



Voices of Freedom

HORATIO W. DRESSER

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and Studies in the Philosophy of Individuality

Horatio W. Dresser

YocBooks: Hollister, MO

YOgeBooks by Roger L. Cole, Hollister, MO 65672
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All rights reserved. Electronic edition published 2015
ISBN: 978-1-61183-288-4 PDF
ISBN: 978-1-61183-289-1 EPUB
2015:10:01:09:37:57
www.yogebooks.com

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Preface

THE PROBLEM of problems in the world of philosophical thought has ever been the relation of the one and the many, the adjustment of the individual to society, the assignment of finite and infinite to their true spheres. The old problem has again and again reappeared in new forms. It is perplexing mankind afresh to-day. The purpose of this book is to bring these living issues to a focus, with the hope that systematic consideration of them may throw new light both upon the problems of daily life and upon the great metaphysical question of the ages.

In the economic world, this problem presents itself as the antithesis of socialism and individualism. In the realm of exact metaphysics, it is the contrast between monism and pluralism. Psychologically, it is the contest between the permanent spiritual ego and its passing states of consciousness—"sold into slavery to a physiological hypothesis." Ethically, it is the paradox of the free moral agent and his mechanically determined environment. Again, the problem appears as the issue between pantheism and the vigorous belief in individuality of our time. Many new forms of fatalism, indifferentism, and mere subjectivism have recently appeared. A certain school holds that the perception or affirmation of the ideal is sufficient; it is not necessary to act, to strive for the Christ; suffering is illusory. Others believe mysticism adequate

to meet all demands; rationality is utterly scorned. Anglo-Saxon energy and Oriental contemplation are face to face. There were never so many who believed in external, aggressive methods. On the other hand, there is a school which believes that all causation is mental; that calm, spiritual thought is the only cure.

All these representative faiths have assembled in my parliament of thought, and I have tried to retain their local characteristics and peculiar national costumes. But these boastful pretensions are in inverse ratio to my claims for this volume. Indeed, I should offer an apology for publishing Chapters I. and II., were it not that, despite the restatements they contain of the doctrines of earlier volumes, their publication has been specially requested. These chapters, together with portions of several others in the volume, originally appeared in *The Arena* as parts of a series entitled, "The New Thought in its Relation to Exact Philosophy," and were announced to appear in a volume under that title. But some of the chapters elicited such comment that I have profited by the wisdom of my critics and produced a new and better volume. To what extent these alterations involve a change of view, the reader must determine. It is for him also to decide whether I have at last successfully defended myself against the charge of pantheism.

So far as my indebtedness is insufficiently acknowledged by the context, I have been helped most of all by the progressively suggestive works of Professor James, whose off-side playing in the forum of philosophy is accomplishing more than the work of anyone else to defeat the old absolutism. But this book differs from those of Professor James, because of its greater love of system. At the same time, it endeavours to carry out in more minute detail one of Professor James's criteria, namely, that philosophy shall be practical.

But this foreword, already too personal, will fail as a clue to the book unless it suggests the larger thought for which the entire discussion contends. Every individual is a fresh revelation of God. The supreme need of practical life is self-knowledge, self-mastery, and complete self-expression.

But the basis, the rationale of it all, the love, the beauty, is the continuous progressive revelation, the eternal purpose of God. The divine point of view, illuminating and including the human, is the only adequate vision of life. To the degree that the individual develops yet puts himself aside, the real mystery is solved. This book may err where individual preference has intruded. Where its teaching is of greatest value, the credit belongs neither to books nor persons—it is the declaration of that Wisdom which in some way makes itself heard even when we try to utter the contrary.

MÜRREN, SWITZERLAND, August, 1899.

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Voices of Freedom

Chapter I. Voices of Freedom

"Gladness be with thee, helper of the world."

FROM THE time when the human soul first opened its consciousness in speculative wonder at the magnitude and beauty of the universe, one motive has triumphed above all others in the upward course of life. The soul has sought freedom, fulness of expression, self-mastery. Other incentives have held superficial precedence, and man has been far from acquaintance with the deep significance of life. But consciously or unconsciously, the desire for freedom has been the chief incentive to action, the true meaning of our struggles, the ideal toward which all moral and spiritual evolution has really been tending. For men are not born free and equal; they are born with a desire for freedom and equality, a desire which each man must realise in an individual way, through personal effort and experience, hampered yet educated by the difficulties and inequalities which his undeveloped condition attracts.

At any stage of its progress, the soul is as near freedom, as nearly on a basis of equality with its fellows, as its general state of development, its degree of understanding, permits. The physical birth and external circumstances may be favourable; teachers of all types may come forward to give the soul

instruction. But permanent progress results only to the degree that the soul understands itself, and consciously takes each step toward the goal of freedom. No one can control or force the soul's growth. No step in evolution can be omitted. Every experience may tend further to enslave or to make for freedom, according to the insight and attitude of the soul whose experience it is. Life is, in fact, either a burden or a blessing, a mystery or an intelligible revelation; each of its details furnishes ground for complaint or means of unfoldment, according to the degree of insight into this great law,—the desire and search for soul-freedom.

