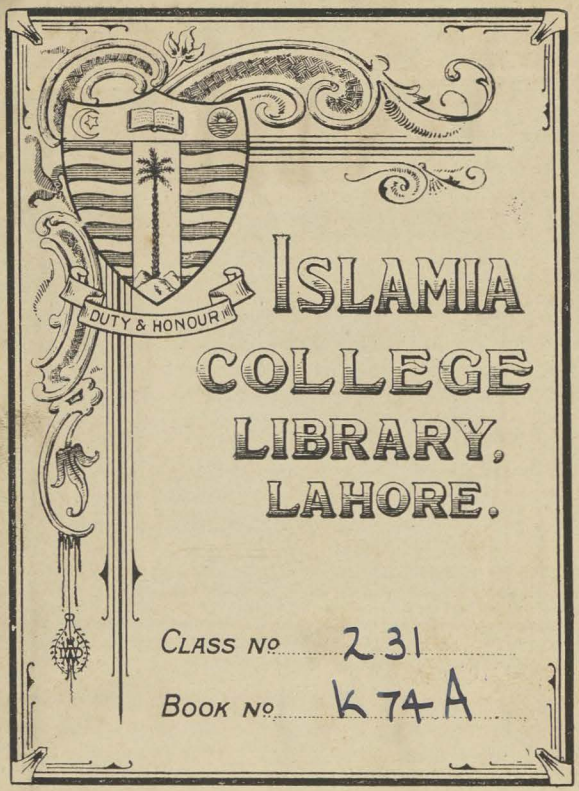
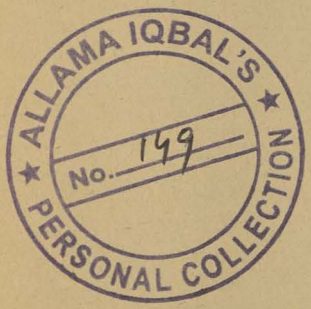


ASPECTS OF THEISM



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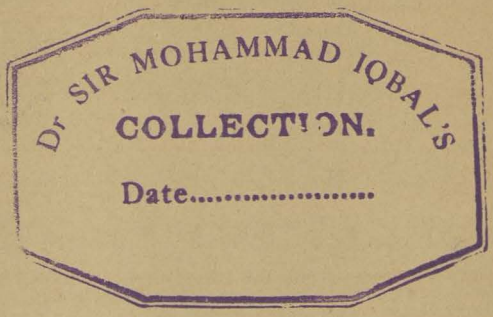

BY

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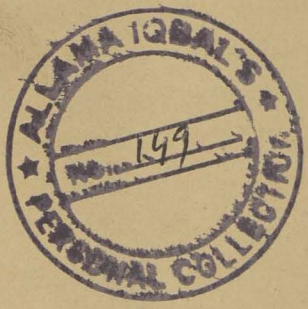
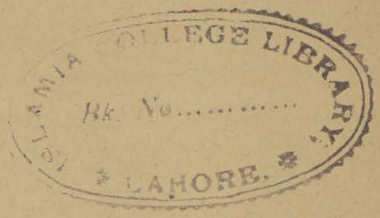




London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

AND NEW YORK

1893

PREFACE

In the year 1870, I gave a course of twelve lectures in Dundee, on the subject of Theism. These were mainly historical, and were intended to be wrought out more fully for publication; but the pressure of other interests prevented the completion of this project. Most of the conclusions reached were embodied in an article published in *The British Quarterly Review* in July 1871, and afterwards included in a volume of *Studies in Philosophy and Literature* (1879). In 1890 I was asked to give a short course of lectures on the same subject to the Theological College at Salisbury. These I repeated in London in 1891.

In the present volume these lectures are enlarged, with several addenda. It contains little of the

history of the proofs, which I endeavoured to trace in detail, in 1868; but it discusses the problem of Theism under aspects which may perhaps be more useful at the present time. In any case, it is for the student of Theology, rather than of Philosophy, to supply the former—which remains a desideratum in our British literature.

It is obvious that, to understand the precise nature of the problem, and what has really to be proved, is an indispensable preliminary to any solution of it; and, while I believe—and have tried in the following pages to show—that the theistic interpretation of the Universe is the most luminous, the most comprehensive, and the least likely to be undermined by future critical assault, I at the same time suggest that we should include much within it, which has at times been excluded, and even supposed to be antagonistic.

It is scarcely necessary to add that it is impossible to deal with the problem, either as one of experience or of history, while ignoring its philosophical basis. Just as a psychology—whether psychical or physiological—which ignores metaphysic, is disqualified, at the outset, from reaching conclusions which the human race can ultimately endorse; so a Theism,

which dispenses with Philosophy, can have neither an adequate basis nor a root of endurance. If based on mere authority, or unsifted dogma, it can have no evidential warrant that is trustworthy or lasting. I have treated it throughout these pages as a problem of Philosophy.

It was my original intention to fill the latter half of the volume with "notes," referring to the literature of the subject; and, with this end in view, I have kept it back for two years. That literature, however, is so vast, and is becoming so increasingly complex, that I have thought it better to print these *Aspects of Theism*[1] very much as they were spoken, and to offer them without notes, as a short study of a great problem. Something in the way of history may be written by and by.

The discussion of the subject has brought me into partial antagonism with men whom I greatly honour, with friends deceased, and many contemporaries of eminence. It is difficult to exaggerate the debt we owe—in Criticism, Philosophy, and Science—to such writers as the late Mr. Matthew Arnold, Mr. Spencer, Mr. Huxley, Mr. Tyndall, and others, from whose

[1] This was the title under which the lectures were originally delivered.

opinion, on ultimate problems I nevertheless dissent. My appreciation of their work is not to be measured by the extent of the speculative difference which separates us.

W. K.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

In the nineteenth century, it is unlikely that any one will be able to discover a new theistic argument. The subject has been already dealt with, in almost every conceivable way, and from the most opposite points of view. It has been, before all others, a "problem of the ages." Nevertheless, in each successive era, a re-statement, which is a *new* statement, of the question at issue has been found to be necessary. The nineteenth century cannot—and it ought not—to rest contented with the way in which preceding centuries have discussed it; and those who most of all inherit the spirit of philosophical inquiry—that of reverent criticism and construction combined—will be the least satisfied with traditional modes of proof, even when profoundly grateful for them. In saying this, I know that I am in antagonism to the spirit which dominated Mediæval Philosophy, and to which many nowadays

desire to bring us back; *i.e.* the unreasoning attitude of intellectual deference to Authority, presented *ab extra*. Those, however, who have the profoundest admiration for Scholasticism—and who themselves owe a thousand things to it—may, at the same time, differ from its characteristic note, and its dominant tendency.

But when, in this century, Theism is represented, even in highly intellectual quarters, as an old-fashioned tradition — an effete superstition, transmitted from weak and credulous ages—as a relic of Mediævalism now quite out of date, as well as out of touch with the spirit and results of modern Science; when, in other quarters, it is regarded as a miserable half-way house—to live in which is worse than to be an agnostic, or speculative nihilist—it is evident that the discussion of the subject cannot be inopportune. It is not only from those who are explicitly agnostic, however, that opposition to a theistic view of the Universe comes. Its claim is set aside, and the evidence of its fundamental truth is quite as much obscured, by those who have built around it a superstructure of dogma, which does not belong to it by natural affinity; and the *addenda*, which specialists have annexed to it, must be removed, before its simple foundations can be be laid bare.

The proofs of Theism are not philosophically

recondite. They do not require any great, or original, speculative power to apprehend them. If they did, it would be extremely unfortunate for the masses of mankind — the "dim common populations," who must be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" to the rest of the world. To see, and to feel the force of, some of these proofs rather demands the cessation of a strictly philosophic struggle with problems, and the exercise instead of what one poet calls a "wise passiveness"; along with the possession of sundry moral virtues, such as reverence, candour, and openness of mind to evidence when it is presented *ab intra*, as well as *ab extra*. It was almost a commonplace of Hebraism that we cannot "by searching find out God"; and this has found notable expression in the language of one of our modern idealistic poets, who, while he glorifies the exercise of Reason in its higher synthetic flights, distrusts the "meddling intellect" in its incessant analyses of things. To him, as to the seers in Palestine, it was not by the nimblest intellectual scrutiny that we could find "the secret of the world," but by simple receptivity; in other words, and in his own language, by bringing with us, when we enter the temple of Nature, a heart "that watches and receives."

Wordsworth saw, as very few have ever seen, that an incessant apocalypse is going on in Nature,

which many of us altogether miss, and to which we all at times are blind; and that, in the apprehension of this—which is a real disclosure of the Infinite to the finite, as constant as the sunrise, or as the ebbing and the flowing of the tide—we find the basis of Theism laid for us. There are many other lines of evidence besides this, which we shall try to follow out. Probably we shall find none of them more interesting, or more satisfactory.

The agnostic position on the subject of Theism has assumed many phases, but none is more curious than the following. It has been said that no evidence for the being of God exists, or in the nature of things is possible; but that, nevertheless, the belief is most useful to the race, because it has an uplifting influence on conduct. It is a buttress to morality. It is therefore wise to hold to it, in one form or another, although it is altogether unverifiable when we apply a logical test, and rigorously scrutinise its evidence; because in abandoning it we lose one of the moral forces of the world, and to that extent weaken the elements of social order and stability.

It is impossible to despise any conclusion honestly come to by the agnostic, who finds no evidence of the Divine Existence—although it might be better, both for him and for the world, that "whatsoever can be shaken," in the way of proof, should also be removed out of the way, in order that what "cannot

be shaken may remain"—but this clinging to one of the immemorial traditions of the race, in the absence of any evidence in support of it, may be adduced as indirect testimony to the belief in question; one of those latent tributes—sub-conscious to the individual—which are more interesting to the student of evidence than direct testimony can be. If there be no real Object corresponding to the theistic belief, the phenomena of religious history may be at once set down as abnormal ones. They are aspects of social disease; and the fact that this belief is welcomed, for any purpose whatsoever, by one who is speculatively agnostic, is an indirect witness in its favour. A philosophical illusion can have no moral value in the sphere of belief.

It will be the aim of the following chapters to approach by degrees to a solution of the problem, which will combine the truth of Theism with what has been called "the higher Pantheism," and will also represent the theistic view of the Universe as a focus, at which the conclusions of Speculative Philosophy, Science, Poetry, Art, History, and Religion meet—a focus at which the personal and the impersonal view of the ultimate mystery combine; and at which the wonder, in which all Philosophy begins, may unite with the admiration and the ecstasy in which Poetry culminates, and the worship in which Religion "lives, and moves, and has its

being." It will perhaps be seen that the most comprehensive solution of the problem—when God is regarded as "the master light of all our seeing" —is at the same time the most precise.

In certain moods of mind one may recognise separate powers in Nature, co-operating to effect great cosmic ends; in other moods, we may construe the whole life of the Cosmos as the outcome of a single protean Force; and, again, we may see a real *alter ego*, transcending ourselves, in that immeasurable Personality before which we bow in worship. At the same time it is necessary to bring these different views of the Universe—which may be separately legitimate as they appeal to the imagination, the reason, and the heart—to a focus, that we may find them authenticated by the humanity to which each appeals, and which alone can interpret the whole. If we break up our theodicy, or doctrine of God, into a number of separate sections—and try to pass from one to the other of them, as we would go from room to room in a house, or from province to province in Nature, or even from one science to another in the realm of knowledge—we run the risk of the whole conception becoming attenuated, nebulous, and vague. It is for this reason that the encyclopædic view, which an eclectic Theism presents to us, is as unsatisfactory to the mind and the heart, as the

irreverent precision, which pretends to be as familiar with the ways of the Infinite as with the procedure of a next-door neighbour.

A point worthy of consideration at this stage belongs almost to the *prolegomena* of theistic discussion. It is that no single mind could by any possibility construct for itself a theodicy, or doctrine of God. It was a fancy of Rousseau's that the intellectual evidence of Theism is such that were one placed in childhood on an uninhabited desert island, he would grow up in the unsophisticated recognition of one Supreme Being. In such circumstances a nineteenth century child would not probably develop into anything else than a savage. We have all grown into the beliefs we now entertain, through the myriad influences of civilisation, and by education as much as by inheritance. By this it is not meant that the theistic belief has been created, either by tradition or by education; but it has certainly been elicited and evolved by both of them. It has not been built up, in the case of any single individual of the human race, by the labour of his own understanding; but has been, at one and the same time, communicated *ab extra*, and evolved *ab intra*, and has thus been handed on throughout the ages. The notions which we now entertain on this subject have been expanded and enriched by the thoughts of all our predecessors. Theism is our

heritage; and we are now the "heirs of all the ages," of Indian, Semitic, Greek, Zoroastrian, Arabic, and Christian thought upon the subject; but Theism has not been left behind, as Comte affirmed, in the scientific age of the world, as the relic of a primitive "theological period." On the contrary, this belief—which, on the evidence of history, may validly be called a central conviction of the human race—has expanded, and has assumed phases, both of strength and of refinement, which it did not possess in the infancy of the world.

Even if we suppose that many of the celebrated modes of proof, by which philosophers have sought to establish the Divine Existence, are unsatisfactory—and I shall have to show this in subsequent chapters, although it brings me into opposition with many contemporary writers—they have failed for the most part only when taken by themselves, when detached from one another, and from their source; and however extravagant their separate pretensions, they all started from a root of truth. Suppose that we admit, to begin with, (what we must concede at the end,) that by no process of reasoning, or argumentative deduction, the inference of Theism can be reached, it is simply because *it is the premiss we are in search of.* That stupendous premiss—the very greatest in the universe—may have other proof, however, than the evidence of ratiocination; and the human race,

in which it has arisen, may carry about with it a vast and many-sided conviction on this subject, without realising at all times the evidence on which the conviction reposes. Theistic evidence may be only occasionally seen in exceptional moments of illumination; but neither the race at large, nor any individual in it, has been able to see lesser truths under a uniform light. In reference to many other things besides Theism, it is impossible to remain on the mountain-tops of evidence. We have been told that to rest a conviction so great and transcendent as that of the Divine Existence, on the evidence of transient moods, is to base it on ecstasy, and therefore not on the rock but on the shifting sand. It is forgotten that no *experiential* proof, however clear and satisfying it may be, can in the nature of things be constant; and while all evidence is only a question of degree, its quality while it lasts may be of special value *in proportion to its transiency*. A more detailed reply to this charge, however, brings us, somewhat early in our discussion, to what may be regarded as the radical evidence, or the unassailable fortress of Theism.

To recognise the Infinite on the height above us, or in the depth beneath our feet, is much less important (and perhaps less easy) than to apprehend it, in moments of illumination, as *within ourselves*—as the Personality in which we live. But if it be

true that *we* have our being in the Infinite, this can only be because the Infinite at the same time has *its* being in us; and we discern this fact—if we discern it at all—not by an effort of thought, but rather by lapsing into the "wise passiveness" already referred to. In other words, it is when we give up the intellectual toil of system-building, or an analysis of the phenomena that surround us in the universe, that we are best able to

> See into the life of things.

We can then perceive—as in a mirror—the unity that pervades all difference, and the phenomena of sense become transfigured for us in the light of their underlying essence. When thus seen, and as at the same time bound together by organic links of causation and interdependence, they at once obtain a meaning they did not possess before.

The special question, however, which we have to answer, is this—Is there, or is there not, a spiritual principle at the heart of things, within the matter of the universe, and pervading it from centre to circumference; which is not a mere *function* of this or that portion of matter that happens to be organised, but rather the interior essence of each separate thing that lives and grows, or feels and thinks? The question is not, Is there a spiritual *realm* to which material things may ultimately, and on the last analysis,

belong? It is, Is the whole universe, at its very core, and in its inmost essence, spiritual? And do its phenomena, as they evolve and display themselves, give evidence of such an underlying essence—if not uniformly, yet occasionally; so that they become to us "the garment we see it by," or (as another poet says) "the vision of Him who reigns"? To my own mind no other solution of the problem is in the least degree satisfactory. It must be noted, however, that if the conclusion be a valid one, it is reached, not by deductive reasoning, but by intuition, *or intellectual and moral second sight.* To those who possess "the inward eye"—or perhaps I should say to those who use it—matter and force, or atoms and energy, do not exhaust the contents of the universe; and what they discern, as happening in time, is not the mere transformation of force, or its ceaseless kaleidoscopic change, but the disclosure of a spiritual Substance revealed through its attributes, and an infinite Reality underneath the flux and reflux of phenomena.

Even were we to suppose that Matter and Force exhaust the contents of the universe, the explanation of matter and force—as we shall see in future chapters—demands something beyond themselves; it involves a spiritual principle at work within them. And if all the life and movement of the universe can be shown to be an apocalypse of Mind, if the forces that work beyond us can be proved to be

kindred to those that are within ourselves; if, in other words, Nature and Man are fundamentally akin, and between them there is a radical affinity, then for us the foundations of Theism are laid. If we say that the essence of both realms is the same—that both Man and Nature are phases of one infinite Substance—we adopt the theory of Pantheism; and, according to it, each of the two elements, Man and Nature, is *lost in the other*. Theism maintains that they are distinct, that they exist in everlasting dualism; but, at the same time, that the sub-strata of both—or that which underlies phenomenal show and appearance—is the same; and that, in this sense, *we*, who know the Infinite, live within it, and are upheld by its imperishable essence.

I humbly think that we are warranted in thus interpreting the Power we recognise in Nature—that mysterious protean Force, which seems remote in its infinitude, but which at the same time evokes in us thought, feeling, and desire—as fundamentally kindred to our own. The special charm of Nature lies in its being a mirror of humanity, in its reflecting what is deepest in man, and revealing some aspects of personality in a way in which the introspection of consciousness does not disclose them. It is not that external Nature is a duplicate or copy of our own. Human nature would soon weary of that. Indeed, one of the functions of the natural world is to take

us away from ourselves, that is to say, from our individual or egoistic selves; but it does this by at the same time disclosing a Presence—underneath its forms, colours, and sounds—that is radically like our own—a *transcendent* life—different from ours, and yet one with it.

The realm of the visible and audible thus hides the Divine, quite as much as it discloses it. Perhaps we construe it best as a veil, interposed to prevent the brightness of such an apocalypse, as would hinder us from seeing anything else. As it is happily put by Browning—

> Naked belief in God the omnipotent,
> Omniscient, omnipresent, sears too much
> The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Some think creation's meant to show Him forth;
> I say it's meant to hide Him all it can.
> Its use in time is to environ us
> Against that sight, till we can bear its stress
> Under a vertical sun. The exposed brain
> And lidless eye and disimprisoned heart,
> Less certainly would wither up at once
> Than mind, confronted with the sight of Him.

This extract from our philosophic poet brings us back to the way in which the most profoundly imaginative minds, from the Vedic and the Hebrew seers to Dante, and from Dante to Tennyson, have helped the metaphysicians (whose final word is of ultimate essence), the biologists (who take us in the

end to protoplasm), and the physicists (who bring us to atoms, or molecules, and their changes). It is not a new idea that the poet can aid the philosopher, as much as he helps the religious man; but the extent of the debt is perhaps yet to be seen. In our modern era Goethe and Schiller aided the metaphysicians of Germany more than the latter knew, although the debt was reciprocal; while amongst ourselves Wordsworth and Coleridge helped the English philosophical mind perhaps more powerfully, and certainly with fuller ultimate recognition. In this respect perhaps no poets in the history of Literature have performed so great a service, both to contemporaries and successors, as Browning and Tennyson have done. These men—as future generations may see better than we do—have intuitively discerned a truth, after which metaphysicians have laboriously toiled, and often toiled in vain. By simple intuition they have seen that the universe is one, and that its unity explains its diversity, while the diversity illustrates the unity. They have further seen that Nature's highest function, in its kindredness with man, is to teach him this truth, as well as to delight his senses and to raise and soothe his spirit; and finally, that it does this by a direct disclosure of the Infinite.

In that vision of the One and the All, to which the poet attains, there is an unconscious protest against the mere analytic separation of things,

however skilfully made in the interests of science. All science is analytic, and marks off the phenomena of Nature into departmental groups, arranging them in classes; but there is no separation corresponding to this, in the nature of things. Poetry, on the contrary, is synthetic. It combines the multitudinous details of the separate sciences, in a unity which embraces them all within it; and in this it is quite as true to Nature as science is. The poet of necessity occupies the higher point of view, immeasurably valuable as the lower view-point of science is; because he brings us within sight of realities, which transcend the phenomenal sphere, and which have reached himself through other channels than the all-important ones of sense. Thus, his moments of ecstasy are at the same time moments of insight into the truth of things; and every one inheriting or sharing his spirit may experience the same. We may not be able to remain long at this point of view, and may find it, as one of our poets has said,

> the most difficult of tasks to keep
> Heights which the soul is competent to gain.

At these times, however, we may apprehend with certainty, and even with precision, what we cannot afterwards state articulately; and this may be one explanation of the sacredness of Religion. The poet

discerns truths which transcend our ordinary formulæ, which cannot be re-stated in the language of common speech, truths which evade the categories of logic, and refuse to be compressed within our frames of theory. But it does not follow that *in*articulate truths—thus discerned in moments of ecstasy—are less real than those which we can afterwards succeed in making explicit by the use of words. It may be that what is implicit and ideal is at the same time the most real of all the truths that we are competent to apprehend.

It is easy to satirise this channel of knowledge, and it is certainly liable to abuse. All its reports must be verified; but, when they are not crude states of consciousness, giving rise to tumult or outbursts of undisciplined feeling—such as those to which the theosophist appeals—they may be their own vindication. States of consciousness, which thus attest themselves, do not abrogate reason, or hide themselves from intellectual cross-examination. The theistic intuition is rather the result of intellectual scrutiny pushed to the very utmost, in wrestling with the problem of the Infinite. It is after this has been accomplished, when scientific analysis has done its best, when metaphysical synthesis has followed after, and no adequate solution has been reached, that the poet finds—as every one in poetic mood may find—that he can pass, in a moment, from the isolation

and particularity of finite things, and become one with the Infinite, which is then and there and thus discerned.

What I have tried in previous paragraphs to unfold was expressed much better, in years long past, by a college-friend now at the Antipodes—who was distinguished, in his student days, both as a metaphysician and a poet—in stanzas which he has never published. He called his poem *The Secret of the World.* Its idea is that God is known, not by any effort of the scientific or metaphysical intellect in rising upwards, but by a direct disclosure of the Infinite to finite consciousness.

Canst thou read the secret of the earth, O Wind,
As thou sweepest o'er the moorland, buffeting the mountain's breast;
And against its headlands beating, with a sobbing as entreating,
Shelter in its bosom from thy wild unrest?

Canst thou read the secret of the earth, O Sea,
By thy seeking, straining, raging for it all the winter night;
When against the depths that hold thee, and the shores that would enfold thee,
Blindly dashing in the fury of thy might?

Canst thou read the secret of the earth, O Soul,
As thou strivest towards the Infinite and Absolute unknown;
Tracing firmamental courses, seeking elemental sources,
Making all the wisdom of the Schools thine own?

No. The secret of the earth is hid, O Wind,
From thy storm-wail o'er her surface, from thy beating as in strife;

Yet each gentlest breeze that bloweth with that secret overfloweth,
Breathed in measured cadence from earth's hidden life.

And the secret of the earth is hid, O Sea,
Though to press against her fire-heart all thy mighty tides are rolled;
Only in the current's meeting may'st thou feel her pulses beating,
Action and reaction, law-ruled, manifold.

And the secret of the earth is hid, O Soul,
From thy many Titan strivings, Pelion upon Ossa hurled;
In the heart contrite and lowly, in the heart upright and holy,
God reveals himself, the "secret of the world."

CHAPTER II

THE EVOLUTION OF THEISM

A NEW field of research has been entered, and traversed with some success, during the present century, viz. the archæology of Theism; in other words, the evolution of the belief out of its prehistoric phases and conditions. It has been thought by some that if we could prove that the belief arose out of others unlike it—beliefs that were rude elementary guesses, with no theistic significance whatsoever—the discovery of such an origin would discredit it, as one of the rational convictions of educated men. This, however, is a totally erroneous reading of the origin of belief in general. If, in the history of the race, a higher belief has emerged as the sequel of a lower one, it does not follow that the higher is the progeny of the lower, and has no authority beyond it. Succeeding it in time, the higher may have emerged out of the lower, only because it is a more accurate apprehension or interpretation of the essential truth of things; in other words, a superior

witness to a Reality, which exists quite independently of the evolution of belief regarding it.

Suppose that we go back to Totemism, to the recognition of a second-self, suggested by the shadow cast by the sun, by reflection in water, or by the spiritual shadow (or double) disclosed in dreams. Suppose that this belief—which might at first be limited to certain individuals — grew, in course of time, to a general conviction; and that it further developed into the idea that the spirit of the individual, as a second shadowy self, could come and go from the body — leaving it during sleep, and returning again, its return in fact awakening the body—the belief in its separability at death, and its separate existence after death, would be the most natural of inferences. Suppose that, along with this, the heroes in a tribe or the chiefs in a clan were regarded as worthy of special honour after death, because of great achievements in life, their worship would be the most natural thing in the world. Hero-worship would thus grow out of ancestor-worship. Then, things that had been associated with the departed during their lifetime—the garments they wore, the ornaments they were fond of, the places which they visited—would become, for their sake, more than usually interesting; and, in course of time, would be venerated. Things and places would gradually be endowed with special charms, because

of their relation to those who formerly owned them, or lived in them; and they would afterwards be supposed to be the receptacles of mysterious influence. Thus, by a natural process of development, Fetishism succeeded Totemism.

The recognition of mysterious powers in certain animals followed naturally. Originally a struggle for existence went on amongst all animals, and the stronger crushed the weaker aside. None could be esteemed above the rest, although doubtless some would be more feared than others. But suppose the stage to be reached in which some men possessed either a near or a far-off resemblance to some animals. In the primitive tribe they would very naturally be called by the names of these animals. The chief of a tribe who had an accidental resemblance, in any sort of way, to a bull, a horse, an eagle, or a crow, would be named accordingly, not in derision, but in honour; and then, by degrees, these animals would come to be specially honoured, as the supposed ancestors of the tribe. Long after the chief died, the legend would pass from the fact that in life he had some resemblance to the animal, to the notion that the animal itself was his ancestor; and thus the latter would come to be worshipped. From this the transition to Polytheism was easy, to the deification of places and of powers; the recognition of separate divine energies leading to a personification of the

forces at work, and therefore to a pantheon of divinities. The subsequent progress from the latter to a monotheistic interpretation of the world is easier to trace. The links become more obvious, as the chain of development lengthens.

But now suppose that we could scientifically trace out every link in the chain—for it is strictly a question of science—by discovering all the phases that the belief has assumed, and every cause that has led up to it in the process of historic and prehistoric evolution, the discovery of these missing links would not prove that the later beliefs were due to the earlier ones, in the sense that they had been created by them. That a "process" explains a "product" is the most helpless of all philosophical theories. The process in question is simply the onward effort of the human mind to know the real state of the case, to ascertain the truth of things, or to get a satisfactory explanation of the mystery which has transcended its insight at every successive stage.

There is a very evident parallel between the evolution of consciousness in the child and in the race. It is obvious that at his birth the child knows nothing, and can know nothing of the Infinite, —although "heaven lies about us in our infancy." So the race, emerging out of savage antecedents, for ages and generations knew nothing consciously of the Being in whom nevertheless it lived, and to

whom it sustained a relationship of unconscious dependence.

The admission that all phenomena have been evolved, instead of being inconsistent or enabling us to dispense with an evolving Power, may be a conspicuous illustration of it. The evolution of the entire realm of Nature is perfectly consistent with the existence or superintendence of a "Providence," in the literal sense of that term; viz. a "sight" which precedes, and also succeeds the evolution. Within each element, and at every stage in the process of development — which has advanced by infinitely slow gradations — there must have been a Power at work, differentiating and directing the whole. Even if we had evidence that the intellect and will — which are the highest manifestations of energy in man—were the product of movements of protoplasm, it would be more natural to interpret the entire process in the light of its latest phases, than of its earlier ones; and that is, in other words, to say that we should find it in the mature reason and volition of to-day—in the achievements of the race, in knowledge, and character—and not in the condensation of gases, the movements of molecules, or the impact of one atom on another. It is true that what we thus take as our clue to the whole is itself a changing and progressive element, since Human Nature has not yet reached its goal, and what it attains to at any one

time immediately becomes a point of departure for future attainment in a process that never ends; but it seems wiser to read the story of the past in the light of the present, than to reverse the process, and try to decipher the hieroglyphics which remain, by going back to the language of our infancy, or to the conditions of an ante-natal state. If science were to prove the unity of all force—although (as we shall see) it will require more than science to do so—it would not compel us to interpret this unity by the lowest of its phases, and to take the elements and the affinities of protoplasm as our key to the mysteries of the whole.

