen to be quite futile to say that science is not in conflict with religion (or theism). Even the inorganic sciences have very gravely disturbed the theistic position as they advanced. To-day they leave no room for an argument that such order and regularity as we find in the inorganic universe point to a controlling mind. We trace all to ether, and ether, as far as we know, may be eternal, and therefore points to nothing beyond itself. Various methods of evading this negative conclusion will be considered in later chapters, but one or two further points may usefully be discussed here.

In the first place, it was urged by St. Augustine, and is still often urged, that order and regularity of themselves imply the action of intelligence. If we find a number of stones at regular intervals or forming a definite figure, we at once suspect a human arrangement, and in some cases may confidently assert it. But this ancient argument flagrantly begs the question. It assumes that in our experience order always or generally implies intelligence, when that is just the point at issue. The regularity of crystals and the order of chemical structures or stellar systems are part of our experience, just as much as the irregular heaps of stones on the seashore. On the face of it, nature sometimes produces order and sometimes disorder. To say that in our experience nature (not rationally guided) produces irregularity, and intelligence regularity, is to beg the very point at issue—namely, whether the regularity of crystals, etc., implies intelligence. In point of fact, modern theories of the crystal ignore intelligence altogether, and explain the regularity on purely mechanical grounds. The deeper physics and chemistry of our time detect a regularity in the structure and affinities of minute bodies throughout the universe and trace it to mechanical principles. We thus see that this argument is a hasty and fallacious deduction from a small part of our experience.

Some have attempted to give a more modern and scientific form to this argument by saying that material things are orderly and regular because they follow "natural laws," and that laws imply a legislator. It is rather late in the history of science to urge such an argument, but it is still urged by men who are unfamiliar with scientific work. The answer is simple. A "law" of nature is not a formula drawn up by a legislator, but a mere summary of the observed facts—a "bundle of facts" Martineau disdainfully calls it. Things do not act in a particular way because there is a law, but we state the "law" because they act in that way. The argument is simply founded on a figure of speech. If it were suggested that probably things act in a regular way because there is a law, one would like to know how stars or molecules are conceived as knowing and observing a law. The phrase, "God has impressed his laws on the universe," is one of the loosest conceivable. It is seen to be utterly unintelligible the moment you remember the unconsciousness of objects; there is not the remotest conceivable analogy with human legislation, as the argument implies. In fine, it is clear that if things acted *irregularly* there would be more reason to look for explanations. A thing acts according to its nature, and, if its nature be relatively stable (like that of an atom), its action is consistent and regular.

A word must be added about beauty in the inorganic universe, though very few to-day would say that beauty in nature implies a mind. There is no inherent reason whatever why unguided energies should not at times bring about a result which is approved by man's æsthetic sense, and the contrary supposition bristles with difficulties. Why are the atoms guided to make the face of one woman beautiful and of another plain? Why are the vast majority of the microscopic Radiolaria devoid of beauty and a few beautiful? Why should the formative agencies of the Bay of Naples be directed to achieve a beautiful result and a hundred other bays have no beauty? The truth is that science can now tell in each particular case why the one phenomenon has the grace or colour which we admire, while the other phenomenon has not. The geologist can tell you precisely the physical causes of the graceful curve of the Bay of Naples, or of the majestic elevation of the higher Alps. The physicist can fully explain why the light of the rising sun is reflected so superbly from Monte Rosa or the Matterhorn. The biologist can say why the skeletons of certain animalcules possess the form they do, and he has theories of animal beauty which leave no room for the theist. The botanist would not entertain the idea that the shape and colour of a rose or an orchid implied, even indirectly, a guiding intelligence. Science is, once more, a rival interpretation of nature; and every advance of science displaces the theist. You may put before the scientist to-day particular instances of beauty which he cannot explain. But if you realise how the theist of yesterday saw God in the starry heavens, or the sunrise on the Alps, or the colour of a flower, and has had to abandon his position, you will not build upon the scientist's temporary ignorance. It is a broad truth that beautiful structures or scenes in nature are now as easily explained without a supernatural or intelligent element as unbeautiful structures or scenes.

We must conclude that astronomy, physics, chemistry, and geology have left no room for a theistic interpretation in the inorganic world. They have wrested their portion of the cosmological domain from the theologian. The theist may say that matter was "guided" in working up to the combinations which we find in nature to-day, but the moment he declares that such a guidance was *necessary* he comes into conflict with the man of science; and, until he shows it to be necessary, he has no right to assume it. As far as we can see, the inorganic universe is a necessary outcome of the fundamental reality, ether; and we have no reason to think that ether was created.

Now we turn to the organic universe. As I said, the early progress of biology favoured theism. The newly discovered wealth and purposiveness of structure seemed to provide ample proof of design in nature. The doctrine of biological evolution has completely altered the situation. I must assume here that the doctrine is admitted by the reader. In Roman Catholic and certain other reactionary circles doubts are still expressed about it; but I assume that a candid inquirer is hardly likely to respect the objection of a few theologians or biologists of an earlier generation against the unanimous teaching of modern biologists. There are controversies about the agencies and the course of evolution; the fact is proved by masses of evidence, and is beyond question.

Must we say, then, that the biologist also has wrested his portion of the cosmological domain from the theist? There are, perhaps, two ways in which this claim might be contested. In the first place, it might be pointed out that many biologists do not admit that the organism is merely a "chemical machine" (as most physiologists now conceive it); they believe that there is some sort of "vital principle" in the plant and animal. It is not necessary here to discuss this opinion of a few biologists—the great majority decisively reject it—and I will not complicate the argument by enlarging on it. It is not relevant to our issue, because this vital principle, or vague internal something, has nothing to do with theism. Many scientific men who admit it are not theists. Even Bergson makes no profession of theism. We could quite admit, if the evidence compelled us, that there was an obscure something in the organism besides the matter of which it is constructed. The evidence does not at all compel us to do so as yet; but, whatever difference this made to materialism, it makes no difference on the theistic issue; and we are not concerned with materialism, which is only one of many non-theistic theories of the universe. We might even admit an intelligent immaterial principle in man, and other intelligent immaterial principles outside of man, without believing in any kind of God. That was the position of Professor W. James. The vital principle, therefore, need not concern us.

The more popular way of combining theism with evolution is to say that evolution only describes a process, or a procession of forms, and leaves open the question whether the evolving agencies were or were not intelligently guided. It is even said sometimes that the doctrine of evolution has given a grander complexion to God's creative power. These phrases require close consideration.

The crude statement that evolution merely describes, and does not explain, can only be made by those who are quite ignorant of science. Biologists have most assuredly no such superficial idea of their work. They are as eager to explain as to establish facts. The science of organic evolution is a massive explanation, not merely a description, of the unfolding of nature and advance of organic forms. Its theories of heredity and its masterly tracing of the effect of environment in past ages are directed to showing *why* animals and plants advanced to new forms. It is quite ludicrous to say that the modern biologist is content to establish the fact that they did advance. Many problems remain in particular cases, of course; but the theist who fancies that science traces only the course of evolution, and leaves the agencies to him, will have a sharp disillusion if he opens any recent work on evolution.

But does not the biologist, in tracing the agencies or causes of advance, leave open the question whether they were intelligently guided? He does not. The issue is one which it is not his place to confront; but the fact is that, when his work is completed, there is no room left for such a suggestion. He aims at giving a complete explanation, in terms of natural science, of the advance of life from level to level. A particular instance will make the point clear. In the Devonian period certain fishes left the water and began the long and higher story of animal life on land. The zoologist finds how a natural modification of the swim-bladder of the fish would provide lungs, and the geologist points out that it was a period when the distribution of land and water considerably altered, and fishes might in places be compelled to breathe the air or perish. Where does the need for guidance enter? It is the same with the very important development of the bird and mammal. The geologist discovers that an ice-age (for which he assigns physical causes) lowered the climate of the earth, and would favour the evolution of warm-blooded animals; the zoologist shows how the reptile could be modified into a bird or mammal-form; the palæontologist discovers transitional forms. We get, in other words, a natural explanation which makes "guidance" superfluous; and until guidance is shown to be *necessary* we have no ground to consider it.

An illustration may be taken from recent theistic literature. Dr. Russel Wallace has endeavoured, in his *World of Life* (1910), to show that the evolutionary process was guided. The reader of his work will find that he builds throughout on some supposed defects in the natural explanation of the process; it has features which science cannot explain, and we are therefore justified in invoking a supreme intelligence. Now, Dr. Wallace's argument is unsound, since scientific ignorance to-day may be knowledge to-morrow, and it is only a fresh application of the kind of argument which theists have been applying and discarding every decade as science advanced. But he is not even correct in his statements of fact. There is nothing mysterious at all, as he thinks, in the dense growth of the coal-forests; the warm climate, the excessive moisture and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and the low level of the land, fully explain it. There is nothing mysterious in the enormous predominance of the reptiles over the mammals in the Mesozoic Era; the warm climate (following upon an ice-age) quite explains it, and leaves no "very puzzling facts" (p. 282) at all. There is no mystery in the later disappearance of the reptiles and rise of the mammals, birds, and flowering plants. Dr. Wallace has created mysteries, or gaps in the scientific explanation, in order to discover design.

Other theists who speak of design or guidance protest that they do not build on gaps in the scientific explanation, as they know how often that habit has been discredited by the advance of science. But unless there are certain features of the evolutionary process which the man of science cannot explain, there is no ground on which to claim guidance; in other words, unless it can be shown that the evolutionary agencies *needed* guidance, it is superfluous, and you can only prove that they needed guidance by showing that they were unable of themselves to produce a certain result. No such proof can be alleged in any department of biology. If a man believes in God on other grounds, he may care to fancy that God guided the evolutionary process, if he can conceive a spirit guiding material particles. But if he wishes to infer the existence of God from the order of nature, he is compelled to find some feature which cannot be understood except by postulating this supreme intelligence.

If, in order to do this, he fastens upon some obscure phenomenon like embryonic development, he at once puts his theism in acute rivalry with science, and makes it vitally dependent on the ignorance of science, which is apt to prove temporary. I have purposely named one of the most obscure groups of phenomena in modern biology, yet I know no embryologist who thinks that theism will solve his difficulties.

From these considerations the reader will perceive how superficial is the statement that science and religion are no longer in conflict, or that the prevalence of Agnosticism among men of science is due to some defect of character or habit of mind. The theist and the scientist are rival interpreters of nature. The one retreats as the other advances. But we have not yet exhausted the sources of conflict.

Science studies nature with an impartial eye. It finds ugliness as well as beauty, disorder as well as order. The bearing of this ugliness, disorder, and pain on theism do not concern the man of science; but the *facts* which he establishes have a very important bearing on the issue. An Agnostic medical friend of mine was invited by his clergyman to regard a beautiful rose and say if he did not see the working of a supreme intelligence in its production. He had just come from a bed on which a beautiful and innocent girl was being slowly killed by a parasitic microbe, and he silenced his pastor by asking if God had also created the microbe. One of the finest works on the lowest branch of the animal world (the Protozoa) is that of Professor Calkins, and the American biologist has quoted on the title-page a piece of old German verse:—

Lies dieses Buch und lern' dabei
Wie gross Gott auch in kleinem sei.

That is to say, "Read this book, and learn how great God is even in small things." You open the book, and find illustrations of very graceful and wonderful forms of these microscopic animals, to which Professor Calkins seems to refer. But there are other illustrations of deadly parasites and of organisms with marvellous apparatus for preying on their kind. I assume that the author did not refer to these. His attitude is uncommon among scientific men, but it is very common in other spheres. Yet there is just as much, or as little, design in the germ of Asiatic cholera or of consumption as in the pretty frame of a Diatom or a Radiolarian.