This much being premised as the principle which universally obtains in human development, the problems of progress are reduced to this: How far has the soul advanced in the endeavour to understand and obtain freedom? How far am I still enslaved? What may I do, in order to advance yet farther toward the goal of rounded, wise, beautiful self-expression?

The discovery of the level attained, the degree of present servitude or freedom, necessarily implies a certain amount of self-analysis, the process of coming to judgment; for the problem of freedom is the entire problem of individuality in its relation to God, to nature, and to humanity. But the experience of coming to judgment need not be wholly of the introspective sort. Contact with other minds, occasional attendance at some other church, the reading of books of various types, may arouse this self-revelation. Conservatism tries to outwit this process by cutting off all avenues of escape into a broader realm. The Englishman, for example, finds himself haunted at every continental summer resort by the English chapel, and he must needs attend. But hope for his greater development lies in the possibility that a few weeks may elapse when he shall not hear expositions of the established religion, but may enrich his life with unconventional thought. It is easy to be content, to remain at a standstill or become a slave to habit when one is not called out of the usual lines of thought and work. Yet growth comes with a vacation, with innovation, when one ventures outside prescribed limits, dares to think on unwonted themes. No occupation is so worthy, no

tie so sacred, that one should not disengage one's self from it for a season, either to return with new life and greater freedom or not at all. For nothing is so important as progress, so long as progress is gradual, evolutionary, thoughtful; and any experience makes for progress which gives us a distant view of ourselves,—which stimulates individual thought.

Endlessly on the alert, therefore, must be the man who would escape from the creeds, dogmas, customs, habits, and authorities which tend to enslave us, still more persistently awake to the inner conditions which make servitude possible. That one may become free, it is well again and again to question every belief, every relation in life, asking if it still be worthy of acceptance, seeking new grounds of conviction, and returning to established lines of thought and action only because one is sure that they are still useful and wise. For the soul must be the master,—circumstance, at the utmost, only its helpmeet. I must not be bound by anything,—except the moral law and the duties it imposes,—least of all by beliefs, customs, habits, which, rightly understood, should be means to the great end, freedom, and never masters of the soul. Every man should therefore see to it that each day witnesses some victory over self, for selfishness is the root of all slavery, the subordination of the soul. Not until I shall have understood, conquered, and transmuted that, may I hope for full freedom in any direction of life, not until then shall I be truly a man. The price of freedom is therefore entire mastery over passion, ignorance, and misery, through the cultivation of our higher nature, through self-knowledge and service; it is individual harmony, not absorption, with God.

The first step, after the discovery that we are enslaved, is the conviction that we are of worth to the universe, the ideal of the gradual attainment of freedom through the strengthening of individuality, the possibility of entire relief from the suffering which slavery involves. Real freedom begins with the day on which one promotes individual thinking to the first rank. Be not discouraged if your thinking is crude and fragmentary at the outset. Do not hesitate because your mind is untrained and you cannot concentrate. Make

a beginning, train it by use; ask yourself persistently, Why am I here? What is my individual meaning? What does individual freedom imply? Search through your mind as if in pursuit of the way out of a labyrinth. Plunge forward through the mists that shut in upon you. Press on and find the way experimentally. For you are free in so far as you have freed the powers of thought, the powers of acting and loving from your own point of view, and the thread which shall lead you out of the labyrinth of ignorance you alone can find. Creeds, dogmas, rules, teachers, books, friends, are secondary to the particular use the soul may make of their wisdom. Everything coming into your life that is to help you must be given an individual turn. If it turns you it masters you. If your thought is the guide, you are thus far free.

Yet freedom is only a word of degrees. Your new thought shall as quickly enslave as the old, unless you are constantly on your guard. The machinery of progress should be as new as the energy which operates it. One should be more eager to keep out of ruts than to arrive at settled convictions. Do not exchange your orthodox dogmatism for the dogmatism of liberal thought. Be not dogmatic at all. Do not renounce one authority only to bow in subjection to another. Acknowledge only the authority of your own highest insight at the time, and when another time arises, let your thought reveal a corresponding progress. If your insight bids you follow the doctrine or advice of another, let it not be because of the greater strength of the other's mind, but because you have reflected upon the subject long enough so that your wisdom discovers the rationality of his. Be always a student. Do not read simply to confute or to accumulate confirmatory evidence. Let it not be said of you that you never change your views. Develop as many points of view as possible. Do not be coerced by another's intellect; own no allegiance to emotional pressure or influence. But respect individuality, both in yourself and in others; let your activity ever reveal a forward movement.

The guiding principle should be the Oriental doctrine of non-attachment. For all who are awake and ready to move with it, life is a progressive revelation, a perpetual flux. The moment you accept a belief, become the

owner of property, or accept partnership of any kind, you have sold your liberty in some degree, unless perchance you are wise enough to possess, to enjoy, or co-operate without being bound.