Three things, however, must here be noted in a paragraph. (1) The chasm between chemical and physical force and vital energy—between dead matter and living movement—has not yet been bridged over; nor has the second interval (which is like the first), between vital and self-conscious energy—or the blind action of life and the intelligent force of mind—been spanned by any arch of Science or Philosophy. (2) The law of natural selection amongst competitors in the struggle for existence presupposes the existence of these competitors as rival powers. (3) The mere fact that they do compete does not explain how it comes about that the one beats the other down. To find out, and to explain, its cause we require to get behind the process of struggle. A selective force

utilising circumstances, can alone explain the movements of matter, which result in the building up of organic structure.

Although every theory that has been advanced as to the origin of Religion may have some truth in it, we may perhaps most easily discover its source if we consider the way in which the material world appealed to primitive man. We are probably right in thinking that to his eye it was a field of vast confusion. It contained many separate things which came and went, appeared and disappeared; but they were all regarded as the ever-changing spectacle of a single thing. At first man did not seek for an explanation of what arrested his attention. He found one before him. The powers of heaven and earth were seen to be productive powers, and very early they were honoured as such. Nature being recognised as a source of beneficence, its individual forms were soon filled up in imagination with life after the human pattern. In this, idealising fancy was at work, and most legitimately. A belief in spiritual essences detached from material objects came later, but it came soon after this. Possibly it had its origin in the phenomena of dreaming. The early races may have come to think of the soul as distinct from the body, because in sleep they seemed to be themselves away in distant places; and so they thought that something within them did actually go away in sleep, and return to the

body when it awoke. Then — as a very natural sequel — primitive man personified the powers of Nature; that is to say, he thought he saw the working of what resembled his own consciousness in Nature, and concluded that certain phenomena were animated or presided over by beings that resembled himself. The progress from this idea to that of a single power which controlled the many was easy and natural.

But a historical exhibition of the way in which this belief has grown—even if we could trace out every link in the chain of sequence—cannot undermine the counter-fact—which is indeed its correlative —that a Power within the universe, kindred to his own, has all the while been disclosing itself to man. The discovery of its germ cannot make a mature product a chimera, in comparison with that from which it sprang. The inferior must of course precede the superior; but perhaps the best way of putting the case as regards the theistic argument, is that the Reality, which the mature idea of the race has more clearly grasped, was at first imperfectly seized by the imagination and fancy, and was afterwards more accurately dealt with by the intellect and the heart of man.

If any one is surprised at the numerous phases which the conviction has undergone, from its infancy onwards, it may be noted that so soon as any belief

has reached a relative maturity, and been transplanted—as this one has been within the historic period—from race to race, *it invariably changes its characteristics.* Any nation receiving its religious and philosophical ideas from another, of necessity leaves out, and sets aside, certain things that are unsuitable for it. At the same time, it evolves these ideas in a new direction, and to fresh purpose. It changes all that it assimilates; and so, the next historic outcome is of necessity different from everything that preceded it. Evolution is certainly a process at work, not only in inorganic life, but also—and perhaps more especially—in all our theories, or intellectual schemes of the universe.

This may become more obvious if we remember that the recognition of the Infinite by man is really due to the presence of the Infinite in him. The disclosure is due, not to the uprise of finite faculty, but to the energy, within the finite, of that universal Essence which transcends it. In other words, "the light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world" is the eternal Logos, the universal immanent Divinity. This Logos is without or beyond each individual, in the sense that it is in others as well as in himself. It may not be recognised by the individual, but it can no more be withdrawn or detached from him, than substance can be detached from phenomena, or a shadow from that which casts

it. If we can thus discern God as the universal essence of things, the real and abiding sub-strate of the Universe, within and without, the Subject as well as the Object of our consciousness, and therefore both the primal and the final cause of things, the so-called "proofs" of his existence, or apologetic arguments to demonstrate it become less necessary. In fact, the desire to possess, and still more to accumulate, theistic "proofs" betokens a certain amount of restlessness; as if the great postulate was an uncertain premiss, from which no adequate start could be made, until it is buttressed round about with a large array of ratiocination.[1]

We do not need to start in our theodicy, as on a speculative journey to try to "find God" at the end of our quest, as a sort of goal, or *terminus ad quem;* because we may find at the close of our studies—in Logic, Metaphysic, and Ethic, in the Sciences, in Art, and in History—that we have been preoccupied all the while with a theological problem, that we have been dealing with the most radical of all inquiries under an altered name. God has been with us from the first, "when we knew it not"; and he has remained throughout, at every step, "the master light of all

[1] On being told that there was a theological chair in some of the Scottish Colleges devoted to the subject of "Apologetics," the late Thomas Erskine of Linlathen remarked with his delightful *naïveté*, "Apologetics, did you say? I thought that Christianity needed no apology."

our seeing." He is not reached at the close of our inquiry, as a deduction from an assumed premiss *more geometrico;* He is recognised as the Infinite, who is presupposed in all finite being, and whose existence is implied in every exercise of thought.

CHAPTER III

ITS HISTORIC TYPES

LONG before it became subjective or introspective, human thought was objective and spontaneous. It was world-conscious and concrete, before it became self-conscious and abstract. In the primitive age man never asked a reason for his beliefs. He thought through the medium of pictures and symbols, and was quite satisfied with them. He groped after reality, and found it in a confused sort of way; and he, of course, expressed his finding obscurely. But, underlying these early processes of half-conscious activity, reason was at work; and in the way in which the theistic idea was subsequently evolved, we see at once a picture of primeval thought, and a mirror of those lines of evidence which appeal to the maturer intellect of the modern world. It should also be noted that the various forms which this evidence has assumed have existed side by side contemporaneously; so that we have not one type that is exclusively Indian

or Indo-European, another distinctively Semitic, a third that is Greek, a fourth Zoroastrian, and a fifth specifically Christian. The different types of Theism have all been inter-related, in the cosmopolitan thought of the world; and they have intermingled more or less in the history of religious belief throughout the ages.

The chief historic arguments may be set down—to use technical terms—as the ontological, the cosmological, the teleological, the ethical, and the intuitional. This may be a suitable arrangement as regards speculative dignity, but as regards simplicity and historical priority they may be arranged exactly in a reverse order.

The ontological argument attempts to prove the objective existence of Deity from the subjective existence of the notion of God in the human mind. The notion, it is said, implies the reality; the ideal carries the actual with it, or in it. The cosmological proof endeavours to ascend from the mere fact of existence to its cause; contingency, it is said, implies necessity—the mere fact of relative existence implying absolute existence as its counterpart. The teleological or physico-theological proof tries to infer from the characteristics of finite existence the nature of its source. It finds the evidence of adjustment, or design, in the correlations of finite phenomena; and it infers that a contriving mind produced them.

Another branch of the same argument tries to ascend from the order of the cosmos to an intelligent Orderer; not from present design to a past designer, but from law now in operation to an Operator present within it. The ethical argument interprets the hints of the conscience as the suggestions of an *alter-ego* within the individual, or as the subjective echo of an objective voice beyond him. The intuitional argument affirms rather than proves—for its evidence is higher than formal ratiocination—that the Infinite Object is apprehensible by man, and is at times apprehended in the act of disclosing itself to him, and that the disclosure has many aspects—physical, intellectual, moral, and æsthetic.

The mere statement of these theistic proofs, as they have been formulated throughout the ages, will show that the idea with which they all deal, and which they severally try to compass, is a root-idea of the human consciousness. They are a historic evidence of the continuous effort which human nature has made to explain to itself a transcendent notion, the reality of which it has always apprehended in one form or another, but the contents of which it has never been able to comprehend or adequately to define. The particular form which the belief has assumed, as mirrored in these "proofs,"—though always very imperfectly reflected in them—while valid for one generation, has often

proved invalid for the next, or at least for the more original minds that have guided it.

This historic fact, however, is not difficult to explain. It has been due to the continuous development of human nature itself, and to the subjective expansion of the idea which the race has all along been endeavouring to grasp. Not that the expansion of the idea—far less the idea itself—has been caused by its own evolution, but the transient phases it has assumed have been partially due to the circumstances under which it has come to light; and, in its elaboration of these proofs, we see the mind and heart of the race grasping, apprehending, and struggling with a reality, which has always transcended its after-power of articulate statement.

It will be admitted by the agnostic that the history of these proofs—or of the efforts men have made to demonstrate the Divine Existence—is a profoundly interesting chapter in the growth of the human mind, and the evolution of its powers. If the modern theist would maintain his ground against the agnostic, however, he must candidly admit that many of these proofs have failed; although, it is more necessary to discover the root of truth, whence each and all of them have sprung, than it is — either for him, or for the agnostic — to find out the error into which they may have expanded. It is further noteworthy that

it is only when theories on this subject have crystallised into dogmas, that they have become inadequate for posterity. It is a philosophical commonplace to say that the most erroneous dogma in the world contains, and must contain, some truth in it; else it could never have appeared. It is no less certain that the truest of them contains some element (or elements) of error and inadequacy, and therefore of transitoriness. If our "little systems" "have their day, and cease to be," the decay of our greater ones is only a question of time. The longevity of any one of them may, as a rule, be due to the amount of truth it contains; but error and heresy—in the sense of partial views—seem as indigenous to the race as truth is, and quite as inveterate. Certainly it has sometimes been rather due to the way in which a particular "system" has been launched, and to the motive force it has received from the personality of its founder, than to its rationality or its intellectual coherence, that it has had a long lease of life.

Thus, every Religion that has existed has had some fragments of intellectual as well as of moral truth in it, or it could not have lived for a year, or even for a day or an hour. History has, however, conclusively shown that it is even more necessary that a Religion should administer to the emotions, and provide food for the imagination, than

that it should appeal to the reason of mankind; and further, that if it is to live for any length of time, the intellectual elements it contains must always blend with the emotive ones. It must have its root in psychological and metaphysical truth of some kind, in the realities of existence and of character; but if it does not give scope at the same time to the heart and the imagination—in other words, if it does not make room for the ideal, as well as for the real in human nature—it very soon decays. For its own sake, therefore, it must utilise the concrete and pictorial elements of human thought and feeling. It is more necessary to its success that it should be homely, and even popular, than that it should appeal to the "dry light" of reason; while, above all things else, it must offer definite practical help to men in their struggle with adversity and disaster.

In reference then to the various phases which Religion has assumed in the world, there may have been a progress, or "increasing purpose" throughout the ages; but it may be doubted whether the masses of mankind in the nineteenth century of our era are any freer of superstition regarding it than they were in the first century A.D. There are distinct social strata—perhaps irremovable ones—to which the lower forms of pictorial religion still appeal more forcibly than the conclusions of the cultivated reason,

to say nothing of the esoteric of scientific schools or philosophical coteries.

I do not think we need be sanguine that a simple and devout Theism, philosophically unfolded and scientifically explained, will speedily overcome the forms of thought opposed to it. All creeds—even the most erroneous—die hard. Very often after an erroneous one has been attacked, and is apparently overthrown, it is found that only one of its outposts has been stormed, and few of its defenders been worsted in the fray, while its citadel has not even been entered. It is extremely easy to expose the error in a defective creed; but, when exposed, it is not so easily dislodged. What is even more important is that the truth, which had been associated with the error, often only retires—changes its raiment (as it were), as well as its weapons of defence—and returns in an altered form, with a new character, to work in fresh environments.

It must also be remembered that, in every race and age, there has been a deep-seated antagonism between the conservative and the progressive instincts of human nature. This has of necessity affected the struggles of the creeds, and the warfare of religious sects. These two radical, equally important, and equally beneficent instincts have, from the beginning of the world, contended together for the mastery. Both of them are necessary to the well-being of the

race, while each is essential to the stability of the other; and thus the strife which takes place between rival religious sects is, in almost every instance, a strife between the permanent competing tendencies of human nature. Within every organised society—no matter how apparently compact and *solidaire*—the latent elements of difference and of subsequent unrest are at work. If we go back, *e.g.* to the time of the birth of a new Religion, or to the appearance of any great leader of the thought of the world, we find that a truth hitherto unknown, or perhaps a series of truths till then ignored, are first stated orally, and then (in most instances) committed to writing. Every hearer of these truths, however, and every reader of them, brings a different individuality to the hearing and the reading. It follows that what was spoken and written will be apprehended in a vast variety of ways; and that perhaps in proportion to the greatness of the system and the originality of its teacher, or its success in the number of adherents, will be the elements of coming difference and inevitable dissent. If no two minds see, or can possibly see, any theory in precisely the same light, they cannot possibly listen to the words of an oral teacher, or read a treatise written by him, and put the same interpretation upon it.

All this is most natural, and inevitable; and why should any one wish that others should think

exactly as he does? It is like compelling them to wear the same kind of clothes, or to use the same kind of spectacles, and losing our temper if they object to do so. In reference therefore to those convictions which we may think most of all important for the human race, and the significance of which we may perhaps ourselves have been long in seeing, it is best "to possess one's soul in patience." Why should we wish to hear an echo of our own beliefs around us, if it be unbecoming to "compass sea and land to make proselytes" to them? It may also be noted that a society of men and women in which belief is uniform is always a dull society. It stagnates from the want of the elements of difference. In all progressive communities, however much the individual may succeed in coming to definite conclusions on great subjects, what is growing up around him in society, as the result of the contemporary forces that sway it, is necessarily different from that which he has himself reached, or from which he originally started. This consideration alone should be sufficient to make men tolerant and sympathetic as to the evolution of belief.

CHAPTER IV

INADEQUATE AND PARTIAL THEORIES

(*The Ontological Argument*)

THE ontological proof of the Divine Existence has always possessed a singular fascination to the speculative mind. It promises so much, and would accomplish so much, if only it were valid! But had demonstration been possible, this theistic argument would have carried conviction long ago, not only to the majority of thinkers, but also to the universal mind of the race. The historical failure is signal. Whether in the form in which it was originally cast by Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, or in the more elaborate theory of Descartes, or as presented in the ponderous English treatises of Cudworth, Henry More, and Dr. Samuel Clarke, it is altogether a *petitio principii*. Under every modification, it reasons from the necessary notion of God, to his necessary existence; or from the necessary existence of space and time, which are assumed to be the pro-

perties or attributes of a substance, to the necessary existence of that substance. A purely subjective necessity of the reason is carried from within outwards, and is held to be conclusive in the realm of objective reality. But the very essence of the problem is the discovery of an intellectual path, by which one may pass from these subjective notions of the intellect to the objective realities of the universe beyond it. We may not at the very outset summarily identify the two, and take the existence of the one as a demonstrative proof of the existence of the other. In every affirmation of real existence we pass from a notion which has entered the mind, or is innate, to the realm of objective being, which exists independently of us who affirm it; and how to pass warrantably from the ideal world within, to the real world without, is the very problem to be solved. To be valid at its starting-point, the ontological argument ought to prove that the notion of God is so fixed at the very root of our intellectual nature, that it cannot be dislodged from the mind; and this some thinkers, such as Clarke, have actually affirmed. To be valid as it proceeds, it ought to prove that the notion, thus necessary in thought, has a real counterpart in the realm of things; that it may vindicate the step it so quietly takes from the ideal notion to the world of real existence. It passes from thought to things, just as one passes

from logical premiss to conclusion. But, to be consistent, its advocates must rest contented with an ideal conclusion deduced from an ideal premiss. Thus the only valid issue of the ontological argument is a system of absolute idealism, of which the theological corollary is pantheism. But, as this is not the Deity the argument essays to reach, it must be pronounced illogical throughout.

The ontological argument identifies the logical with the real. The illicit procedure in which it indulges would be more apparent than it is to *a priori* theorists, if the object they imagine they have reached were visible in nature, and apprehensible by the senses. To pass from the ideal to the real sphere, by a transcendental act of thought, is seen at once to be unwarrantable in the case of sense-perception. In this case, it is the presence of the object that alone warrants the transition, else we should have as much right to believe in the existence of the hippogriff as in the reality of the horse. But when the object is invisible, and is at the same time supreme or ultimate, the speculative thinker is more easily deceived. We must, therefore, in every instance ask him, Where is the bridge from the notion to the reality? What is the nature of the plank thrown across the chasm which separates these two regions (to use an old philosophical phrase), "by the whole diameter of being"? We can never, by any vault of logic, pass from the

one to the other. In all *a priori* demonstration we are imprisoned within the region of mere subjectivity, and how to escape from it is, as was said before, the very problem to be solved.

Anselm was the first who definitely formulated the ontological proof. Our idea of God, he said, is the idea of a being than whom we can conceive nothing greater; but, inasmuch as real existence is greater than mere thought, the Divine existence is guaranteed in the very idea of the most perfect being. Otherwise, the contradiction of the existence of one still more perfect would emerge. The error of Anselm was the error of his age, and the main blot in the whole of the Mediæval Philosophy. At first it seemed to him that reason and faith were separated by a wide interval, if not by an impassable chasm. He then wished to have a reason for his faith, cast in the form of a syllogism; and he failed to see—or adequately to understand — that all demonstrative reasoning hangs upon axiomatic truths which cannot be demonstrated, not because they are inferior to reason, but because they are superior to reasoning; or because they are the pillars upon which all ratiocination rests. This was his first mistake. Dissatisfied with the data upon which all deductive reasoning hangs, he preferred the stream to the fountain-head; while he virtually thought that by going down the stream he could reach the fountain!

His second mistake, however, was the greater of the two. He confounded the necessities of thought with the necessities of the universe. He passed, without a warrant, from his own subjective notion to the region of objective reality; and it has been the same with all who have since followed him, in this ambitious path. After witnessing the elaborate intellectual feats which the mediæval theologians performed, and the artificial strain to which they subjected their intellects in the process, the modern world sees the chasm still yawning between the abstract notions of the mind and the concrete facts of the universe. It is remarkable that any one of these thinkers was satisfied with the accuracy of his reasoning. We can explain it only by the intellectual habit of the age, and the (misread) traditions of the Stagyrite. They made use, unconsciously, of the intuition which carries us across the gulf, and they mistook the process by which they reached the other side. In other words, what was due to the necessities of the moral nature and the voice of the heart, they set down to the credit of the intellect.

The most illustrious thinker who developed the scholastic theism at the dawn of modern Philosophy was Descartes. While inaugurating a new method of research, he retained the most characteristic doctrine of mediæval ontology. He argued that necessary existence is as essential to the idea of an all-perfect

being, as the equality of its three angles to two right angles is essential to the idea of a triangle. But though he admits that his "thought imposes no necessity on things," he contradicts his own admission by adding, "I cannot conceive God except as existing, and hence it follows that existence is inseparable from him." In his *Principles of Philosophy* we find the following argument :—

> As the equality of its three angles to two right angles is necessarily comprised in the idea of the triangle, the mind is firmly persuaded that the three angles of a triangle *are* equal to two right angles; *so* from its perceiving necessary and eternal existence to be comprised in the idea which it has of an all-perfect being, it ought manifestly to conclude that this all-perfect being exists (Pt. i. sec. 14).

This argument is more formally expounded in his *Reply to Objections to the Meditations*, thus :—

> Proposition I. The existence of God is known from the consideration of his nature alone. Demonstration: To say that an attribute is contained in the nature or in the concept of a thing, is the same as to say that the attribute is true of this thing, and that it may be affirmed to be in it. But necessary existence is contained in the nature or the concept of God. Hence, it may be with truth affirmed that necessary existence is in God, or that God exists.

It is not difficult to show that, in this elaborate array of argumentation, Descartes was the victim of a subtle fallacy. Our conception of necessary existence cannot include the fact of necessary existence, for —to repeat what has been already said—the one is

an ideal concept of the mind, the other is a fact of real existence. The one demands an object beyond the mind conceiving it, the other does not. All that the Cartesian argument could prove would be that the mental concept was necessary, not that the concept had a counterpart in the external universe. It is, indeed, a necessary judgment that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, *because this is an identical proposition;* the subject and the predicate are the same, the one being only an expansion of the other. We cannot destroy the predicate, and leave the subject intact; but it is otherwise when we affirm that any individual triangular object *exists.* We may then destroy the predicate "existence," and yet leave the subject (the notion of the triangle) intact in the mind.

It is true that Descartes did not limit himself to this futile *a priori* demonstration. He buttressed his formal ontology by a much more suggestive argument; although it is logically quite as inconclusive. He reasons thus in his *Principles:* We have the idea of an all-perfect being in the mind, but whence do we derive it? It is impossible that we can have an idea of anything, unless there be an Original somewhere in the universe whence we derive it, as the shadow is the sign of a substance that casts it. But it is manifest that the more perfect cannot arise from the less perfect, and that that, which knows something

more perfect than itself, cannot be the cause of its own being. Since, therefore, we are not ourselves so perfect as the idea of perfection which we find within us, we are forced to believe that this idea is derived from a more perfect being above us, and consequently that such a Being exists.

It will be observed that this second argument of Descartes is partly cosmological, although it ultimately merges in the ontological proof, and falls back upon it for support; hence Descartes himself called it an *a posteriori* argument. There is no link of connection between the notion from which we start, and the world in which we live, except that the former is ours. The two extremes are obvious enough. If we "begin, continue, and end" with experience, never transcending it, we are confined to a world of *individua*—of single powers, or forces, moments of energy, or phases of experience—and are therefore necessarily a-theist. If, on the other hand, we begin with the "notion" of the intellect, and keep to it—never getting out of the abstract, the one, and the universal—we are necessarily pan-theist.

If we start with the idea of the Absolute, and try to construe the whole story of the Universe as the historic unfolding in a time-process of the life of that absolute Being, or its manifestation and apocalypse under the conditions of finite existence, we merge the Infinite in the finite, and the finite in the

Infinite. Their distinction becomes illusory. The one is the double of the other, its echo or its shadow. If we say, with Hegel, that the Absolute and Universal realises itself in the relative and the individual, and that this historic process of realisation is necessary for the self-consciousness of the Absolute; then, each stage of the process is equally a phase of the life of the Absolute, and all its stages equally mirror the Absolute to us, because all are opportunities for its self-consciousness.

Before passing to the second group of theories a brief consideration of Hegel's defence of the ontological argument will give an opportunity of indicating at this stage one of the philosophical bases of Theism.

Hegel's rehabilitation of the ontological argument amounted to this, that "the notion" *is* "the Absolute," and contains Being along with itself; in other words, that real and ideal existence are implicates, wrapped up together. Thought, in short, is the supreme category, which includes everything within it.

But if "the notion" includes existence, it will follow (1) that the existence it attests is purely ideal; and (2) that, being absolute, it includes all existence, simultaneously and miscellaneously; and that is to say that the Divine and the human are merged in each other.

The truth within the ontological argument is not that which Hegel surmised, but something very different. Perhaps it may be expressed thus: All experience *a posteriori* implies the existence of elements that are *a priori*. As the individual consciousness evolves itself, it finds an objective realm beyond it, which corresponds to its subjective self, or harmonises with it. Its own evolution goes on according to law; but, as it proceeds, it meets and recognises an objective universe evolving beyond it. The subjective ideal does not create the objective real. It finds it. It enters into its own heritage of development; but, in so doing, it finds that, running parallel to this — reflecting, and consolidating it — are the objective laws of the universe, the laws of the real world of things. It finds that its own *a priori* thought hits reality, so to say, in its *a posteriori* apprehension of the facts of existence around it. Hence it concludes that there is an underlying unity in both—a background in the Absolute, which is the archetype of all types, or the supreme category which includes and transcends every lesser one.

The synthesis of the two realms of thought and being, the ideal and the real, may be reached through experience; but such a basis for Theism is a very different one from that of the ontologist. It is the basis on which all the sciences are built up; and in carrying us across the chasm between the subjective

and the objective, it gives us something that we can practically recognise. We cannot worship "the unity of knowing and being," any more than we can worship the unknown and unknowable mystery of the Absolute.

Thus it seems impossible to reach a valid theodicy, if we start—as all ontology does—from the abstract notions of the intellect, and not from the concrete facts of experience. We must transcend our experiences of phenomenal reality, or we can never get higher in our Theism than to the "magnified and non-natural man," which is so easily caricatured. But if we *begin* beyond experience, we will remain for ever in the air; and all existence in time will be included within the self-development of the one, absolute, and undivided Essence.

But what warrant have we for thus construing the facts of phenomenal existence? for interpreting the process of "becoming," or the evolution of Nature in time, as the mere dramatic disclosure of the "being" of the Infinite? or the method by means of which it realises itself, as at once infinite and finite, in a duality which is taken up into unity, and a unity which is again dissolved in indefinite multiplicity? We have no speculative warrant for so doing, and the consequences which result from such a monistic theory are obvious. Each individual thing ceases to have any real individuality of its

own, the moment we construe its life as the manifestation in space and time of an infinite subject-object, which cannot be disclosed in space and time. If the evolution of phenomena be a process by which the Absolute unveils its essence, and by which it realises itself through contraries and opposites, it comes to this that the objects which mirror the infinite subject are mere phases of the underlying essence—"modes," Spinoza called them—and the distinction between each is a distinction in name only. Nay, I go further, and say that there is surely more than a contradiction in thus saying that the Infinite and Absolute requires to manifest itself in the finite and the relative. If such an incarnation of the Infinite be necessary to it, all its embodiments —from the least to the greatest—must be equally necessary. On this theory, good and evil together are equally valid reflections of the infinite Reality.

We have been told that, as time goes on, the self-realisation of the Absolute becomes progressively more complete and thorough, and that it gradually works itself out. It shows itself first as dumb inarticulate force, then as self-conscious energy, next as latent reason, and again as conscious volition; and while in each individual we see the transient blossoming of consciousness—which perishes as soon as it runs its course—in the history of the human race, the infinite reason and self-consciousness

"comes to itself"—and fulfils itself. But why should time be needed for this? why should a process of development accomplish what a single event cannot secure? If this absolute self-identical Essence exists before all time, and after it—in other words, above beneath and beyond phenomena, in timeless and spaceless integrity—what is the use of a time-development to it? The phrases we make use of, in describing it, are due to *our* limitation in time and space. But this abstract infinite and absolute Essence is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," although it bodies itself forth in finite forms, in time and space. And how can the infinite and absolute *grow?* How can that which is in itself perfect go on, realising and perfecting itself in a time-process? Surely to the Infinite there can be no "*increasing* purpose."

On the one hand, we cannot get down from the realm of the "abstract notion" to the concrete world of phenomena by a process of subjective development; and on the other, we cannot transcend the phenomena, by a process of objective development in the world of things. If we are to get beyond the finite stream of evolution at all, it is neither by regress nor by progress along the lines of occurrence. There is no bridge that way across the chasm.

But may we not begin with experience, and see in the concrete world not a mere series of empirical

events—detached occurrences, or atomic phenomena —but a living whole, a connected hierarchy, a cosmic process, in which there is a continuous evolution and inter-connected development, reflecting our own life? and may we not from this infer a parallel although an infinite agency at work? Is it not possible to strip the process of all that is empirical and accidental; construing it as the disclosure, through phenomena, in space and time, of that which in its essence transcends them? In other words, can we not discern the product underneath the process?