I need hardly enlarge on this aspect of nature. There is much sunshine and happiness and beauty in nature; there is also much gloom and pain and ugliness. Whatever made the one made the other. Statements that evil is "only relative" or "a defect of good" are academic futilities. A touch of gout would disturb that philosophy, nor does it reconcile us to the sufferings of the poor. Pain is as positive a sensation as pleasure. This difficulty has always reduced the theist to a melancholy silence, and it has been terribly reinforced by modern science. Not only do we find that the struggle and carnage we witness to-day have reddened the planet since consciousness dawned on it, but that the advance of life has actually been accomplished by that struggle. Prince Kropotkin has vainly attempted to reduce the element of struggle; his few examples of social life are taken from the highest and latest animals, and even in these groups the struggle against nature and against hostile groups is not lessened. Dr. Russel Wallace has been more fortunate in pointing out that we magnify the cruelty of nature[1] by reading a consciousness like our own into the lower animals. With this I cordially agree; I have shown reason in another work (*The Evolution of Mind*, 1910) to think that there is no consciousness in nature below the level of the fish, and only a feeble consciousness below the level of the mammals and birds. Yet what millions of years of carnage this concession leaves unexplained! Grim as the struggle is to-day, the vaster claws and teeth of our fossilised predecessors show how much grimmer it was in the past. We cannot close our eyes to these ugly facts. If there was guidance at all, this ghastly method of evolution was deliberately chosen. Whatever in nature produced the antelope produced the tiger; whatever produced woman produced the germ (or other agency) of cancer; whatever gave the child its beauty created the germ of diphtheria. Most of us prefer not to ascribe intelligence to that creative power.

There was a time when beauty and order seemed clearly to point to an intelligent principle, and in such circumstances evil might be regarded as a painful mystery. Now that order and beauty no longer compel us to postulate intelligence in or behind nature, we get rid of the oppressive mystery of evil. If the evolving substance of the universe is unconscious, it may take the form of a flower or a tooth, a child or a parasitic microbe. When we look candidly at both sets of facts, this seems to be the more likely alternative, and "guidance" is a superfluous mystery. A robust and very resolute theist like Robert Browning may triumphantly conclude that evil is merely "stuff for transmuting." It is true that a fine-natured woman (like Elizabeth Barrett Browning) may advance in character through suffering; but what is the proportion of such cases in the totality of pain? How does it apply to the millions of years before such fine natures graced the earth?

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[1] Mivart and others protested against the use of such a phrase as "cruelty," since animals are non-moral. The point does not concern us, as we are considering only the pain of the tiger's victim

Sir O. Lodge and a few other recent theists have argued that things are improving; that this earth may yet be a world in which God may take pride. To this Mr. Mallock bluntly retorted: "Whatever be God's future, we cannot forget his past." In any case, *how* is the world improving? Not by any "law of evolution," but by the efforts of devoted men and women. When a golden age comes, if it ever does come (and I believe that it will), its inhabitants will probably give honour to those who merit it. As a last resort, it might be suggested that the reformers are "guided." Such a theory would have to meet the singular fact that large numbers of the reformers are not theists, and that the "guidance" becomes more explicit (*i.e.*, humanitarianism increases) in proportion as faith in God decreases. But we need hardly consider that hypothesis. We have no right to assume such guidance until their conduct is inexplicable without it. Of which humanitarian of our age will this be alleged?

There is still one other important consideration in connection with this attempt to deduce the existence of God from the order and beauty of nature. Suppose we were able to set aside all the evil and pain and waste of the evolutionary process as a hopeless mystery; suppose there were, after science had exhausted its powers of explanation, instances of beauty and order in nature which seemed inexplicable on natural principles; and suppose that, undismayed by the retreat of theism age after age before the advance of science, we entertained the idea that in these inexplicable phenomena we had the action of a supreme intelligence. It will be recognised that the only ground for assuming the existence of this supreme intelligence is that it, and it alone, explains certain aspects of reality. Otherwise it is superfluous. But how much does the theory really "explain"? How does spirit act on matter? How do material particles carry out the will or design of a conscious being? In science explanation means the analysis of an obscure phenomenon into known phenomena; here the "explanation" of order and beauty leads us into a sea of mysteries. Take the embryonic phenomena, which are, as I said, the most inexplicable thing in nature. How does the assumption of a supreme intelligence help us to interpret them? How are the atoms directed or guided to realise a design of which they are utterly unconscious? We might as well resign ourselves to the initial mystery as attempt to explain it by other mysteries. Science is, in fact, not without hope of finding a solution. The same difficulty arises whenever intelligence is introduced into the order of nature.

Some reply that, since our intelligence certainly does direct or control matter (our muscles), the point of this difficulty is blunted. Quite recently a scientific man has attempted to show in the *Hibbert Journal* that there are cases in which an emotion (a state of consciousness) interferes in the chain of physical processes. An injured man, for instance, becomes angry, and certain actions proceed from his anger. We need not urge that such writers are apt to postulate what is not proved—namely, that intelligence and emotion belong to "spirit." The answer is simple enough. Every state of consciousness has a correlative state of nerve (an emotion is accompanied by a nerve-storm, for instance), and it is the nerve-process which leads to the subsequent actions.

Sir Oliver Lodge has made various efforts (especially in his *Life and Matter*, 1905) to meet the difficulty. "Is it not more reasonable," he says (p. 118), "to say that, just as we are conscious of the power of guidance in ourselves, so guidance and intelligent control may be an element running through the universe, and may be incorporated even in material things?" It is not "more reasonable," but quite unreasonable. *We* can be guided because we have intelligence; the difficulty precisely is that the universe is not conscious, and the analogy completely fails. He then very curiously imagines a materialist deriding a man for saying a path will "guide him home." Again there is not the faintest analogy; the man has intelligence, and can draw deductions. Later he refers to the way in which a musician guides the wind in the organ to the production of definite notes and harmonies. In answer to this I may repeat what I said about states of consciousness and nerve-states. None of these examples has the remotest approach to the action of spirit on matter, and Sir O. Lodge has to conclude that the method of guidance is unknown (p. 165).

pain and waste of the evolutionary process as a hopeless mystery; suppose there were, after science had exhausted its powers of explanation, instances of beauty and order in nature which seemed inexplicable on natural principles; and suppose that, undismayed by the retreat of theism age after age before the advance of science, we entertained the idea that in these inexplicable phenomena we had the action of a supreme intelligence. It will be recognised that the only ground for assuming the existence of this supreme intelligence is that it, and it alone, explains certain aspects of reality. Otherwise it is superfluous. But how much does the theory really "explain"? How does spirit act on matter? How do material particles carry out the will or design of a conscious being? In science explanation means the analysis of an obscure phenomenon into known phenomena; here the "explanation" of order and beauty leads us into a sea of mysteries. Take the embryonic phenomena, which are, as I said, the most inexplicable thing in nature. How does the assumption of a supreme intelligence help us to interpret them? How are the atoms directed or guided to realise a design of which they are utterly unconscious? We might as well resign ourselves to the initial mystery as attempt to explain it by other mysteries. Science is, in fact, not without hope of finding a solution. The same difficulty arises whenever intelligence is introduced into the order of nature.

Some reply that, since our intelligence certainly does direct or control matter (our muscles), the point of this difficulty is blunted. Quite recently a scientific man has attempted to show in the *Hibbert Journal* that there are cases in which an emotion (a state of consciousness) interferes in the chain of physical processes. An injured man, for instance, becomes angry, and certain actions proceed from his anger. We need not urge that such writers are apt to postulate what is not proved—namely, that intelligence and emotion belong to "spirit." The answer is simple enough. Every state of consciousness has a correlative state of nerve (an emotion is accompanied by a nerve-storm, for instance), and it is the nerve-process which leads to the subsequent actions.

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To sum up, therefore, we find that the old and familiar argument from design has encountered very serious difficulties, and we can hardly wonder that it is being abandoned. It was never more than a superficial attempt to fill gaps in our natural knowledge of the universe, and it has retreated for a hundred years before the advance of science. Science has put a new interpretation on the cosmos, and the theistic interpretation becomes superfluous. I have elsewhere likened the present situation to sunrise in a mountainous district. Before dawn you may, if you please, people the whole landscape with creatures of your imagination. Then the first rays illumine the hill-tops, and you see that there is no room there for your fairies and elves. The light gradually steals down the slopes and floods the valleys, and your spirits must retreat as it advances. There remain, perhaps, unexplored woods or dark gorges where you may still imagine your elves at play; but they have gone from the broad landscape, and you know that they will melt when the fuller light enters the gorge or the forest. So it is with the argument from design: for one hundred years science has advanced and teleological theism retreated. When the sun of science has fully risen it will close its long career.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MORAL ARGUMENT

MORE than a hundred years ago the famous German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, declared that theistic arguments from the order or other features of the visible universe were invalid, and that the phenomena of conscience alone guaranteed the existence of God. It was from no foresight of the victorious advance of science that Kant pleaded for a retreat from cosmic to moral arguments. His reasons were metaphysical, and were based upon a critical study of the "pure reason" or speculative intelligence. I may say that I do not accept the limitations which he imposes upon pure reason, and his view is not at all recognised as a permanent doctrine of philosophy. But his prestige and authority had a profound influence on his generation, and it became common to desert the beaten paths of theistic reasoning and search for God along new avenues.

Kant passed from the study of pure reason to that of "practical reason," or the moral intelligence, and maintained that he found here those proofs of the existence of God which pure reason could not supply. His personality should be considered in connection with this development of his system. He had been reared among the Puritans or Pietists of the time, and he clung to their inexorable moral ideal when he discarded their religious doctrines. A man of ascetic and simple life and high character, he was more stoic than the Stoics in reverence for the moral law. In a well-known phrase, he spoke of the starry heavens and the moral law as equal in impressiveness and majesty. And, while the starry heavens were in his view mere phenomena from which we could draw no transcendental deduction, the moral law testified eloquently to a supreme legislator. He brooded over his own imperious sense of right until it became what he called a "categorical command." It did not say, "Be honest if you would be happy," but, "Be honest." Yet in this world its prescriptions found no sanction and no perfect realisation. There must be a world beyond in which man can complete his moral task; and there must be a supreme legislator who enacted the law and will provide the immortal theatre for its realisation.

The fallacy of Kant's procedure has been generally recognised by subsequent philosophers. There is no *must* in the matter at all. Until the moral law is perceived to have a divine or some other weighty sanction we may, if we please, regard its "imperative" character as a delusion and disregard its enactments. It is plausible to argue that if there is a God, who formulated or enforced the moral law, he is bound to grant a future life in which its majesty will be vindicated; but it is not plausible to argue first that the law is absolutely binding, and then that it has a divine source because it is imperative. The truth is that Kant only recognised, and even exaggerated, the moral law as he found it in his own consciousness. Probably in the minds of the vast majority of his fellows at Königsberg it was infinitely removed from the majesty of the starry heavens. There are in our day able and sober writers who do not recognise its existence at all in any other form than as a social tradition. To great numbers of others it is not "categorical" at all; our moral experience is quite consistent with the theory that conscience is a conditional, not a categorical, imperative. Its dictates are just such as we should expect if it merely enforced a human law, enacted and urged by countless generations of men, for the health of the social organism. Kant is wrong, in other words, both in his initial phenomenon and his deductions from it.

From that time, however, the moral sense has been pressed into the service of theism; and the decay of the older arguments, as science advanced in its interpretation of the physical universe, threw greater stress on it. Newman relied almost entirely on the "voice of conscience" for testimony to the existence of God, and drew out an elaborate argument to show that it is the echo or reflection of a supreme personal will. Martineau also placed great reliance on the moral argument. Unlike Kant and Newman, he believed that one could demonstrate the existence of God from the physical order and the adaptations of organisms; but he gave the first rank to the argument from conscience.

In all these cases the starting-point of the argument is the highly-trained and very sensitive conscience of an individual. They generally assume that conscience takes the same imperious and august form in the breasts of other men, and it need hardly be said that their assumption is quite incorrect. Conscience is one of the most versatile and elastic powers of the human mind. We may rule out of consideration the born criminal as an abnormal person, and we may admit that the conscience of inferior races, with its grotesque contradictions, is an undeveloped faculty. But within the limits of civilisation we find the greatest diversity, and it is only in relatively few cases that we have a moral sense of the character assumed by Kant or Martineau; in those cases, moreover, the agencies of heredity and environment explain the extreme sensitiveness and seeming imperiousness.