Are all questions to remain open, all problems to be held in solution? Yes, be continually in search of new evidence, always growing, ever hoisting anchor and casting it afresh. If you must be a specialist, approach your specialty each year from a fresh point of view. When questions arise for solution, instead of settling them in accordance with some conventional standard, question the standard itself. For, let me repeat, the wisdom of the occasion is worth more than the wisdom of the past, which it may assimilate. "Who leaves all, receives more." Every time one is called upon to act thoughtfully is none too often to re-examine the fundamental principles of conduct. "The things we now esteem fixed," says Emerson, "shall one by one detach themselves like ripe fruit from our experience, and fall....The soul looketh steadily forward, creating a world before her, leaving worlds behind her."

Is this independence of established teaching to apply even to affairs of conscience? Certainly, for no man possesses absolute truth, no two consciences precisely agree, no one is infallible. All philosophy is hypothetical. All our decisions are tentative. We are participants in a progressive experience, testing hypotheses, waiting for evidence. Do not expect consistency from us. What we say to-day expresses the enlightenment of to-day. To-morrow it may be either supplemented or contradicted. Our books are outgrown before they are published. No progressive lecturer can deliver precisely the same course of lectures a second season.

Yet because of the perpetual flux of life and consciousness, the mind continually asks the great question of the philosophic Greeks of old: What is permanent? If all is perpetual flux, shall anything abide? Is there no truth in conservatism? Are we not to preserve the type? From the point of view of our present discussion we may reply, Unless somewhat of moral and spiritual worth abides it is useless to seek to be free. Through all that flows

and passes, one element of life and consciousness persistently makes its presence known,—the soul moving toward freedom, the triumph of that part of us to which all else should be subservient, without which the great universe of God would be a disappointment indeed. That is the true type—the progressive ideal, as yet unattained. It is not therefore the flux that is important, not the creeds, organisations, authorities, relationships, which come and pass, but the soul, in whose advancement toward freedom this flux may be made an end. Let this great fact be thoroughly understood, and circumstance will assume its due place.

How is this ideal of the soul's progress and the secondary importance of passing events and external types to be applied to the present problems of society? By the recognition of the state of development, the degree of progress people have attained in the search for freedom, by applying to society the same principle one adopts in the discovery of one's own bondage, by first inculcating it as a broadly inclusive ideal, whose realisation means entire emancipation of humanity—to full political liberty, the right to full enjoyment of life and property, the equality of the sexes, the liberty of enslaved races.

All about us, day by day, we see those who have sold themselves to certain issues, to hobbies, political parties, religious creeds and dogmas. We comment upon the capitalist, the silverite, the socialist, the politician, as though he were a slave and we alone were free. But each man who has the courage to associate his name with an issue has a lesson to teach. Therefore be tolerant. If you disapprove, do everything in your power to make the world an intellectual arena. Encourage those who think differently to come forth from their subjective shells and advocate their views. If you disbelieve an hypothesis, urge it for all it is worth, that the world may learn its fallacy. Accord to every man the fullest freedom of utterance, and you need not tremble for the truth; that will preserve itself. Remember that the majority of people still prefer partisanship to universal truth, intellectual slavery and selfishness to spiritual freedom and brotherhood. Educate them to

appreciate the higher ideal. When you are tempted to condemn a man for selfishness, ask yourself if you are free, if you are really unselfish.

Yet a man may be a partisan without surrendering himself to the party he chooses; he may advocate certain theories with all the enthusiasm of one who believes his particular doctrine absolutely true. But let him become a partisan because he believes certain ideas necessary to the advancement of society, because they help maintain the balance and stimulate the progress of thought. First make sure that you are larger than your theory, that you value freedom of soul more than personal aggrandisement, then throw yourself into your chosen work with all the power at your command. For no possession is so valuable no remuneration is so great, no political power so high, that it is worth attaining if to win it you must sell your soul. Ideas, experiences which shall free the higher nature, are incomparably greater in value than things, than material power. But place ideas first, give due importance to opportunities for character-building, and you may possess what you choose, always remembering that the good which materiality may bring you is secondary to that which touches the soul. A man is truly wealthy to the degree that he is spiritually free; his silver or gold may be the heaviest bond, if he value it more highly than the possessions of the spiritual life.

If I visit a financier who thinks I have come to urge the investment or loan of his money, I find him drawn into self, conservative, and cold; whereas, upon other occasions, he is outgoing and warm. That man is hurting himself far more than by at once handing me a thousand dollars. Generosity is the heir to freedom, and the universe never deserts the man who is ready to give of himself. It is ever the spirit, the motive, that ennobles; its particular expression is often matter of insignificance. No experience is to be scorned that makes for character, and before I try to rid myself of external conditions I should be sure that they have taught their fullest lesson. The law is registered eternally in heaven, that wherever I go I am equally enslaved or free, according to the attitude of the spirit within, and no prison can hold an enlightened soul; no desert isle can grant freedom to him who is in bondage

to self. Heaven and hell are purchased by as exact a price as any article the market affords. You may interfere with the fall of an apple, but you cannot hinder the gravitation which takes me to my own, which brings my own to me if I persistently seek it.