Before leaving the ontological argument it should be observed that the majority of *a priori* theorists, professing to conduct us to the desired conclusion along the level road of demonstration—while they contradict their own principle, and furtively introduce the contingent facts of experience—have but a faint conception of the magnitude of the question at issue. To work out a demonstration of the Divine Existence with algebraic formulæ—to contemplate it as a problem of mathematical science, under the light and guidance of the understanding alone, and unaided by moral intuition—shows a lack of insight into the question in debate. The object, of which we are in search, is not a blank colourless abstraction, or necessary entity. Suppose that even an "existence" were demonstrable, that bare entity is not the God of Theism, the infinite Intelligence and Person-

ality, of whose nature the human spirit desires some assurance,—if it can be had. And the formal demonstration of a primitive source of existence (*more geometrico*) is of no theological value whatsoever. As a mere *ultimatum*, its existence is conceded by every philosophical school; but it amounts to very little. It is an unillumined, colourless, blank admission. So far as intellectual and moral recognition go, the object is a zero-point; inaccessible alike to the reason, and the heart; before which the human spirit is either hopelessly perplexed, or absolutely paralysed.

(*The Cosmological Argument*)

The germs of the cosmological, as of the ontological, argument are to be found in the Scholastic Philosophy; although its elaboration was left to the first and second periods of our modern era. Diodorus of Tarsus, John Damascenus, Hugo of St. Victor, and Peter of Poitiers—with many others—have contributed to the development of this mode of proof. It is the argument *a contingentia mundi*, or *ex rerum mutabilitate;* and may be briefly stated thus: If the contingent exists, the necessary also exists. We ourselves, the world, all objects of sense, are contingent existences; but there must be a cause of

these, which cause must be also an effect. If we try to go back to the cause of that cause, and to its cause again, we must at length pause in our regress; but, by rising to a First Cause, we escape from the contingent, and reach the necessary. From our observation of the manifold sequences of Nature, we rise to a causal fountain-head, since we cannot travel backwards for ever, along an infinite line of dependent sequences.

This argument, however, is as illusory as the ontological, from which it borrows any strength it has, and of which it shares the weakness. Why should we ever pause, in our regressive march along the lines of phenomenal sequence, of which we observe the slow evolution through immeasurable time? and how can we reach a fountain-head at all? Because we cannot think out an endless regress of infinite antecedents, we are not warranted in therefore assuming the existence of a first cause. For that assumption of an ἀρχή, or an uncaused cause, after we have spent some time in mounting the steps of the ladder of phenomena, is to the speculative reason equally illicit, as its assumption would be, when standing on the first rung of the ladder. Why should we not assume it at the first, if we may do so, or are compelled to do so, at the last? The fact of our having wandered a little way backwards, from our present standing ground amongst

antecedent phenomena, will not warrant our ultimately leaving the phenomenal sphere, unless we are warranted in doing so before we begin our wanderings. The cosmological argument starts from the concrete, works its way backward along the channel of the concrete, till it turns round, faces the abstract, looks up, takes wing, and

suddenly scales the height.

In other words, the speculative reason essays to cross over the chasm, between the long series of dependent sequences, and an original or uncreated cause; but it does so furtively, and illegitimately. It crosses by an unknown path, to an unknown source, supposed to be necessary.

Besides, what light is cast, by this ambitious regress, on the nature of the fountain-head? How is the Being, whom we are supposed at length to reach, the source of that series of effects, which are supposed to have sprung from his creative fiat? If we experience a difficulty in our regress, in connecting the last link of the chain with the *Causa causans*, we experience a counter-difficulty in our progress, in connecting the first link of the same chain with the original creative energy. And how, it may be asked, do we associate or connect the supreme Cause with intelligence, or with personality? This assumption of an ἀρχὴ is a speculative leap in

the dark; and it may be asked, how can we possibly escape from the series of effects, which we perceive in Nature, to the noumenal Source of which we are in search? By the observation of what is, or of what has been, we merely ascend backwards in time, through the ever-changing forms of phenomenal energy—our effects being only developed causes, and our causes latent or possible effects,—but we never reach a noumenal Source. That is reserved for the flight of the speculative reason, soaring into the empyrean, beyond the very atmosphere of thought.

It is constantly forgotten in this controversy that the admission that *some kind of being* must always have existed in the universe, is the common property of all the systems of philosophy. Materialist and idealist, theist and atheist, alike admit the proposition; but its admission is theologically worthless. "The notion of a God," said Sir William Hamilton—in his admirable manner—"is not contained in the notion of a mere first cause; for, in the admission of a first cause, atheist and theist are at one." So far as this argument can carry us, the being assumed to exist is, therefore, a blank essence, a mere zero, an everything = nothing. Nature remains a fathomless abyss; telling us nought of its whence, or its whither. It is the fountain-head of an ever inscrutable mystery, which overshadows and overmasters us. The *natura naturata* casts no light

on the *natura naturans*. The systole and diastole of the universe go on, the flux and the reflux of its phenomena are endless. That something always was, every one admits; but the question between the rival philosophic schools is as to what that something was, and is. We may choose to call it "the first Cause" (an explanation which implies that our notion of endless regression has broken down), and we may say that we have reached the notion of an uncaused cause. But is that a conceivable notion at all? Is it intelligible, and representable? Do we not, in the very assumption, bid farewell to reason, and fall back on some form of faith?

Finally, the moment that the supposed Cause is reached, the principle which was supposed to bring us to it conspicuously breaks down? And, by thus destroying the bridge behind, the very principle of causality—which was valid in our progress and ascent, along the limited area of experience—now emptied of all philosophical meaning, when we desert experience and rise to the transcendental, invalidates the whole series of effects, which are supposed to have sprung from it? We need not rise above any single event, contingent and finite, to another event as its proximate cause; if, when we have essayed to carry out the regress, we suddenly stop short, and congratulate ourselves that we have at length reached an uncaused cause.

Thus, when the cosmological theorist asks, Does the universe contain its own cause within itself? and, answering in the negative, asserts that it must therefore have sprung from a supra-mundane source, it may be validly asked in reply, May it not have been eternal? May not its history be but the ceaseless evolution, or transformation of unknown primeval forces? So far as this argument conducts us, it certainly may; and to pass from the present contingent state of the universe to its originating Source, we must make use of the ontological inference, in which we have already indicated that there is a double flaw.

CHAPTER V

INADEQUATE AND PARTIAL THEORIES (*continued*)

(*The Teleological Argument*)

THE teleological has been the most popular of all theistic arguments, not only in England, but in Europe generally. It has carried apparent conviction to many, who have seen the futility of the *a priori* processes of proof, and is the stock argument of British "Natural Theology"; in explanation and defence of which volume after volume has been written. It is, as Kant remarked, "the oldest, the clearest, and the most adapted to the ordinary human reason." Nevertheless, its failure is the more signal; considering that its reputation has been so great, and its claim so vast.

It has been somewhat inaccurately termed a *physico-theological* argument, a phrase equally descriptive of it and of the cosmological. The difference between them may be stated thus. The latter proof starts from any finite existence whatsoever, and

without scrutinising its character, rises from it to an absolute cause, by a mental leap or inference. This one scrutinises the phenomena of Nature, and finds traces of intelligence within them. It detects the presence or the vestiges of mind, in the particular effects which it examines; and from these it infers the existence of Deity. One branch of it is the popular argument from design, or adaptation in Nature; the fitness of means to ends implying, it is said, an Architect or designer. It may be called a technological argument; and is variously treated, according as the technologist starts from human contrivance, and reasons to Nature; or begins with Nature's products, and reasons toward man. Another branch is the argument from the order of the Universe—the types or laws of Nature, indicating, it is said, an Orderer or law-giver, whose intelligence we thus discern. In this case it is not that the adjustment of means to ends proves the presence of a mind that has adjusted them; but that the law itself, in its regularity and continuity, implies a mind behind it, an intelligence animating the otherwise soul-less universe. The argument might be termed a nomo-theological one.

Under the same general category may be placed an argument from animal instinct, which is distinct at once from the evidence of design, and from that of law or order. To take one instance: The bee

forms its cells, following unconsciously—and by what we term "instinct"—the most intricate mathematical laws. There is mind and thought in the process; but whose mind, whose thought? Not the animal's, because it is not guided by experience: it works automatically, unconscious of the end it is accomplishing. Nevertheless, the result arrived at is one, which could be reached by man, only through the exercise of reason of the very highest order. The question arises, Are we not warranted in supposing that a hidden pilot guides the bee, concealed behind what we call its instinct? This is not a question of the adjustment of phenomena. It is the demand of the intellect for a cause adequate to account for a unique phenomenon. It approaches the cosmo-theological argument, as closely as it approaches the techno-theological one; and yet it is different from both. The cosmo-theological endeavours to rise from any particular effect to its cause, and by a backward mental bound to reach an infinite source. The techno-theological proof attempts to rise from the adjustment of means to ends, to an adjuster or contriver. This one simply asks, Whence comes the mind that is here in operation, perceived by its effects, the intelligence that is obviously present within the observed phenomena?

Reverting to the first form of the argument—or that which is ordinarily known as the argument from

design—it may be thus stated, in brief compass. We see marks of adaptation, of purpose, or of foresight in objects, which—as we learn from experience—proceed from the contrivance of man. We see similar marks of design or adaptation in Nature. We are therefore warranted in inferring a world-designer; and from the indefinite number of these, an infinite designer; and from their harmony, his unity. Or thus, we see the traces of wise and various purpose everywhere in Nature; but Nature could not of herself have fortuitously produced this arrangement. It could not have fallen into harmony by accident. Therefore the cause of this wise order cannot be a blind, unintelligent principle, but must be a free and rational mind. The argument is based upon analogy, and it might be termed *analogical*, as strictly as technological. It asserts that because mind is concerned in the production of those objects of human Art, which bear the traces of design, a resembling mind must have been concerned in the production of Nature, where we recognise similar traces of design.

The objections to this mode of proof are manifold. In the *first* place, admitting its partial validity, it falls short of the conclusion which it attempts and professes to reach, because—

(1) The effects it examines, and from which it infers a cause, are finite; whereas the cause it assumes is infinite. The infinity of a cause, however, can

be no valid inference, from an indefinite number of finite effects. The indefinite is still the finite; and we can never perform the intellectual feat of educing the Infinite from the finite, by any multiplication of the latter. It was once said, by an acute defender of the teleological argument, that the number of designed phenomena (indefinitely vast) with which the universe is filled, is sufficient to suggest the infinity of the designing cause; and it may be admitted that it is by the ladder of finite design that we rise to some of our grandest conceptions of infinite agency. This ascent and survey are, however, philosophically possible, only after we have discovered, from some other source, that a Divine Being *exists*. The vastest range of design is of no greater validity than one attested instance of it, so far as proof is concerned. It is not accumulation of facts that we need, but relevancy of data.

But, (2) by this argument, at its best, we only reach an artificer, not a creator,—one who arranged the phenomena of the world, not the originator of its *substance*,—the architect of the cosmos, not the maker of the universe. Traces of mind discoverable amid the phenomena of the world cast no light upon the fact of its creation, or the nature of its source. There is no analogy between a human artificer arranging a finite mechanism, and a Divine creator originating a world. Nor is there a parallel between

the order, the method, and the plan of Nature; and what we see, when we watch a mechanician, working according to a plan, to produce a designed result. The only real parallel would be our perception, by sense, *of a world slowly evolving from chaos*, according to a plan previously foreseen. From the product, we are at liberty to infer a producer, only after having seen a similar product formerly produced. But the product which supplies the basis of this argument is unique and unparalleled; "a singular effect," in the language of Hume, whose reasoning on this point has never been successfully assailed. And the main difficulty which confronts the theist, and which theism essays to remove, is precisely that which the consideration of design does not touch, viz. the *origin*, and not the *arrangements* of the universe. The teleological analogy is therefore worthless.

There is no parallel whatsoever between the process of manufacture, and the product of creation, between the act of a carpenter working with his tools to construct a cabinet, and the evolution of life in Nature. On the contrary, there are many marked and sharply defined contrasts between them.

First of all, in the latter case, there is fixed and ordered regularity, no deviation from law; into the former contingency enters, and often alters or mars the work. Again, secondly, the artificer simply uses

the materials, which he finds lying ready to hand in Nature. He detaches them from their "natural" connections, and arranges them in a special fashion. But in Nature—in the successive evolution of her organisms—there is no detachment or displacement, no interference or isolation. All things are linked together; every atom is dependent on every other atom, while the organisms grow and develop "after their kind" by some vital force, but by no manipulation similar to the architect's or builder's work. And yet again, thirdly, in the one case, the purpose is comprehensible; the end is foreseen from the beginning, because we know what the mechanician desires to effect; but, in the other case, we have no clue to the "thought" of the architect. Who will presume to say that he has adequately fathomed the purposes of Nature, in the adjustment of any one of her phenomena to another of them?

But (3) the only valid inference from the phenomena of design would be that of a *phenomenal first cause*. To infer the existence of a personal Divine Agent, from the observation of the mechanism of the universe, is invalid. Where is the link connecting the traces of mind discernible in Nature, those *vestigia animi*, with an agent who produced them? There is no such link; and, in its absence, the Divine Personality remains unattested. The same may be said of other attributes. Why should we

rest, in our inductive inference from the phenomena of design, in a single designer, when the designs are so varied and complex? May not the complexity and variety of the latter suggest a polytheistic group of ruling, yet conflicting powers? Might not the two broadly marked classes of phenomena—the one good and the other evil, and both presenting the evidence of design—warrant the dualistic inference of two hostile deities, such as Ahriman and Ormuzd? Or if, in all that we observe, a subtle and pervading "unity" is found, and as a consequence existing arrangements point to one designer, why may not he himself have been, at a remoter period, designed? And so on, *ad infinitum*.

Again, (4) design is a plan to overcome hindrance, to effect a contemplated end by conquering difficulty, and by adjusting phenomena each to each. But it is only a being of limited resources that requires so to act, or work. The omnipotent can have no hindrance to overcome, no difficulty to surmount. Working with supremest ease and adequacy, there can be no "adaptation" of phenomena in his procedure, or any adjustment of means to ends. A finite extra-mundane Deity, a material cosmos existing side by side with him, might require so to plan, adjust, and balance things; but it would be a poor accomplishment compared with the work of an intra-mundane Deity, evolving everything from within. With the Infinite

the idea of design is incongruous, partly because it is not by dovetailing phenomena, and by planning that certain things shall be so arranged that certain others follow from them, that the Infinite can be supposed to work; and also because the idea of getting at the purposes of the Infinite is scarcely a reverent one. If God be in Nature, as the soul is in the body, "all in the whole, and all in every part," what is the use of trying to discover a special or peculiar meaning, in the adjustment of one set of phenomena to another set? To suppose the Infinite holding a sort of cabinet-council, and arranging a programme or policy of action, at once reduces him to the level of the finite. We may validly ask, "Do his designs extend only to those phenomena in which we happen to see them? and if they extend to *all* phenomena, where is the design, or the fitting of 'this' to 'that'?" It is surely rendered superfluous by the first postulate of theism.

In the *second* place, not only is the argument defective—admitting its validity so far as it goes—but even partial validity cannot be conceded to it. (1) The phenomena of design not only limit us to a finite designer, not only fail to lead us to the originator of the world, or to a personal first cause; but they confine us within a network of observed designs, and do not warrant the inference of a being detached from or independent of these designs, and therefore

able to modify them with a boundless reserve of power. These designs only suggest mechanical agency, working in fixed forms, according to prescribed law. In other words, the phenomena of the universe, which distantly resemble the operations of man, do not in the least suggest an agent exterior to themselves; and we are not intellectually constrained to ascribe the arrangement of means to ends in Nature to anything supra-mundane. Why may not these arrangements be due to a principle of Life, immanent in Nature, the mere endless evolution and development of the world itself? We observe that phenomenon A fits into phenomena B, C, and D; and we are therefore asked to infer that A was fitted to its place by an intelligent mind. But suppose that A did not fit into B, C, or D, it would certainly in some way, either known or unknown, fit into phenomena X, Y, or Z. It would, in any case, be related to its antecedent and consequent phenomena. Our perception of their fitness or relationship, however, gives us no information beyond *the fact of fitness.* Any other (larger) conclusion is illegitimate.

It is often asserted that the phenomenal changes, which we observe in Nature, give evidence of their being *effects.* But what are effects? Transformed causes, modified by the transformation—mere changed appearances. If a cause be, in one sense, an effect concealed; the effect must, in the same sense, be a

cause revealed. It is true that we see the result of volitional energy in those phenomena which our consciousness forces us to trace back to our own personality as their producing cause. But where do we see in Nature, or the Universe, phenomena which we are similarly warranted in construing as the effect of volitional energy or of constructive intelligence? We are not conscious of the process of creation, nor do we perceive it. We have never witnessed the construction of a world. We only perceive the everlasting flux and reflux of phenomena, the ceaseless pulsation of Nature's life,—evolution, transformation, birth, death, and birth again. But Nature herself is dumb as to her whence or whither. Even if—as already hinted—we could detect a real analogy between the handiwork of man, and the processes or products of Nature, we would not be warranted in saying that the constructive intelligence which explains the one class of phenomena is the only possible explanation of the other.[1]

Thus no study of the existing arrangements and disposition of Nature's mechanism can carry us beyond the mechanism itself. The teleological argument professes to carry us above the chain of natural sequence. It affirms that those traces of intelli-

[1] And a *possible* explanation is of no use. It must be the *only possible* one. It has no theistic value if it merely brings the hypothesis of a Deity within the limits of the conceivable.

gence, which are everywhere visible, are a hint to us that long ago Mind was engaged in the construction of the universe. It is not that the phenomena

> Give forth at times
> A little flash, a mystic hint

of a living Will within or behind the mechanism, of a Personality kindred to that of the artificer who observes it. With that suggestion, as will presently be seen, we should have no quarrel. But the teleological argument is said to bring us authentic tidings of the origin of the universe. If it does not carry us beyond the chain of dependent sequence it is of no value. Its advocates are aware of this, and they assert that it is able thus to carry us beyond the adamantine links. But this is precisely what it fails to do. It can never assure us that those traces of intelligence, to which it invites our study, proceeded from a constructive mind detached from the universe; or that, if they did, another mind did not fashion that mind, and so on *ad infinitum*. And thus the perplexing puzzle of the origin of things remains as insoluble as before.

Further, (2) the validity of the teleological argument depends upon the accuracy of our interpretation of those "signs of intelligence" of which it makes so much, and which it interprets analogically in the light of human nature. To describe Nature as a mechanism is to employ a figure or metaphor, which

may be helpful to our understanding of some of those features in which it resembles the "works of art or man's device"; but it must never be forgotten that we are speaking metaphorically, not literally; and that it is one function of Philosophy to expose the illusion of mistaking the symbolic for the real, and if possible to eradicate it. The "interpreter" of symbols is ever "one among a thousand." Who is to guarantee to us that we have not erred as to the meaning of Nature's secret tracery? Before we can deduce a conclusion so stupendous, from data so peculiar, we must be assured that no further insight will disallow the interpretation we have made. But is not this presumptuous in those, who are at present acquainted—in a very partial manner—with the significance of a few of Nature's laws? No theologian, and no scientific man has penetrated to the radical meaning of any one of these laws? And, if he has not done so, how can he single out the few resemblances he has detected, and explain the nature of the Infinite by a sample of the finite? Nature is so inscrutable that, even when a law is discerned, the scientific explorer will not venture to say that he has so read its character as to be sure that the law reflects the ultimate meaning of the several phenomena it explains. Nay, is he not convinced that other and deeper meanings *must* lie within them? A law of Nature is but the generalised expression of

the extent to which our insight has as yet extended into the secret laboratory of her powers. As that insight deepens, our explanations change. We say that the lower law is resolved into a higher one, that the more detailed is taken up into the more comprehensive. But, if our scientific conceptions themselves are thus constantly changing and enlarging, how can we venture to erect our natural theology on the surface interpretation of the fleeting phenomena of the universe? "Lo, these are a part of his ways, but how little a portion is known of Him!"

And this consideration may be advanced with equal force against those who dogmatically deny that there can be *any* resemblance between the forces of Nature and the volitional energy of man. Both assumptions are equally arbitrary and illegitimate. We shall immediately endeavour to show on what grounds, remote from teleology, we are warranted in believing that a resemblance does exist.

But, to return, (3) if the inference from design is valid at all, it must be valid everywhere. All the phenomena of the world must yield it equally. No part of the universe can be better made than any other part. Every phenomenon is adjusted to every other phenomenon, with more or less of nearness or remoteness, as means to ends. Therefore, if the few phenomena which the teleologists single out from the many are a valid index to the character of the source whence

they have proceeded, everything that exists must find its counterpart in the divine nature. If we are at liberty to infer an Archetype above from the traces of mind beneath, on the same principle must not the phenomena of moral evil and malevolence be carried upwards by analogy?—a procedure which would destroy the notion of Deity which the teleologists advocate. If we are at liberty to conclude that a few phenomena, which seem to us designed, proceed from and find their counterpart in God, a reason must be shown why we should select the few, and pass over other phenomena of the universe.

In other words, if the constructor of the universe designed anything by the agency he has established, he must have designed all the results that actually emerge. And, if the character of the architect may be deduced from one design, or a few, we must take all existing phenomena into account, *to help out our idea of his character*. Look, then, at these phenomena as a whole. Consider the elaborate contrivances for inflicting pain, and the apparatus—so exquisitely adjusted—to produce a wholesale carnage of the animal tribes. They have existed from the very dawn of geologic time. The whole world teems with the proofs of such intended carnage. Every organism has parasites which prey upon it; and not only do the superior tribes feed upon the inferior (the less yielding to the greater), but the inferior prey, at the very same

time, no less remorselessly upon the superior. If, therefore, the inference of benevolence be valid, the inference of malevolence is at least equally valid: and, as equal and opposite, the one notion destroys the other.

Again, (4) while we are philosophically compelled to consider all events as designed, if we interpret one as such—nay, to believe that the exact relation of every atom to every other in the universe has been adjusted by a "pre-established harmony"—the moment we do thus universalise design, that moment the notion escapes us, is emptied of all philosophical meaning, and theological relevancy. Let it be granted that phenomenon A is related to phenomenon B as means to end. Carry out the principle,—as philosophy and science alike compel us to do,—and consider A as related by remoter adaptation to C, D, E, and to all the other phenomena of the universe; in short, regard every atom as inter-related with every other atom, every change as co-related to every other change; then the notion of design breaks down, from the very width of the space it covers. Seemingly valid on the limited area of finite observation and human agency, it disappears when the whole universe is seen to be one vast network of interconnected law and order.

(5) Combining this objection with what may seem to be its opposite, but is really a supplement to it,

we may again say, that we, who are a part of the universal order, cannot pronounce a verdict as to the intended design of the parts, until we are able to see the whole. If elevated to a station whence we could look down on the entire mechanism, if *outside* the universe (a sheer impossibility to any one), we might see the exact bearing of part to part, and of link with link, so as to pronounce with confidence as to the intention of the contriver. If—like the Wisdom of which we read in the *Proverbs* — a creature had been with the Almighty "in the beginning of his way, before his works of old, set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was; when as yet he had not made the world, when he prepared the heavens, and gave his decree" to the inanimate and animated worlds as they severally arose, such a spectator might be able to understand something of the meaning of creation. But unless the supposed spectator were equal in knowledge to the Architect and Builder himself, he could affirm nothing with absolute certainty as to his designs.

Thus the teleological argument must be pronounced fallacious. It is illusory, as well as incomplete: and were we to admit its relevancy, it could afford no basis for worship, or the intellectual and moral recognition of the Object whose existence it infers. The conception of Deity as a workman—laying stress upon the notion of clever contrivance, and deft

manipulation—whilst it subordinates moral character to skill, could never lead to reverence, or give rise to the adoration of the architect.

It must be conceded, however, that there is a subsidiary value in this, as in all the other arguments. It proves (as Kant has shown) that if the phenomena of Nature cannot lead us to the reality we are in search of, they cannot *discredit* its existence. They do not turn the argument the other way, or weight the scale on the opposite side. They are merely negative, and indeed clear the ground for other and more valid modes of proof.

They are of further use (as Kant has also shown) in correcting our conceptions of the Divine Being, in defining and enlarging our notions of his attributes, when, from other sources, we have learned his existence.

CHAPTER VI

THE METAPHYSIC OF PHYSICS

It may be taken as a scientific axiom that the amount of energy in the Universe is a constant quantity. Its total sum is never increased, and never diminished. In other words, there is only one imperishable force which undergoes perpetual change—a ceaseless physical metempsychosis, or palingenesia. It appears, in a particular form or aspect, only to disappear, and to reappear transformed. It is unnecessary, in the present discussion, to state the evidence on which the correlation of the physical forces rests. It is enough to say that it has been demonstrated that heat, for example, is not a separate substance, but only "a mode of motion"; but it is important to note that the corollary of this physical axiom is the indestructibility of energy.

If we take for granted that this has been proved, by evidence equal to that by which the law of gravitation has been scientifically demonstrated, we find ourselves only at the threshold of a much larger

inquiry—and a purely metaphysical one—which of necessity succeeds it. If we have good grounds for believing that in the groups of phenomena aggregated under different names—chemical, physical, vital, etc.—we see the evolution of a single force, what is to be our fundamental idea of this force? We describe it variously, but are we to say that it is in itself unknown, in its essence impenetrable and inscrutable, while only its manifestations, or the transient phases it assumes, can possibly be known by us? If so, how can we connect the latter with the former?—the known phases with the unknown essence? How can we describe them *as belonging to each other at all?* If all forces are one, the nature of the single force within the universe becomes the supreme problem of Physics,—if it is able to solve it,—and of Metaphysics, if it cannot.

The sciences tell us individually, and one by one, what those phases are which this protean Force assumes. They show their relations and their correlations, their groupings and endless variety of aspect; but they do no more. In this many-sided portrayal, their function — in itself so vast, and apparently inexhaustible—ceases. Their recognised authorities tell us—and we receive the verdict deferentially — that they know nothing of what transcends the sphere of phenomenal change. Their inquiries began on that plane, and they must there-

fore continue on it to the end. They tell us of "modes of motion" *ad infinitum*, but as to what produces motion they tell us nothing. On the nature of "efficient cause" science is healthily agnostic. It virtually says, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me," I know nothing about it; and, in the very nature of things, it is evident that if this can be discovered at all, it must be by a process unknown to science, and altogether different from that which investigates phenomena and their laws. If we can reach the "secret place of power," and find out what it is that produces motion, we of necessity leave Science behind us; and as this is sometimes advanced by sectarian physicists as a taunt to those who venture into a region which transcends phenomena, and as it is really a very important admission as to the limits of one kind of knowledge—and therefore as to the possibility of another—it may be as well to deal with it a little further.

It is obvious to many that when we ask the cause of the complexity of phenomena, or what has differentiated them each from each, we raise a problem which compels us to transcend both the material world and the phenomenal sphere. We put questions which cannot be answered within the domain of molecular physics. The sciences of Chemistry and Physics disclose the manifold changes which Force or Energy undergoes, phenomenon

succeeding phenomenon, in ever-evolving processes, which have no real break in the continuity of development. But these sciences do not tell us how it comes about that the phenomena are thus differentiated. They merely show us the movements of energy along a variety of paths. The presence of that energy may explain the fact that changes do occur in the line of sequence, but it does not explain why these changes take one particular path rather than another.

We may imagine that we can explain phenomenon D by the mere presence of phenomena A, B, and C, or the phenomena X, Y, and Z, by the action and the interaction of all the previous ones, from A to W; but it is not so. The sequence of phenomena simply tells us that an everlasting process is at work; but were we to carry back our regress *ad infinitum*, we would never get within sight of the problem as to how any one phenomenon caused another to succeed it; in other words, we could never say what led the force to select a special path to work in, and, in order to accomplish the result, to group around it just that particular set of molecules, and no other ones. If we suppose something within the entire series of phenomenal change, an originating motive power, to be the latent cause which differentiates and determines the result at every stage of the evolution, it is evident that, in bringing in this explanation, we at the same time transcend the phenomenal sphere.