It is so important to determine what conscience is before any inferences be drawn from it that the point must be considered more closely. It implies two things: the recognition of the difference between right and wrong, and the sense of obligation to do right and avoid wrong. In neither respect, and especially not in the former, do we find a uniform experience. The Chinese or Japanese gentleman, who has as strong a moral sense as the European, thinks concubinage or the frequenting of houses of courtesans permitted; the Christian regards such things as pre-eminently denounced by conscience. There is the same difference of opinion in regard to suicide. Nor can it be said that the Asiatic is at a lower stage of moral development. There is a growing inclination in Europe to question the rigid ideal transmitted (in theory) by Christianity, and to denounce this serious and reasoned questioning as immoral is simply meaningless abuse. There are many signs that traditional moral values will be candidly reconsidered in Europe in an early generation of the future. Apart from those who are bound by their dogmatic beliefs to adhere to the Christian ideal (though even this, as regards marriage, differs materially in different countries and is changing in England to-day), men and women feel themselves at liberty to discuss the question. Where, after candid reflection, they decide to adhere to the older ideal, they generally do so on the explicit ground of the social consequences of actions. Indeed, for all parties the social welfare is the supreme criterion. None appeal more frequently than the clergy to social consequences in connection with changes of moral views or practices.

And if there is no agreement in the subjective dictates of conscience as regards what are understood to be its peculiar sphere (sex-relations), and we have to appeal to an external standard to check its conflicting pronouncements, there is not much greater uniformity in regard to the feeling of moral compulsion. Some regard their feeling as æsthetic in nature, and place high character in the same class with beauty; some declare that the feeling is social, and enforces a communal rule for the common good; some think that its entire force is due to a fear of punishment or hope of reward; some think that it is the pure reflection of the will of a supreme legislator; some regard it as a mystic intuition, commanding allegiance by its own dignity. There is no agreement in the interpretation of our moral experience. The only common measure is that we recognise certain acts as right and others wrong, and feel (in the most varied degrees) an impulse to do the former and avoid the latter.

Now, it is plain that no theistic argument can be drawn from the mere recognition of a distinction between right and wrong. Our differences and disputes, and our appeals to the test of social consequences, clearly show that conscience is in this sense our ordinary reason directed to the study of conduct. We shall see later how modern science can trace the evolution of this recognition of right and wrong. It does not dawn mysteriously on the human intelligence, but grows up out of the tribal experience. For the moment it may suffice to quote a moral theologian who has not the faintest sympathy with liberalism in any shape. In his *Theologia Moralis* the Jesuit Father Lehmkuhl says that "even God cannot dispense from natural law" (p. 125); and he declares that this objective morality consists "in preserving the dignity of a rational nature and the harmonious relation of rational beings" (p. 30). He holds, of course, that this law is enforced (though not devised) by God; but in man it is perceived by reason. However, this will be clearer presently.

It is usual to claim that the moral impulse is the specific phenomenon which points to a moral legislator. But it is not generally perceived that the argument has been curiously undermined since the days in which Kant formulated it. In a recent and important work of Christian apologetics, *Foundations* (1912), by "seven Oxford men," Mr. Moberley very candidly states this change. The old idea that the sense of obligation implies a moral legislator has, he says, "been undermined by the spread of democracy" (p. 462). In Kant's time lawgivers were autocrats, like Louis XIV. or George I. If you detected an imperious law in your conscience, you naturally looked for the autocratic lawgiver. To-day "neither the origin nor the validity of human laws implies a monarchical lawgiver." We are accustomed to see laws formulated by the will of an entire community, and when we are confronted by a law we recognise that it may be autocratic or democratic in origin. There is nothing whatever in the moral impulse that compels us to regard it as autocratic rather than democratic. In the mind of a Christian, whose literature and reflections have consistently related it to a supreme being, it will naturally have the complexion of a monarchic command. To others, who have a strong sense of obligation, but no Christian beliefs, it reveals no trace of its origin. As far as the subjective experience goes, it may be either autocratic or democratic in origin.

Thus the political development of Europe has robbed of its apparent solidity the proof which Kant wished to substitute for the discarded arguments: so frail and precarious are the traces of God in the range of man's experience. This political change has, however, merely opened the way to a rival interpretation of conscience, and has not decided the issue. Here modern science once more enters the field as a grim and successful rival of theology in the interpretation of our experience. It seems determined to wrest the moral as well as the cosmological domain from the theist.

The chief issue is now the question of the source of the moral law, since the feeling of obligation to observe it will come from the legislator. We are, on this issue, confronted with two rival interpretations. The theist declares that conscience is the echo of the supreme command; the non-theist suggests that the moral law was laid down by men in their own interests, and is enforced by a perception of those interests and the traditional or social insistence on them. We have, in essence, the same position as before. If the man of science can give us a plausible theory of the rise of the moral feelings, he has displaced the theist from another area of reality. The theistic view becomes superfluous. You cannot infer from a phenomenon that God exists unless you prove that his existence is essential for the production of that phenomenon.

There are, of course, many theories of the origin of morality besides that which I have placed in opposition to that of the theist; but it is not necessary to consider them here. There is, for instance, the intuitionist theory, which detaches the moral law from both God and humanity, and conceives it as a self-existing law perceived by an intuition of the human mind. Since this philosophical view explains neither the origin nor the (comparative) imperiousness of moral feeling, I propose to disregard it. Further, the social view of morality has many shades, and is variously known as Utilitarianism, Hedonism, or Humanism. It is necessary here only to resent the misunderstanding, or libel, which causes many to assail Hedonism. *Hedone* is the Greek for pleasure; and it is a common error, much fostered by St. Augustine, to suppose that Epicurus and his followers regarded "pleasure" as the supreme good and the test of morals. Epicurus led a life of great sobriety and high culture—"plain living and high thinking," in a modern phrase; and neither he nor any other serious moralist ever concluded that pleasure was the aim of moral legislation.

On the other hand, it is unnecessary to choose between "happiness" and "utility" as the test of morals, since both words must be taken in so wide a sense that they practically coincide. We may say that the social or humanitarian view of morals is that moral law is a code of conduct promulgated by mankind for the present welfare of the community. Such a view, if it can be established, sufficiently explains the feeling of obligation, except where it is enhanced by specific religious doctrines. A moralist like Martineau raises his moral feeling to an intense pitch by a life-long conviction that the moral law coincides with the will of God, and then would deduce the existence of God from the very intensity of his feeling. What we have to explain is the moral feeling in its natural condition. If it be true that moral law is vitally connected with man's interests, individually and socially, we have a ground for a feeling of obligation to observe it. But, whatever view we take of it, we must make a large allowance for education, literature, and public opinion. If moral philosophers were to make a patient study of the various kinds of consciousness which we find in different environments, they would speak less about "intuitions" and "categorical imperatives." They would find the moral feeling of the individual varying almost precisely with the influences and traditions of the environment. I do not mean simply that the stunted intelligences and hard conditions of the poor do not develop their "intuitive" power. This relation will be found among educated, as well as uneducated, persons. In certain intellectual environments the inner feeling of obligation, especially on sex matters, hardly exists; the tradition is against it, and the conscience coincides with the tradition.

What science has to explain, therefore, is not the very sensitive feeling of a sincere divine or a religious woman or a moral philosopher, in whom extraneous dogmas have combined with the natural moral impulse. We must find an explanation of moral impulse in a less complex form, and then proceed to explain the more complex varieties. The earlier procedure has been entirely unscientific and misleading. We must begin, not with the conscience of a Kant or a Newman, but with the moral feeling of the lowest races of men, and proceed upward from that level.

A number of works have been written in recent years on the subject,[1] and there is now no anthropologist or sociologist of importance who questions the natural evolution of moral feeling. The old legend of the giving of an elementary decalogue on the summit of Sinai is outside the range of discussion. The Old Testament itself states that the Hebrews had previously sojourned in Egypt, and we know from the Egyptian remains that that nation had very advanced moral ideas. It is, in point of fact, most improbable that the Israelites were ever in Egypt; but the fact remains that Egypt and Babylon had moral codes comparable to ours thousands of years before Moses is even claimed to have existed, and that at least the Assyrian and Babylonian moral culture influenced the Jews. We have to go among the lowest peoples of the earth, who represent man in the remote Stone Age, if we would discover the beginning of moral feeling.

It is impossible here even to summarise the mass of evidence we have as to the moral notions of lower races, and I must proceed as in the earlier chapter on their religious beliefs. Those peoples who, as I previously explained, represent the earliest phases of human development are found to be the most primitive in regard to a moral sense. When so learned and authoritative an anthropologist as Dr. Haddon pronounces that they have no moral sense, we must conclude that it is at least most rudimentary. But it is a common mistake to imagine that these lowly peoples (the Tasmanians, Veddahs, Yahgans, Bushmen, etc.) live repulsive lives from our moral point of view. They are generally monogamous and more strictly faithful in the conjugal relation than civilised races. They rarely murder, and are generally pacific and kindly. In most cases they rarely steal or lie, and they are almost always hospitable. We have, in fact, the singular situation that, as Dr. Haddon says of one of these peoples, "they do not recognise virtue, but do not practise vice."

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[1] Spencer's *Data of Ethics* and Mill's *Utilitarianism* are well known. The more important of recent works are A. Sutherland's *Origin and Growth of the Moral Instinct* (1898), L. T. Hobhouse's *Morals in Evolution* (1906), Professor Westermarck's *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas* (1906–8), and Professor Read's *Natural and Social Morals* (1909).

Naturally, many observers infer from their conduct that they have moral ideals; and we have the customary difference of opinion. The truth is that we have here moral feeling in its first stage of evolution. In a sense we might trace moral feeling down into the animal world from which man has arisen. As soon as, in the birds and mammals, the family relation begins, and the parents make sacrifices for their young, we have an unconscious attitude which will develop into moral feeling. The social life of higher animals extends this unconscious altruism to other individuals besides the family. But there is no consciousness of law, and most observers find no such consciousness among the lowest human peoples. Perhaps we may recognise in their case a dim consciousness of a duty to adhere to the traditions of the community; but it is certainly only a matter of tradition, which has great force among primitive peoples.

Even when we rise to a higher level of savage life — say, the Australian aboriginals — the best authorities still differ as to whether there is any moral feeling. It appears so gradually and insensibly that it is impossible to assign a definite stage to its appearance. A time comes when the tribe consciously admits laws of conduct, and thus formulates a primitive decalogue. The most grotesque aberrations of the moral feeling develop at this stage, but they hardly concern us here; it need only be said that special economic conditions, tribal needs, or superstitions will generally be found to account for these deformities. What we are concerned to recognise is that throughout all these early stages morality has a plainly social character. The unconscious virtues of the lowest peoples are precisely those habits which contribute most to the welfare of the community—peacefulness, honesty, monogamy, and hospitality. Chastity they know not; but they strictly respect each other's wives, which contributes largely to their peace. They have unconsciously, by a kind of natural selection, acquired socially useful habits.

Morality arises when the intelligence develops sufficiently to recognise the social value of these habits, and the elementary law of conduct is laid down. The Hebrew decalogue is, apart from its theological clauses, merely a legal expression of the traditions of the lowest races. When those traditions are reflectively weighed and formulated, we have morality. Nor does this purely social character alter when we rise to higher peoples. Monogamy is apt to disappear, and cruelty is often cultivated instead of the primitive kindliness. The infants and the aged are frequently put to death, and human sacrifices of a horrible character begin. But now that the primitive peoples are organised in tribes and roam over broad hunting grounds, warfare begins and cruelty or ferocity is a useful social quality. As the tribe increases, moreover, food often runs short, and the young or the useless aged (who are commonly quite willing) must be sacrificed. Other conditions disturb monogamy, while the growing belief in spirits occasions repulsive efforts to conciliate them. Even in its aberrations morality develops along social lines.

At length the developing moral feeling is combined with the developing religious feeling. Anthropologists have now made it quite clear that the two arose independently, and amalgamated at a relatively late stage. It hardly concerns us here to ask whether this union was or was not of advantage to morality. If we concluded that it was, we should not be in the least tending to show that the religious ideas were true; but, in fact, it seems that the stereotyping of moral codes in sacred books, the distortion of moral sentiment by crude dogmas, and the facilities generally provided for releasing the sinner from his sense of sin, have probably outweighed whatever advantage morality derived from the alliance. It is an open question whether the morality of the ancient Egyptians was not favourably influenced by their intense belief in life and judgment after death; but the general morality of Europe certainly did not improve when Christianity added its (theoretically) weighty sanctions to the moral law, and is not deteriorating now that large masses of people cease to believe in those sanctions. On the other hand, where morality has been again dissociated from religion (China, Japan, Greece, and Rome), it has not lost any of its authority, to say the least.