The highest price of freedom, therefore, the price which outbids all competitors, is the calm, confident, silent endeavour of the man who understands. I need not labour to rid myself of a fear whose absurdity I have mastered, nor need I push a man away from me when I have discovered how he coerced and tricked me. Fear is always the child of ignorance, pressure the tool of the short-sighted. Sooner or later the world will reward me according as my deeds have merited. I have but to work on and wait. Every desire is a prayer, every aspiration a step toward that to which one aspires. We build or destroy our ideals by each thought, by every hope or fear, by every effort or retreat. Each moment we waste energy or direct it to advantage, and the economy of life is to learn the calm, confident method of conduct of the man who is wise, moderate, unselfish. For selfishness is waste of force; altruism is its wisest concentration. The universe is the field of choice of the one or the other, granting to each with perfect justice, with equal readiness, the fruits of our particular selection. Our trouble is forever of our own making, our slavery personally though unconsciously and ignorantly sought.

Is there reason to hope that the great world will some time be free? Assuredly, since the law is thus exact; since, as we shall see, true individual freedom is the first and most important step toward social liberty. Hope lies in education, with those who are learning to think. If, therefore, you would liberate society, aim first of all at this. Do not advocate special issues so much as any investigation, any book or teaching which shall aid man to think. If you really love humanity and truth, you would rather quicken your opponent's intellect than have him accept your views. Play the part of Socrates, and ask those questions which shall call out his best arguments. When he offers an hypothesis whose inadequacy is transparent to you, do

not ridicule it, but put him on the track of more fundamental ideas. Push him to the utmost, without discouraging, without assuming to know more than he. Is there any greater service one intellect can render another than this suggestive questioning, the taking of another tack, the stimulation of individual thinking?

By the same method, by recognition of the fact that truth is large enough to need all possible points of view, one may help one's fellow-men to steer clear of narrowness of thought, at the same time saving one's self from servitude to partial philosophies, or systems of truth. Here is a man, for example, who comes to America from the far East as an exponent of a system of philosophy. If I hold this grand ideal of truth, remembering the necessity of maintaining an open mind, what attitude do I take toward him? I reason thus: The entire universe is a revelation of God, and since it is infinitely varied, probably each of its aspects is the messenger of a special revelation, and has a particular lesson to teach. Our earth is but one among many possible planets where human beings live and think. What truths other worlds may reveal future experience alone can show. How these other revelations may affect what we now call truth this same future experience must reveal. For the present, therefore, I will accept all revelation tentatively, as at best only fragmentary, subject to modification, and probably not infallible. On this earth each nation has expressed its particular genius in terms of its own, terms which no thinker has yet fully reconciled with all other national revelations. At the utmost this particular philosopher can probably speak only for one nation, and I shall have no positive evidence that he is its true representative until I listen to other exponents of the same faith. I have reason, therefore, to expect only a temperamental phase of national truth. To this I will give unprejudiced, receptive attention, that I may learn the phase of truth especially illumined by his spirit and intellect. I will not listen as if he alone spoke truth, but, knowing that at some point he must fail, that I must be as alive to his error as to his truth. Then I will compare his doctrine with the precepts of others, urging my fellow-men to do the same.

I will not be suspicious, nor so critical that I shall miss his revelation. But I will remain free; I will not sell myself to be his disciple. In this spirit every teacher I meet shall give to me out of the store of his wisdom, and I shall lay the foundations of broadly universal philosophy.

Likewise in the Christian church, I am to recognise that as there are numberless sects, all claiming to know the truth, the utmost I can expect is a phase of truth from each. No sectarian religion is wholly true. The strength and beauty as well as the weakness and defect of its special teaching are to be found in its sectarian limitations. Let those who will, follow it as the spiritual warrior follows the Salvation Army. Their work probably lies there, and it is not for me to be intolerant. But my own thought is turned elsewhere, and my partisanship is for universal truth, for spiritual freedom. Once free from bondage to organisation, creed, and person, I cannot in the strict sense be a follower. I may and ought to be one in spirit with every religious zealot I meet, with every reformer, every man of science, with all philosophers. I may thus be a Vedantist, a Parsee, a Jain, a Christian, but more than these. I may be as fully interested in the therapeutic power of thought as the mental healer, yet avoid being a member of this particular cult. I am still an American, an Englishman, or a German, as the case may be, because of my duties to my fatherland, but only in so far as I may lend my influence to make Germany, England, or America a part of the brotherhood of the world, only because I believe in the solidarity of the race. I continue to dwell in one town or city, that I may enjoy the advantages of home, but every year I must travel to distant cities or countries, that I may outgrow local limitations. In short, I should try to become a better citizen, a closer friend, a truer patriot, more deeply religious and more broadly philosophical, while endeavouring to be each year more universal, in a higher sense a citizen of the world, a lover of all truth, the brother of all men.

That such a man will encounter opposition and be greatly misunderstood, is evident from the outset. For, in their ignorance of fuller opportunities, the greater wisdom and happiness of freedom, the majority still prefer bondage.