To take a particular illustration, if we go back to the motion of the planetary bodies, we find that they all move in an elliptical orbit, as satellites around the sun. This is vaguely explained as being due to "the law of gravitation." It is at least an intelligible question, "What caused the gravitation to act as it does? How came it about that rotatory motion was originally given to the ὕλη, or primitive matter of the universe, when it condensed from a gaseous to a fluid, and thence to a solid state?" The phenomenal physicist tells us that the forces of the universe contain their own explanation within themselves, that they are self-adjusting, self-determining, and self-directing. But this is not only to beg the question in debate, it is also to answer it in the vaguest possible fashion. A crystal is built up in a definite manner. We may even watch its evolution, as we watch the growth of the frost-ferns on a window pane in winter, or the development of the buds in any vegetable structure in spring. We see the molecules drawn together into a particular shape; but by what? Is it by themselves? or by a magnet acting on them, and in them? What, in short, is this Force which directs the molecules how to cohere and to combine, and how again to dissolve and to recombine? In the formation of the simplest organism every molecule moves in a different fashion along its path toward the goal it reaches. But what directs the movements

of the molecules? Do the atoms "push themselves," as Lucretius thought? It is true that science has shown us how the process of Natural Selection works; but is such selection all that is necessary to make the evolution of organic forms and their origin intelligible to us? Have the atoms a free will of their own? and does natural selection thus explain itself?

To put the problem otherwise. Suppose that all energy is one, and that we are warranted in saying of the forces of Nature, "the many are the one,"—in other words, that chemical energy becomes physical, and that chemical and physical energy together become vital,—have we in this discovery obtained a key, or even a remote clue, to the mystery of the universe? If the vital force of the human brain be due to the transformation of the physical forces which lie latent in the food of the eater,—as the heat of a fire is demonstrably due to the activity of a force that was latent in the coal,—our solution of the problem would be a materialistic one. As animal heat is undoubtedly the product of chemical combustion, if all the energy which now shows itself in thought and emotion—mental and spiritual states —can be proved to have once existed as chemical or physical energy, we have a purely physical explanation of these states. But this is just the solution that has never yet been demonstrated. Every physiologist, and every psychologist, knows that the move-

ment of the atoms of brain-tissue and the phenomena of consciousness are correlated. They act and interact; but the emergence of the latter out of a group of the former has never been proved, and the process cannot be shown to be a probable one by any kind of experiment. To account for the evolution of organic Nature, then, we must transcend its forces; we must pass beyond its protean energy to something else, which at once determines and differentiates it.

The truth is that, adopting an atomic theory of the Universe, we must either suppose the primary atoms to be endowed with self-consciousness to begin with,—and that not in a loose, general sort of way, but must suppose each of them separately thus endowed,—or we must believe that the whole course of their evolution and transformation is pervaded by a Self-Consciousness that transcends the series. The former hypothesis has no basis of evidence from which to start; and, even if it were proved, the whole difficulty would re-emerge in the attempt to understand the action of atom upon atom — their reciprocal energy—or the interaction of the various units in this vast republic of self-conscious powers. To explain the existence of self-consciousness, or the blossoming of thought and feeling in individual units, recourse has been had to a distinction among the atoms. Some being organic, and others inorganic,

the organic monads have been said to possess the power to evolve consciousness, while the inorganic have it not. But here again there is supposed to be some cleft in Nature between the two ranks or classes of atoms, and we are no nearer an explanation of both, because we do not bridge over the chasm between them.

The most important point, however, remains. Whether there be an original difference among the atoms or not, whether they fall into two, or into any number of groups, we cannot evolve from them what we do not first place within them, in another form, to be evolved. We must begin by interpreting them intellectually, if we may end by construing them as in any sense intelligible; and we cannot put a rational meaning into their evolution if we consider it as purely physical and simply automatic. No modern writer has put this more effectively than Dr. Martineau. In an address given eighteen years ago, speaking of matter, as called in to explain the outcome of mind, he said: "Starting as a beggar, with scarce a rag of property to cover its bones, it turns up as a prince when large undertakings are wanted, and within an inch of a plenipotentiary. . . . Such extremely clever matter—matter that is up to anything, even to writing *Hamlet*, and finding out its own evolution, and substituting a molecular plebiscite for a divine monarchy of the world—may fairly be

regarded as a little too modest in its disclaimer of the attribute of mind."

The theistic interpretation of force, or cosmic energy, is this. The universe is pervaded from centre to circumference—although, in truth, in the happy allegoric phrase of Pascal, "the centre is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere"—by a vast transcendent Power, known yet unknown, its action being mirrored to us in our own moods of conscious energy, but surpassing these immeasurably. The energy of which we are conscious, in the forth-putting of volition, gives us the root-idea of force; and, in the light of this idea, we are warranted in interpreting the myriad minor forces of the universe, not as in themselves divine, but as the outcome or manifestation of a Power which underlies and yet pervades them, which animates and at the same time transcends them. To attribute to individual molecules of matter "the promise and the potency" of all terrestrial life is as warrantable as it would be to attribute to separate spiritual powers the promise and the potency of all material substance; but that is to say that neither alternative is warrantable. If, however, the power which directs the movements of an individual human body be a self-conscious mind and will, why may not the principle which directs the universe be, similarly, a self-conscious Mind and Will.

Theism does not confuse the separate forces of the

world by reducing them to unity, and subsuming them in a transcendent manner within a single all-embracing energy. According to the theistic view, the supreme idea of force is *will;* but it does not follow that all force in the universe is volitional. No wise theist has ever maintained that will-force is the sole force in the world. What he maintains is that the volitional is the highest known type of force; but within the category of force in general other kinds may certainly be embraced, while all lower types shadow forth their archetype.

Thus, to the eye of the theist, the phenomenal outcome in the realm of nature is as varied, as distinct, and even heterogeneous, as it is to the eye of the worker in each separate science. But underneath these heterogeneous phenomena he discerns a single substance, which he interprets in a variety of ways. He asks the physicist how he knows that physical phenomena are so radically different from chemical ones, that they may not be at their root the varying phases of a single solitary Substance? The phenomena differ, — let us use Jeremy Collier's much-maligned phrase, and say they differ "by the whole diameter of being," — but the Essence underneath, which the phenomena "half reveal and half conceal," may be the same in all. If it be so, manifestly we know something about it, and the highest altar we can erect is not one inscribed ἀγνώστῳ Θεῷ. The

Power we recognise is known as one, and as the substantive essence of all reality. It is also known as "a Presence not to be put by." In discerning it, we "neither ascend into heaven nor descend into the deep," but we enter into a region where—as one of our poets has said—"time and space are not," and in which, another of them has added, "there is no more near nor far." And so the Theism which at this stage we reach is not built on the shifting sands of a casual apocalypse, or on the rare disclosure of what is normally hidden from mankind. On the contrary it is rooted on the rock of that which always was, and is, and shall be.

A serious problem, however, remains behind. Does the doctrine of the correlation and convertibility of the forces extend beyond the chemical and physical spheres, and include the vital within it? Is "life," as well as "heat," only "a mode of motion?" And if the vital forces are thus taken in, are the conscious ones of thought, feeling, and volition, to be included with them; so that unity is reached by embracing every separate kind of energy within the fold of one universal cosmopolitan type?

If we generalise to this extent, we reach a unity which abolishes difference. It is the old Eleatic doctrine, in an altered form; and whether the single resultant Force be construed by us as material, or as spiritual, is of slight speculative significance. It is

not on the ground of its consequences, however, that a monistic theory can be set aside. It may be suspected, but cannot be thus speculatively rejected. The real ground on which the inclusion of all known forms of energy, within a single category which abolishes their difference, may be set aside, is the simple one of experience. We have no evidence to warrant the doctrine that physical force can become vital, and that vital force can be transformed into physical energy. In other words, the chasm between the movements of the physical atoms and the energy of life is one which experience has not yet crossed, and which, in the absence of experience, no scientific theory can bridge.

That life is only movement is an unproved assumption, that vital change is a mere "mode of motion" is an unverified hypothesis. If we grant that the primal atoms have always moved, and have been in an everlasting process of change, that incessant motion will not make one single atom, or any group or aggregation of atoms, actually alive. If motion goes on in the inert mass, as well as in the living organism, it is not the movement of the latter that is the cause of its life. Let us start with the atomic theory—that ancient theory which attained a form so complete, so far-reaching and symmetrical, at the hand of Lucretius —and suppose that an indefinite number of atoms have been incessantly circling, whirling, and battling;

that they have been changing their places and their relations from eternity, and have at length fallen into certain shapes, these shapes are, on the theory, as temporary as those which have preceded them; and, what is much more important, we are none the better of a theory of mere *procession*, as an explanation of how they have come to assume any one of their forms? Between the attraction and repulsion of dead atoms, and the evolution of vital structure, there is "a great gulf fixed." In other words, the atomic theory does not in the least explain how matter evolved life; and, if it does not give us a clue to the process by which a cloud is formed, or a crystal built up into symmetry, *a fortiori* it cannot tell us how a flower grows, or a worm is endowed with life.

But may not matter be itself alive? This theory has been advanced in opposition both to the evolution of the vital out of the non-vital, and to the doctrine of its creation out of nothing by the fiat of omnipotence. If matter be itself alive, we shall not need a bridge to connect the two realms of the lifeless and the living.

In dealing with these high questions, it is as easy to mistake one's own meaning as it is to misconstrue that of others; and it is quite possible that, when a distinguished physicist like Mr. Tyndall speaks of matter as itself alive, and his opponents speak of an

eternal life within it, it is just two separate ways of expressing the same truth in different language. What has been called "the higher Pantheism"—to distinguish it from the deification of material forms—recognises an Infinite Life, within the whole of the cosmos as its animating soul, the very breath of its being. Perhaps, allowing for difference in the physicist's point of view, these two conceptions are not so far apart. An important difference, however, will be noted further on. Meanwhile, is there any evidence for the doctrine that matter is itself alive, or that life is a property of matter?

In the first place, it cannot be said to be true of every kind of matter, or it would abolish the distinction between the living and the dead. In the second place, if it be true, it must be true without our knowing it. The truth must lie concealed within what seems to be its very opposite. In the third place, if all matter be really alive, we should have frequent evidence of the emergence of vitality out of what seems—and on the opposite theory is—the non-vital. A universe of matter really teeming with life, containing the promise of life everywhere, would constantly show us the rise of vital structure out of unlikely quarters. But the most careful experiment, the most prolonged and anxious search, has never shown us this. In the lowest forms of life, we find that vital action is very similar to physical action;

but similarity is not identity. Vegetable or animal life may arise out of dead matter that was once alive; but that is a very different thing from its rise out of a non-vital aggregation of atoms. The phenomena of crystallisation, and the action of frost—chemical and physical processes—are pointed to as showing that the molecules of matter are endowed with a power of coalescence. The "tendency of the particles of matter to run into symmetrical forms"—"the very molecules appearing inspired with the desire for union and growth"—explains, according to Mr. Tyndall, the "movement of the sap of trees." This is either an extremely figurative way of putting the case,—an instance of thinking and speaking in metaphor,—or it is an abuse of terms; for we have no evidence in support of this "physical basis of life." The very use of such a term as "physical basis of life" implies a radical difference between the two things, conjoined in the descriptive phrase. But what do we mean when we speak of a basis? Is it a foundation on which something is to be reared, or built up? The mere statement of what is sought for in this fashion shows that the search is vain. What is built up on a physical basis will be a physical structure; but such a building would explain nothing as to its own contents. In other words, the origin of life is not explained by the origin of its physical envelope.

Suppose that we revert to protoplasm, as the

mystic element out of which all life is evolved, and of which it is the magical essence, we are really not one whit nearer to the goal. It is an explanation of the obscure by the more obscure. How is protoplasm worked up into vital forms? By what power, or force, or agency? Can protoplasm dispense with a protoplast? or evolution with an evolver? Either this alleged primitive element, or substance, has been itself everlastingly alive,—in which case we almost touch, as already said, the opposite theory,—or, originally dead, it has been vitalised by another and a living agency beyond itself.

CHAPTER VII

CAUSALITY

A TRACK or by-path, if not a very open road, towards the theistic interpretation of the Universe may be found in the metaphysics of causality; or through an analysis of what, in the schools, is called the "causal judgment." We have already seen how all physical inquiries lead up to metaphysical ones; (hence the meaning of the respective terms, as laid down by Aristotle). But, if we are to be in a position to interpret the physical world, or "realm of Nature," aright, we must do more than merely glance at the metaphysics of causality; we must have a philosophical knowledge of the nature of causation.

We are in the habit of breaking up the single notion of causality into two things, viz. cause and effect; that is to say, in order to get hold of the root-idea of the notion, we broaden it out over the whole phenomenal area. We trace an occurrence back to a number of antecedents that produced it, and we follow it on to a number of sequents that issue from

it. But no extension of this area of antecedence and sequence gives us the true idea of cause. Juxtaposition in space, and succession in time, are not sufficient to yield it; *energy* in space and time is needed. In other words, every change in the *status quo* of a phenomenon is due, not only to the statical relation in which it stands to other phenomena, but also to the dynamical force which it exerts upon the others.

Perhaps the problem of causality may best be stated in the form of the following question: "Is the cause of an effect to be found in the sum of its con-causes, simply as antecedent phenomena? or, is it to be found in that which exists within, and yet lies behind each phenomenon, and so transcends the whole?" The school of experience not only adopts the former alternative as the true one; but affirms that the latter solution is a chimera; that it has no existence save an illusory one in the imagination of the transcendental metaphysician, and is therefore a mere *ignis fatuus*, or "will-o'-the-wisp." The opposite school of *a priori* metaphysic maintains that the phenomenal theory of mere antecedence and sequence is still more illusory, because it empties the phenomena themselves of all philosophical significance, and impoverishes the seeker by the vanity of his quest. The controversy is thus a clear and decisive one, and there can be no mistake as to the issue involved.

In briefly vindicating the *a priori* view, it is to be noted that, according to this solution of the difficulty, the causal power does not reside in any single object in external Nature, but works through them all. No single object or occurrence in Nature can be the sole cause of any other object or occurrence; still less can any one be its own cause. An "entity" is not, as such, a Cause; but, what is much more to the point, an antecedent cannot of itself, by simply "going before," *produce* a consequent. It may be the *conditio sine qua non* of the production of the latter, but it does not *cause* it, in the sense of exhausting the elements that go to produce it. Nay more, no multiplication in that direction,—that is to say, along the line of phenomenal antecedence,—no congeries or sum of co-operating antecedents can exhaust it, or supply the most important element towards its solution. And it is to be further observed that, although the sequence of phenomena in a particular *order* be inevitable, and even necessary, this inevitable and necessary sequence does not explain a single occurrence. By what we call the law of gravitation, a stone falls to the earth, does not rise from it; but that constant order of succession (*i.e.* the falling and not rising) does not explain the occurrence. In short, it is not the fact of its going before an effect that makes a cause a cause. The causal law, or principle, is not that B must always

follow A; but that, given A as an antecedent, *some* sequent must always result, and that the productive power lies *within* as well as behind the phenomenon. It is not necessary that we should be able to explain *how* the underlying cause affects the phenomena above it. How the force works within the phenomena, how it is attached to them and they to it, how it affects them and utilises them, is the great puzzle; but, suppose that puzzle to remain for ever an insoluble one, it does not follow that we must fall back on the helpless position — which is really an abandonment of all Philosophy — that phenomenal antecedence and sequence is the whole of the process.

It is next to be observed that the very idea of antecedence and sequence vanishes, and is merged in the higher problem just stated, whenever we realise the unity of Nature, and the convertibility and correlation of its forces. If phenomenon A really produces phenomenon B, A must be phenomenally quite distinct from B; but our modern science has shown, not only that all phenomena are interrelated and interwoven, but also that all the physical forces are convertible *inter se*. There is no chasm, or cleft, or *hiatus* anywhere, in the realm of Nature. It is a continuous stream of evolution. To the eye of Science, Nature is a Heraclitic process of becoming; and it is only we who, for our convenience in noting and registering them, mark off things as "prior" and

"posterior." Nature knows nothing of those artificial distinctions of ours; and Science, which is man's reading of Nature, cannot rise above antecedence and sequence. Thus the conclusion to which an *a priori* Philosophy comes—viz. that we must transcend phenomena for an explanation of Cause—seems warranted by the scientific study of Nature itself.

This may become clearer if we go on to consider what the doctrine of Causation is, which metaphysical philosophy warrants. Negatively, we have seen that it is not mere antecedence and sequence; but positively the idea may be said to culminate in that of Power. If no antecedent ever causes its own sequent, but is merely its pioneer, going before it,—and if, to explain any single occurrence, we must take account of many coefficents as concauses,—it is no less true that we must transcend them all, for the sake of each. Be the coefficients many or few, in each and all there must be *power* at work, to make the most trivial of them intelligible. Suppose we continue to observe the way in which phenomena succeed each other, we may at length infer the law of their occurrence, and conclude that what has been will be, so far as the *order* of Nature is concerned. But that is all the length we can go, and all the result we can gather from the scientific study of Nature. It is otherwise when we raise the metaphysical question of the meaning of any single

change that has occurred, that is occurring, or that will occur. It is then that we find the evidence of causal Power, within each and every link of the chain of Nature, a power which binds all phenomena together under law. Each occurrence is the index of power. Every phenomenon conceals it, and at the same time every one displays it; and it is only when we get beyond each, to the causal ground of all, that we obtain a metaphysical explanation of a single one. It must of course be admitted that we reach a *scientific* explanation of phenomenal occurrences from a study of their processes, or of how they emerge and remerge. We can thus deduce a law which accounts for their evolution, but not a principle which explains their existence.

The distinction between the two schools of thought on this question is a radical one. Empirical or *a posteriori* Science affirms that we know nothing, and can know nothing, of causal or formative power. All that we know is the antecedence and sequence, the evolution and derivation of phenomena. Ideal or *a priori* Philosophy affirms that we can discern power at work in, or behind, and beneath all phenomena; and that we must carry this *a priori* postulate with us in our interpretations of Nature, if these are to be philosophically adequate.

A further consideration, which may at least give some countenance or colour to the *a priori* view, is

this. We know no phenomenon so thoroughly—nor can ever know it so completely—as to be able to say that we have exhausted the sum of its phenomenal antecedents. Therefore, if this phenomenal explanation is the only one open to us, we can never know it at all. We are cut off from an *adequate* scientific explanation of any single occurrence in Nature. For the complete (physical) explanation of any one phenomenon, we would require to go back along the whole chain of Nature, and explore every link, before we could feel sure that we were in possession of the real clue. It is quite otherwise with the other (the metaphysical) explanation, which is the dynamical and causal one. One phenomenon, a single change, is enough to elicit it; and no extension of the chain of phenomena can, in this inquiry, help us in the very slightest. We find the source of power—the metaphysical agency we are in search of—within every single link of the chain.

It seems to me that we can give no intelligible meaning to the word Cause if we remove from it, as positivist science does, the idea of Power, *i.e.* creative power—lodged not within each antecedent and consequent separately, but within the entire realm of Nature—as the sole substance beneath the multitudinous phenomena, and as that which in its latency brings the phenomena to pass. The mediæval metaphysicians, following Aristotle, divided "causes"

into four separate classes: the "formal," the "efficient," the "material," and the "final"; but they would have felt that the whole group fell to pieces, emptied of meaning, if the second, the "efficient," was left out. It is clear that this fourfold classification was merely an attempt to emphasise certain aspects under which the one *Causa causans* operates, or manifests its presence and its efficiency; and while the progress of Science, showing us that "the reign of law" is uniform and universal, has banished this fourfold classification of causes, it has not banished any one of the four ideas from the realm of Philosophy, or made the notion of *efficient* cause unscientific.

I may here point out what seems to be the inherent speculative poverty, or meagreness, of the intellectual system known as that of Experience, under all its forms: empiricism, phenomenalism, positivism, etc. It has obtained wide recognition, and has commended itself from its simplicity, and the apparent modesty of its pretensions. But it either takes for granted the central doctrine of the opposite school,—adopts it, that is to say, unknown to itself,—or it is an absolutely airy system, cut off at its root from the *terra firma* of verifiable knowledge. We can get beyond the links of the chain of experience, or phenomenal sequence, in many ways; because (1) at every moment we can apprehend by reason the inner tie of Causality which connects every link of the

chain; (2) each apparently separate phenomenon may become to us a mirror, disclosing the realm of Substance underneath it; and (3) by the synthesis of imagination we can take up all the sequences of Nature into a whole, which is not a phenomenal process of division, succession, and differentiation, but a self-evolving unity, and therefore the disclosure of a higher realm of reality.

It may be a truism to say that Science deals with phenomena and the laws of phenomena, while Philosophy deals with that which transcends phenomena and their laws; but, if it be a truism, it is certainly not a commonplace, because the possibility of the latter — *i.e.* of getting beyond appearances — is by so many persons, and perhaps by the majority of scientific experts, declared to be utopian. This realm of Substance, which underlies and transcends phenomena, is supposed, not only in many scientific schools, but also in some philosophical systems, to be a *terra incognita*, a stupendous desert, a Sahara of interminable sand, or a region which may be appropriately described, in the words of Milton, as

> that Serbonian bog,
> 'Twixt Damietta and Mount Cassius old,
> Where armies whole have sunk.

It is said that, in pretending to know anything about the realm of Substance, a metaphysician is either a presuming sciolist, or a dreaming egoist; or more

likely that he is a lunatic, who is literally pursuing an *ignis fatuus*, or will-o'-the-wisp.

It cannot therefore be too strongly emphasised, that if Philosophy be an illusion, the theistic interpretation of the world must pass away with it. The Being, who can appeal to the reason and the heart of man together, so as to satisfy both, is assuredly no mere phenomenon, and no mere inference from phenomena; and it is certainly not by Science, nor in Science, that the basis of Theism can be laid. The "magnified and non-natural man," who is the God of a distorted popular theology, *may be* a hypothetical inference from the facts of Science; but he is not the Being who is known and recognised by a reverent philosophical Theism.

So close is the connection between Metaphysics and Theism that the fundamental question in both is the same, viz. What is the nature of the Substance that underlies phenomena? and what the relation of phenomena to it? Is this Substance knowable and known? or unknowable and unknown? or both of these together? How are we to construe it to ourselves, and to interpret it to others? In these questions the whole theistic problem lies wrapt up.

What do we really mean when we say that Substance is the ground of phenomena, or that it underlies them? It will be at once observed that in making use of these terms, "ground" and "underlie," we are

bringing in a spacial figure, to image forth to our minds that which is not a spacial concept at all. We thus try to define it, or to make it clear. The "ground" of a thing is contrasted with its "superstructure"; but, when we press the contrast literally, we find that both terms describe what is phenomenal alone. To say that one thing "underlies" another, is again to bring in an idea of space, to help out our notion of a realm "where time and space are not." One thing may "underlie" another phenomenally; but, when we use the term in the above connection, we drop the figure from our mind in the very act of using it. And it does not follow that if we drop the spacial idea of "standing under" phenomena, when we thus think of substance, our thought is attenuated or vague. The idea of the "other side" of phenomena, of that in which they inhere, and to which they belong, or of which they are the manifestation,—the ghostly inner-essence of that which has also an outward bodily form,—may become all the clearer from our first making use of the symbol, and then dropping it from our mind.

If, therefore, it be the function of Philosophy to reach, and if possible to interpret the One beyond the many, and at the same time to discern the Real beyond the allegoric,—to discover Essence beneath appearance, Substance within phenomena, the Absolute beyond the relative,—this is at the same time,

and in other words, the quest of Theism; and all philosophic schools worthy of the name agree that, in some way or other, the goal may be reached.

Many scientific schools pronounce the quest to be a vain one. They relegate Theism and Metaphysic together, to the realm of the illusory; but the overthrow of Metaphysic would be the death-blow of rational Theism, while the triumph of Philosophy inevitably involves the victory of Theism. There are, of course, many various ways in which the Substance which underlies phenomena has been *explained*, in the metaphysics of India, of Greece, of Alexandria, of Mediævalism, and of modern Germany, France, and England; but its existence is admitted, and its reality vindicated, in every one of them. Similarly, the theologies of the world vary, their dialects are very different; but "there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard; their line is gone out into all lands, and their words to the world's end."

It is of extreme importance thus to grasp the fundamental notion in which Metaphysics and Theism are at one, viz. the existence of a supreme Principle, Power, Force, Essence, Energy, Being,— we may use freely all these terms as complementary each to each,—*of* which are all things, *to* which are all things, and *through* which are all things, the One within the many, the single in the multiplex, unity in difference, transcending the limits of space and

time, yet everlastingly revealing itself in both, and through all the phenomena of the universe. This idea is the highest to which we can attain, and yet it is the humblest. We have not "to ascend into Heaven for it." It is "higher than the Heavens." We have "not to go down into the depth for it." It is "nigh at hand"; although, in its apprehension we find that it is inexpressible in language. This, however, is not because the idea is vague, or misty. It may have no outline that can be reflected in words, as the shape of a mountain or tree can be mirrored in the waters of a lake; but it may be, like the reflection of the infinite azure,—of the depth above, in the depth beneath,—"without form," and yet not "void" of content or of meaning.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EVIDENCE OF INTUITION

Both in popular and in philosophical controversy the evidence of Intuition has been appealed to with the utmost vagueness. It has been brought in to support beliefs otherwise without a warrant, and even when they had been discredited by reason. It is therefore necessary to be extremely cautious in giving assent to it, especially if the things it is said to attest are out of analogy with reason itself. If any opinion or belief can validly be pronounced *irrational*, it is obvious that intuition cannot authenticate it.

On the one hand, it is extremely easy to refute, and even to satirise, the position of those who resort to intuition as a sort of "harbour of refuge,"—when no reason can be given for the beliefs they entertain, or when some flaw is discovered in them, so soon as they are subjected to cross-examination and analysis. On the other hand, the opponents of intuition as a source of evidence take up a position that is equally extreme. They condemn it as a misleading, or an

altogether erring light, because to use it is equivalent to our taking what may be a mere whim or caprice—a peculiarity or idiosyncrasy of the individual—as reliable evidence in matters which concern the race at large, or in problems of universal belief.

It is therefore necessary to look with care into the place which intuition occupies in the scale of proof; and it may be admitted at once that its rank, to begin with, is the very humblest. It is the lowest rung in the ladder of evidence, although it may ultimately be the highest. When we trace back any conviction to its root, we find that we can say nothing more to authenticate it than that it is its own evidence—that it is borne witness to by an instinct that is inexplicable. It is not a conclusion deduced from a premiss; it is the evidence on which all premises rest, and by which they are authenticated. Its outcome is an apprehension of reality which is perceived by us (to use the Cartesian phrase) *clare et distincte*, when our subjective faculties are in direct contact with the objective world. If, therefore, we distrust Intuition, we may validly be asked on what ground we trust the evidence of Reason, or how we come to rely on Sense or Memory.

J. S. Mill used to contrast Intuition with Evidence; as if there was no evidence of intuition, or as if intuition was the opposite of evidence. But intuition is the root of all evidence. If what is taken to be an

intuition can be proved to be a derivative product, made up of a multitude of inherited tendencies—each one of which may deflect or distort the faculties of the intuitionalist, and prevent him from apprehending reality—it cannot of course be trusted. It is not enough, however, to prove that intuition *may* deceive us; and the fact that all our intuitions are complex, and variously evolved, will not prove their falsity in any single instance of attestation. Every human faculty has been evolved, and the action of all of them is complex. If, therefore, the mere possibility of its deflection from the straight path can invalidate the evidence of intuition, we cannot be certain that the action of any faculty is reliable. The only ground on which we can trust the reports of consciousness is that they assure us *clare et distincte* of the truth of things.

The evidence of Sense rests on Intuition. In the use of the word we are, it is true, taking one of the senses, and giving it a place of honour, as the type of all the rest. We "intuite" a thing, or see into it, by instinct or second sight. But there are other primary truths, similarly attested, which do not reach us through the avenues of Sense. Consciousness traverses a wider area, and attests much more than belongs to the realm of sense experience; and intuition, as a source of evidence, may work along a track that transcends inductive proof. The evidence

it brings us may be implicit, as well as explicit; and, while quite incapable of showing itself visibly, in a chain of ratiocination long drawn out, this may only be because it has struck its root more deeply in a soil that is occult.

It is also to be noted that an intuition, which, in its normal exercise gives a valid attestation of reality, may often slumber in an individual, or in a race; much as a particular sense — the colour sense, or the musical ear, for example — may be absent, or may be abnormal. Such peculiarities, however, will not reduce the *normal* reports of these senses to the level of accident or chance. It is no disparagement to the reports furnished by the five senses that they are relative to the individuals who possess them. The important question is, Are they valid witness-bearers? Now the lower any organism is in the scale of being, the fewer are the senses it possesses, the less numerous the avenues by which it comes into contact with reality; and the great majority of existing organisms belong to the lower rank.