These later developments, however, do not concern us in this inquiry.[1] All that we need observe is that morality arose as the formulation of social rules of conduct, and at each phase in its normal development it is quite intelligible as such. It has no mystic features which impel us to transcend the natural order. Its whole phenomena are consistent with the view that it is a social law, formulated as a result of human experience. I have said that in the mind of a fervent Christian it takes a specifically Christian complexion, and is in reality something more than a social law, because it has from infancy been associated with God. To explain this specific type of conscience, however, we are by no means compelled to assume the existence of God; the *belief* in God quite suffices, whether it be true or false. To a fine-natured person the idea that the moral law reflects the will of an all-holy and all-seeing God must be an incentive to virtue. But experience has amply shown that non-theistic conceptions of morality (Stoic, Buddhist, Confucian, or Rationalistic) may be just as efficacious in promoting high character. From a particular conscience you can only infer the existence of the ideas which moulded it, irrespective of their truth.

This conclusion—that morality is, in essence, purely social—is clinched by two other considerations. Suppose that, in obedience to a modern school of writers, we agreed to abolish the moral law. What would be the result? It is surely obvious that we should be speedily compelled to restore it on purely human grounds. We should shrink from a social order in which honesty, kindliness, truthfulness, justice, and sobriety were regarded as delusions; or, were we blindly insensible to the misery and chaos of such a society, our nation would soon be enfeebled and extinguished. Let us face such issues frankly. There is only one line of the existing code of morals which would be disputed in such a social reconstruction of morals. That question we will consider in the last chapter. All other contents of the moral code are plainly social laws, and contain not the least reference to a non-human legislator.

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[1] The subject will be treated in a later volume of this series by Mr. Charles T. Gorham.

The second consideration is that the clergy themselves seem to be convinced of this. It is not enough for them to suggest that, if the belief in God is abandoned, the moral sentiment will decay. They must show, and are most eager to show, that such a decay means social deterioration, if not catastrophe. They put before us lurid visions of the immorality of Babylon, Athens, and Rome, and predict that Europe will suffer a similar dissolution if it does not retain the moral ideals and the religious doctrines they represent. These historical statements are, like their pictures of modern civilisations (*e.g.*, France) which have little religion, entirely reckless and inaccurate. We cannot enter into that point here, but will assume that such writers, though culpably ignorant of history, sincerely think that morality will decay with religion and social decay will be the outcome. They could hardly furnish a stronger testimony to the social character of moral law. If grave social deterioration follows upon the decay of conscience, we have the plainest social ground for cultivating it. The theist is, in fact, in a painful dilemma. If he shows that the world will grow unfit or unpleasant for rational beings by a surrender of the moral sentiment, he betrays its human source and sanction; if he cannot show that the world will be less fit to live in, and progress will be suspended, he will hardly induce our generation to share his anxiety about the decay of faith.

We must conclude, then, that the moral order no more testifies to a supreme intelligence than the physical order; no more than the social order, of which it is merely one aspect. My conscience bids me cultivate honour, sobriety, kindliness, and justice. I see no mystic features in its bidding—and might, indeed, be tempted to disregard it if its meaning were not plain—but see in that social order to which I belong the plain reason for all its dictates. I would live in a world brightened by those qualities, and know that in proportion as I contribute to them I may expect others to do the same. "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you" has been hailed as a revelation. To me it is a moral platitude. But, whether it be profound or obvious, it is a plain declaration of the social ground and sanction of moral conduct. I do not need to transcend the order of nature to discover the source of such a maxim; nor, when I perceive that experience of life has impressed it on every civilisation and every generation, and it is the supreme lesson of all teaching and all letters, do I wonder that it echoes with some note of command in my mind.

CHAPTER VII.

SOME POPULAR APOLOGISTS

IT has seemed to me useful to examine at some length the two lines of argument which have led the majority of theists to their conviction. The more liberal or more philosophical theist is impatient of a discussion of what he regards as ancient fallacies, but it will be found that most people who believe in God rely on one or both of these arguments. To one man the starry heavens or the adaptations of organisms reveal the existence of a supreme intelligence; to another, the "voice" of conscience is the confident indication. I have therefore examined the principles involved in these two classes of evidence, and failed to find them convincing or valid. But, when each generation of critics has spent its force on them, they rise again from their discredit and mould the convictions of millions. New shades of thought, new turns of reasoning, new facts on which to base them, are discovered, and, at least among the unphilosophic mass, they enjoy an unfailing popularity.

We have, therefore, to glance next at some of the recent works in which these and other arguments are urged. A time will come when men will look back on our generation with acute curiosity. Hundreds of writers and preachers feverishly work to establish the existence of God for a doubting generation, and no mysterious fire flashes across the sky, no single word breaks the inexorable silence of the heavens. God could reveal his existence with absolutely overpowering force at any moment, yet men must search creation for disputable traces of his presence. Nor is this the sole ironic feature. Some of the most profoundly religious men of our time regard all these "proofs" which we are discussing as mere bubbles of rhetoric, and think that, whether the men before us did or did not go on to face God, they believed in him for entirely unsound reasons. Listen to William James:—

> That vast literature of proofs of God's existence drawn from the order of nature, which a century ago seemed so overwhelmingly convincing, to-day does little more than gather dust in libraries, for the simple reason that our generation has ceased to believe in the kind of God it argued for. Whatever sort of being God may be, we *know* to-day that he is nevermore that mere external inventor of "contrivances" intended to make manifest his "glory," in which our great-grandfathers took such satisfaction.[1]

The passage may surprise some who are accustomed to hear James described as one of the brilliant men of science who in our day upheld "religion." He did uphold religion, but the way in which he is quoted is sadly characteristic of present religious literature. He saw no proof (see the last chapter of the book quoted) of the existence of God or the immortality of the human mind, and remained agnostic on those points to the end.

But Professor James is strangely astray in relegating arguments from "the order of nature" and "contrivances" to our great-grandfathers. His biting words apply to Martineau or Sir O. Lodge as much as to St. Pierre. We shall deal in the next chapter with more novel and philosophic arguments, but it will be seen from this chapter, in which I discuss a selection of the most popular of recent apologists, that they nearly all build on organic adaptations and the order of nature. I decline to disdain the faith of the millions; indeed, it is possible that we shall not find the faith of the philosophers more convincing. They never convinced James of the existence of a supreme being, either personal or impersonal.

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[1] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 74.

In the first place I take what is, I suppose, the most esteemed apologetic work on the Roman Catholic side. We may award this the first place, not because we are likely to listen to the Roman Catholic boast that they only have really solid evidence, but because it gives the most ancient and discarded arguments and is most promptly dismissed. The volume is one of a series of manuals of "Catholic Philosophy" issued by the English Jesuits, and is written by Father Boedder (whom we must assume to have been their best representative on this subject) and entitled *Natural Theology*. It is the philosophy I taught for some years, and I am therefore not likely to misapprehend it.

Father Boedder's first argument may be a graceful concession to the Papacy, which insists that apologists shall rely on Thomas Aquinas. He sets out to prove that there is a First Cause. There must, he says, be at least one "self-existing" or "necessarily existing" being. We can conceive the material world and its living population as non-existent, therefore they do not exist by some intrinsic necessity of their own nature and must depend for it on a cause. They are "contingent" beings, in the jargon of the schools, and the whole chain of contingent beings must start from a self-existing being. It is doubtful if this kind of logic-chopping impresses many to-day, except those who are compelled to take their cue from the early medieval philosophers. Its fundamental defect is a confusion of ideas and things. Father Boedder transfers his abstract and arbitrary ideas of "contingent" and "necessary" to the real world with all the ancient facility of a medieval schoolman. It is the same confusion of the order of ideas and the order of things as in the famous and beautifully simple argument of St. Anselm (known as the "ontological proof"), that our idea of the Infinite would be short of a perfection if it did not include existence, therefore the Infinite exists.

Further elaborating his "cosmological" proof, Father Boedder finds that things must not only have a cause, but an "adequate cause." That is a truism, of course; but that the First Cause must be intelligent because man is intelligent does not in the least follow. It follows only that the First Cause, whether ether or God, must have been capable of producing intelligence. There is a much-esteemed popular maxim in these matters, that "You cannot take out of a sack (or pie) what you did not put into it." This is taken to mean that you cannot have materially different qualities in the effect from those of the cause, which is a flagrant defiance of all experience. The beauty of a diamond emerges by the crystallisation of unbeautiful carbon; morality arises out of non-moral feelings; and so on to infinity.

In the second place, Father Boedder, having discharged his duty to the ancients, presses the familiar argument from design. Order and beauty "cannot be explained" by science; he stakes his faith on that. But as he seems to be singularly ignorant of what science has done in the way of explaining them, we are not much impressed by his dogmatic assurance. He tries a metaphysical short-cut. Order is "an adaptation of diverse things to one definite result," and implies intelligence. The definition is, of course, neatly framed so as to contain his conclusion. All that we see in nature is that diverse things or structures co-operate in producing a certain result, and such an issue is well within the range of natural selection. However, if you press the evolutionary view, on which Roman Catholics seem to claim more authority than biologists, he says that the particles of the primitive nebula must have had a certain arrangement to work out in the way they did. A little knowledge of astronomy would have saved him from this supposition. The particles may be entirely chaotic in the nebula; the arrangement takes place in the course of condensation. In fine, he says that the evolutionary process must have had a beginning, because otherwise we should have an "infinite series" of states, consisting of units and capable of addition. In other words, he makes his own contradiction in terms (an infinite series which is not infinite), and imposes it on nature. He forgets that infinity or eternity is a purely negative idea. All that it means, when applied to the material universe, is that there was, as far as we can see, no beginning, and will be no end. His conundrums, therefore, do not apply.

He then proceeds to find a "moral argument" in the universal belief of mankind, which we have already considered. Father Boedder evades the difficulties ingeniously. All peoples believe in "an intelligent nature superior to the material world and man"; and to prove this he quotes a few anthropologists, who are of opinion that there are no peoples without "religion." After quoting these vague (and disputed) assurances, he finds that all men believe in "a superior and invisible intelligence governing the visible universe," which not a single one of his authorities states. As to modern Agnosticism, at the other end of the scale, you are invited to reflect that "only a small portion of these can be regarded as persons of special culture" (p. 66). Of the educated Chinese and Japanese he does not seem to have heard; and, indeed, his knowledge of comparative religion is just as slender as his knowledge of scientific explanations of order and beauty.

A fourth line of argument is drawn from the stupidities and other inconveniences of Agnosticism, and is hardly worth examining. Catholic theologians hold that there is no such thing as honest disbelief in God, and that the Agnostic will be damned "sans phrase." On the other hand, there is hardly a philosopher to-day who does not reject their metaphysical "demonstrations" as empty verbiage, and even many Catholics (such as Newman) heartily concur. The reader may judge.

From the atmosphere of the Middle Ages we turn to a liberal and popular Protestant writer, Dr. Warschauer, who has recently published a very vigorous and triumphant little book, which he calls *The Atheist's Dilemma.* Dr. Warschauer is no more intimidated by the philosophers than Father Boedder. He has perfectly clear and demonstrative proofs, from the order of nature, of the existence of God; and his followers must really feel that the "atheist" is a fool, or else a rogue. Let us examine them.

"Every phenomenon has a cause" is the solid foundation. The word "phenomenon" may sound impressive to Dr. Warschauer's followers, but it is unfortunate. It is borrowed from Kant, and is an essential part of his philosophy; and Kant went on to show that the law of causation had no validity whatever among phenomena! Well, let us take it that Dr. Warschauer merely chooses a wrong term from ignorance of philosophy. We then stumble at the word "cause," which in modern thought means merely "antecedent." Now, Dr. Warschauer assures us that, even if the universe were eternal, there must be a cause of its successive changes. Quite so; but the apologist does not give us the least reason why these causes may not be found within the material series (say, ether). Parenthetically he remarks that the supposition of an eternal material universe is "open to serious scientific objections." He refrains from naming these "scientific objections"; but I presume that he is referring to certain semi-metaphysical arguments which we will consider presently, and which Sir Oliver Lodge, an authority on the matter, describes as "childish" (*Man and the Universe*, p. 30).