The chronic invalid misses his pain when he is cured, and even uncleanness possesses a charm for some people. But let a man once know freedom, and he will never again be content with bondage. It is all a question of lower and higher standards. Therefore, to help a man in his advance toward freedom, you must first put before him the ideal; he must first desire freedom. And you should not begin by undervaluing his standards. Every standard has had its place in the world, every system of government, every religion. Gently, wisely point out the higher way, that which seems to you the forward step in evolution. Urge him to experiment, to try hypotheses. All thinking is an experiment, all governments are tentative, all society a movement toward that condition in which all men shall be free. Yet the ideal shall be realised only when all experiments have been intellectually or practically tried, when all men shall be enlightened. Apply your energy where people are thinking and acting to-day. Concern yourself with the immediate experiment, and leave to unbalanced visionaries the advocacy of schemes which claim to do away with evolution. True freedom can be purchased only on the instalment plan. In its evolution there are no unbridged chasms. Therefore its wise exponent proceeds by moderation and strategy to encourage people to think.

“We possess as much freedom now as we will ever know,” said a recent exponent of a current system of thought. Then evolution has no meaning; it is futile to think and hope, and woe be to the pauper, the invalid, and the sinner! Woe to all who aspire after the spiritual life! Pessimism is true after all. Fate is really our god. And onward to ceaseless toil of dreariest repetition we go, burdened with illusory ideals, with monotonous sorrow and pain.

On the other hand, in the glad universe of evolution, with every oncoming cycle, with every experience that leads us to think, with every pulse-beat of the prayerful heart, we achieve liberty, we move forward a step in the long gradation of ever-broadening life. For, as ignorance is slavery, and knowledge freedom, man is sure to become freer in so far as he understands, even though life should involve no real advancement, but only

that perpetual play of change which continually provokes thought. We may not even assert that we are potentially as free as we are ever to be, since new potentialities may come with greater freedom of thought, fuller liberty of action. Nor is it true that the soul is eternally free, because freedom comes only with full soul-expression, with knowledge, and, therefore, power over the conditions that bind it. And who shall at this early stage in the search for liberty fully define freedom or the soul? Only he who has escaped knows what a slave he was. He only who views himself at a distance shall truly understand. Freedom, itself a progressive quantity, may be comprehended only through a progressive experience, and the soul shall be fully defined only when it is fully master. Always, then, we return to the conclusion that life is progressive, that power over it must come through personal effort, through self-understanding.

Be on the lookout, therefore, for the lines of least resistance. When Nature seeks expression for certain ideas she chooses the man who can word her thought most easily, he who is freest or most enlightened in that direction. So in all endeavour there is a line of freest activity, a way whereby we may express ourselves, a point of approach to other minds. If, therefore, you discern a common bond of sympathy or thought, you shall carry your point far more readily if you appeal to that and avoid all negative thought or refutative argument tending to call out opposition. If you feel a certain need, you may attract what you desire quickest by uttering the prayer for that which is in line with your development. That will come speedily toward you; all else will come only by severe effort. And the line of least resistance *par excellence*, in all the universe, is the line of thoughtfulness, moderate consideration, that endeavour which leaves your spirit freest, nearest to conscientious repose, most altruistic, most universal. First deliberate, then act. Discover how events are tending, then move with them, where your soul approves. Thus shall every thought be effectual. Thus shall every movement tell.

Concentrate attention and effort upon the line of work which the universe gives you to do, the phase of truth for which your life stands, in relation to the universal ideal above defined. There are circumstances in your life by which you feel bound, conditions at which you rebel. Seek the causes of these circumstances in your own nature. Think yourself free from them. Then formulate your experience, that others may profit by it and master their problems. Have confidence to believe that you have such a message for the world, that in preparing to express, and by delivering it, you will not only win freedom, but aid others in intellectual and spiritual evolution.

Provide a constantly progressive outlet for your activities. If you feel hampered by your social environment or occupation, send out a prayer for friends and opportunities which shall offer fuller scope, freer play to your mind and heart. When the conscience does not approve, when you discover that you are leading a degrading life, do not apply your energy directly to this misspent power. Seek a higher interest; gradually turn your thought elsewhere. One's force seeks a physical outlet when the intellect is inactive. Therefore quicken the intellect, and the physical force will retreat. The physical man is really seeking to free his soul. The soul is pressing from within for self-expression, and activity is aroused where the thought is focused. Regard life from this high point of view, and you will be led to seek those centres of interest which are most in accord with the spiritual nature.

Try to solve the problems of philosophy, to arrive at your own conclusions, to master the obscure points of the books you read, and occasionally to master a book so well that you could write a better treatise yourself. Ask how and why it is that some people have such power over you, while others you can hardly endure. Look back of the tendencies of the present for their historical causes and precedents, and take a broad view of their meaning. If you detect yourself in the act of becoming absorbed in another's teaching, propose other hypotheses and keep the discussion alive. Analyse your own temperament sufficiently to learn why certain experiences always bring unhappiness.