Organisms diminish in number, as their place in the scale ascends. It is quite conceivable that, were they possessed of reason, those far down in rank might be sceptical as to the existence of a class above themselves—as to the possibility of higher endowments, other channels of knowledge, or means of access to a sphere of being different from that which

they inhabit—and, if so, they might certainly quote the suffrage of the many as on their side. The *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* amongst the crustacea or the ascidians would be against the verdict of the finer senses of the vertebrata; but such scepticism would not destroy the fact that higher senses exist, or invalidate their report. Nor would it discredit the fact that these higher senses are channels, by means of which an ampler discernment of the truth of things is possible. The more delicate the insight, the rarer the endowment; the wider its range, the smaller the number of those who have it. Must we therefore conclude that in man—who is, as yet, "the roof and crown of things"—Nature has evolved a being in whom all possible senses are conjoined, and that the work of the protoplast has ended? It is surely possible that finer senses may yet be developed in races that will succeed our own—senses in comparison with which the present reports of the human eye and ear, with all their delicacy and precision, may be considered as inadequate, as was the transmission of news by post in comparison with messages sent by telegraph or telephone.

What, then, is the legitimate inference from the fact that the higher we rise in the scale of endowment, the creatures who have the finer faculty are relatively fewer in number? It is surely this: that,

while the reports of every faculty must submit to the severest tests for verification, the evidence of no faculty is to be set aside merely because it is possessed by few. Within the range of familiar experience, those who possess a delicate musical ear, or who have a fine discernment of the harmonies of colour, are not silenced because the masses of the people, the "hewers of wood and drawers of water," affirm that *they* have no such sense. Is, then, the report of the finer senses invalid—even for those of rougher mould—because they happen to be without it, or because it lies as yet undeveloped within them? It may surely be said that those members of the race who have the higher endowment—the more ethereal sense, or the rarer intuition — ought to be more entirely trusted, and even deferred to by the rest. Here, if anywhere, Authority may come in, and the reports of those who are specialists be deferred to, until they are proved to be erroneous.

It must be noted further, that the higher powers are those which are most easily deranged, or thrown out of order. Our lower animal senses do not require the same amount of care to keep them in vigorous exercise. Although it is quite possible to damage them by excess, they as a rule take care of themselves. The higher any faculty is, it requires more assiduous training to evoke it, and to keep it in a normal state. If, therefore, we possess a faculty by means

of which we can discern the Infinite, it is not surprising that it should be liable to disturbance. Our finest optical instruments are those which are most easily deranged; and we can hardly expect it to be otherwise in the optics of intellectual and moral experience.

It is still further to be noted that the reports of the higher faculties are less commonly announced, and are therefore less frequently "in evidence," than is the testimony of the lower ones. The latter are almost always active, and their verdicts are received with unquestioning deference, because they are so familiar. Of the energy of the former we are conscious only at intervals. The higher harmonies of sight and sound are very seldom discerned by us, because the times when Nature is transfigured by

> The light that never was on sea or land

are of rare occurrence. But, as the latter are welcome, the former should—all the more because of their rarity—be not only trusted, but esteemed. The corollary from this, its legitimate inference, is that the intuition of the Infinite—which is the root of Theism—being necessarily rarer in conscious experience than the knowledge and recognition of the finite, is not therefore to be less esteemed, or less deferred to, as an attestation of reality. On the contrary, it brings with it—because of its rarity on the one hand, and the

height to which it carries us on the other—intuitional evidence of a presumptive kind in its favour.

Thus, the apparent absence of this intuition from the field of consciousness in certain individuals, and its real absence in others, is not only no evidence against it, but is only what is to be expected, *a priori*. A man may, as an intuitional poet puts it, have

> faculties within
> Which he has never used,

and this intuition may slumber, not only in an individual, but in the race. If the special organ of apprehension, by which we discern any other aspect of the universe, be unused, the faculty itself will weaken, and then collapse; and why should it be otherwise with the theistic instinct? It may even hybernate for a time,—during a whole era, as well as a generation,—and be transmitted in a latent state to posterity. This theistic instinct working in the dark, its workings will necessarily be obscure; and this may explain how certain periods of history have been agnostic in their tendency. If the intuition of the Infinite is not a constant experience of any individual, and if the infinite Object is differently discerned by the finite eye, in different states of the organ—and of the medium through which the organ acts—it is not wonderful that it should be the same

with the apprehension of the Infinite by the nation, the age, the era, or the race.

An important corollary may be noted at this stage of the argument. It has not been in the power of any individual, and it has not been in that of any one nation or any single era, to include within its vision all the aspects under which the Infinite can be truly and adequately realised. The intellectual insight of Plato and of Aristotle, and the religious vision of the whole Semitic race, failed to grasp it in its entirety. Neither the Greek nor the Hebrew conception of God was final. The corollary from this is not that the earlier ideas are to be discarded as inadequate or outworn, but that we must make room for other notions alongside of them—ideas that are not contradictory, but supplementary—conceptions which will yet further extend and develop the significance of Theism.

Let us suppose it could be proved that all our present Theism has grown out of a non-theistic root, and that the manifold "theologies" of the world are a development from primitive agnosticism, the discovery of that fact would surely not glorify the earlier, ruder, and duller insight of our remote progenitors, but the later vision of their successors. It is perhaps natural to imagine that, by discovering "the origins" of religion, we reach what is more important than the mature belief of the world on this

subject, because we ascertain what was prior in time; but this is only accomplished by getting nearer to our infancy. What has taken place historically has been a very gradual development of the world's insight; and the discovery of the starting-point would certainly not reduce all the opinions that have been formed by the human race in reference to the Infinite to the same level of credibility. It would only show that primitive man saw through a glass very darkly, and that our ancestors both thought and spoke as modern children do. Agnosticism, however, in its abandonment of theory,—or the attempt to construe the meaning of the world rationally,—is a virtual glorification of the state of childhood, and that not the moral childhood of spontaneity, but the intellectual childhood of pure ignorance.

Let us suppose it demonstrated that man has risen from a lower prototype—much in the same way as each individual rises from infancy to manhood, and as we know that the race has emerged within the historic period from barbarism to civilisation—and further that, in the course of his uprise and development he has in very various ways interpreted the ultimate Power within the universe, that demonstration would not prove that all his attempts at interpretation have an equal value, or that all have been ultimately mere guesswork. Let us start with the theory of evolution, and admit as a necessary part or consequence of

it that there have been elements of truth within the crudest conceptions that have been evolved, the admission will surely tell in favour of the last stage of the ascent, rather than any of its predecessors.

When human nature has striven, in the course of the ages, to grasp the transcendent and overshadowing Reality, it has seized it, now by intuition, then by reason, again by feeling, and yet again by poetic imagination or idealising fancy. At other times it has passively received it, as simply given on authority. Every faculty and energy of human nature has been stirred up successively—"for better, for worse"—to apprehend and interpret this Reality. The organic consciousness of the race may be said to have wrestled with it from the dawn of time. Very often it has added to it; as often it has taken from it. In its wonder it has devised multitudinous legends regarding it; in its credulity it has mingled fable with fact, and sometimes mistaken the one for the other. In its reverence it has waited passively for messages from the unseen, some of which have been authentic, and others wholly erroneous. But throughout its whole career, and in every stage of its evolution, it has sought for a knowledge of the Infinite, and has desired some sort of union with it.

It is true that no solution of the mystery—whether proposed by an individual or a community, by a nation or an era—has fully satisfied those who have come

after. Each generation has tried to get nearer to the goal, and every one has found that the goal invariably recedes the moment it seems to be reached, so as to baffle further pursuit. It is true that the very exercise of reason has at times obscured the reality reasoned about; but, at other times, it has cleared the firmament of mist and superstition regarding the object of belief. Still, through all changes and disguises—of myth, legend, and symbol—the fact remains that the historic consciousness of the human race has been persistently and continuously struggling with this Reality, of which it has never been able to get quit.

Or—as I would rather put it—it is not that we, the members of the human race, cannot rid ourselves of the notion of the Infinite, but that the Infinite cannot by any possibility quit its hold of us. Throughout the ages it has been continually revealing itself to the finite; and, while no finite mind can possibly escape from the disclosure, which "besets it behind and before," each perceives that "such knowledge is too wonderful for it," while it very variously interprets the disclosure made to it. Every individual, and every era, gives an account of what it has apprehended in its own dialect. Hence our various theologies.

The instinct—to which we make our final appeal—is, in its first rise in the soul, crude, dim, and inarticu-

late. Gradually it shapes itself into greater clearness, aided, in the case of most men, by the myriad influences of religious thought and historical tradition, heightening and refining it when educed, but not creating it; separating the real gold from any spurious alloy it may have contracted. Like all our innate instincts, this one is at first infantile; and, when it begins to assert itself, it prattles rather than speaks coherently. I do not now raise the general question of the existence of *a priori* principles. I assume that the mind is not originally an *abrasa tabula*, but that it commences its career with sundry latent endowments, the unconscious germs of power in embryo. These are not explicit powers, but they are the capacities and potentialities of mental life. Their growth to maturity is most gradual, and the difference between their adult and their rudimentary phases is as wide as is the interval between a mature organisation and the egg from which it springs.

It is therefore no evidence against the reality, or trustworthiness, of the intuition to which we appeal that its manifestations are not uniform; or that it sometimes seems absent, in abnormal states of consciousness, or among the ruder civilisations of the world. I admit that when it is modified by circumstances to any extent, it is difficult for the uninitiated to trace any affinity between its normal and its abnormal manifestations. I further admit

that, while never entirely absent, it may sometimes slumber, not only in stray individuals, but in races or eras; and then awake, as from the sleep of years, arising against the will of its possessor, and refusing to be silenced. Almost any phenomenon may call it forth, and no single phenomenon can quench it. It is the spontaneous utterance of human nature, in presence of the Object whose existence it attests, and as such it is necessarily prior to any act of reflection upon its own character, validity, or significance. Reflex thought, which is the product of experience, cannot in any case originate an intuition. It cannot create the object which intuition attests, and after which it gropes and searches. All our ultimate principles, irreducible by analysis, simply assert and attest their own object.

The very existence of the intuition of which I now speak is itself a revelation, because it points to a Revealer, within or behind itself; and however crude it may be in its elementary forms, in its highest and purest state, it manifests itself as at once an act of intelligence and of faith. It may be most fitly described as a direct gaze, by the inner eye of the spirit, into a region over which mists usually brood. The great and transcendent Reality, which it apprehends, lies evermore behind the veil of phenomena. It does not see far into that reality, yet it grasps it, and recognises in it "the open secret" of the universe.

This, then, is the main characteristic of the theistic intuition. It announces the existence of a transcendent Being, *whom it apprehends in the act of revealing itself.* It perceives, through the vistas of phenomenal sequence, a Presence which it only knows in part, but which it does not follow in the dark, or merely infer from its obscure and vanishing footprints. Unlike the "necessary notion" of the Cartesians, unlike the Space and Time (which are but subjective forms of thought), unlike the "regressive inference" from the phenomena of the world, the conclusion it reaches is not the creation of its own subjectivity.

The God of the logical understanding, whose existence is supposed to be attested by the necessary laws of mind, is the mere projected shadow of self. It has therefore no more than an ideal significance. The same may be said, with some abatements, of the Being whose existence is inferred from the phenomena of design. The ontologist and the teleologist unconsciously draw their own portrait; and, by an effort of thought, project it outward on the canvas of infinity. The intuitionalist, on the other hand, perceives that a revelation has been made to him, descending as through a break in the cloud, which closes again. It is "a moment seen, then gone"; because while always conscious of our close relation to the natural, we are of necessity

less frequently aware of the presence of the supernatural.

The wide difference between the evidence of intuition and the supposed warrant of the other theistic proofs is apparent. It is one thing to create or evolve—even unconsciously—a mental image of ourselves, which we vainly attempt to magnify to infinity, and thereafter worship the image that our minds have framed; it is another to discern for a moment an august Presence, other than the human, through a break in the clouds, which usually veil him from our eyes. It is to the inward recognition of this self-revealing object that the theist makes his appeal. What he discerns is at least not a "form of his mind's own throwing"; while his knowledge is due, not to the penetration of the finite spirit, but to the condescension of the Infinite.

It is at the same time true that this intuition is not naturally luminous. It is the presence of the transcendent Object, which it recognises, that makes it luminous.[1] It is itself rather an eye than a light, —a passive organ rather than an active power,—and when not lit up by light strictly supra-natural, because emanating from the object it discerns, it is dull and lustreless. The varying intelligence it

[1] "Were I to speak precisely," says John Smith, alluding to this intuition, in his *Select Discourses* (1660), "I would rather call it ὁρμὴν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν, than, with Plutarch, Θεοῦ νόησιν."

brings of that object corresponds to the changing perceptions of the human eye in a day of alternate gloom and sunlight.

Since, however, the evidence of intuition is so generally disesteemed, it may be useful to look a little more closely into its credentials.

Our knowledge of the object which intuition discloses is at first, and in all cases, necessarily unreflective. In the presence of the object the mind does not double back upon itself, to scrutinise the origin, and to test the accuracy of the report that reaches it. Thus the truth which it apprehends is at first only presumptive. It must afterwards be tested by reflection, so that no illusion is mistaken for reality. What, then, are the tests of our intuitions?[1]

The following seem sufficient criteria of their validity and trustworthiness. (1) The persistence with which they appear and reappear after experimental reflection upon them, the obstinacy with which they reassert themselves when silenced, the tenacity with which they cling to us. (2) Their historical permanence—the confirmation of ages and

[1] There are sundry elements in every intuition on which I need not enlarge, since they are necessary features, rather than criteria, characteristics rather than tests. Two of them may be merely stated: (1) every intuition is ultimate, and carries its own evidence within it—it cannot appeal to a higher witness beyond itself; (2), the fact or facts which it proclaims, while irreducible by analysis, must be incapable of any other explanation.

of generations. The hold which they have upon the general mind of the race is the sign of some "root of endurance" planted in the soil of human nature. If,

> Deep in the general heart of men,
> Their power survives,

we may accept them as ultimate truths, or interpret them as phases of some deeper yet kindred truth, of which they are the popular distortion. (3) The interior harmony which they exhibit with each other, and with the rest of our psychological nature; each intuition being in unison with the entire circle, and with "the whole realm of knowledge." If any alleged intuition should come into collision with another, and disturb it, there would be a good reason for suspecting the genuineness of one of them; and, in that case, the lower and less authenticated would at once yield to the higher and better attested. But if the critical intellect carrying an intuition—to adopt a very crude figure—round the circle of our nature, and placing it in juxtaposition with all the others in turn, finds that no collision ensues, it may safely conclude that the witness of that intuition is true. (4) If the results of its action and influence are such as to elevate and etherealise our nature, its validity may be assumed. This by itself is no test of truth or error; for an erroneous belief may for a time elevate the mind that holds it; and the intel-

lectual life, evoked by many of the erroneous theories and exploded hypotheses of the past, has been great. But error cannot permanently educate. No illusion can survive as an elevating power over humanity; and no alleged instinct can sustain its claim, and vindicate its presumptive title, if it cannot stand the test now mentioned. A theoretic error becomes visible, when we attempt to reduce it to practice; as a hidden crack or fissure in a vessel is seen whenever any strain is applied, or the folly of an ideal utopia is seen in the actual life of a mixed commonwealth. Many of those scientific guesses, which have done good service as provisional hypotheses, have been abandoned in the process of working them out. Similarly the flaw that lurks within an alleged intuition—if there be a flaw—will become apparent when we try to apply it in actual life, or take it as a regulative principle of action. We may bring this criterion to bear upon the belief in the Divine existence — attested as it is by intuition — and apply it in the act of worship or adoration.

Does that belief, which fulfils all the conditions of our previous tests,—for it appears everywhere, clings tenaciously to man, comes into collision with no other normal tendency of his nature, and defrauds no instinct of its due, — tend to elevate the character of those who hold it? The reply of history seems conclusive, and the attestation of

experience abundantly clear. The power of theistic belief over human nature is such that it has frequently quickened the faculties into more vigorous life. Its moral leverage has been vast; while it has sharpened the aesthetic sense in some of its most delicate perceptions, and in some instances has given a new accession of intellectual power. The intuition, which men trust in the dark, gradually leads their whole nature towards the light. Its dimness is by degrees exchanged for clearness, its silence for an intelligible voice; and, while it grows luminous and articulate, it gains in power, and our confidence in its verdict strengthens.

The importance of this evidence is not so much the directness of its attestation, as that it makes room for many opposite aspects of the Object discerned —aspects that are apprehended very variously, "at sundry times, and in divers manners." There is an intellectual intuition, as well as an emotive apprehension of the Infinite, and a subsequent reflex cognition of it; when it leaves room for the truth which agnosticism distorts, viz. the unknowableness of God. If we know only "in part," the Infinite is to us both known and unknown. It is ultimately inscrutable and incomprehensible. As old theologies put it, "a God fully understood would be no God at all." This vision of the Infinite may, however, be all the clearer and more real, because of its transcendence.

It may be *better known*, in its untranslatableness and ideality, than anything that can afterwards be described, set in order, and communicated through the medium of figurative speech. Is there nothing knowable, which is at the same time incommunicable a second time, through the vehicle of language? In reference to the *ultimata* of knowledge, there may not only be "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak," but there may also be implicit evidence of the most indubitable kind which cannot afterwards be made explicit by any possibility.

There is a school of philosophy which ignores every intuition, which cannot give an account of itself, at the summons of reason, in the court of logical appeal. That court is one of the most useful for the human race to resort to, and to be even at times compelled to enter. To insist on the precise definition of all that can be defined—to compel the mystic, for example, to tell us what he means by his rhetoric, and the rhapsodist (who may fancy that his fate is somehow upbound with the movements of a planet, or with a personality that belonged to some distant age) to submit these things to inductive proof and rational verification—is a real service to humanity. But it is quite as important to remember that the logical is not the *final* court of appeal, if we are to carry out this symbol in the matter of evidence. Beyond the court of Logic—

where thought is made clear, precise, and self-centred —there is the court of Intuition, where the *ultimata* of belief are borne witness to, by evidence that is direct and final.

We have already seen[1] that there is no scientific or philosophic warrant for the unification of all the forms of force, and especially for the development of life out of motion; but let us suppose such a unification to be at length accomplished. In our attempt to explain the mysteries of being, let us start with the doctrine of the persistence of force, or the indestructibility of energy; let us add to it the correlation of all the forces, or the transformation of every form of energy. Suppose that the mature consciousness of the human race has been evolved, not only out of movements of protoplasm, but out of the condensation of gases long before our planet appeared, and therefore before protoplasm existed. Suppose that there is but one Power or Principle, eternally evolving itself in the Universe, the problem of its nature could not be settled as a problem of molecular physics. Manifestly we have no right to go back to what we may imagine its earliest phase in time, and its lowest in structural development, and to interpret all evolution in the light of its starting-point. Surely, if the existing wealth has been really evolved out of so unpromising a source, we ought to interpret the cosmic principle

[1] Pp. 77-92.

incessantly at work, in the light of its latest product, rather than in that of its earliest phase, and therefore to construe it as both intelligent and moral. To suppose that because evolution has been continuous, the fountain-head must be an inscrutable mystery—or to suppose that the beginning of things will yield us a clue by which to unravel their end—is much less reasonable than an attempt to find the oak within the acorn, or the man within a speck of protoplasm.

Nay, on the monistic theory of evolution, the theorist must admit that, as the end is not visible, and can never in fact be discovered, the evolving Principle *must* bring phenomena to light that are vaster, richer, fuller, and more complex, than any that have yet been disclosed; and therefore that the supreme Principle is infinite in its characteristics, its resources, its aims, and its issues.

Let us now suppose that we have seen the meagreness, the artificiality, or even the error of many notions that were inwoven with the old theodicies of the world; notions that were no part of the theistic idea itself, but accessories that surrounded and clung to it for a time. Is the *radical* element, in that universal and world-pervading idea, to be surrendered by us or not? And is the ultimate metaphysical essence of the universe to be thought of as a mere sphinx-riddle?

In answer, it may be said that if we set aside

the conceptions which degraded it—the anthropomorphic notions, that first contracted and then obscured it—what remains is not a *caput mortuum*, or an intellectual zero-point. To construe it adequately, after we have denuded it of that which degrades, we must reclothe it with that which exalts. And this re-investiture is after all a return to another—although a much higher—kind of anthropomorphism; anthropomorphism not of the limited provincial type, but of the universal and unlimited. If it be asked why we thus return, and reinvest the notion with these attributes, the answer is because they are the highest known to us; and we give these quasi-human features to the Infinite, simply because we, the interpreters, are human. We use our own faculties in the act, and we cannot help ourselves. In the happy language of a Scottish metaphysician, "as the greyhound cannot escape its shadow, or the eagle outsoar the atmosphere in which it floats, and by which alone it is supported," so, we cannot know anything, excepting in and through the exercise of our faculties, and therefore the action of these faculties conditions all our knowledge.

We must of necessity construe every single thing we know in the light of our own faculties. Unless we are to stand deaf, dumb, and inarticulate before the surrounding Universe, we must put some sort of interpretation upon its phenomena; and that is, in other

words, to say that we must make use of mind, in the explanation of all phenomena. Our faculties, thus applied to the surrounding universe, do not bring back the report of an impassable chasm, or a "great gulf fixed," between man and nature. They tell us rather of harmonies and correspondences, of hidden unities and occult affinities, that are best discerned by us when we draw aside the veil of allegory, when we drop the crutch of metaphor, and walk straight into the shrine of Reality. A sense of mystery remains, and deepens as we proceed, overshadowing all the knowledge we have reached; but the mystery does not extinguish the knowledge; while, instead of lessening, it rather intensifies the worship—albeit "of the silent sort"—that is spontaneously offered to the Infinite.

That there is a certain resemblance between the Divine nature and the human, which apprehends it, is involved in the theistic doctrine. Whether this resemblance implies the finitude of both natures will be discussed later on. Here it may be noted that while it does not bring the things that resemble into a common category, the unity of the two natures cannot abolish their diversity, or imply their identity. On the contrary, a distinctive difference subsists within the likeness, and a radical resemblance underlies the difference.

CHAPTER IX

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFINITE

I HAVE stated the general nature of the theistic intuition, and added one or two criteria, by which all our intuitions must be tested. It is now necessary to indicate more precisely the phases which the former assumes, and the channels in which it works. Though ultimate, and insusceptible of analysis, it has a triple character. It manifests itself (1), in the consciousness which the human mind has of the Infinite (an intellectual phase); (2), in our perception of the world-soul, which is Nature's "open secret" revealed to the poet (an aesthetic phase); and (3), in the act of worship through which an Object, correlative to the worshipper, is revealed in his sense of dependence (a moral and religious phase).

It is not only essential to the validity of this intuition that the human mind should have a positive, although an imperfect, knowledge of the Infinite; but this is involved in the intuition itself. If we had no positive knowledge of the Source it seeks to

reach, this instinct — benumbed as by intellectual frost, and unable to rise—would be fatally paralysed; or, if it could move along its finite area, it would wander helplessly, merely groping after its object, "if haply it might find it." All who deny the validity of intuition, either limit us to a knowledge of phenomena, or, while admitting that we have a certain knowledge of finite substance, adopt the theory of nescience in reference to the Infinite. From the earliest Greek schools, and the earlier speculations of China, a powerful band of thinkers has denied to man the knowledge of aught beyond phenomena; and from Confucius to Comte the list is an ample one. In our own day this school has included some of the clearest and subtlest minds devoted to philosophy and science. The majority of our accomplished scientific guides, however they may differ in detail, agree in the common postulate, that the only thing we can know—and intelligibly reason about — is phenomena, and the laws of phenomena, or "that which doth appear." There is, however, a positivist "religion," which consists now in the worship of certain selected phenomena, and again in homage paid to mystery, or to the unknown and the unknowable, which lie beyond the known. Comte deified man and nature in their phenomenal aspects, without becoming pantheist; and the instinct of worship, though speculatively outlawed

from his philosophy (which denies the existence of its object), asserted itself within his nature—at least in the second period of his intellectual career—and led him not only to deify humanity, but to prescribe to his followers a minute and cumbrous ritual. It is true that worship is philosophically an excrescence on his system. The secularist, who disowns it, is logically more consistent with the first principle of positivism. To adore the *grand être*, personified in woman, is as great a mimicry of worship as it is to offer homage to the law of gravitation. Comte, says his acutest critic, "forgot that the wine of the real presence was poured out, and adored the empty cup." But we may note—in this later graft upon his earlier system—a testimony to the operation of that very intuition, which positivism disowns; its uncouth form, when distorted by an alien philosophy, being perhaps a more expressive witness to its irrepressible character.

Mr. Spencer, on the other hand, bids us bow down before the unknown and unknowable power which subsists in the universe. The highest triumph of the human spirit, according to him, is to ascertain the laws of phenomena, and then to worship the dark abyss of the inscrutable beyond them. But there is surely neither humility nor sanity in worshipping darkness, any more than there would be wisdom in erecting an altar to chaos; and the advice is strange as coming from one, who is a special teacher of clear

knowledge, and comprehensible law. If we must at length erect an altar at all, we must have some knowledge of the Being to whom it is erected; and, we must have some better reason for doing so, than the bland confession that we have not the smallest idea of its nature!

Mr. Spencer has undertaken to "reconcile" the claims of science and religion, and he finds the rallying point to be the recognition of mystery, into which all knowledge recedes. But if religion has any function, and a reconciliation between her and science be possible, the harmony cannot be effected by first denying the postulate from which religion starts —sweeping her into the background of the inconceivable, consigning her to the realm of the unknowable—and then proclaiming that the reconciliation is effected. This is to silence, or to annihilate, one of the two powers, which the philosopher undertook to reconcile. It is annexation accomplished by conquest; the cessation of strife being effected by the destruction of an opposing force; not by an armistice, or the ratification of articles of peace. Mr. Spencer does not come between combatants, who are wounding each other needlessly, and bid each put his sword into his sheath, for they are brethren; but he turns round and—to his own satisfaction—slays one of them, and then informs the other that the reconciliation is complete!

The theist therefore asks the phenomenalist for his warrant, on the one hand, in denying the existence of a realm of substance, underneath the fleeting phenomena of being, *out of which a revelation may emerge* apprehensible by man; and, on the other, in denying to man a positive knowledge of the Infinite, as a Substance and a Personality. He reminds him that infinite and finite, absolute and relative, substance and phenomena, are terms of a relation; and wishes to know his warrant for differentiating these terms, and proclaiming that the one set are knowable and known, the other unknown and unknowable. The phenomenalist singles out one of two factors—which together constitute a relation, and which are only known as complementary terms—and he bestows upon it a spurious honour, proclaiming that it alone is intelligible; while he relegates the other factor, or term, to the region of darkness. The theist asks him on what ground he does so? whether the law of contrast does not render phenomena as unintelligible without substance, as substance without phenomena? and whether we have any right to affirm that the one is known and the other unknown, merely because the former reaches us through the gateways of sense, and the latter through the avenue of intuition?

No wise theist ever asserted that God was phenomenally known. God is no phenomenon, but the

noumenal essence underlying all phenomena. It has been said, in previous chapters, that a study of the laws of Nature cannot give us any information as to a first Cause; for a first Cause could never be revealed to the senses, nor could it be an inference deduced from the data which sense supplies. The assertion, therefore, that the phenomena of Nature—of which the physical sciences are the interpretation—do not reveal God is as strongly made by the theist, as by the positivist. They may reveal his footprints, or his handiwork, but we only know whose foot or hand has left its mark on Nature, when we have learned from some other source that He *is;* while, in the employment of these terms, it must never be forgotten that we are making use of a dubious analogy.