Having got our cause—which may be ether or anything as far as the argument goes—Dr. Warschauer proceeds to endow it with intelligence. It must be "adequate to the effect"; and that innocent platitude is made, as in the pages of Father Boedder, to prove that only a conscious cause could have produced consciousness. In fact, we are told that, since the universe is "intelligible," its cause must have been "intelligent." What the ground for that audacious maxim is I cannot discover. Even a chaos would be intelligible, one imagines; and the order of our universe does not in the least imply an intelligent cause, as we have seen.

Then it is claimed that regularity and order imply "will." We have, it seems, to choose between "chance" and "purpose," and we might as well expect to form a poem by throwing down a handful of type as form a world by the "fortuitous concourse of atoms"—a very ancient fallacy. It might apply to the atomic universe of Democritus, but has no application whatever to the evolutionary process conceived by modern science. "Will" is superfluous, until you show that the natural and scientific explanation fails. This Dr. Warschauer proceeds to do, building on the temporary embarrassments of science in the good old way (and probably assuring his congregation that there is no rivalry now between religion and science). Take the embryonic development of the bird, he says; he seems to think that modern embryology attributes it to "chance." Take, again, the beauty of flowers (which any botanist will explain), or the instincts of bees. He even points out that the brain of the bee is very minute, as if that had the remotest bearing on the question. In fine, he asks us to see how a great naturalist, Dr. Russel Wallace, has found purpose in the evolutionary process; as if it were not notorious that Dr. Wallace's conclusions are eccentric and (as I have previously shown) based on a wrong statement of facts.

The only substantial point in Dr. Warschauer's book, therefore, is that there are many things in the natural order which science cannot explain, and so they fall to the theologian. It is unfortunate that he chooses the wrong examples, and, like most people who descant on what science "cannot explain," has no knowledge of science. However, this seems to be the really popular apologetic. Such apologists seem to forget that the inability of a scientist to explain a thing and the inability of natural elements to produce it are totally different matters. When the scientist has a perfect knowledge of natural elements, and is still unable to explain certain structures, it will be time to consider transcendental explanations. Meantime Dr. Warschauer sits on the beauty of the flower, and the actions of the bee, and the embryonic development of the bird; until science dislodges him. His theism has a rather precarious lease of nature.

A very different type of popular apologist is Sir Oliver Lodge. He is a man of science, and does not eke out his arguments with quotations from ancient authorities or foreigners whose names and authority the reader is not likely to know. He is one of the very few men of science in our time who have responded to the appeal of the Churches for aid. It is true that he is regarded by the Churches as a very doubtful auxiliary; since he holds that, in spite of their divine guidance, they have been deplorably wrong for ages (in fact, always) in interpreting their own dogmas, and wishes to set them right; and because he is singularly alone in his opinions in the scientific world. He is a Pantheist, moreover, and will not admit the creation of the world. However, he does believe in God, and we turn with interest to ask his reasons.

In his *Man and the Universe* (1908) we have what seems to be his most deliberate pronouncement on our subject. The first chapter very fairly states the issue between modern science and theism; the second chapter offers a "reconciliation." We must give up all metaphysical quibbles about the non-eternity and the creation of the universe. Nature is "an aspect of the godhead," and to say that it arose from God is "only a mode of saying that what was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be" (p. 171). "I want to make the distinct assertion," he says (p. 172), "that a really existing thing never perishes," and that we cannot conceive things "jumping into and jumping out of existence."[1] As to those who (as we shall see) argue from the dissipation of energy that the world had a beginning, their excursion into physics is "childish." Moreover, "the old teleology has gone," and Sir Oliver shows no disposition to build on conscience or the beliefs of savages.

Where, then, must we seek God? It appears that the average theist makes the singular mistake of looking in dark nooks and corners for the Almighty when his action is seen in every movement of every atom of the universe. God guides and controls all. Imagine a room full of automatic machinery, turning out its products unceasingly without apparent guidance. It seems to be a self-sufficient mechanism, but you know that you need not wait for something to go wrong to discover the controlling mind; the man is controlling the whole time. Sir Oliver Lodge's writings are rich in analogies, but the moment you want to examine any particular analogy closely he drops it like a hot potato, and reminds you of the difference between finite and infinite things. The point is, of course, that even a child sees that this machinery was set up, is kept going, and is controlled by intelligence. It is totally inexplicable without intelligence. But is the mechanism of the universe inexplicable without intelligence? We think that we are on the point of discovering some forceful principle when the argument suddenly closes with the vapid questions: "*May* we not be looking at the action of the manager all the time?" and "Are we sure that there is no guidance?"

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[1] Sir Oliver Lodge is often difficult to understand, as he seems to think that plain statements savour of materialism. He had made these statements in an earlier work (*Life and Matter*), and when someone, on my authority, observed that Sir Oliver Lodge did not admit the creation of the universe, he (Sir Oliver) wrote a letter in the press indignantly denying it. I therefore put this interpretation on his words with all diffidence. The real aim of his metaphysical dogma—it is nothing else—is to show that the mind of man does not perish. But it seems to cut both ways.

Sir Oliver Lodge's apologetic is as rich in "may be's" as in analogies. When, in an earlier work, he spoke of a sunrise on the Alps as an indication of deity, and I pointed out that science could give a complete explanation of the phenomenon, he retorted: "Are we sure that we have explained the whole phenomenon?" All that we can say to this elusive attitude is that it has an immeasurable field for its play, but the field is hopelessly sterile. We account for the things that are, not the things that may be. There may be a whole Olympian family managing the universe, but the serious question is to find a positive trace of their existence. Hence, we need not stay to examine Sir Oliver Lodge's subtle (and highly metaphorical) suggestion of the nature of this guidance until he shows us some reason to think that it exists.

But he is not content to leave the matter there. After rebuking those who look only for an "intermittent action" of God in the universe, who regard him as a *deus ex machina* to solve only the more difficult problems of science, he returns boldly to their policy and builds resolutely on "the old teleology." There are various things which science cannot explain—the origin of favourable variations, the instinct of the bee or the beaver, the genius of man—so (assuming, as usual, that the inability of the scientist to explain is the same thing as the inability of nature to produce) we must bring in God. We may reply as to Dr. Warschauer. First, Sir Oliver Lodge apparently does not know what biology has already explained; secondly, he is welcome to occupy these little areas of obscurity until science tells him to move on. When he adds, as inexplicable phenomena, "premonition, inspiration, clairvoyance, and telepathy," we may wait until the facts are proved before we try to explain them. For telepathy there is evidence, in my opinion, but it is quite easily conceived as a material process.

The arguments of Sir Oliver Lodge are so exceedingly feeble and old-fashioned that one wonders what is the real ground for his persistent disdain of "materialism." In *Life and Matter* he reads the materialist a lesson from Huxley; but as Huxley relies in this on Hume's idealist philosophy, we can hardly think that Sir Oliver Lodge seriously endorses it. In another place he imagines a materialist scolding a man who says that a certain path will "guide" him; and in *Reason and Belief* (1910) he makes a materialist say to an audience at a concert: "What are you crying about, with your Wagner and your

Brahms? It is only horsehair scraping on catgut!" As I have never been able to discover who these stupid people are to whom Sir Oliver Lodge so frequently refers, I am at a loss to criticise him. But there is grave reason to suspect that no such people exist (people, for instance, who cannot distinguish the sensation of music from the physical processes which lead to it), and that Sir Oliver Lodge is merely caricaturing those who do not accept his spirit-world. If so, it is regrettable that he has nothing better to offer them than this mixture of bad biology, worse metaphysic, and figures of speech.

There would be a peculiar interest in examining the arguments of other scientific men who are theists, but it is unfortunate that very few furnish us with the opportunity. The peculiar evidence on which Dr. Wallace relies we have previously considered, and the late Lord Kelvin seemed to appeal to certain biological considerations which our leading biologists promptly repudiated. Sir J. J. Thomson has, apparently, not made public the grounds of the liberal theism which he seems to hold, and we can only faintly conjecture the considerations which move Professor J. A. Thomson from a work which he has translated from the German, and we will examine in the next chapter. Principal Lloyd Morgan has somewhat scantily revealed the bases of his religious conviction (*Contemporary Review*, June, 1904), and he seems to argue for an impersonal First Cause underlying material phenomena, on the customary grounds, while protesting against the "crude" idea of divinity which is current in the Churches. In spite of the constant assurances of Sir Oliver Lodge and others that the "materialistic wave" of half-a-century ago (when Huxley, from whom Sir Oliver Lodge reads us a lesson against materialism, was the nearest approach to a materialist) has subsided, we find very few scientific men professing theism, and hardly any professing Christianity; and where they do make a profession of theism, they either refrain from stating the grounds of it or rely on the arguments we have already analysed.

Two works by scientific men should be noticed, though they cannot be described as popular. The first is an essay entitled *The Unknown God*, by Sir Henry Thompson. The chief part of the essay is the conclusion that the infinite and eternal source of energy in the universe—let us accept the phrase, with the qualifications I have given—is intelligent and beneficent, though not personal. In so far as Sir Henry relies for proof of this on the order and regularity of natural phenomena, we have already considered his argument. The regularity is quite intelligible without an objective intelligence, and we entirely fail to see how a spiritual intelligence could help us, even if there were obscurities. Sir Henry Thompson adds that when we see the upward trend, as it were, of evolution, and its culmination in civilised man, we must recognise intelligent and even beneficent purpose. On the reconciliation of this assumed beneficence with the predominance of pain and evil, Sir Henry has no new suggestion to make, and most people will conclude that the evidence of insensibility in the evolving substance far outweighs any scanty suggestions of beneficence. But, in point of fact, the upward trend of the cosmic process implies neither intelligence nor beneficence. A distinguished chemist lately said that in his conviction the origin of life on earth was due to a "series of accidents." That phrase may be applied fearlessly to the course of that line of evolution which has culminated in man, as any good work on evolution will show. Once more, you cannot infer God from the cosmic process until you discover some feature of it which is unintelligible without him. The evolution of man is assuredly not such a feature. And if we glance at the future, and foresee the time when the story of man will end in the frozen silence of this earth, we are confirmed in the feeling that the evolving process is mechanical and unregarding.

The next work is entitled *Quæro*, and comes from the pen of Dr. Keeling, formerly professor of gynecology at Sheffield University. His work is by far the most thoughtful contributed to the subject from the scientific side; and its conclusion is modest, since Dr. Keeling thinks that this conclusion will "offend neither theist nor non-theist." He does not trust to the scientist's inability to explain the charm of the Bay of Naples or the adaptation of an organism to its needs. He admits an eternal evolving universe (like all the other scientific men I have quoted), and merely claims that there is a source of energy, a Power, equally infinite and eternal, underlying its phenomena; and, since there are phenomena of life and mind as well as of matter, it has its living and conscious side as well as the material.

This is probably the conception of most of the scientific men who still adhere to theism, and I will make one or two suggestions concerning it. The popular arguments advanced by the Ballards and Waggetts and Warschauers and Boedders are doomed. They expressly challenge science and give a rival interpretation of the universe, or parts of it. But it is a mistake to think that science will have nothing to say to this more advanced theism, which is very little more than the conception of Herbert Spencer. In the first place, "power" and "source of energy" are scientific terms, and scientific men may insist on their being used accurately. Now, a very little investigation will suffice to learn that by energy the physicist means only a certain abstract expression of the motion, or potential motion, of matter. As Sir Oliver Lodge says, from the physicist's point of view there are only matter and motion; it would be better to say, matter in motion, or moving matter (including ether). Hence "infinite and eternal energy"—a phrase which theists, Spencerians, and materialists have adopted—really means only infinite and eternal matter; and the "source of energy" is not a "power," which we may transform into a semi-divinity, but, as far as we can see, the ether itself. It is thus seen that the starting-point of this new theism is not so firm as it looks.