Let the deepest purpose of your life be the unceasing endeavour to seize moral and spiritual opportunities. In that secret inner world where the soul alone knows its burdens and its sorrows, the conscience sets its seal upon certain deeds as right, others as wrong, and, neglect it as one may, one cannot ignore its decisions. When questions come before it for debate, apply the criteria above suggested. Am I enslaving my soul? Does this make for progress, for the freedom of society and the universal ideal? Or am I as small and mean as my neighbour whom I condemn? By accepting this proposal shall I intrude upon my brother's rights? Will that project be granting the liberty of individuality to my wife, my sister, my mother? If not, I cannot afford to do it, for it will injure others; it will retard my own development. Thus is the inner consciousness the arbiter of that which tends toward slavery or freedom. And when you are in doubt think longer; try an intellectual experiment, asking whether this course or that best accords with your higher self.

Finer and keener grows the mind of the one who, taking this supreme opportunity of life, applies to these problems the analysis of his penetrative thought. In these days of liberty of thought, and in this free land where man is largely unhampered, limitless possibilities are opening before the progressive mind. There is much theological servitude still to be overcome. The subtleties of the conservative and the deceptions of the unbalanced can be discovered only through critically watchful thought. But dogma is already doomed, ritualism must soon follow, and if for a time the sanctities of religion are neglected, out of the extreme reaction which usually follows the glad escape from orthodoxy shall come first the intimations, then the strong ideals of a more richly spiritual thought. It is natural that those who have found freedom should be irreverent for a time. Every man who discards one belief for another is likely to throw something valuable away. But do not obstruct the course of those who are escaping. Let them think. Nothing good will be lost; neither truth nor religion will suffer. And in due season we shall see the old added to the new. Freedom shall come with their

union, and every advance shall lay the foundations of a yet richer transition to follow.

Chapter II: The New Thought

No truth so sublime but it may be trivial to-morrow in the light of new thoughts.

—EMERSON.

IT IS sometimes difficult to justify the terms in which a new sect formulates its message to the world. Its terms are apt to involve invidious distinctions, or assume novelty of doctrine, when its revelations are in large part restatements of ancient wisdom. But, however this may be, the young aspirant steadily presses forward, let purists and conservatives say what they may. Such has been the history of the term "New Thought," now the accepted appellation of a doctrine which has differentiated itself from the general theory known indiscriminately as mental science, metaphysical healing, spiritual therapeutics, mind cure, and "Christian Science"; and become the representative teaching of those who, while endeavouring to assimilate all that is good in the mental-healing movement, are not worshippers of personality, are not bound to certain books, but remain independent, and endeavour to be true to the wisdom of all ages. It is emphatically the common-sense, rational phase of the mental-healing doctrine. It is moderate in its claims, and does not deny the existence of the physical world. In fact, it stands for that phase of thought which has survived

in the struggle for existence, since the time when the mind cure, owing to its irrationalities and abstractions, was called the "Boston craze." As such it is worthy of the recognition of those who found neither sense nor reason in its predecessor. I will therefore give a brief outline of its teaching, and in later chapters point out certain directions in which the new faith may become more broadly scientific and philosophical. I undertake this discussion as an independent truth-seeker, not as a mere follower of the New Thought, but as one who believes the doctrine has made an important contribution to the knowledge and practice, the life and thought, of our time.

What, then, is the New Thought, and what is the secret of its rapid development? In the first place, it is both a philosophy of life and conduct and a mode of healing.¹ It is in the latter phase as a method of treating disease, that it is generally known. In fact, the converts to it are almost without exception those who have been healed of disease by the mental method, while many of its leaders are successful healers with a large and lucrative practice. But to its most ardent disciples the mode of life it inculcates is by far the larger and nobler part of the New Thought. The application of its principles to the study and cure of disease is, indeed, but one of its spheres of activity. It aims to be as broad and inclusive as life itself, to consider all the problems which our rich social and intellectual life suggests. In order rightly to estimate, or even comprehend it, it is necessary to approach the new faith in the light of the age out of whose demands and complexities, eccentricities and conflicts, it has grown.

Our age is, first of all, the age of mechanical invention and discovery, of painstaking and minute inquiry into the constitution, order, and development of nature. It finds external causes for things so far as it can; while the new science, physiological psychology, looks upon the mind as entirely dependent upon this external or physical constitution of things. The

1. The theory of healing I have considered in a separate volume, *Methods and Problems of Spiritual Healing*, 1899.

scientific theory of disease is also largely physical, and the multiplication of names for our ills has been accompanied by a corresponding development of physical methods of cure.

Against all this materialism of the age, the New Thought is a revolt. The interest centres almost entirely in and about the inner world. It is in large part an attempt to bring the inner or mental world into due prominence, as the seat of the thought forces which shape our outer life, the assembling point of impressions and mental influences coming from other minds. It is also particularly concerned with the effect or influence of mind upon the body, since it is primarily as a healing or curative principle that the laws of thought-influence are studied. In a word, it is a philosophy of spiritual freedom.

From the historical point of view, the New Thought bears closest resemblance to philosophical idealism. It is, in truth, rather a phase of the great transcendental movement of the century than a separate philosophy. None of the metaphysical principles on which it rests are new. They can be paralleled by quotations from the mysticism of India, by the teachings of Plato and Neo-Platonism, and by the doctrines of Kant and Post-Kantian idealism. Its novelty consists rather in the minute persistence with which its followers have applied well-known principles in fields untried before. In order rightly to place it in relation to other systems of thought, we have only to recollect what the transcendental movement is, then pass on to a consideration of its specific application.