As little, however, can the laws of Nature discredit belief in a first Cause, which springs from a region at once beneath, above, and beyond phenomena. The theistic doctrine is not an *inference:* it is a *postulate.* It is an axiomatic truth, affirmed on the evidence of intuition, of which the root is planted so firmly in the soil of consciousness, that no kind of phenomenalism can tear it thence. Let Science, therefore, march as it will, and where it will,—being hemmed in by the laws of the universe which give rise to it, and of which it is the exposition,—it cannot interfere with the theistic intuition, or encroach upon it. If

there is a region behind phenomena and their laws, accessible to knowledge, or to philosophic faith,—a region penetrable in any sense by intellectual, moral, or aesthetic intuition,—no conclusion gathered from the scientific survey can touch it, whether to attest or to discredit.

The fundamental doctrine of both the schools of nescience is the relativity of human knowledge; and that doctrine, as taught by the Scottish psychologists, —and notably by Sir William Hamilton,—has been wrested from their hands, and turned against the theism they advocated. Mr. Spencer would exhibit them all as "hoist with their own petard." It is necessary, therefore, to inquire whether this doctrine of relativity favours a theory of nescience, or warrants a counter doctrine of the knowledge of the Infinite, or is indifferent to either view.

The relativity of knowledge is a first principle in philosophy. To affirm it, however, is merely to assert that all that is known occupies a fixed relation to the knower. It is to affirm nothing as to the character, or the contents of his knowledge. But, as regards the objects known, it may be further maintained that they are apprehended only in their differences and contrasts. We know self only in its contrast with what is not self, a particular portion of matter only in its relation to other portions, which surround and transcend it. So also, and for the same reason, with the finite and

the Infinite. The one is not a positive notion and the other negative, the one clear and the other obscure. Both are equally clear, and sharply defined, so far as they are given us in relation. If the one suffers, the other suffers with it. In short, if we discharge any intellectual notion from all relation with its opposite or contrary, it ceases to be a notion at all. The finite, if we take it alone, is as inconceivable as the Infinite, if we take it alone. Phenomena by themselves are as incogitable, as Substance by itself; and the relative, as a notion cut off from the Absolute which antithetically bounds it, is not more intelligible than the Absolute, as an essence absolved from all relation. Thus the entire fabric of our knowledge being founded on contrasts, and arising out of differences,—involving in its every datum another element hidden in the background,—may be said to be a vast double chain of relatives mutually complementary. It looks ever in two directions: without and within, above and beneath, before and after.

I maintain, therefore, that we have a positive knowledge of the Infinite. Whosoever says that the Infinite cannot be known contradicts himself; for he must possess a notion of it, before he can deny that he has a positive knowledge of it, and before he can predicate anything regarding it. He therefore says that he cannot know that which he affirms, in another fashion, that he does know. The Infinite

could never have come within the horizon of hypothetical knowledge, it could never have become the subject of discussion, unless it had been positively (though inadequately) known. It is thus that the Infinite stands as the antithetic background of the finite.

The doctrine of nescience, as taught by Hamilton and Mansel, is quite as suicidal as that of Mr. Spencer. It implies that we have no knowledge of that, which we are nevertheless compelled to conceive, in order to know that it is unknowable. We could not compare the two notions, if one of them were unthinkable. If all knowledge is a relation, in each act of knowing, I must know both the terms related. The one term—the finite—occasions no difficulty, being admitted on both sides; but the other, which so perplexes our teachers of nescience, and their pupils, is necessarily vague. It is not given us with the luminous clearness that its correlative is given; nevertheless, it is a real term in a real relation. The moment we proceed to analyse our consciousness of the finite, we find it as the penumbra of the notion, its shadowy complement. We may never obtain more than a moonlight view of it: nevertheless, behold it we do, apprehend it we can, realise it we must.

It is objected, however, that as human knowledge is always finite, we can never have a positive appre-

hension of an infinite object; that as the subject of knowledge is necessarily finite, its object must be the same. This objection must be sifted.

I may know an object in itself, as related to me the knower; or, I may know it in its relation to other objects, also known by me the knower. But in both instances, and in all cases, knowledge is limited by the power of the knower, therefore it is always finite knowledge. But it may be finite knowledge of an infinite object, incomplete knowledge of a complete object, partial knowledge of a transcendent object. The boundary, or fence, may be within the faculty of the knower; while the object he imperfectly grasps may not only be infinite, but be known to transcend his faculties in the very act of conscious knowledge. For example, I may know that a line is infinite, while I have only a finite knowledge of the points along which that line extends. And similarly my knowledge of the infinite Mind, while partial and incomplete, may be clear and defined. It may be definite knowledge of an indefinite object. I may have a partial knowledge, not only of a part, but of the whole. Thus, I have a partial knowledge of a circle, when I know only a few of its properties; but it is not to a part of the circle that my partial knowledge extends, but to the whole circle, which I know in part. In like manner, as the infinite Object has no parts, it is not of a portion of its being that we possess a

partial knowledge, but of the whole. We know the Infinite as we know the circle, inadequately yet really, immediately although in part; and, while our knowledge of it may be *vivified*, it is not really *enlarged*, by spurring our faculties onwards, to traverse wider areas of space or vaster intervals of time. The knowledge in question is directly elicited, while we are apprehending any finite object, as its correlative and complementary antithesis.

Again, it is said that to know the Infinite would be to know the sum of all reality; and, as that would include the Universe and its Source together, it must necessarily embrace, on the one hand, the knower along with his knowledge, and on the other all the possibilities of existence. The possibility of our knowing the infinite Being, as distinct from the Universe, has been denied on the ground that the realm of the Infinite is coextensive with the universe of things. But the assertion that the Infinite must necessarily exhaust existence, and contain within itself all actual being, is a mere theoretic assumption. Why must the presence of the finite limit the Infinite? The area of the latter is not contracted by so much of the former as exists within it; because the relation of infinite to finite Existence is not similar to the relation between infinite space and a segment of it. It is true that a portion of finite space is so much cut out from the whole area of space — although, if the

remainder be infinite, the portion removed will not really limit it; but our intuition of the Infinite has no resemblance to our knowledge of space. The intuition of God is a purely spiritual apprehension, informing us not of the quantity of existence in the universe, but of the quality or characteristics of the Supreme Being; and to affirm that the finite spirit of man, standing in a fixed relation to the Infinite, limits it by virtue of that relation, is covertly to introduce a spacial concept into a region to which it is utterly foreign, and which it has no right to enter.[1]

It may therefore be maintained, in opposition to the teachers of nescience, that a positive knowledge of the Infinite is competent to man, because it is involved in his very consciousness of the finite.

There is another aspect, however, no less important, under which it may be regarded. To say that the Infinite is inscrutable to man, is to limit not man's faculty only, but the possibilities of the Divine Nature also. If God cannot unveil Himself to man through the openings of the clouds which ordinarily conceal his presence, can his resources be illimitable?

[1] Similarly with the action of the infinite and absolute *Cause*. The creative energy of that Cause is not inconsistent with its changelessness. To say so, is to introduce a quantitative notion into a sphere where quality alone is to be considered. A cause in action is the Force which determines all the changes which occur in time. But the *primum mobile*, the first Cause, need not be itself changed by the forthputting of its causal power.

can he be the infinitely perfect? It is said, on the one hand, that an unknown Force reveals itself in the laws of Nature, but cannot disclose its essence; and, on the other, that the Infinite Being reveals his handiwork, from which he permits us to infer his existence, but that he cannot reveal Himself. Such assertions are either subtle instances of verbal jugglery, or manifest contradictions in terms. All revelation, of whatsoever kind, presupposes some knowledge of the Revealer. That knowledge may be imparted either at the moment the revelation is made, or beforehand, and from an independent source; but no revelation could be made, were the being to whom it was addressed wholly ignorant of the source whence it came. Is there any real difficulty in supposing that an infinite Intelligence can disclose its nature to a creature which reflects its image; the disclosure quickening a latent power of intuition, which, thus touched from above, springs forth to meet its source and object?

The question between the theist and agnostic is brought to its real issue as soon as the latter recognises that the God of theism is no inference from phenomena, but—as already explained—a *postulate of intuition.* Hence it is so necessary to concede the failure of the teleological argument from final causes, as well as of the ontological proof from the necessary notions of the intellect. By

inductive science we can never rise higher than phenomena; and hence, at the end of our search, we are no nearer God than we were at its outset. But, while we cannot reach the Divine Nature by induction, we may do so before we begin the study of Nature, by giving our intuitions free scope to rise towards their source; and to dislodge the theist from his stronghold, the agnostic must succeed in proving that the theistic intuition—whose root springs from a region beneath phenomena, and which in its flight outsoars phenomena—is as baseless and unauthenticated as a dream.

CHAPTER X

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE INFINITE

THE argument in the previous chapter as to our knowledge of the Infinite has, of necessity, been mainly intellectual; but this knowledge has other aspects than those which are strictly cognitive; and to some of these the following chapter is devoted.

To be ignorant of self—while we fail to apprehend the underlying unity within ourselves—is to be ignorant of God; while to know self, in the conscious apprehension of that inner thread of personality, is to know God, as the principle of unity which underlies all difference, because He is the sole ultimate Substance of the universe. Of Essence, Substance, Cause, or Force detached from the Infinite, I can form no conception whatsoever. Phenomena are detached, as the appearances or shows of things; but, in apprehending Substance, I, at the same time, know and apprehend the Infinite; and I also know myself as one with the Infinite. It transcends me, is above me and beyond me, but, it is also within

me; and I apprehend it as *ens realissimum*, the most august of all realities, the surest of truths. God is thus both the proximate and the ultimate principle of unity, as that which is presupposed in all difference, but which also overcomes difference, and brings us back from difference to unity again; and, in knowing this underlying unity, we know God, and not only know that He exists, but understand something of his procedure, and of his relation to the world of detached and finite things.

The revelation and manifestation of God is a process ever developing. It evolves itself in Nature, and demonstrates itself in History. The highest things in our finite life, when we find them brought to a focus,—differences overcome, chasms bridged over, and contradictions reconciled,—become to us a mirror of the highest things in the life of the Infinite; while in the moral sphere of experience the revelation is much fuller. In the self-surrender of the individual, in his renunciation of personal aims, in his living for others, in his choosing rather "to give than to receive," there is an ampler disclosure of the life of the Infinite, than is to be found in the sphere of science, or the realm of Nature.

One of the most important points in connection with this knowledge of God remains to be noted. It is its effect in removing the sense of an interval, between the finite and the Infinite. They become

consciously one; and, in the perception of that truth, all discords are reconciled. Having attained to this knowledge—Essence being known beneath appearance, Substance and Cause behind phenomena—we can use, without the slightest scruple, metaphorical and even pictorial phrases to describe it. We find that those symbols, which often conceal the highest truth from us, also at times reveal it; and that they become the transient mirrors of a Reality, which cannot be fully known through any one of them. The terms of which we make use in our familiar speech,—gathered from our finite world of personality, and in our moods of recognition, transferred to the canvas of infinity,—such terms as Father and Friend, are known to be inadequate. None of them are ever regarded by us as exhaustive. Nevertheless we use them freely; because, while knowing that the Infinite transcends the limits of our humanity, we find the features of that humanity the highest and the most adequate available for us, both in thinking and in speaking of the Infinite. We leap from the ladder of metaphor, by which we have ascended so far, in our effort to scale the heights. But "jealousy to resist metaphor," as Francis Newman says, "does not testify to depth of insight."

Let me contrast this way of reaching the conclusion of Theism with other modes of proof. To base the Divine Existence on a fact or an event, on anything that has happened historically, is to mistake

a consequence for a Cause, or the sequel for the origin and the originating source of things. An event supernatural, in the sense of its being *out of the order* of Nature, is an impossibility. By the mere fact of its happening, by its simple occurrence, it is and must be within the order of Nature, and it could not come into that order if it were ever out of it. All events are supernatural as well as natural: natural in one respect, as occurring within the realm of ordered fact; supernatural in another sense, as revealing, disclosing, and carrying with them, the glory of the Infinite. God is not the cause of Nature, in the sense of his creating it "out of nothing," and leaving it—tossed out, as it were, from the abyss of nothingness; and yet, according to the same theory, in some mysterious manner projected from himself—to pursue its way beyond Him, and to be thereafter occasionally entered into, or miraculously descended upon, and interfered with only from above. Such action *desuper* would be an instantaneous sign of limitation. He is, on the contrary, everlastingly within every single thing that exists in the universe of being; so that we have not to say, "Lo! *here* He is revealed," or, "lo! *there* He is again disclosed"; but find Him besetting us behind and before, the life and soul of everything, and the centre of that circle "whose centre is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere."

As already stated, Causality is a notion which we must universalise, if we are to construe it aright, every effect being a cause, and every cause also an effect; the cause, indeed, being only the effect concealed, and the effect being but the cause revealed. If all things thus act and react on each other, if a particular event chances to reveal the Infinite to us more significantly than another does, its arresting power over us may be due to our own limitation, rather than to any peculiarity belonging to itself; and could we ascend above the limitations of our vision, all events might equally reveal the Infinite to us.

It is, however, equally necessary to maintain the immanency, and the transcendency of God; to recognise that He is, at one and the same time, the life of all that lives, and yet distinct from the Universe which He animates and sustains. The atheistic and the pantheistic theory of the world come much nearer, at one point, than their respective advocates admit. They agree in this, that the whole is simply the sum of its parts, its added contents or individua, swept into a common category, and bracketed by a common name. Monistic Theism concurs in this that there is but

> One life, within us and around;

but it denies that we can explain the whole, either by any one thing in it, or by the sum of its several parts. It maintains that the universal

life is within us, and yet detached from us; and that, while we are a part of Nature's general plan, we at the same time stand dualistically apart, and our personalities are not quenched in that of the Infinite. If God be merely the sum of the forces of the world, He must include all human energy within his own, as "modes" of his activity; and, on that theory, every event in history will be part of

> The garment we see Him by.

If, on the other hand, He transcends all these forces, and is the immeasurable background of energy underneath them all, out of this latent δύναμις a new manifestation may actualise itself at any time, in a new fashion. The duality thus brought in does not limit the Infinite, keeping Him cut off from universality, by just that amount of consciousness over and against His own; but the presence of the Infinite—unlimited within the finite, which thus recognises it—is the *conditio sine qua non* of the recognition itself.

But now, can we regard these two things, the likeness and the difference, as equally valid and equally real? That is to say, can we, as matter of fact, apprehend them together, as concrete realities of knowledge and experience, and not as mere abstract possibilities of existence? This may be regarded as in one sense the problem of problems. Theism main-

tains that Intelligence, Feeling, and Will exist at the very heart of the Universe,—that they pervade it from centre to circumference,—and that these are characteristics which we may legitimately attribute to the infinite Substance, which is at the same time the ultimate Cause of whatsoever happens within the sphere of phenomena. It further maintains that, in reference to this ultimate fact, *our* intelligence, feeling, and will is not a series of uncertain flickering lights,—mere *ignes fatui*,—but that they yield us adequate and accurate reports of what transcends themselves; in other words, that when we read our own human nature aright we find in it a reflection of the infinite Intelligence, Feeling, and Will, in which it lives and moves and has its being.

On this theory, there is no identification of the media, through which the disclosures are made, with the Being, Substance, or Power which thus discloses itself. The latter is the pantheistic theory. But suppose that the story of the universe be construed as an "eternal process moving on," every phase of which is, in one way or another, a continuous revelation of the Infinite, a self-disclosure or manifestation of it, this will not identify Nature with God; the self that construes the world, and the world that is construed by it, being taken up as parts of a universal whole, or an essence which discloses itself everlast-

ingly. The doctrine that the evolution of the world in time is a process of infinite self-consciousness—the infinite Object being realised by the infinite Subject as its perpetual *non-ego*—is a deification of the Universe. But it has no warrant, speculative, scientific, or practical; and it is the exact antithesis of that doctrine which is here offered as the basis of a rational Theism.

We are asked by other systems to look through the evolution of things in space and time, that we may discern the essential underneath the accidental, the absolute within the relative, the one behind the manifold, the permanent below the changing. We are to throw phenomena aside, and in their sub-strata to find the "unity where no division is." We are assured that God is above all "process." We are asked to dispense with "Revelation," as a disclosure of things that are antecedent and sequent in time,—these being not the essentials which reveal, but the accessories which conceal Him,—and we are told that when they are swept aside, then, and then only, can we reach the Absolute, when we reach it *per saltum*, and thus "see into the life of things."

Is this Eleatic solution of the mystery speculatively more consistent, or experimentally more verifiable, than the doctrine which finds within appearances themselves, or in the phenomenal world as it is, the whole secret of existence? The Aristotelian

solution had at least the merit of fastening on a weak point in Plato's metaphysic; and no disciple of the earlier philosophy of Idealism can now ignore the contribution which the later doctrine of Experience made. But Idealism, as we find it in Parmenides, and Plotinus, in Erigena, Spinoza, and Hegel,—to select dissimilar though representative types,—is not by itself more satisfactory than the Realism which we find in Aristotle, Bacon, and Comte. The great desideratum, however, is the discovery of a link of connection between the two spheres of the ideal and the real. The sphere of the real, of phenomenal process, is obviously one of constant change, of finite dependence, of antecedence and sequence; the sphere of the ideal is one of changeless rest, of identity and permanence, of infinite self-containedness. But how are we to connect the two? How does the one affect the other? Do they touch at all, or are they essentially and always disparate? This question brings us back to the problem of problems, with which the Eleatic and the Neo-platonic metaphysicians wrestled as eagerly as we do.

To affirm that the Absolute realises itself perfectly in the relative, that the Infinite blossoms into being in the finite, that the One fulfils itself in the many,—the former being an explicit disclosure, in space and time, of what in the latter is implicit, and beyond space and time,—does not make the process luminous.

And what is perhaps more important, it seems to reduce the historical development of things to an illusion. There can be no "*increasing* purpose" in the progress of the ages, if the development is equally real at every stage of the evolution. What can possibly give to that, which in our ignorance we call the "later" links of the chain of development, any superiority over the "earlier" ones, if the process is perpetual? The Absolute and the Infinite cannot "attain to" anything, by a process of disclosure through the relative and finite; nor can the perfect develop to greater perfection, in space and time.

There is no speculative difficulty, however, in the theistic theory of the world. The link of connection between Absolute and relative, the One and the many, is on that theory but the energy of the Infinite revealing itself within the finite, its direct and continuous disclosure in the world. This reduces the otherwise impassable interval between the two; and, if we may not construe the nature of the Infinite as precisely analogous to our own—but must throw aside all figures of speech, after we have used them, as inadequate and deceptive—we may not, on the other hand, make the chasm between the two an absolute one. The transcendence of the Infinite, which is one of the very roots of Theism, does not mean its absolute difference from the finite, else we could not know anything of it. The two ideas being

correlative, we know them together in a single intellectual act; we also apprehend them together, in a synthesis of experience.

This brings us to a distinction which is very old, and in reality very simple, but which is one of perennial interest in philosophy; viz. the distinction between the comprehension, and the apprehension of things. We cannot possibly know the Infinite, in the sense of comprehending its essence; but we can apprehend its existence, in the very act of transcending ours. We realise it as endowed with a multitude of features, characteristic qualities, attributes,—name them as we may,—many of which are like our own, but many of which are altogether unlike. Within the Infinite there must be many sides, aspects, phases —we must use figurative terms in speaking of them —which are utterly different from our own, and are for ever shut out from our knowledge; just as the secret of the personalities of other men is hidden by a barrier which we cannot overpass.

But that there exists within the universe, as its latent essence, pervading it in all its phenomenal life, a Principle which is also a Force unfolding itself through law, a Power which reveals itself in life, and a Character which assumes a vast variety of phases— all of which are equally true and beautiful and good— this is the doctrine of a rational Theism. The notion of one "altogether like ourselves," the "magnified

and non-natural man," is doubtless quite as unworthy as that of a superior Being that flits about from place to place; but every rational theist regards such metaphoric phrases applied to the Infinite as mere "figures of the true." They are steps of the ladder, by which we ascend to a height, where we lay metaphor aside. On the other hand, if we discard symbolic thought to begin with, we may easily find ourselves in a still vaguer region; and the coloured clouds of metaphor may hinder our vision of the Infinite less than the haze of abstract thought. If we widen out our conception of God till it embraces everything, it must become attenuated, and therefore shadowy and evanescent. But if the distinction between God and the world, the Infinite and the finite, be retained, we may include within the former many characteristics which transcend our human nature, and attributes which have no analogy in ourselves. The "Presence which disturbs us with the joy of elevated thoughts" we may at one time describe as "it," and again as "Thou," while it "besets us before and behind"; we may recognise it as a Life infinitely greater than our own, while at the same time it "works within us, to will and to do."

CHAPTER XI

PERSONALITY AND THE INFINITE

It is not the mere *existence* of a supreme Power, or Energy, within the Universe of which man craves some definite assurance; it is its *characteristics* that he desires to know, and the phases under which it may be recognised. Are we warranted, then, in construing and describing it as *in any sense like ourselves*, while at the same time confessedly transcendent? If Personality in all cases implies a limit,—in the same way that design implies hindrance to be overcome, or difficulty to be surmounted,—then certainly we cannot apply it to the Infinite. But personality implies a limit only in the sense in which all definition whatsoever does so. To define a thing is to give it limits, "finiteness" in the sense of "definiteness"; and, in this sense, we may without contradiction limit the illimitable, in so far as we attempt to define it. The mere use of words is a process of limitation. Whatsoever is placed in a category is, *ipso facto*, limited by its belonging to that particular category. It is

circumscribed by definition, even when the definition has the widest possible scope. The point to be noted, however, is that when we make use of a term which savours of limitation, or which is usually understood as implying a limit—*e.g.* that "God is a person who thinks and loves"—it is easy (as already said) to let the idea of a limit drop from the mind in the very act of using it.

When we employ this particular phrase we are quite well aware that "thought" and "love" in us are necessarily finite; but it does not follow that *all* "thought" and "love" are finite; or that, because our personality (to which they belong) is finite, therefore *all* personality is finite. It is here as in the use of symbolic terms generally. There is no more difficulty in passing from the symbol to that which it symbolises, than in escaping from the shadow to its substance. In speaking of a divine King, Judge, and Father, we ascend as on the steps of the ladder of symbol; but, it is by means of this very ladder, that we are at last able—as one of our poets puts it—to "step out grandly to the Infinite."

The original meaning of "persona" was the mask through which the actor performed his part; but, if "each man in his time plays many parts," *personating* each, surely the Infinite Being may manifest himself in an infinite number of ways, and assume an infinite number of guises; although his likeness is

not to be found in any one of them, either in "the heavens above, or in the earth beneath." The mighty "stream of tendency" of which Wordsworth speaks, had an articulate voice, and was not an unconscious process, as Mr. Arnold's was. It neither follows that a nature which partakes of personality is therefore a limited nature; nor that, if unlimited in space, time, and degree, it cannot be personal. The personality may be radically the same, as the personality of the finite, while the difference between them may at the same time be radical.

In the world of human nature, each person is a unit, and is of necessity different from every other unit; while each, in virtue of his personality, is finite. But it does not follow from this that all personality is necessarily finite. If I possess personal identity, I must remain in the future essentially what I now am; and I retain the finite selfhood, which differentiates me from all other beings when I enter into relations with them, whether of knowledge or of sympathy. We all remain separate and isolated, while we recognise that the same elements which constitute personality in ourselves exist in others beyond us. In knowing other finite personalities, we do not merge our life in theirs. On the contrary, we feel their separateness, the more we get to know them, and the more we know of them.

Thus, we cannot escape from dualism. It is

involved in all knowledge; but the knower, in knowing things other than himself, is not therefore limited to a knowledge of the finite. In a previous chapter we have seen that he may, at the same time, know the Infinite, knowing the two as correlatives. May it not be a corollary of this that the Infinite, in knowing the finite, simultaneously knows itself as infinite?

The root element in all personality is consciousness, —self-consciousness plus the consciousness of other than self,—the subject and the object being known together; and the limitation of each being at once known, and transcended, in the knowledge of the other. But the ordinary, or, to speak more strictly, elementary consciousness supposes that these things can be known apart, or in isolation. It imagines the cleft in knowledge between object and subject to be much the same as the cleft in existence between the real and the ideal. It cannot see how the ideal contains a higher reality in it; and so it fancies that we know an object, in a totally different way from that in which we know a subject; but it is not so. *The one involves the other.* And if the subject, in knowing itself, must know the object as well,—finite subject knowing finite object synthetically and contemporaneously,— why may not the finite subject know an infinite object in the same way?

In a letter to Jacobi, written in 1784, Herder said:

"With the personal supramundane and extramundane God, I, no more than Lessing, can get along. God is not the world, and the world is not God; that is quite certain, but, as far as I can see, this 'extra' and 'supra' do not improve it. When we speak of God, all idols of space and time must be forgotten, or our best labour is in vain." He goes on to say, what every theist will assent to, "Let us banish from the thought of God the personal qualities which lead, if not to something false (as though he played a part), at least to something peculiar (as if he sustained a character), and which consequently detract from the pure notion of a wholly incomparable Being."

Admitting this, it is surely possible—while dispensing with the 'extra' and 'supra,' and bringing boundlessness as well as endlessness to the front—*to retain the idea of Personality, although of a Personality infinitely transcending ours.* With us, personality is limited to a small area of space, and to a short interval of time; but if it be true, as regards mind in relation to body in man, that "all is in the whole, and all in every part," why may not mind in Nature be similarly diffused "all in the whole, and all in every part"? May not the very conditions which limit the exercise of free personality in man—the barriers of space and time—be removable ones? and, where they are removed,—in the infinite and absolute Being,—may there not be the highest kind of per-

sonality? In thus recognising that God is more than a person—as we understand the term—we may discern at the same time the glorification of personality, its apotheosis or perfection.

I may put the question in a fresh form, thus: Is separateness from other existences equivalent to finitude? Does the one notion carry the other with it, or within it? All finite existences *are* separate, one from another; but does it follow that all existence, that is separate from other forms or phases, must be finite? The infinite existence, which we conceive as the simple negation of the finite, may surely pervade the latter without limitation. The idea of a fence or boundary is not involved in the notion of Personality in the abstract, although it is involved in the notion of finite personality. It does not therefore follow that, if a being is personal, it must on that acount be simply one out of many,—differentiated from others, by reason of its personality. Its personality need not be the cause of its separateness and differentiation. Doubtless it cannot exist out of relation to other beings; since—to fall back on the suggestions of philology—all *ex*istence, or the emergence of being in definite forms and relations, implies separateness from others. Although particular existence is what it is, however, in virtue of other existences determining and conditioning it,—and we, in our limitation, cannot be conscious of our own personality, except under the

condition of a *non-ego* beyond us,—it is an illegitimate inference from this to affirm that personality cannot exist, or be consciously realised, except under the condition of a limiting *non-ego*. Is it not conceivable that the sense of a limiting *non-ego* would vanish, in the case of a being that was transcendent, and a life that was all-pervasive? That the dualism, involved in all finite consciousness, should cease in the case of the Infinite, may be difficult *for us* to realise; but to affirm that self-consciousness of necessity implies a centre or focus, at which the scattered rays of individuality are gathered up, is assuredly to transgress by the unwarranted use of a physical analogy.

In his *Der alte und der neue Glaube*, Strauss writes thus, and he always states his case with force and clearness:

> The modern monotheistic conception of God has two sides, that of the Absolute and that of the Personal, which, although united in Him, are so in the same manner as that in which two qualities are sometimes found in one person, one of which can be traced to the father's side, the other to the mother's. The one element is the Hebrew Christian, the other the Græco-philosophical contribution to our conception of God. We may say that we inherit from the Old Testament the "Lord-God," from the New the "God-Father," but from the Greek philosophy the "Godhead," or the "Absolute."