The second difficulty is the assumption that whatever it is that produces life and intelligence must be living and intelligent. The cause must be "adequate" to the effect; or, as Dr. Keeling says (since the preceding phrase is a platitude, and means only that, to produce an effect, a cause must be able to produce it), *Nemo dat quod non habet* ("No one can give what he has not got"). It is the familiar, and somewhat threadbare, sack-argument. Now, this maxim is based neither on experience nor philosophy. Very few informed people to-day would question that non-living matter is capable of evolving into living matter. In saying the opposite Dr. Keeling puts himself in antagonism to the overwhelming majority of biologists, and puts his faith at the mercy of the advance of science, in the traditional way. Sir O. Lodge more wisely points out that an intricate grouping of atoms "is likely to have properties differing not only in degree, but in kind, from the properties of simple substances."[1] That fact, based on the most ample and daily observation, makes an end of the sack-argument. It was never more than a difficulty of the imagination. Mind, for instance, seems so very different from matter that we cannot imagine the one arising from the other. There is no intrinsic reason whatever why it should not, and it is an open question whether it did or no. In each human being born consciousness slowly develops out of the unconscious. Why not in the universe at large, which, though less rapidly, has built up the human brain just as the embryonic agencies do?

A very different writer may next be noticed, as he presses a line of argument to which we have as yet only incidentally referred. A few years ago a Mr. de Tunzelmann challenged me to a debate on theism on the ground that he had novel evidence. It turned out that the argument was so technical that he was unable to put it fairly before the audience, and wanted me to "take it as read."[2] It is an intricate mathematical argument, borrowed from Professor Jeans, which purports to prove, from the dissipation of energy, that the universe had a beginning and was therefore created. I will not go so far as to call this argument "childish," as Sir O. Lodge does. The positive basis of it is that, in our experience, energy is being converted into heat without, *in our experience*, a corresponding re-conversion into active energy. It is quite obvious that this is a cosmic matter, and cannot be settled by man's experience on this planet. Nature may have myriads of laboratories for the re-conversion of energy, for all we know. The basis of fact is, therefore, quite unsound, and the argument is worthless.

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[1] *Life and Matter*, p. 186.

[2] He afterwards, during my absence from England, published a misleading "report of the debate," in spite of my wife's protests. The speeches ascribed to Mr. de Tunzelmann are not those delivered by him.

Finally, the apologetic work of the Rev. Dr. Ballard requires some notice. His voluminous and vigorous (to speak politely) works do not seem to have had a far-reaching influence, and they have little originality. For the most part they are interesting compilations of quotations from earlier writers, freshened by round abuse of his opponents. In his *Haeckel's Monism False* (1905) he has a lengthy chapter on "The Thought of God." I can, however, only gather incidentally from his hundred pages of trivialities and personalities that he has a most robust faith in teleology. The order and regularity and occasional beauty of the universe point to a controlling mind. As he does not contribute any original element to the argument, I need not return to it.

These examples of current popular theistic literature will suffice for our purpose. Many more have been analysed elsewhere by me, but they purvey the same arguments in the same forms. We have here the considerations on which the belief of the vast majority of theists is based, and may make a few final reflections on them.

1. The arguments from conscience and from the supposed universality of belief in God have greatly

waned in popularity, and are now seriously regarded by few.

2. The metaphysical argument for a First Cause leads to no useful conclusion, and is little trusted. Both science and philosophy have considerably modified the idea of causality, and this has destroyed the base of the argument. It is now, moreover, generally admitted that there is no proof that the universe had a beginning, and so the argument gives no support to the popular belief in creation.

3. There is still, at this popular level of argumentation, an incurable disposition to build on gaps or obscurities of scientific knowledge. Particular structures (organic forms and beautiful objects) are said to be beyond the power of science to explain, and therefore hailed as revelations of God. That argument is entirely illogical in itself, since science has a very imperfect knowledge of what natural forces can do, and it places the theist in deadly rivalry with science.

4. The more enlightened popular defenders of theism reject all these arguments, and rely increasingly on what is called "the new teleology." They speak superciliously of Paley, and return, with little modification, to his principles. The only difference is that, while Paley found the action of God only in the more intricate or more beautiful objects of nature, the new teleologists find it everywhere. A cholera germ is, Sir O. Lodge says, "a good thing in itself," and we need not be deterred from seeing the divine guidance in its construction. Briefly, no atom, of the universe, which is admitted to be infinite and eternal, moves without guidance. This, apart from the more philosophical views which we will consider in the next chapter (which often coincide with

this), is the new theism. It was practically initiated by Dr. Croll (*Basis of Evolution*). On this argument I offer three reflections :—

(*a*) I have not discovered any serious ground for supposing that the particles of matter needed intelligent guidance even in the construction of organisms, still less in inorganic combinations. One would like to hear of the living astronomer who thinks that the particles in a nebula needed "guidance" to form a star or a planet. The new Paleyism takes an intolerable burden on its shoulders. As to organic structures, very few biologists will admit even that a "vital principle" is needed to guide the molecules, still less an infinite intelligence.

(*b*) If atoms need guidance, as well as physical impulsion, it is the business of science to detect it. Science is not the superficial thing some imagine. If there is an element of mystery—an unexplained element—in the movements of material particles, science is bound to register it. The curious thing is that it is metaphysicians and theologians, not the men who study material particles daily, who discover this unexplained element in their movements. This new theism enters into keener rivalry than ever with science.

(*c*) Neither Croll nor Lodge nor any other has given us a remotely plausible idea of the guidance of material atoms by a spiritual intelligence. Ignorance of the method would not, of course, alter the certainty of the fact, if we had serious ground to suppose it were a fact. But the difficulty causes us to be exacting about the evidence, and we have seen what it is. You cannot infer God from the material order, organic or inorganic, until you positively show that it is inexplicable without him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST STAGES OF THEISM

THE popular apologists for theism whom we have examined nearly all agree in seeking evidence of God among the processes of visible nature. One may doubt if any other form of argument will ever appeal to more than a cultivated few. Unless this material frame of the universe bear somewhere the traces of a divine architect or controller, there is, for the great mass of men and women, no proof of the existence of God. If a plausible explanation be offered by science of the order and beauty of nature, the adaptations of organisms, and the moral ideal, the faith of most men is void. They have been taught for ages to stake their belief on the inability of science to explain one or other feature of the universe; this has put theism in an irreconcilable rivalry with science, and science advances in its task every decade. The supposed traces of the finger of God on the face of nature are disappearing. You may, if you please, still fancy that a God lurks behind the visible frame. That remains a mere fancy, without a particle of guarantee of its truth, until you prove that there is some feature or movement of nature which is unintelligible without God.

Some have sought to evade this conclusion and the sombre prospect it opens out for theism by retreating upon what they call their "religious sense." The unsoundness of this position is easily seen. If we trusted our inner feeling of conviction on such matters, truth would become the most chaotic thing under the sun. The God of the Calvinist and the Unitarian, the God of the orthodox and the liberal, the God of a savage tribe and of civilised man, would be equally authenticated. The most contradictory religious views are, and always have been, endorsed by this religious sense. It approved the hell-creating God of our fathers as much as it approves the God of the Pantheist. It is, in fact, no more than the blending of sentiment with an inherited belief. One would like to know the psychologist who enumerates a "religious sense" among the powers of man, and does not take what goes by that name to be merely a direction of the intelligence and emotions to religious subjects; and one would like to hear of any other department of life in which the emotions are consulted as to an objective reality.

Hence the next, and probably last, phase of theism is to surrender the material universe to the scientist, or deny its existence, and reach the existence of God by strictly philosophical argumentation. This gives us a select class of philosophical defenders of theism which we have now to consider. These men usually disdain the "cosmological" and "teleological" arguments which the majority of theists still cherish. They decline to pit themselves against science as interpreters of organic adaptations in nature, and they regard the argument from causality as an ignorant reliance on an ancient metaphysical notion which is no longer admitted either in science or philosophy. Their own arguments can never be popular, since it requires some training in metaphysics to understand them, and the faith of the millions gives them some concern. As a rule, they allow men like Sir O. Lodge to sustain the popular faith with the discarded lines of "evidence," and reserve their esoteric doctrine for the few. They no longer speak of "demonstrating" the existence of God—no one above the cultural level of Dr. Warschauer or Father Boedder now dreams of "demonstrations"—but they believe that certain philosophic considerations point in the direction of a very refined and attenuated theism.

The chief disadvantage of this group, apart from the unfitness of their arguments for general use, is that there is no such thing as an accepted doctrine of philosophy. If you reason on the lines of Kant, you are sternly opposed by Hegel and the Hegelians; if you follow Hegel, you are just as sternly opposed by other philosophers. There is not a single principle of philosophy, from which even an approximate argument for God can be derived, that is generally admitted in the philosophical world. It is just as if one sought evidence for theism in some particular scientific hypothesis which is no more accepted than the contrary hypothesis. This weakness at once puts philosophical theism in as parlous a condition as popular theism.

The situation is, in fact, not without humour. Anxious theists are comforted by their apologists with the assurance that many of the philosophers—the deeper thinkers—of modern times are on their side. I have before me a press-cutting in which Dr. Monro Gibson exclaims: "The advanced thinkers of my younger days were right away in the frozen north, so to speak. The advanced thinkers of to-day—men like Eucken and Bergson [it is always foreigners]—we almost hail as allies of Christianity." Seeing that Bergson has never professed a belief in any religious doctrine, and that Eucken's system is an eccentric mysticism which no other philosopher shares and few can understand, one must conclude that "allies" are scarce. Others appeal to William James, who declines to be called a monotheist and disdains the God of the creeds. And when modern philosophers do profess a belief in God, their deity is one before which the worshipper would be hopelessly perplexed and their criticism of his "evidences" would merely dissolve his faith.

Between these academic and idealist thinkers and the group of popular writers we should, perhaps, place men like Dr. Martineau and Professor Le Conte. They exhibit a more refined stage of the ordinary cosmic argumentation. Dr. Martineau (*The Study of Religion,* 1889) unites a grace of style with a confidence of reasoning which make his work a classic of theistic literature. But the bases of his argument are now generally regarded as unsound. Causation, he says, always implies will, and therefore every movement and change in the cosmic process reveals the omnipotent will behind. In this he not only relies on the older philosophical idea of causation, but reads into it a most unwarranted addition. Causation is supposed to imply will because in our experience will is the only form of causation. Dr. Martineau begs the whole issue. The occurrence of a thunderclap is as much a part of our experience as the movement of our muscles, and we have not the least warrant to say that, because the latter phenomenon is associated with will, the former must be. But science is reducing all these changes in nature to the movement of particles of matter, and "will" is a much less intelligible cause of this than the shock of other particles or the strain of ether. When Dr. Martineau goes on to support his argument with teleological considerations, he is exposed to all the difficulties we have already seen.

Professor Le Conte, a distinguished American geologist, has a somewhat similar argument (*Evolution and Religious Thought*, etc.), though he speaks of "energy" instead of "will." God is the sum-total of the energies of the universe. Instead of looking for him in organic adaptations which the scientist is supposed to be unable to explain, we must recognise him in every movement in nature. "Spirit" is the only "efficient force," and the cosmic process is merely a "progressive individuation of the Divine Energy." Here we have the mystery of "spirit" moving particles of matter spread over the whole universe. The answer is that "energy" is not a reality at all, but an abstraction; that movement in nature is quite explicable without spirit, and inexplicable when you introduce it; and that Le Conte gives us no adequate reason for calling this sum-total of energy (or moving matter) God. In another work (*The Conception of God*, 1897) he says that if we looked at the living brain we should merely see a mass of moving particles, yet would know that there was a "spirit" behind; and that therefore "probably" there is a spirit behind the movements of nature.

As a matter of fact, we do not know that there is a "spirit" behind the movements of the brain, and, even if there were, there would not be the slightest "probability" of finding one behind other material movements; the organised matter of the brain is a unique thing in the universe, and to argue from it to ordinary matter is illogical.