As used by Kant,² the term "transcendental" was applied to the philosophy which investigates and unifies the principles by which we know; that is, the faculties in us which make knowledge, and therefore experience, possible. Kant believed in a "beyond," in "things in themselves," or realities lying beyond or transcending the phenomena of mind and nature, and which the forms of our intuition enable us to perceive in terms of space and time.

2. *The Critique of Pure Reason*.

For him, the matter of supreme importance in human life was the moral law, through the realisation of which, guided by his famous "categorical imperative," we were to rise to the blessedness of life with God. If ever anyone believed in freedom, in a reality lying beyond the realm of sense, and a law of righteousness finding its emphasis in the inner world, it was this heroic moral figure, the genius and recluse of Königsberg.

Into the subtleties of Kant's critical philosophy, however, we must not now enter, for our present interest lies rather with its later developments and its popularisation in Europe and America. Foremost among exponents of the popular type, perhaps, stands the name of Ralph Waldo Emerson. For the followers of the New Thought, Emerson has, from the first, been the great prophet, and to a lover of Emerson one need only say that the New Thought is an application of Emersonian philosophy to daily life and the problems of health and disease. Indeed, if one would read Emerson thoroughly and deeply, asking again and again how his wisdom is to be applied to actual life, one might easily dispense with a greater part of the literature of the New Thought, and be the gainer thereby, for many writers have simply restated clumsily what he had already put gracefully.

Yet unless their attention were specially called to it, the majority would miss just that application in which the life of the New Thought consists. The Unitarians, since the days of Channing and Parker, have been followers of the transcendental movement, and have believed most faithfully in the reality of the inner world, in its right of judgment, and the ability of the soul to turn directly to the source of all inspiration without the mediation of external authority or a propitiating Saviour. Still, they have not carried the doctrine far enough to heal and transcend disease, and many to-day, strange to relate, are yet hostile to this new claimant of public attention.

The mystics of the East have long known the same great truths. So have the great philosophers of all ages. But their interest has centred upon

theoretical problems. It remained for a man³ unlearned in the wisdom of the ages to make this new application, and to take a stand entirely opposed to that of doctors and materialists alike. Once started in their career as searchers for practical truth in the inner world, the New Thought pioneers carried forward their investigations until they had developed a complete philosophy of our mental life.

The fundamental principle of the philosophy thus espoused is the belief that the reality lying beyond phenomena is ultimate spiritual Being, absolute Self, or omniscient Life. Ultimate Being or Spirit is transcendent only so far as it lies beyond our ken, beyond the limits of finite existence. It is not unknowable, but in this its highest aspect is unknown because of its infinite or boundless selfhood. As known by us, Being is the living God, the source of the tendencies which stream through us, and make for righteousness; the resident force of nature and of cosmic evolution, the life of the universe at large. Spirit thus becomes God the Father, the object of our worship, the immediate basis of help in every spiritual moment, yes, in the experience of healing itself. "In him we live and move and have our being." In him is the particular well-spring of help for each individual soul,—the supreme Reality, the eternal Beauty, the immortal Love. Here is the central principle, and it is in the faithfulness with which they have developed and applied this truth of truths that the followers of the New Thought have given the philosophy its right to be called "new."

Next in order of importance comes the statement that man, or the real self, is not to be identified with these physical features we see. The real man is the soul: invisible, immortal, spiritual, potentially free; an original individuation of ultimate Being, existing in the environment of Being's outgoing life, or the immanent Spirit. The soul is deemed the possessor of faculties not limited by matter,—of senses other than physical. It is a centre of creative activity; by birthright, at least, master of the body through which it expresses itself

3. See *The Philosophy of P. P. Quimby*, by A. G. Dresser. Geo. H. Ellis. Boston, 1895.

and gains experience. Moreover, it differs in each of us, and in each a divine purpose is revealed. We are not sparks sent off by some celestial flint, soon to go out or expire. Nor are we like rivers flowing down, to be absorbed in the sea. We are emphatically just ourselves. Experience, if thoughtfully met, adds to, it does not take from, individuality.

Distinct individuality thus being one of the goals of our existence, its discovery, preservation, and development should be one of the chief aims of daily conduct. Here, in fact, is one of the strongest doctrines of the New Thought, which insists on self-reliance, clear-cut and positive individual thinking, with all the vigour which even an Emerson could command. One is urged again and again to renew one's ideal, to keep it ever before the mind as a sort of permanent "auto-suggestion." "For what we believe, we create." The practice of "ideal suggestion"⁴ thus becomes almost the keynote of New Thought practice. It is vigorous, direct, persistent, in its affirmations and claims. It has ransacked the Christian Bible, the scriptures and literature of all nations, in search of brief, specific statements tending to enforce ideals and make them habits of life. I am not saying that it has always wisely chosen, nor am I defending the abstract assertions and denials which many have made. I am only setting forth the principle, the method, which at once appeals to the mind as true. "The part of wisdom as well as of courage," says Professor James, "is to believe what is in the line of your needs, for only by such belief is the need fulfilled."