So far well, and excellently put. But if it be so, if these notions—seemingly incompatible—are united in our modern monotheism "in the same manner as two

qualities are sometimes found in one person," does not that mitigate the difficulty of realising both as combined in one transcendent Personality? As two rills of hereditary influence unite to form a single stream of personality in the individual, and as two great conceptions of God have survived in the world, and alternately come to the front in the mind of the race,—call them, for distinction's sake, the Hebraic and the Hellenic,—cannot these be supposed to unite in one vast stream of Transcendent Being? And are not these two conceptions merely different ways of *interpreting* that supreme Existence, which both equally recognise? If we inherit these notions from the sources which Strauss so happily indicates, why should we proceed to disown one half of the inheritance, casting out the Jewish as airy and unverifiable, while we retain the Greek as real and scientific? If we are indebted to both, why refuse one half of the legacy? or construe it as the ghostly shadow, while the other is the enduring substance? Was not the monotheism of the Jew at least a historical discipline to the human consciousness, in the interpretation of a real side of the mystery, which in its fulness eluded him, as much as it baffled the Greek ontologists? Grant that the Jewish notion of personality degenerated at times into an anthropomorphism that was crude, and scarcely more elevated than the polytheism it supplanted. The emphasis which it laid on the distinction and

separateness of God from the world was, nevertheless, part of the historic education of the race; just as the emphasis which the Greek mind laid on the unity which underlies all separateness was another part of that many-sided education.

The idea that "personality implies a limit" is largely due to the physical or semi-physical notions that have gathered round the notion of a throne on which a monarch is seated. If we give up these symbols of a "throne," a "court," and "a retinue of angels," and even renounce that of a local "heaven" as an "optical illusion," we shall not thus "lose every attribute of personal existence and action," as Strauss tells us we must. Every rational theist, nay every thoughtful man, understands that these ideas are the mere symbolical drapery, which has been wrapped around the spiritual notion by the realistic imagination of the Jews.

The whole of the sensuous imagery under which the Divine Nature is portrayed, as well as the material figures inlaid in every sentence in which we speak of the spiritual realm, are mere aids to the imaginative faculty. They are the steps of a ladder on which we rise, in order that we may transcend the symbols,—just as we find that a realisation of indefinite areas of space, or intervals of time, helps us in that transcendent act, by which we think away the finite, and reach the infinite. But that God is, to quote the

ancient formula, "all in the whole and all in every part" (as the soul is in the body), not localised at any centre,—this is one of the commonplaces of theology. The notion of the oriental mind, which has coloured much of our western theology, that such symbols as those associated with royalty must be taken literally, and not as "figures of the true," is expressly rejected in some of the definitions of the Church itself. And further, there is scarcely an idea connected with the monotheism of the Jews—such as King, Judge, Law-giver, Father—in reference to which there are not express statements, within the Sacred Books of the nation, cautioning it against a *literal* application of these terms to the Infinite. The prophets saw their inadequacy, and felt their poverty, while they used them. But they could not help using them. They could not speak to the mass of the nation in other than symbolic language, any more than the leaders of the Greek schools could have dispensed with an esoteric, and made the crowds in the agora understand speculation on Being in the abstract. If we are to speak of God at all in human words, we must employ the inadequate medium of metaphoric speech; and, as Francis Newman says, "To refuse to speak of God as loving and planning, as grieving and sympathising, without the protest of a *quasi*, will not tend to clearer intellectual views, but will muddy the springs of affection." In their horror of anthropomorphism,

ontologists have rarefied their notion of the ultimate principle of Existence into a mere abstraction. But, in making free use of anthropomorphic language, we know that it is of necessity partial and inadequate; and we exclude from our notion of personality—which it thus imperfectly describes—every anthropomorphic feature that savours of limitation, while we retain the notion of a Being who is *personal, and yet infinite.*

That personality cannot coexist with infinity is an assumption without speculative warrant, or experiential proof. It may be essential to personality that the person "thinks and loves," as Matthew Arnold puts it. But are thought and emotion only susceptible of finite action, and adequate to accomplish finite ends? And, if the stream to which they give rise is limited, may not the Fountain whence they flow be infinite? Can we not realise the existence of a Supreme Personality, within which the whole universe lives, moves, and has its being, and which has that universe as an area in which to manifest its thought, feeling, and purpose? May not the intelligence, traces of which we see everywhere in the physical order,—the purpose, in the manifestation of which there is no gap or chasm anywhere,—be the varying index of an omnipresent Personality? Into thought and emotion themselves the idea of restriction does not enter; although, whenever they appear in special acts or concrete instances,

they assume a finite form. They are then limited by each other, and by their opposites, as well as by every specific existence in which they respectively appear. But to themselves in the abstract the idea of limitation no more appertains than it is necessarily bound up with the notion of power or energy. This, however, is to anticipate.

We are deceived when we carry into the realm of Nature, and the Infinite, the analogy of a material centre and a physical circumference, by which our own personality is "cabined and confined." To the Infinite, there can be neither centre nor circumference; or we may say that the centre is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere. But if the attributes of mind or intelligence are revealed throughout the whole extent of the universe open to our inspection, is it impossible to conjoin with the notion of their infinite range the idea of a Person, to whom they belong, in whom they inhere, and of whose essence they are the many-sided manifestation? Is there any greater difficulty in supposing their conjunction over the whole universe, than in realising their coincidence at any one spot within it? It is assuredly not the mere extent of the area that constitutes the difficulty of their union.

We thus come back to what has, in one form or another, lain at the root of every theistic argument. Is the universe in any sense intelligible? Can it be

read, understood, and interpreted by us at all? or does it present an "untranslatable text," which we in vain attempt to decipher? When we say that phenomena are *organised*, what do we mean by the statement? When we speak of them as correlated, reciprocal, ordered, the parts of a whole, what do we mean by these terms? Are we projecting our own thoughts outwards, on the face of external nature? or are we engaged in deciphering an inscription that is written there? Surely, in the earliest and simplest act of perception, distinguishing one phenomenon from another, we recognise the presence of mind within the universe; and in our earliest knowledge of an external world, we have an experience suggesting the theistic inference.

Before leaving this subject of Personality and the Infinite, one or two additional points may be noted; because, just when we fancy we have reached a solution of the problem, it would seem as though some angel with a flaming sword turned us back from the door at which we were about to go in, and compelled us to seek another entrance.

Parmenides, Erigena, Spinoza, Hegel, and Spencer, —to select different names from a wide area— all agree in this, that the Infinite and the Personal are contradictory of each other, or that the one excludes the other. But it is only when personality is defined, at the outset, as belonging essentially to the finite, that any contradiction between the

two can emerge. If personality be "the quality in a subject of being consciously an object to itself, does it follow that it cannot be infinite"? It may rather be *that only the Infinite is truly personal.* We, the finite, require the presence of a non-ego beyond us, in order to self-consciousness. This is a condition of the self-consciousness of the finite; but it is surely conceivable that the Infinite may dispense with this condition, *because of its infinity.* If it be difficult to affirm, it is at the same time impossible to deny, that the source and the ultimate essence of the universe may be more strictly personal because of its infinity, and may pervade all existence without including it within itself.

In this matter let us start from the lowly ground of experience. The individual, who is physically separate from his fellows, had organic union with the race at his birth, and before it. He has become detached for a time, just as polyps float from a parent stem, swim in water for a while, and then cease to live separately. But, during this separate existence, he is one with the realm whence he came, and to which he at length returns. It is an illusion to fancy that, in the detached life he leads, the individual is more truly "himself," than when at first united, and afterwards reunited with the Infinite. His present detachment gives him *a certain kind of consciousness,* which was impossible in the

earlier, and may be impossible in the later, stages of existence; and certainly this detachment is a source of present unrest and illusion. It has introduced him into a world, in which intellectual contraries and moral opposites control his experience, and lead him to attach himself to finite transient things. When he escapes from this, much illusion will cease. Without sinking back into nirvana, he may become consciously one with the Infinite—the union deepening, rather than abolishing, his sense of personality. In its present state the individual ego,

> moving about in worlds not realised,

thinks itself detached, and seemingly separate from the whole; but this is an illusion of experience. May it not be that the detachment of our finite personalities from the Infinite is the cause of our present unrest, and that our return to *that* Personality will be a return to rest.

This is not the doctrine of Buddhist Pantheism, although it has a surface resemblance to it. It is the truth which underlies the teaching of Gautama Buddha. Man, Nature, and God are distinct, not merged in a single all-embracing unity; but the reality which underlies Man and Nature—conserving each, and uniting both—is God; and in realising our finite consciousness in relation to Nature, we at the same time realise the infinite and transcendent con-

sciousness of God. *Deus nos personat.* We may almost say that in knowing that we know in part, or finitely, we at the same time know that God knows in whole, or infinitely.

Perhaps the mere fact that we are able to conceive of an Infinite Being, revealing himself to finite consciousness, warrants the belief that there is no impassable chasm between them; but that, as each reflects the other, the Infinite contains within it all that the finite can know, or become. Our individual limitation does not prevent our being pervaded by the personality of the Infinite; and so, we can recognise it as at once within us, and as the all-embracing unity, which takes up our finiteness within it. If the goal of our intellectual quest is to find God exclusively beyond us, — above, and detached, — we shall never find Him, except as the projected shadow of ourselves. But, we may surely find Him also within; and, in knowing Him thus, attain to the best knowledge of ourselves.

But further, if God possesses consciousness, there must to Him be not only a subject knowing, but also an object known. Where is that object to be found? If it be internal, within the knower, it can exist for him—*qua* object—only by a process of self-sundering. But for the Infinite to divide itself by such inner diremption, in order to realise its own double (as the finite does), would be not only to degrade, as well as

to break itself up, but also to relegate itself to the sphere of the finite. The only way in which it seems possible to escape from this difficulty is to suppose that the finite supplies *to* the Infinite the object needed for its conscious life. A subject without an object would not be conscious of anything. A subject with itself for its object is a contradiction in terms. A finite subject conscious of finite objects is realisable enough; it is our own conscious state. And an infinite subject, with finite things for the object of its consciousness, while it knows itself as infinite in knowing them as finite, is surely also realisable by us *through analogy*, even although we have no direct evidence of it.

In any case, it is quite clear that, if we construct a theodicy, by projecting our own individuality outwards, we create our own God. "It is we that have made him," not "He that hath made us." But, in predicating consciousness and personality of the Infinite, it does not follow that the distinction of subject and object—which is radical in all forms of finite experience—must be abolished, simply because we think of consciousness as infinite. If it did, the ultimate reality would be a bare essence, naked being—an abstraction of the thinking faculty, a *caput mortuum*, devoid of attributes, characteristics, and qualities—and therefore to us no reality at all, but a sort of zero-element. In that sense "pure

being" would be "pure nothing." The abstract, however, implies the concrete, as the relative implies the absolute, and the finite the infinite.

How to unite the subjective with the objective Divinity,—the immanent with the transcendent, or the omnipresent Universal with its archetype in the Absolute,—is the old problem with which Hellenic speculation struggled for centuries in vain. It is a puzzle, with which the faculties of man will probably wrestle for ever. It is clear, however, that, while acquiescing in its mystery, human nature cannot worship an impersonal absolute Being. With our own concrete personalities we must get into an intelligible relation with the Infinite, not as an abstract essence, but as the *ens realissimum;* and, we can most easily do so, when we conjoin the two apparently disparate notions of the personal and the Infinite.

CHAPTER XII

THE ETHICAL ARGUMENT

THEISM has been supposed by some to rest solely on an ethical basis, to have no other root. Kant was one of those who thought so. His theistic argument, however, was excessively roundabout, and altogether inferential. Although to a certain extent he regarded the Divine Existence as an implicate of moral law, in what he called the "categorical imperative" of duty, he reached his Theism rather as a corollary from the immortality of the moral agent. Having first established his "imperative" as a law obligatory on every will within the universe, he affirmed that happiness should attend the observance of the law—the reward of perfect virtue being perfect happiness; but, as this is not always the case in the present life, he inferred that there must be a future in which virtue and felicity would be united, and therefore that there must be a Being capable of bringing them together.

Kant held that, by the exercise of the theoretical reason, it was impossible to say that the idea of God

had any objective reality; but that the practical reason, working autonomously, imposed a universal law upon the will, demanding its perfect realisation in each individual. This perfection, however, could not be reached within the time-limit of the present life. Immortality was therefore necessary to the individual, for the accomplishment of his destiny in the fulfilment of moral law. It was, in other words, a "suppressed premiss" of morality, an implicate of the practical reason. To secure the victory of this autonomous law over the obstacles which oppose it, and to effect the moral synthesis of the right and the prosperous, more than time was required. It could not be wrought out, by a mere prolongation of the struggle which begins in the present life, even although we suppose the continuance of individuality in a future life. It demanded the existence, the presence, and the causal efficiency of a Being able to unite them, and in whom both now unite. Thus God, as well as immortality, was a corollary of the "practical reason" in man.

This is so circuitous a way to reach the theistic inference that the chief wonder is that it ever satisfied Kant himself. It is really a utilitarian argument, but it is not so open to attack, as Fichte and others thought it was, on the ground of its being eudaemonistic; because the ultimate union of virtue and felicity is an ethical commonplace, which we inherit from

Judaism. It was no part of Kant's teaching, however, that the prospect of felicity should be a motive to virtue. Fichte thought that the Kantian idea made the Divine Being an idol of the imagination; while Schiller thought that to reward virtue reduced the moral agent to the position of a slave. But to suppose that the restoration of a lost balance between virtue and felicity, within the phenomenal sphere, is a work which must be accomplished in the near future; and that, to bring about that harmony, a Being of stupendous power must be assumed,—is to fall back, in a blundering fashion, on the very teleology and adjustment which Kant had previously rejected. That the "right" and the "happy" at last coincide must be admitted, and as no individual can effect such a harmony, we may rationally trust to its being accomplished in the slow evolution of the ages, by the infinite Will—in which the finite "has its being."

But perhaps the Kantian argument may be purified from its dross. At any rate, the truth within its paradox may be stated thus. Neither individual nor collective experience can effect a harmony between what is, and what ought to be; and that is, in other words, to say, between the phenomenal and the noumenal. May we not, therefore, look forward —urged by a moral instinct, as well as by the sense of harmony—to an equation, or an adjustment of

the balance, being accomplished by a Power beyond our own? If it be a genuine instinct which tells us that the right should prevail, and that evil should not permanently triumph, are we not at liberty to infer —when we see the good defeated, and the evil victorious—that this will not last, and that a Power exists which will rectify the anomaly and the disturbance.

A much more suggestive, if not an entirely satisfactory, plea for Theism may be found in an analysis of consciousness itself. The moral imperative may be construed, not as the voice of our own nature, but as the utterance of an *alter ego*, or another personality within the limits of that which it controls. We thus find a higher Agent, within the moral agency; and are able to transcend "the spiritual order," by recognising a greater Personality in which our own exists. Writing of this evidence, Fenelon says: "Where have I obtained this idea which surpasses me and makes me disappear in my own eyes, which renders the Infinite present to me? It is in me. I have not put it there; I have found it there. It remains there, when I do not think of it. It presents itself when I am not seeking it."[1]

To be of real service, however, at this stage, our ethical analysis must be more minute. To say that the moral world is under moral law is the same

[1] *De l'existence de Dieu*, Part II. chap. i. § 29.

thing as saying that it is moral; but, that it is a realm presided over, and pervaded, by a moral Governor is not an *obvious* fact on the surface of experience. This is the hidden implicate, which Theism draws explicitly forth, or deduces from the moral premiss. But what is our warrant in making the deduction, or drawing out the implicate? It is not enough to say that we have an intuition of God in conscience. The nature of this intuition must be known, its credentials must be clear, and what it attests must be verifiable.

First of all, then, it is to be observed that, in affirming that one thing is right and another wrong, we really pass from the phenomenal world to the substantial. If I contemplate a certain line of action, and say, "This act will promote my welfare, this other act will frustrate it," I do not transcend phenomena. I keep to the realm of antecedence and sequence. But if, in contemplating the same line of action, I say, "This action is right, intrinsically and substantially; that action is wrong, intrinsically and substantially," I have passed beyond the sphere of phenomena or mere occurrence. In trying to explain *why* we ought to do certain things, and refrain from others, we may look to their consequences alone. So far we may formulate the rules of conduct, by a wise induction of their issues, and may thus obtain what Mr. Mill called a

"moral nautical almanac," by which to steer the vessel of our life, so as to avoid certain rocks and quicksands. Experiential moralists tell us that this is all the aid we can get, that our canons of right are merely the generalised dictates of prudence, or rules of expedient action. They represent our moral nature as fashioned for us by long inheritance, evolved out of ruder elements, created in the struggle for existence, and the survival of what is best for the race, or morally the fittest to live. Intuitional moralists, on the other hand, maintain that, although evolved—as our whole nature is, and must be—the evolution has not created the moral consciousness, but rather liberated it; that it has set free an imprisoned power, which announces itself as, at one and the same time, above us, and yet a part of our highest life. They maintain that "the right" is not a complex notion, and that it cannot be decomposed, or analysed into simpler elements. Any action, now instinctively condemned, may be taken in illustration: an act of fraud, falsehood, or perjury, the selfishness that deserts a friend with the view of obtaining a supposed personal advantage. Is the judgment pronounced on such things a complex and indirect judgment? or is it a single direct affirmative? Is it made up of calculations of interest, or is it unresolvable, unanalysable, amounting to the categorical dictum that the thing is wrong, and ought *not* to be, or to have been.

This is the question to be determined, both by Psychology in the court of experience, and by History in the court of archaeological research. Do Experience and History together say that the judgment is simple or complex? It is true that what now *seems* to be simple and intuitive may be due to many co-operating concauses, that have worked not only in the individual from his birth, but in the blood of the race for centuries. At the same time, the rightness of one line of conduct, and the wrongness of its opposite, may also have been seen at every stage of the evolving process; and, if so, the moral agent will have been carried, at every point in the line of progress, across the chasm which separates essence from phenomena.

In other words, he will have found in the sphere of conduct, a pathway conducting him from the realm of appearance into that of substance. If the wrongness of an act be disclosed to the moral agent, not by the tracing out of processes, and by drawing inferences as to the results of action,—in other words, not by following a series of phenomenal causes to their effects in individual or national life, but by a discernment of the intrinsic character of action,—such moral vision will give him at least *some* information as to the realm of substance. This does not mean that all the implicates of his conduct are ever revealed to the moral agent; but it means that an element, which

does not belong to his act *qua* act, or even *qua* moral act, comes to light — an element present, as an attendant shadow is present—disclosing another realm to which the act belongs. It is within the narrow field of individual experience, a purely phenomenal field, that this glimpse into the world of substance is obtained. When, by moral intuition, we transcend phenomena, we enter the realm of the Absolute and "the Unconditioned": a realm that is not fettered—as that of time and space is fettered—by relative conditions and limitations, or by adjuncts and accessories. In other words, in Conscience, or moral knowledge with one's self, there is also a knowledge of what transcends self; and the Infinite is apprehended by us, in moments of personal decision and action, as it is never apprehended in external Nature.

There are two characteristics of the moral consciousness, which have theistic significance. The first is the fact of freedom itself. If it be true that this moral autonomy is ours,—the power of changing the order of life, and the outcome of character, by the forthputting of choice,—in that self-determination, which moulds and even *masters* circumstance, we find an analogue of the Power which works among the molecules of matter, and guides them to ends they could not otherwise reach. The second is the authoritativeness of the demand that is made, within the sphere of morality; and the wide difference between

our non-compliance with that demand, and our neglect of any physical law.

In what is popularly known as conscience, we thus find, not only the hints or suggestions of a Power superior to our own, but a direct revelation of it. The Infinite is evidenced to us in our own moral life; because that life is, at one and the same time, our own, and that of the Highest within us; and thus we have, through the moral channel, a new suggestion of the personality of the Infinite.

Whatever be the origin of conscience, it is a permanent and residual element in human nature. In its most ordinary utterances it gives evidence that it is not the unconscious creation of the race, by an evolutionary process; but that while "in us," it is not "of us." It is more than the appeal of a higher part of our nature against a lower part; it is the evidence of an infinite *alter ego*, kindred to the lower *ego*, and yet transcending it immeasurably.

This moral dualism in human nature—the presence of two elements working together, and co-operating though occasionally conflicting—is perhaps the most suggestive evidence on which Theism rests. Dualism is a distinctive note of our humanity, as contrasted with natures underneath the human. There may be the germs of conscience in the dog, and other animals,—man standing to them, as the Infinite to the finite,—but we have no evidence that these

animals feel that they are in contact with a Power which is the source of law, and which ordains that certain things are right and others wrong. In the human consciousness the continuous demand that certain things should be done, and others refrained from, seems to point to a Person from whom the demand comes, and gives us at least a partial light as to his moral characteristics. The source of the demand must be more than a mere "stream of tendency," or an abstract law; because a stream of tendency is a process, and a law is impersonal, whereas we are persons. A law is an abstract universal, we are concrete individuals; and what appeals to us, with a view to moral government and control, is a Power which not only indicates a normal path for our natures to pursue, but which also operates in us to that end.

Thus conscience in man may be said to be an organ for the apprehension of the Infinite. As it ordains the right, it is an emanation from a righteous source; and, as realised in experience, it is the consciousness of a higher personality acting upon a lower one, or of the Infinite within the finite.

When we pass from the individual to society, the moral evidence of Theism becomes cumulative. It is the whole moral life and order of the world—not individual consciousness alone—that suggests the theistic interpretation; and there is a significant contrast

between the action of all forces in Physical Nature external to man, and the way in which certain of them operate in Human Nature. The energies of the Universe are spent, not only in the production of organisms, but in their destruction and death. The one, in fact, implies the other. An elaborate machinery exists for the infliction of pain, and for the remorseless crushing aside of the weak to make room for the strong; but in human nature we find this law of the cosmos partially reversed. Here also selfish and destructive tendencies are at work, but they are combined with others that are unselfish and conservative. The former are not altogether hostile to the welfare of the race. War and pestilence, which do a certain rough work that slower agencies do as surely, are to be included within our inventory of the things that ultimately tend to good, and to the progress of mankind. A larger good is evolved, through the winnowing process by which Physical Nature casts its weaker products aside; but, in Human Nature, we meet with a principle which works directly the other way. It comes "not to destroy, but to fulfil"; not to trample down or crush aside, but to uplift and tend with care. Does this second principle give no hint of its origin? If it is not an evolution of the earlier forces, that ruled the animal world, what is its source? If it is not a product of the healthily egoistic struggle of the brute,

may we not trace its parentage to something which counteracts and counterbalances this struggle? The mere existence of such a centrifugal force — if the other be centripetal—is evidence of the working of a principle in human nature, different from that of natural selection, and the survival of the fittest to live.

Besides, the outcome of the exercise of this force is a lessening of the amount of evil in the world. If we have reason to believe that this amount can be reduced by effort, — that it can be held in check, or beaten down, and finally eradicated,—may we not also conclude that the power which effects this result comes not from the phenomenal sphere of effort, but from the substantial which underlies it? The doctrine of the correlation of forces and the conservation of energy, if applied in the same way within the moral sphere as in the physical, has this for its corollary; viz. that there is a certain definite quantity of moral good circulating in the world, and a certain definite amount of evil, and that both are ineradicable. The sole result of our philanthropy is thus a change in the incidence of particular forms of evil, or special aspects of good, while we can eradicate nothing, but can only make the evil and the good assume new phases respectively.

(3) The moral argument for Theism may start from the fact of moral order pervading the entire realm

of Nature, so far as it is open to our inspection; but it must be observed that it is an order disclosed to the individual, in the first instance—not self-imposed upon him, but announced to him—since the individual often questions and disregards it. Kant thought that it was of the essence of the moral law that it should be imposed by the agent upon himself. It is the very reverse. The control of the will cannot proceed directly from the will itself; and the consciousness of law and authority points to what is, in its origin, independent of the individual. It is imposed on him from without; and it is by identifying ourselves with the moral order of the Universe beyond us, that we are freed from the tyranny both of Nature and of self. By such identification we escape, at one and the same time, from the thraldom of fate, and the slavery of caprice.

Another fact of moral psychology, which suggests the theistic inference, is the sharp and keen antitheses that occur in moral experience. It is difficult to explain, on any other than a theistic theory, how in our best moments we experience a sense of elation, of being lifted out of our ordinary selves, out of the ruts of common experience—a consciousness of strength in the mere love of right, and an exhilaration in the doing of it; and, contrariwise, a sense of degradation in the thought of wrong, and of shame in the doing of it. How is the radiance on the one hand, and the

remorse on the other, to be explained? May they not be construed as a sign that we are in direct relation to a moral Source? Not to an abstract rule, evolved out of elements unlike itself, but to a Person? Emotions are kindled in us by moral experience, like those awakened by a sunset, or by the mountains, or by the sea, when these natural phenomena seem to be disclosing

> A Presence that disturbs us with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

In other words, the phenomena of conscience point to that which transcends phenomena.

It is an incomplete Theism which identifies God with moral order, and finds the Divinity within in the "absolute best," transcending all actual or even possible attainment. This is to minimise the Infinite, by reducing it under one of the many aspects it assumes. The moral order is—like the apocalypse of the Beautiful—only one of the many channels in which it works; and it is when we transcend them all that we take in the fulness of the Infinite. It is true that each of us, in our separateness, is but the fragment of a larger whole; but then, it is in separateness that our individuality consists. It is not when this consciousness

is lost, in union with the Infinite, that the end of human existence is reached; but, when it is retained, taken up into, and blent with, a higher sense of union with the Infinite—a union which at once conserves and transcends it.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BEAUTIFUL IN ITS RELATION TO THEISM

If Beauty be an ultimate element in the Universe,—not analysable into anything else, but an essence or characteristic quality which defies the disintegrating effort of the analyst,—it may perhaps supply us with one means of escape from that "slough of despond" into which materialism plunges us. Beauty is as ultimate as anything that is known in the spheres of the true or the good; and while the discussion of its "ultimata" is as interesting as the problems of metaphysical and ethical philosophy, it may be found to cast much light upon the latter. The discovery of its nature will not of course "explain all mysteries," but the service will be great, if it makes any one of them less perplexing to the intellect.

In what follows, it is hoped that this may, to a certain extent, be done. Mystery must of course remain at the background of this, as of every other aspect of the universe; but the peculiarity of the

enigma of the Beautiful is, that it is a *radiant* mystery, known as well as unknown; that its "secret" is at once "open" and concealed; and that it is a mystery which connects itself with our common life in a manner altogether unique.

An analysis of the nature of Beauty is not necessary to the theistic argument, although it is of great value to it; while its bearing upon the problem we are discussing has not been always seen by those who have most skilfully unfolded its special characteristics, as an element in the cosmos. Some of these characteristics must be noted, before we can draw any satisfactory inference from them. (1) One of them is the prodigality of Beauty, and its being diffused in quarters where it is not at first recognised. There is, in truth, "no speech or language where its voice is not heard." It is not only in external aspects of form and colour, however, that it is to be seen, as an adornment of the world. It exists in the very heart of its laws, as these hold sway both over the realm of the organic and the inorganic world. It is seen in atoms and monads, as well as in the entire "system of Nature." It is further disclosed in all the movements of the Universe. The interchangeability of the physical forces does not lessen the beauty of each, and their correlation serves only to enhance the sublimity of the way in which all co-operate to a common end. If in the constitution

of every molecule there is symmetry, in the arrangement of every atom the most consummate accuracy, and in the adaptation of each group of inorganic forms a perfect adjustment of means to ends, they may all be regarded as a world-wide disclosure of the Beautiful.

Nature everywhere ornaments herself. There is a process at work which is a real *effort* of Nature to realise the Beautiful by the production of harmony. That is much the same thing as saying that the inmost spirit of Nature is itself beautiful, and that it strives to disclose itself through this channel. It is not the world of matter, or dull inert substance, however, that is beautiful, or that ornaments itself. It is the spirit of the cosmos that shines through, and eradiates, or transfigures material substance. It thus becomes a genuine apocalypse; and, in this connection, it is to be noted that every individual thing which we call beautiful, or which discloses Beauty, is a perishable medium. It embodies, for a brief period, the transcendent element, which makes a passing use of it. These material forms, in which Beauty is mirrored to us, have been gradually evolved, and are incessantly changing; and so the Beauty disclosed is a transient apparition, which vanishes as the organic products of the world pass away. Evidenced in the laws, rather than in the forms of Nature, and in its movements and moving forces, Beauty changes

as they change; but, so far as, and so long as, it is discerned, our apprehension of it is a knowledge of the very essence of things, and therefore of that which transcends Nature.