Professor Fiske, another American evolutionist who clung to theism in the last generation, was more severe in his argumentation and more slender in his conclusions. In his *Outlines of a Cosmic Philosophy* (1874) he advanced little beyond the position of Herbert Spencer, whom he generally followed. He sharply rejected the argument from "design" or "final causes," and held that "God" was the unknown Power behind the knowable phenomena. To this Power we must not attribute intelligence, will, and personality, which we know only as human attributes. But Fiske went beyond Spencer in drawing a rigid line between the physical and the psychical, and saying that we might venture to describe this eternal Power "symbolically" as a spirit. Thus far Fiske is only exposed to the objections which are now commonly urged against Spencer's distinction between the knowable and unknowable—an arbitrary distinction which led to an unsatisfactory Agnosticism. Neither science nor philosophy now favours this view that we perceive a kind of mantle of "phenomena" in which is enwrapped an inscrutable "thing-in-itself" or unknowable power, like the planet Jupiter wrapped in its mantle of cloud. We perceive reality, or else we perceive nothing beyond our states of consciousness.

Fiske, however, added to this elementary theism in the course of his life, and his later doctrines are founded on a much less severe form of reasoning than his earlier. He discovers an ethical attribute in the unknown Power by finding that the moral impulse urges a man to adjust his life, not only to society, but to "the whole of reality"—an analysis of conscience which few will recognise. In later works (*Through Nature to God*, *The Idea of God*, etc.) he partly recanted his early opposition to teleology, and gave it his support in some measure. "There is in every earnest thinker," he said, "a craving after a final cause," or "a teleological instinct," and we must grant it some validity. In point of fact, "earnest thinkers" to-day are not at all well disposed toward teleology, and no one else ever recognised a teleological instinct. Fiske, however, was too well acquainted with science to look for proof of God or of "design" in particular cases of organic adaptation, as Sir O. Lodge still does. He made no attempt to build on the temporary obscurities of the evolutionary process. His chief point was that, since that process ends in the production of intellectual and moral natures, we may recognise that it had that purpose throughout, and so ascribe "quasi-human" attributes to the eternal Power. The weakness of this deduction is apparent. The evolutionary process is quite intelligible without supposing a "purpose" and pre-conceived aim; and it is quite unintelligible, on the other hand, how material agencies could have carried out such a pre-conceived purpose. Fiske has espoused the anthropomorphism which he set out to oppose.

It is thus seen that every attempt to deduce the existence of God from the phenomena of visible nature fails. It is the task of science to interpret, not merely to describe, nature, and any other interpretation is opposed to the legitimate aspiration of science, since it places a limit to the scientist's ability to explain. This is plainly seen where the theist builds on natural features (beauty, order, or organic adaptations), which, he says, science "cannot explain"; and we have seen that there are few popular apologists who do not adopt this practice, Sir O. Lodge says, for instance, that science cannot explain the origin of favourable variations in organisms, and *therefore* we must admit that matter is guided. In point of fact, evolutionists and embryologists have thrown a great deal of light on this origin of favourable variations, and it would be difficult to choose a less secure footing for a theistic argument.

But the form of the argument is always the same, even when it declines to build on present gaps (or supposed gaps) in scientific knowledge, and maintains that the whole process of nature implies either divine action or divine guidance of action. The theist is bound to prove that this is *necessary* in order to explain the movements we perceive in nature, and he thus conflicts as much as ever with the ideal of science. You cannot infer the existence of a certain agent until you point to an action which can be ascribed to it or him alone. You cannot definitely say that a super-natural power exists until you find phenomena which cannot be fully explained by natural agencies. Certain popular writers are fond of repeating the assurance of Bacon and of Pope (whose knowledge was very limited) that a little knowledge may turn away from God, but a deeper knowledge leads to a recognition of him. You will generally find that these writers are not distinguished for their knowledge of science. I would venture to say that if a list be drawn up of the hundred living men who are, throughout the civilised world, or in England alone, recognised to be the ablest and most learned students of science, more than half of them will be found to be Agnostics.

In view of this discrediting of theistic arguments by the advance of science, there is a growing disposition to turn to philosophy; and we must briefly examine a few characteristic writers on the philosophic side. This discussion may—and indeed must—be brief, for several reasons. In the first place, philosophical arguments for theism cannot be compressed into a few pages; the volumes must be read by the inquirer. In the next place, the line of argument is unintelligible to the general public to which this work appeals. And, thirdly and chiefly, all the philosophical writers we are about to notice are idealists, and either deny the existence of, or question our power of knowing, a material world. This may be a short way of dealing with materialism; but it has the disadvantage of dealing just as shortly and disastrously, not only with common sense, but with all human culture except philosophy. Science, history, and sociology become meaningless; and, with history, the whole scheme of Christian belief must depart. I was once amazed to hear Mr. Campbell meet my argument —that religion and science are rival interpretations of nature—with an appeal to the philosophic denial of the existence of nature. If that denial be seriously entertained, we may cease to dispute about the nature of Christ, the Church, the Reformation, or any point which implies objective existence of a material order.

Confining myself to a few recent examples of this kind of literature, I may begin with Professor J. Royce. Several American professors published in 1897 a book (*The Conception of God*) which embodied their conflicting views, and Professor Royce contributed a brief statement of his peculiar form of theism. I despair of giving an intelligible expression of any part of Professor Royce's philosophy in any words other than his own, and must doubt if many will understand those. From our fragmentary or individual (internal) experiences he concludes that there is an "absolute experience," for which "the conception of an absolute reality is fulfilled by the very contents that get presented to this experience." He proves the existence of this Absolute Experience in the following sentence:—

> If every reality has to exist just in so far as there is experience of its existence, then the determination of the world of existence to be this world and no other, the fact that reality contains no other facts than these, is, as the supposed final reality, itself the object of one experience, for which the fragmentariness of the finite world appears as a presented and absolute fact, beyond which no reality is to be viewed as even genuinely possible (p. 43).

Therefore there exists an Absolute Experience, or, as Professor Le Conte calls it (or him) in the same volume, "a passive, powerless, passionless Thought." I will content myself with stating, without discussing, this view. Professor Royce is often quoted by popular writers as a great philosopher who is on the side of religion, and it is as well that theists should recognise how far he is with them. He rejects any other supposed "evidence" for the existence of God.

Next we may take Professor Seth's *Two Lectures on Theism* (1898). He proposes to reconcile the Pantheism which identifies God with nature and the Deism which placed God outside of nature. I may take the opportunity to say a word about the doctrine of the "immanence" of God, which Sir O. Lodge and others claim as an advance on the part of modern theism. God is no longer conceived as "behind" nature, but in it. Now, this must mean one of two things: either God is conceived as identical with nature (Pantheism) or as substantially and in essence distinct from it, yet present in every point of it. In neither case is there anything new in the idea. Pantheism is two thousand years old, and the doctrine of the immanence or omnipresence of God is not a "new theology," but the common teaching of Christian writers, of all sects, in all ages. None but a few of the early Stoics and Epicureans, and a few Deists like Victor Hugo, ever questioned it.

Professor Seth follows Hegel, against Kant, in holding that our knowledge is a knowledge of realities, not of mere "appearances," and holds that "the Absolute" (Hegel's expression for reality conceived as an eternal and developing whole) is revealed in its appearances. Whether Hegel himself may be called a theist is, as Professor Seth shows, very doubtful; he sometimes clearly teaches that the Absolute only attains self-consciousness in man, and many Hegelians interpret him in a non-theistic sense. For Professor Seth, however, the unfolding of the Absolute (the process of evolution) is theistic. You cannot get something out of nothing, and therefore morality must come from a moral source. Man could not make morality except by "a divinely guided process," and by drawing on "a fount of eternal fulness." Order and beauty lead him to the same conclusion. Truth, beauty, and goodness as outcomes of the evolutionary process imply truth, beauty, and goodness in its source.

There is in this form of argument nothing that we have not already met. It is true that you cannot get something out of nothing, but quite untrue that, as Professor Seth implies, the antecedent (the cause, if you wish) must be like the consequent (or effect). The evolution of morality or beauty from non-moral or unbeautiful elements is not in the least a creation of something out of nothing. I may add that Professor Seth goes on to disclaim any knowledge of the nature of the Absolute. It is "superpersonal," and different from all categories of human experience. Poetry and religion bring us nearest to it, but their phrases are merely "thrown out" at a vast reality. However, since he relies on the fallacious maxim that the producer must have the properties of the produced, we cannot recognise the validity even of his slender theistic conclusion.

A volume issued by "Eight Oxford Men" (chiefly philosophers) in 1902, and entitled *Personal Idealism*, was acclaimed as a contribution to theistic literature, and is often quoted. It contains, however, hardly anything in the nature of theistic argument, and the little it contains is naive. Dr. Hastings Rashdall, in the essay on "Personality, Human and Divine," outlines the argument which, he says, idealists generally endorse. To exist, in idealist language, means to be perceived or experienced; nothing exists but mind or states of consciousness. Consequently, before the evolution of man the world must have existed in a vast pre-human mind, and so God (or a Universal Knower or Thinker) exists. Dr. Rashdall says that science, which describes an evolution during millions of years before man appeared, would cease to be rational unless we admit this conclusion,

The argument is the most singular in the whole library of apologetics, and is well calculated to expose the absurdity of idealism. One of the most wonderful achievements of modern science is to have reconstructed the process of the development of worlds and of life; to have shown that the present is a stage in an evolutionary process which has filled the stupendous dimensions of space for incalculable ages. If this be inaccurate, science is indeed irrational and sterile. Yet on idealist principles it is wholly inadmissible. My consciousness has constructed this great epic of evolution, and I have no more right to regard it as a description of a real process than to regard the legends of *Genesis* in that light. The latter is as "true" as are the former. And so Dr. Rashdall, taking from science a doctrine which is absurd if it is not realistic, puts on it an idealist interpretation, and demonstrates the existence of God with the certainty of a sum in arithmetic. It is not quite so easy to find God.

In 1903 another English philosopher, Professor James Ward, published two important volumes on *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, in which he advocated some shade of theism. He is chiefly occupied in showing the difficulties and shortcomings of a mechanical interpretation of nature; and it must be clearly understood that, even if such criticisms as he makes were valid, theism would not be established. The alternative to theism is not materialism or mechanicism, but agnosticism. We might admit that there are non-material elements or powers in the cosmos, as James and Bergson do, without recognising any proof of the existence of God or the immortality of the soul; we might accept idealism, and regard matter as non-existent or unknowable, yet remain non-theistic, as many idealists and Hegelians do. Hence, even if this substantial part of Dr. Ward's task were accomplished, we should not be nearer theism. In point of fact, his criticisms of mechanical schemes were largely invalid at the time, and the recent progress of science has shown the futility of some of his further criticisms.

It is, however, easy enough to show that science, or the mechanical interpretation of nature, a very recently founded and growing branch of culture, has its limitations; and we may grant that some of Dr. Ward's strictures are just. What it is more important to observe is that the moment he begins to construct a theistic argument he deserts the order of reality, and discloses his idealism. If the only reality we know is mental, and the only causes we know are minds—as he says—it is superfluous to discuss mechanical schemes. Science is a colossal hallucination. In fine, even if we grant this exorbitant claim, we find that Dr. Ward can only attain to God by a *tour de force*. In this world of minds —it is not stated how we can know any mind but our own—God is "the living unity of all." This system of "idealistic monism" can have little encouragement for the average theist.

Dr. Rudolf Eucken, who is so often claimed as a firm support of religion in our time, is one of those thinkers whom it is better to claim as an "ally" than to quote in detail. His metaphysical mysticism is as impenetrable as that of Professor Royce, and his conclusion is little more satisfactory. He starts from our subjective experience of "spiritual life," and claims that we feel that there is a "spiritual whole" of which our finite and fragmentary experiences are part. This "Absolute Spiritual Life," in which we are "anchored," should be called Godhead rather than God, and is not personal. Dr. Eucken disclaims the title of Pantheist, but says that "the Divine must be apprehended through the Divine within us." The only, and the sufficient, difficulty of Professor Eucken's theory is that those data of inner experience from which his argument starts seem to be confined to so few individuals of the race that his works give little support to the general belief in God.

Finally, we must notice a recent work (*Foundations*, 1912), in which "Seven Oxford Men" attempt a reconstruction of Christian belief. The last essay of the volume, by Mr. W. H. Moberly (a reader in philosophy), deals with "God and the Absolute." After setting aside as invalid the customary arguments—cosmological, teleological, and moral—for the existence of God, the writer approaches the subject from the philosophical point of view. His starting-point is "the Absolute," or the ultimate reality as conceived on Hegelian lines. Much metaphysic must therefore be accepted before even his starting-point can be granted; but it will suffice here to examine how he transfers the old insignia of deity to the Absolute of Hegel's philosophy.

We must, he says, conceive this ultimate reality in the "highest" or "richest" terms of our experience; in other words, we must (impersonally and symbolically) conceive the Absolute as having intelligence and goodness. The universe is "a system which is the ground and explanation of everything in it," or is "a perfect individual." We must apply to it the "most inclusive" terms we know—spirit, mind, goodness. Many points in this argumentation might be questioned, but it seems to me that we need only recognise one fatal defect in it. Reality, as we know it, is an infinitely varied thing—a mass of particular realities having the most diverse qualities. Now, not a single one of these qualities must be taken from the particular area or phase of reality in which we find it, and applied to others, or to the whole. Thus only are we true to our experience. Hence we have no right to transfer mind and goodness from man, with whom alone we find them associated, and ascribe them to an unperceived ultimate reality.

Such are the various lines of argumentation or suggestion which philosophical theists would now substitute for the old proofs of the existence of God. I have been unable to do more than trace the outline of their arguments, and must refer the reader to their works if he feels that any one of these lines of reasoning promises a substantial result. One conclusion we may confidently reach. The philosophers rely no longer on either the popular proofs of the existence of God, or the arguments of their philosophical predecessors. That whole apparatus of proof on which men have relied from the days of Socrates to the nineteenth century is condemned as unsound; and in its place are put certain abstruse considerations which none but students of philosophy can appreciate, which have nothing approaching a common acceptance in philosophy itself, and which, even if they were admitted, would prove only the existence of an "Absolute," an "Absolute Spiritual Life," an "Ethical Individual," or an "Absolute Experience." Not before such august abstractions will Demos ever kneel, and he is told by these masters of thought that *his* arguments are valueless.

It will further be seen why I refused at the outset to tarry in defining personality or other attributes of deity. The arguments for an impersonal deity seem no more valid than those in favour of a personal God. There is, in fact, a great deal of confusion about this issue, and some injustice is done to the older theists. It is not correct to say that they placed a limitation on the deity by conceiving him as personal, or that personality and infinity are irreconcilable. Men like Professor Royce are finding new meanings for the word "personality"; but, as far as this issue is concerned, there is no need. The early Christian divines took the word from the Greeks, and to them it meant only "a being endowed with intelligence." The "person," in this sense, might be either finite or infinite. I do not, therefore, see that theists have gained anything by surrendering personality, by insisting on "immanence," or by adopting Pantheism (as Mr. Moberly and so many others do).

The fundamental issue, which we should keep clear of all quibbles about terms, is: Is there an intelligent being pervading, guiding, or sustaining the universe? Until that point is settled, it is useless to discuss other features. Dr. Rashdall, Sir O. Lodge, and others, make their Supreme Power finite, so as to reconcile it with the vast prevalence of evil. Others would sacrifice will or benevolence. All these controversies are secondary to the great issue: Was there intelligence in the universe before it dawned in man or the dwellers on other planets?

We have surveyed all the types of argument which are used in support of the theist's reply to these questions, and it will at least not be wondered that so large and increasing a proportion of thoughtful men and women in our time turn to the Agnostic[1] position. Theistic evidences are now in a chaotic condition. The old references to the starry heavens and the moral law, and the triumphant discoveries of things which "science cannot explain," are out of fashion in the intellectual world; and the new schemes of evidence are abstruse, contradictory, and confined to few. There is no more agreement among philosophic theists than among popular apologists. Not a single feature of visible nature or of our inner experience is generally regarded, among thoughtful theists, as a firm foundation. The whole scheme of evidences is thrown by modern thought into the melting-pot; and the more cultivated and informed the theist is, the less confidently he speaks.

Meantime science advances victoriously in its interpretation of the universe, and human life becomes richer and more attractive every decade.

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[1] I prefer the term "Agnostic" to "Atheist," because there is a common tendency to conceive the Atheist as one who believes he can disprove the existence of God, and there are men who hold that position. An able French work was recently published on those lines. At the same time, the word "Agnostic" is not free from ambiguity. The earlier Agnostics had a metaphysical theory of the limitations of the human mind which I do not share. I mean only that no satisfactory evidence is offered to us of the existence of God (any God).

No man or woman need be impoverished through the sacrifice of theism. It is only men of no experience who talk of the "sadness" of living without God. The thousands who have experienced that change find that neither mind nor heart nor conduct is the poorer. We have lived down the fictitious concern of an older generation, lest life should grow more sombre as faith in God grew dim. Eucken is probably right when he says that there never was an age in Europe with so little religion as ours since the days of the Romans and Greeks; and there never was an age with more zeal for sound social conduct, for the betterment of human life, for the spread of charity and toleration, for the refining of human standards, and for the comprehensive progress of the race. The stars above us have paled; but they have paled because the sun is rising.

In conclusion, a few words may be said on what some regard as the broader consequences of the rejection of the idea of God. I have already, on the ground of a very large experience among men and women who have been compelled to surrender their theistic faith, denied that the change involves a grave emotional crisis for the individual. People are intimidated from investigating the bases of their opinions by dogmatic assurances that a loss of faith would mean at least acute personal distress. This kind of moral used to be enforced by most mendacious legends about the death of Voltaire (who firmly believed in God), Charles Bradlaugh, and other distinguished "atheists." Even now we find grave misrepresentation at times. A few years ago Mr. Raymond Blathwayt published a statement that His Excellency Dr. E. Haeckel was plunged in despondency and severely shaken in his convictions. I knew well that my friend was most happy and genial at the time; and he, in fact, described the report as ridiculously false. Such statements are generally without foundation. Life remains intensely interesting, a glorious and promising field for work, when the old ideas are abandoned.

There are, however, more thoughtful people who apprehend some more general social consequences from the decay of the old beliefs. As far as moral culture is concerned, I have already met and answered this concern. Moral law is a human enactment, palpably connected with the present welfare of the social order. The clergy themselves are, as I said, eager enough to make the point. The man or woman who seriously imagines that we are not likely to be anxious to cultivate justice, kindliness, truthfulness, and self-control unless we believe in God is not easy to understand. We should hardly like to see this life made worse than it is, because we believe it to be the only life man will ever live. As Ruskin finely says, in the Introduction to *The Crown of Wild Olive:* "It is a sign of the last depravity in the Church itself when it assumes that such a belief [Agnosticism] is inconsistent with either purity of character or energy of hand." In China and Japan high conduct has been maintained for ages on natural ethical principles, and there is to-day sufficient experience of the same situation in Europe to make real anxiety impossible. The morality of England has improved[1] considerably during the last hundred years, when faith has been steadily decaying.

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[1] I have shown this in my *Bible in Europe*.

I can imagine only one line of the ethical code which may conceivably be disturbed in the society of the future. There is a growing demand for the re-consideration of the moral control of sex-relations, and it is quite possible that here there will be in time a change of convictions. Such changes have frequently taken place. The purest of the Stoics (Marcus Aurelius) did not hesitate, on the Roman custom, to take a concubine when his wife died. St. Augustine (in his work *De Bono Conjugali*) said that he was not prepared to forbid a man to have a concubine or mistress if his wife was childless. The Church, in fact, did not generally withhold communion from a man who lived with a concubine until the fifth century. Then the ascetic ideal of marriage prevailed; and, although the Reformers candidly departed from it, Europe still generally adheres to it. It is, perhaps, singular that most of the men who assail it to-day (*e.g.*, G. B. Shaw and H. G. Wells) are theists, while prominent Agnostics sustain it.

In discussing such an issue two things must be borne in mind. First, the traditional ideal of chastity may be upheld on æsthetic grounds, quite apart from the question of theism. That seems to be the position of so refined a moralist as Maurice Maeterlinck, and is common in such bodies as Ethical Societies. If the objection be raised that such a standard has little hope of general acceptance, the reply is simple. No ideal of chastity ever won such general acceptance. The 20,000 or 30,000 prostitutes of London to-day (besides other forms of irregularity) sufficiently show this; a hundred years ago there were 50,000 prostitutes (according to the head of the London police) to a population of 600,000, and in the Middle Ages morality was still worse. Secondly, if such a thing as a law of "chastity" be questioned, other laws clearly remain. The most obvious and urgent line of the moral code is that pain and injustice shall not be inflicted on others; and there would probably be a far cleaner moral record in Europe if *this* law had been emphasised instead of a law of "chastity" which men felt at liberty to disregard.

There is, therefore, no ground whatever for concern about the essentials of conduct; and, in point of fact, morality is indisputably rising throughout the civilised world. There was never in the world before so widespread and resolute a demand for the redress of injustice and the alleviation of pain; and that is the finest test of moral sentiment.

It may be suggested that the moral and social idealism of our time is a force which was engendered by the old belief in "the fatherhood of God," and merely subsists for a time by sheer inertia. The inaccuracy of the suggestion will be seen when we reflect that this idealism is a characteristic outcome of modern thought and feeling. When the belief in the fatherhood of God and consequent brotherhood of man was most intense in Europe, social idealism was at its lowest. The new spirit began with the humanitarianism of the French Deists and the French Revolution, and had for decades comparatively little support in the Churches. The real root of it is so plainly indicated by Ruskin that I may quote a passage from *The Crown of Wild Olive* (Introduction):—

> For these others [Christians], at your right hand and your left, who look forward to a state of infinite existence, in which all their errors will be overruled and all

> their faults forgiven......for these, indeed, it may be permissible to waste their numbered moments, through faith in a future of innumerable hours; to these, in their weakness, it may be conceded that they should tamper with sin which can only bring forth fruit of righteousness, and profit by the iniquity which, one day, will be remembered no more. In them, it may be no sign of hardness of heart to neglect the poor, over whom they know their Master is watching; and to leave those to perish temporarily, who cannot perish eternally. But, for *you* [non-theists], there is no such hope, and therefore no such excuse. This fate, which you ordain for the wretched, you believe to be all their inheritance; you may crush them, before the moth, and they will never rise to rebuke you......Is it therefore easier for you, in your heart, to inflict the sorrow for which there is no remedy? Will you take, wantonly, this little all of his life from your poor brother, and make his brief hours long to him with pain? Will you be more prompt to the injustice which can never be redressed; and more niggardly of the mercy which you *can* bestow but once, and which, refusing, you refuse for ever? I think better of you, even of the most selfish, than that you would act thus, well understanding your act.

Ruskin was a theist (in a liberal sense), and did not share the agnostic views of those whom he imagines himself addressing. But no other writer ever conceived so truly and expressed so plainly the sources of that humanitarianism which has spread and taken deeper root in proportion as the belief in God has grown dimmer. That is the feeling which really succeeds, instead of accompanying, the belief in God. For all the wrong and suffering in the world God is no longer responsible; *man* is responsible, and he is realising his responsibility. Thus do we understand the idealism of the great Agnostics of the nineteenth century. They felt

> A deeper passion and a mightier thrill
> Than comes of commerce with mortality,

in the words of the author of *The Unknown God.*

To the theistic reader I beg, in conclusion, to address a word. You may dissent from the criticism here offered of some line of argument which seems to you to prove the existence of God, and will therefore cling to your belief. I respect every honest and reasoned belief. But you will, perhaps, understand somewhat better the position of those who cannot share your belief. In face of this confused and discordant scheme of theistic evidences—in face of this wavering and diffident attitude of the more learned theistic writers of our time—the traditional arrogant denunciation of the "unbeliever" is as foolish as it is unjust. The finger of God is no longer discerned on the face of the heavens. You must search for God, and the search is long and difficult. Probably for ages some will find God, and some fail to find him. At least the age has gone by for mutual vituperation, and the time has come for a candid recognition of the difficulty of the search for God.

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