The Beauty of the universe may be philosophically construed as a direct disclosure of the Infinite to man. When a great poet and seer exclaimed, in a moment of ecstasy:

> O the one life, within us and around,
> That meets all motion and becomes its soul,
> A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
> Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere,

had he not penetrated quite as far toward the core of things as the scientific analyst does, when he proves the unity of law and the correlation of the forces, or when he unfolds the dynamics of a particle? The specialty of *this* disclosure of the Infinite is that, preserving a dualism underneath its monism, it transfigures the monism, by showing the kindredness of the elements that form it. In other words, it is a sign to us that the Infinite has need of the finite, the Absolute of the relative; that there is not a "great gulf" fixed between them; but that, beneath the difference which separates, there is a deeper unity underlying.

This may be more fully realised when the apprehension of the Sublime is added to that of the Beautiful, and when its realisation—not in space

dimension or area, but in power intension and degree —is awakened in us.

If we are for a time alone in what seems to be one of the intense solitudes of Nature, the universe may appear a vast reservoir of forces utterly unlike ourselves. All the while, however, this reservoir may be teeming with powers that are really kindred to our own; and in a moment, as by apocalypse, the counter-truth of their resemblance may be disclosed. This can only be perceived when certain subjective states in the percipient correspond with the objective conditions of Nature itself. But, when they do correspond, all material forms seem to be the mere embodiment of a stupendous life beneath them, an embodiment which, as Tennyson says of Nature,

> half conceals
> And half reveals the soul within.

When our faculties are at their keenest stretch, and when external conditions are favourable,—as when on the high hill-tops on a still day we watch the clouds that gather round the setting sun, or when by the shore of the sea we look to its far horizon, or even when under any clear vault of sky we gaze toward infinitude,—the veil is often at the very thinnest, and the conviction is flashed upon us that the inmost life of Nature is kindred with our own : not that we and Nature are one, but that there is a common life within us, and that she desires our fellowship as

much as we desire hers. On these occasions the feeling of solitude passes away; that of an underlying unity between man and the Universe takes its place. We realise, not the coldness, the silence, and the incomprehensibleness of Nature, but its kindredness, its affinity, and its friendship.

An acute, although a somewhat mystic writer, the late Mr. Hinton, used to say that the laws of Nature corresponded to the habits of a friend. It is perhaps more accurate to say that the life of Nature is a constant revelation of character; and it is scarcely necessary nowadays to guard against the mistake of carrying this idea too far, and thus degrading it. That was an error of the mediaeval period; but, in our modern era, the unlikeness of man to Nature always takes care of itself. It is constantly suggested, and sometimes painfully obtruded upon us; while the counter idea of resemblance between them is only occasionally grasped, is always fugitive, and is often wholly ignored. Poets, naturalists, and divines alike know that, after the grandest disclosures of the heart of Nature, the curtain falls, and the glory fades away; while we are again over-shadowed by the blank familiar sky. But both experiences, like the two ideas just mentioned, are complementary ones. They are indeed but the two sides of the knowableness and the unknowableness of the Infinite.

The evidence of Theism which reaches us from

this region of the Beautiful comes and goes; and it is meant to come and go. If it was a uniform attestation, the result would be a stationary idea; and, as a stationary idea, it would soon become a sterile one. But when we keep company with the poets, who have been seers and prophets of the Beautiful, we find that we are taken very much nearer to the heart of things, than when we follow the chemist or the physicist — great as is our indebtedness to them. The reason is that the latter tell us, at the very end of their quest, that they know nothing of the nature of force, that the atoms of matter are as mysterious as its aggregates of phenomena, and the ultimate nature of its molecules as obscure as its ordinary laws. But what the poet's eye discerns—and the scientific student of Nature may both possess and use this eye—is the existence of a great cosmic *Life* beneath all force, a pulse within all causal sequence, an energy which is at least quasi-volitional, but which the physicist—who either has not, or does not use this inward eye, or is colour-blind—construes as mere metaphoric guesswork or allegoric fancy. If any single force in the world is *alive*, what do we mean by the adjective applied to the substantive? Surely that, to a certain extent, it resembles ourselves; and, in giving this description of its underlying essence, we mean that, however different from us, it is at the same time "like in difference."

It is quite true that the realm of the concrete is a sphere of limitation, and that the very process of embodiment imposes a limit on the things which we thus clothe, or which clothe themselves, with form. On the other hand, the realm of the abstract and the unembodied is not only vague, but it is void of content; and the poetic interpretation of Nature is here the bridge that spans an otherwise impassable chasm. It embodies the unembodied for us, while it retains the idea of the limitless and unoutlined; and it helps us to pass by easy steps, that are verifiable at every stage, from the world of concrete reality under foot, to a realm of abstract ideality that is overhead. We thus ascend from the real to the ideal, more easily and successfully than Plato's speculative theory did; and we find that the ideal sphere—in which all great poets have lived, and moved, and had their being—is most emphatically a world of the real, when by means of it we are brought into touch with the Infinite.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FAILURE OF AGNOSTICISM

We do not escape from mystery by walking down the avenues of positive Science; and the more intelligently we recognise the barrier of the unknown, the more profound is our craving for a theoretical explanation of things, so far as speculative theory can carry us. Positivism tells us to look into the mystery, to face it, and then to worship what is inscrutable to our faculties. But we cannot worship mere darkness, and we must conjoin an intellectual view of the mystery of things with the dumb wonder which remains, after all our explanations of it have been given.

I plead for the reverent inclusion within the great theistic postulate of many elements which are anthropomorphic, and which a *doctrinaire* theology has excluded from it. I wish this central idea of the human race, this cardinal conception of mankind, to be augmented by many an accessory of modern Science, as well as "compacted by that which every

joint" of the old theology "supplied." This will deepen the reverence of the coming age, as well as touch its life to new issues, and raise its aspirations indefinitely.

I have already said that whatever may have been the case with the mass of worshippers in Palestine, the great seers of the Hebrew race recognised both the personal and the impersonal side of the Infinite, both the knowableness and the unknowableness of God. But when St. Augustine could exclaim, in a paroxysm of devotion, "O aeterna Veritas, et vera Caritas, et cara Æternitas, *Tu* es Deus meus"—laying hold of the most abstract ideas of the True, the Good, and the Eternal, and making them concrete to his imagination, offering his homage to the eternal Truth, and the true Charity, and the dear Eternity—who need wonder at Carlyle lapsing into the vagueness of the seer, as he spoke of the Infinities, the Immensities, and the Eternities, and preferring to leave his conception "without form," though not "void" of meaning, to himself or to mankind? To us the personal is the highest known element in infinity, simply because we are persons; and in our constructive Theism it is necessary for us to start from the basis of our own nature,—our mind, feeling, imagination, and will,—and to construe the Infinite in the light of our own consciousness. But other existences, higher than we, may, for aught we can tell, construe the same infinite essence, and the supreme principle of things, differently.

> The great intelligences fair
> That range above our mortal state

may surely know more than we do about it, just as we know more than the ape, the dog, the bird, the reptile, or the fly. Even in that case, perhaps the mental attitude of these "great intelligences fair" will not be widely different from ours. Although there may be no uniform idea or conception on the subject, there may be a uniformly right or fitting attitude—an attitude which remains unaltered, while insight varies, and recognition comes and goes. If, for example, the ideas of "light," "life," "love," and "law" are ultimate ones, which we cannot analyse further, they may all be included as attributes of the Infinite, and thrown in with what we have inherited from Semitic and Christian sources to swell the sum total of the theodicy of the modern world. The attitude of recognition may be an attitude which recognises very different things, which discovers truth in strange places—and strives to combine every fragment of it in a unity that makes room for difference—and which conserves what it also transcends. Thus, if, in the great hymn of Cleanthes, one theistic note is struck, another is heard in the Vedas, another in the Zend-Avesta, another in the Jewish Psalter, and a higher in the Christian Scriptures. It is for the modern world to combine these, not to separate them; but it must do more than this. It must

include within its Theism elements which have been supposed to be alien to it, and even antagonistic—ideas which are furnished to us by Philosophy, by Science, and by Art.

The agnostic asserts that the problem of the Universe is insoluble. The theist affirms that the Divine Nature is incomprehensible. But the scientific mind, so far as it is anti-theistic, thinks of God as *extra*-mundane. The *intra*-mundane, immanent, cosmic deity—the *anima mundi*—seems to it to be the same as its own "matter and force." The student of science is, however, a theological student in disguise. In his quest for what is ultimate in atoms, and molecules, he is pursuing the very same inquiry as that which is pursued by the divine; only he begins at the opposite end. It may be granted to him that the exclusively *extra*-mundane God—the Deity which the ontologist, the cosmologist, and the teleologist try to reach by their modes of proof—has never yet been demonstrated by them. This being granted, he is reminded that the speculative search for ultimata is very much the same as the quest of Theism, for a recognisable being at once above and within the matter of the Universe; and that neither of these—which are the aim of Philosophy and Theology—can be given up at the bidding of Science.

Agnostic science virtually says, "Renounce this vain search for *ultimata*, give up ontology as a delusion

and a snare. It is the region of chimeras and cob-web fancy, of egoistical dreaming and self-complacent theory. Your *one* God is no better than three, or a thousand, in the pantheon of mythology. How can you explain the whole Universe by isolating one or two of its features from the rest, and fancying that these contain its secret? How can a part understand the whole? To this last question the answer is relevant and conclusive. "It cannot comprehend, but it may nevertheless apprehend the whole"; and perhaps the best key to the difficulties of the problem may be found, as I have already said, in this distinction between the comprehension and the apprehension of things. In one sense every definition of the Infinite makes it finite; but, in the interest of Philosophy as well as of Theology, we must define the ultimately undefinable, so far as we possibly can; and all our definitions of it have a real, although perhaps only a relative, and therefore a passing value.

But suppose we discard all theory as to the ultimate nature of being and essence, suppose we toss theology aside, how will it fare with our scientific knowledge? We find that many, who denounce theology as exploded, take up theosophy as proved, with a reckless disregard of logic, or of consistency in the use of terms. It is more important, however, to note that Science, as well as Theology, reposes upon a background of mystery; and that there is a

certain type of agnosticism, which characterises every system of belief that has arisen, that can ever possibly arise. Every one admits the ultimate mystery of things; but the modern agnostic points — as Sextus and Pyrrho did—to the discord of the schools, and the impossibility of any *consensus gentium*. He is blind, however, to the fact that there may be germs of truth in the most erroneous system ever promulgated; and further, that absolute uniformity of belief, as to the precise import of the theistic postulate, is not to be expected, and is not necessary to mankind. The truth is that the agnostic assault on Theism is, for the most part, an irrelevant attack. It assails positions which no wise theist maintains, and it ignores that intuitive evidence, which I have ventured to call the "impregnable fortress" of Theism.

CHAPTER XV

A SOLUTION BY WAY OF COMPREHENSION, AND NOT OF EXCLUSION

SEVERAL branches of theistic evidence have now been traced *seriatim*. But, if one of the grandest characteristics of the Infinite be its incomprehensibleness, it is easy to see how agnosticism distorts an unquestionable truth into a more than questionable error. The same characteristic of the Infinite will explain how it is that theistic evidence comes and goes; that it is not, and cannot be, constant in any of its attestations. There are not only many minds to which it does not appeal in any mood; there are also many subjective states, in which even the most convinced theist has no realisation of it. The modern seer is as familiar, as the ancient used to be, with the feeling that found expression in the phrases: "Wherefore hidest thou thyself?" "O that I knew where I could find him!" These words were primarily addressed to, and spoken of, the God of Hebraism; but they apply no less to the Infinite and the

Absolute of Christian Theism. If the Infinite, however, were constantly obtruded on the finite, its evidence flashed in at every turn of experience, and from all points of the compass, it would be impossible to attend to any mundane interest whatsoever. To finite beings, recognition of the finite—occupation with, or even absorption in it—is quite as necessary as is the recognition of what transcends it; and the theory of life that would convert it into continuous *conscious* worship is not one that can be put in practice on this planet.

Besides, one of the chief functions of Religion is to permeate secular work with a finer spirit of activity, and to make it more ardent, as well as more thorough, on its finite lines. It has not been found possible, even by the most devout in Christendom, to carry the conscious recognition of a personal Deity into their life in every working hour. If St. Augustine could say devoutly, in a sentence already quoted, "O æterna Veritas, et vera Caritas, et cara Æternitas, Tu es Deus meus,"—thus losing, for the time being, the personal view of the Object of his adoration in the impersonal,—who shall say that either the poetic or the metaphysical view of the same Object is an undevout one? St. Augustine felt that the concrete view of things must often give place to the abstract; because the former impoverishes by its definiteness, while the latter enriches by

its very vagueness. It may truly be said of him that he "worshipped the Invisible alone," in giving utterance to that sentence, directed toward the impersonal side of Nature; quite as truly and profoundly as when, in other moods, he turned to its Personality, which he apprehended as few in the modern world have done. And if so, the prevailing speculative attitude of Spinoza, and the habitual poetic mood of Goethe and of Wordsworth, may surely blend harmoniously with the devout aspiration, of the father of the Latin Church. In this connection it may be said of thousands, like the child described by the poet, that they are

> Pious beyond the intention of their thought,
> Devout above the meaning of their will.

Scarcely any rational person is now enslaved to the idea of a "magnified and non-natural man" in the heavens overhead. The worship addressed to such a Being, however, is no poorer than is the intellectual assent offered by the metaphysician to his abstract essence,—the *Causa causans*, the *Ding-an-sich*, the *νόησις νοήσεως*,—or by the poet to the Being that is in the woods, or hill, or sea, or sky. It is quite true that fragments of an earlier faith survive in Christianity, but it is very easy to transcend them. When we say "O thou that dwellest in the Heavens," it is not necessary to retain the idea of one who is

limited to an abode, or of a dweller who comes and goes from it. Unless this idea is abandoned, anthropomorphism is retained; and when men say to the Infinite, "Bow down thine ear, make haste to help us," there is no real difference between their prayer and the cry "O Baal hear us," unless the metaphor is laid aside, as soon as it is used. But the profoundest thought of Christendom touching the Infinite is not anthropomorphic. It sees that symbols and analogies are "figures of the true." It uses them to enable it to rise from a lower to a higher level of insight, and it dispenses with them whenever it has done so.

Suppose, now, that we take all the efforts of constructive reason to deal with this problem of problems. To the notion of the infinite and absolute Substance immanent in the world, superadd the idea of a primal, universal, and ultimate Force, of an Energy that is also infinite and absolute, and is therefore the fountain-head of all the other energies of the Universe. Conjoin with this the notion of supreme Causality. Fill up the idea with others gathered from what is noblest in human nature, letting the symbols which savour of limitation drop from the mind—as we have repeatedly said—after they have been used to help in its ascent. We need not reject a single anthropomorphic notion, but utilise each one, and then transcend them all; nay, we may use them, with the

view of transcending them, *and then returning to their use.* We may think of the Infinite, not as *posssessing* thought, emotion, and volition, as we possess them; but as *being* mind, feeling, and will, in amplest measure, and fullest possibility. As soon as any name, given to the Infinite, seems to suggest a limit, we may at once set it aside.

> Name is but sound and smoke,
> Shrouding the glow of heaven,

said Goethe; and a thousand names are no better than one, except as an aid in expanding the notion, and filling it up with new shades of inner significance.

There is a certain vagueness, however, in this universal religion which recognises a divine element everywhere in the world; an intellectual diffuseness, which must be met—and I would say supplemented rather than corrected — by a central notion which dominates the rest, excluding none of them, but reigning as it were over the whole. This we find not in external Nature, but in Man, and in what is highest in him, viz. in *the depths of personality.*

This dominant idea makes room for others alongside of it, which have often been supposed to be antagonistic — even for impersonal tendencies and energies — which are quite as real as the personal, which is enthroned as supreme. We may thus turn

to all the great conceptions of the Universe, which have come to the front in the course of time, and find in each of them a theistic contribution. We may even levy one from agnosticism; for, is not "inconceivability" an aspect of the Infinite, and "incomprehensibleness" a recognised attribute of God? Only, we cannot worship darkness. To adore the "unknown and the unknowable" is a mockery of human reason, although we may worship an Object, which we know to be mysterious.

The right attitude of mind toward this problem of the Infinite is of more importance than any solution of it—even the profoundest—which we can succeed in formulating; and perhaps we find that attitude best expressed, where some would least expect it. Going back to Palestine, we may see in the act of the father of the Hebrew race, leaving his Mesopotamian valley, and turning from Nature-worship—following a summons to go forward "not knowing whither he went"—the prototype of all that followed in the history of the people of Israel, and also an allegory of the intellectual and moral progress of the world on this subject. "Forgetting what was behind," Judaism "reached out to what was before it," in insight and attainment; while there was a recognition of mystery, of the unknown beyond the known, in all the Hebrew Theism, as truly as in those systems in which the erection of an altar to the Unknown has been

regarded as "the last and highest consecration of all true religion."

Very great injustice is done to the religious insight of the Jews by imagining that the root idea of the national faith was the existence of a vast extra-mundane Being, "a magnified and non-natural man," seated somewhere on an aerial throne, who interfered occasionally to help a favoured race upon the earth; a Being who made "covenants" with men—a God of gods it is true, and a Potentate above all others, but crowned at the last with merely human characteristics—an anthropomorphic God. This is only one half of the truth as regards the Hebraic Theism. The religious imagination of the Semitic race was certainly working with imagery of that kind all along. The Jew thought in metaphor, and his metaphors were sometimes of a very limited kind; but there was another side to the picture. The higher seers, the prophets of Israel, warned the nation that its God was *not* like themselves; while the philosophic poets—and there were such in Palestine—took a still higher flight, and asked, "who by searching can find out God?" They announced that "his ways" were past the discovery of man. As to the ultimate secret of the Universe, they put it thus. "The Depth saith it is not in me, and the Height, it is not in me." It was "high as Heaven, what could man know of it? deeper that the depth, what could man do"? Others, after

a survey of many notable things, exclaimed: "Lo! these are a part of his ways, but how small a whisper do we hear of Him?" In thus admitting the incomprehensibility of their God, the Jews were on precisely the same intellectual level as the theologians of later Christendom. Even if we went so far as to say that the former "thought as children," and "spake as children" do,—which Christendom cannot in the least admit,—those, who owe so large a heritage of insight and religious vision to them, can surely rise on the steps of the theistic ladder they have constructed, and pass by means of it to a loftier height, whenever they feel its inadequacy.

The dread of anthropomorphism is childish. We cannot help the use of figures of speech, and if we discard some, we are sure to make use of others. Who but a pedant would object to our speaking allegorically and metaphorically of the sun rising, of the sea roaring, of the wind whispering; or of the mind as clear, or calm, or cloudy? All human speech is a mosaic of symbols, which we use consciously or unconsciously. Do we know more or less of the sun or the sea, when we describe them in figurative language gathered from human nature, or when we adopt the strictly scientific phrases of astronomy or physiography? Similarly, do we know more or less of the soul, when we describe it in terms fetched from outward Nature, or from its own interior realm?

It would seem that we discern the state of the case most clearly, and record our insight best, when we gather our phrases in each instance from the opposite realm; when we describe Mind in terms of matter, and Matter in terms of mind. If this be so, it will also be found that, in the moments of highest insight into what is mysterious, and hidden from our faculties, we instinctively clothe our insight in the raiment of metaphor. While we perhaps feel that "all that we know is that we know nothing," we nevertheless succeed best, in expressing the little we do know, when we set it forth symbolically. Of course we look through the symbol. We get behind the metaphor, we break the shell of allegory, to extract the kernel of fact; but we approach far nearer to the centre of things, when we make use of concrete aids to abstract thought, than when we discard them, and try to reach the shrine of pure being, *per saltum*.

It must be further remembered that the defect, which clings to every metaphoric phrase, may be met—and overcome—by our use of others. Each new symbol we employ helps to correct the inadequacy of the rest. If, in speaking of the Infinite, we confine ourselves to one or two favourite phrases, we are sure to err. The very loftiest of our symbolic terms —such as King, Judge, Father—lose their adequacy —as we have already seen—if we do not conjoin with them others, which are perhaps intrinsically

less adequate, but which correct the poverty of the former.

It must also be noted that the value of symbol and allegory is not confined to the illiterate many. It is quite as necessary for the educated few. It has been said that, while the masses must have their metaphoric modes of thought,—walking on crutches, and by the help of the "lesser lights" of the symbolical,—the esoteric few may dispense with such aid, and enter the shrine of knowledge by the avenue of pure thought alone. It is a total mistake. Thought, that dispenses with allegory, soon ceases to retain the characteristics of "pure" thought; and, in reference to its use of this figurative raiment, it may truly be said that, it should "not be unclothed, but clothed upon, that its mortality may be swallowed up of life."

It should also be noted, as a historical fact, that the greatest truths — truths the announcement of which has been epoch-making to the world—have always reached it, draped in metaphor; at times wrapt up with imperfection, and even associated with crude and transient notions, which reflected the spirit of an age about to be superseded. But this has helped the reception of the new ideas with the people. It is the same now, as it used to be in Greece. The exoteric is needed for the sake of the esoteric, because the masses of mankind have

never been able to live in the sphere of the highest intuition.

It may be objected that the Theism, advocated in these pages, is at the same time a Metaphysic, and an Ethic, an Aesthetic, and a Sociology. I reply that, unless it is so—unless it includes these things within it—it is, and must ever remain, sectarian; in other words, an incomplete theodicy. It is not meant by this that God is "the sum of all Reality." That is the pantheistic solution of the problem. What is meant is that God in Himself is both the *ens realissimum*, and for man the *principium essendi et cognoscendi*. If we take the antithesis of Essence and accident, Substance and phenomena, and describe God as both, there is no escape from Pantheism; but, if we take the antithesis of subject and object, it is very different. We may surely speak of God as both of these. The infinite Substance may at one and the same time be the infinite Subject and the infinite Object. In other words, the enduring Substance—which survives while phenomena come and go—may be both Object and Subject, when regarded by us from different points of view: may be object, as the antithesis of the finite; and may be subject, as itself "the thought of thought."

God is thus discerned within us, as well as without; subjectively as well as objectively. He is recognised in the outer sphere by direct intuition, as infinitely

transcending the limits of our own personality; at the same time he is known in the inner sphere, as the very substance and essence of the Personality, which realises itself in us.

Unless, however, our theistic study is to be a sort of philosophic game of hide and seek, we must append to it some method of verification. The postulate from which we start must be evidenced by subsequent scrutiny, and the application of tests: and the theist maintains that he can ascend by a pathway of experience, to a "mount of transfiguration," where his surmises are transformed into evidence, and his hypothesis is raised to the rank of a proof.

If we entrench ourselves within an individualism which bars off the Infinite, as the intellectual and moral antithesis of the finite,—between which there is a gulf fixed, so that there can be no intercommunication, or indwelling of each in each, but only occasional "conferences," "contracts," or "covenants," —it is all over with a Theism, that can be verified at the shrine of experience. We may rise to the supreme postulate, however, by a process of evidence; evidence which explains the product which we reach, and in which we rest. We may begin by the obvious, though constantly forgotten, fact that we cannot know anything if we do not know more than itself; in other words, unless we know it in

its relation to other things. The Absolute, as the unrelated, must remain for ever unknown to us. Reciprocity of some sort, mutuality of relationship, kindredness between opposites, is the condition of all our knowledge.

> Nothing in the world is single.
> All things by a law divine
> In one other's being mingle.

Thus the finite implies the Infinite, the relative the Absolute, just as substance implies a shadow, the negative a positive, the cause an effect, and the centre a circumference.

But how do they thus respectively imply each other? It is because they are elements of precisely equal meaning, in a whole which includes, because it implies both. The one term carries the other *essentially and inevitably* within it; and it cannot exist without the other, as its double.

This is tolerably clear. But the further question, What *is* the Infinite, the Absolute, the Substance, the Cause, the Centre—thus implied in the finite, the relative, the shadow, the effect—is not so easily answered. The mere admission of another *side* to the concept, which we know to be a reality of experience, is not of much value to us, unless it either supplies us with a definite intellectual horizon, or unless it integrates *ourselves* in a realisable manner with that other side.

The finite implies the Infinite; but then, the Infinite also implies the finite. The former takes the latter up, and includes it within itself; emphasising it, in the very act of transcending it. While we know the Infinite, we cannot know it so as at the same time to escape from our own finiteness. To do so, would be for the finite to cease to exist. But no less can the Infinite dispense with the finite, and itself continue to exist. The Infinite not only discloses its deepest essence, when it puts on the raiment of finite form; it thus also manifests itself to itself, as unity can alone show itself in the midst of diversity. The finite is thus as necessary to the Infinite, as the many are to the one. As correlatives, they involve each other; and thus, in a certain sense—although with many limitations—it may be said that Infinite and finite are one.

This, however, is a very different solution of the problem from that which has fascinated so many minds, from Parmenides to Spinoza, the result of which has come to light in those acosmic systems in which the finite does not get its due. In the solution of the problem now offered, both elements are conserved. They are held together indissolubly; and are as closely interrelated, as an upstroke involves a downstroke, as the yea implies the nay, and as the ebb of the tide is meaningless without its flow.

It is only by uniting the two ideas of the immanency and the transcendency of God, that we can escape from Anthropomorphism on the one hand, and from Pantheism on the other. We may adopt, in all its literality, the mediaeval lines

> Intra cuncta, nec inclusus,
> Extra cuncta, nec exclusus,

and regard our individual personalities as embraced but not sunk—within the universal personality of the Infinite. We live—because it lives; that is to say, we live because our individualism is taken up into, and is pervaded by, the universalism of the Infinite. It may not be too much to affirm—as one of the devoutest and most reverent theologians of the world has put it—that we know ourselves in God, and know at the same time that He knows himself in us.

It may be further said, in this connection, that only the Infinite could impose a limit upon itself. The finite cannot limit itself; but, in the very act of entering into relation with the finite, the Infinite must know itself to be limited by the attitude it assumes. In entering into any relation whatsoever with the finite, it submits for the time being to a temporal process, and thus voluntarily makes its own limit.

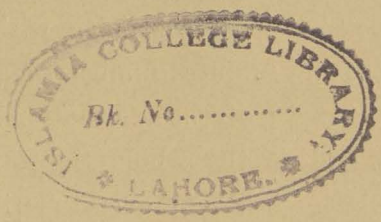
But to affirm—as all agnosticism does—that we cannot know anything of the Infinite, is clearly to limit it as well as ourselves; in other words, to deny

the power of self-manifestation or disclosure. Surely the grandest feature or characteristic which we can realise is the power of self-manifestation or revelation, the drawing aside of a veil; and, contrariwise, what the nature of man most aspires to is being taken up into a Reality higher than itself, which stoops to include it, and to hold intercourse—intellectual or moral—with its finitude.

In this connection it should be noted that undifferentiated being, bare "essence," is a zero quantity. It has really no meaning at all; it is unknown, and unknowable. Suppose we affirm with Spinoza that Substance has an infinite number of attributes, what the better are we of the affirmation? What is an attribute? and is the whole Substance compacted by that which each and every attribute supplies? We may give a thousand names to the ultimate essence, which remains—after all our characterisations of it—the "nameless" one; but what the better are we for this miscellaneous nomenclature, unless each is a partial mirror of the Reality, which transcends them all?

Men speak, in the dialect of one school, of the "self-determination" of the Absolute; but, when we pierce through the metaphor employed, what does the phrase really tell us? Can we bring the two ideas of absolute being, and volitional energy—or those of self-centredness and self-sundering—within a single

category? As, in a stereoscope, two pictures are united and seen together, each being enhanced by its conjunction with the other, can we similarly unite the Universal and the particular, the Absolute and the relative, or the Infinite and the finite, within a single whole? The answer to this question must be postponed. It carries us a stage further on, in the consideration of the aspects of Theism, to which the preceding chapters have been devoted.



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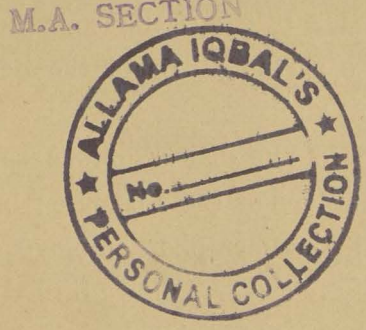

Printed by R. & R. CLARK, *Edinburgh*