Since the New Thought believes in the realities of the inner world—that Spirit is supreme, the soul rightfully master, and the worth of the individual greater than that of any external thing,—it follows that it fully accepts the idealistic theory of the universe. Now, philosophic idealism does not, as popularly believed, assert that there is no physical universe, but that it is grounded in the idea or intelligence of God. Physical nature

4. See *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photography*, by Henry Wood. Boston: Lee and Shepard.

is, therefore, subordinate to the metaphysical realm. It springs from Spirit; it is the manifestation of the Spirit's will, and the laws of the Spirit dominate its activity. Natural phenomena come and go, while their laws, which are spiritual and eternal, abide. Nature is not an existence out there by herself, apart from all observers, but is dependent upon invisible Being for all that appears real and stable in itself. It is not, in our correct thinking, to be dissociated either from the mind of God who created it or from the mind of man who perceives it. We cannot project ourselves outside ourselves to see what nature is, apart from our percipient organism, nor can we tear nature from God to view it separate from its basis. As "Idealism sees the world in God," so we can hope to understand it aright only so far as we trace out the divine details.

It follows that if the soul, or spiritual individual, is the most real portion of man, consciousness, or mind, is fundamental to, and more real than, the physical organism of which the soul is thereby made aware. Here, again, the New Thought is a close follower of philosophical idealism, which always takes its start with consciousness as the most assured fact.

That this is a true statement of the case at once becomes evident if we try to look beyond the present state of consciousness. What is the one phase of your life from which you can never escape? You can only reply, consciousness. All you have experienced in or of the world is that of which you are conscious. A thousand and one things may exist in the great world which as yet have no place in your life because consciousness of their presence has not been awakened. Your world is as large only as your consciousness makes it. You know of the existence of your immediate physical environment through the physical sensations produced in you. Into your mental world come the witnesses of the life about you. Out of your mental world proceed the conscious activities which enable you to play a part in the realms of nature and society. God, the individuals and worlds which reveal him, meet in your consciousness to constitute your universe. Self-consciousness is fundamental to that in you which enables you to

choose, to will, and to react; thus everywhere mind, and naught but mind, proves to be fundamental in all experience, although consciousness itself implies a spiritual reality or ego-hood, in order to be itself fundamental to all else that the universe holds.

For the New Thought, therefore, the mind is that which receives impressions both from within and from without, from nature and God, from the soul and from the minds of others. It is the conscious medium which unites the soul with the world. It is not itself the active agent,—activity is the right of the soul. It is by no means changeless, but is kept alive by the wealth of sensations from without and the stream of reactions from within. It is the vehicle of volition and deed, the transforming medium of thought, that, of course, with which we are in immediate contact in the endeavour to effect changes in the outer world.

If now we ask what is the law whereby ideas on the one hand, and sensations on the other, become effectual in their impression upon the mind, the answer clearly is, attention. The soul sits in contemplation of the great stream of life, until an idea comes before it which is especially interesting; precisely as in walking along a crowded thoroughfare one passes a sea of faces without giving more thought to one than to another until one face stands out above the rest, and one almost forgets that other people are present. That face is looked at, and afterwards mentally recalled, until it makes an impression upon the mind. In the same way an engaging idea is held in thought long enough to be added to the store of ideas which supply the data of thought. An idea must interest the mind, it must win attention, or it will pass ineffectively by, though it be supported by the most strenuously logical argument. Therefore, if you would impress an ideal upon the mind, give yourself to the realisation of its meaning for a sufficient length of time fully to grasp and hold it.

To attain the ability thus effectively to direct the mind, the New Thought advises the practice of concentration, or, in other words, the attainment of self-control. One is to learn to marshal the tendencies of the mind, so that

they may be held together as a unit by the chosen ideal. To this end, one should set apart times for silent meditation, by one's self, preferably in a room where the surroundings are favourable to spiritual thought. In New Thought terms this is called "entering the silence." As this is one of the most marked practices of the new faith, we must bear its meaning constantly in mind in the endeavour to grasp the doctrine as a whole.

As the object of entering the silence is the development of spiritual poise, which shall in turn lead to spiritual self-control and the ability wisely to direct one's thought forces, the mind should of course concern itself with spiritual thoughts. It is here that the doctrine of the immanent Spirit comes into play. One is to disconnect the thought, so far as possible, from the external world, and, selecting some of the many ideal suggestions making toward that end, turn the thought upon the soul, and consider its relationship with Spirit. The definite thought or suggestion is the means to the higher end of actual apprehension of the Spirit, of immediate communion with the Father. It serves as a magnetic centre, gradually to draw to it the diffused powers of thought until they shall be focused in the spiritual direction. Then one is to think more and more of the Spirit, and less of the words, assimilating from its living presence, and at the same time stamping upon the concentrated mind the clear-cut outlines of the individual ideal. This consciousness is to be maintained until one feels a spirit of repose or restfulness, a quiet, gentle state of mind tending to calm the whole life. Then one should turn once more to the marching world of beings and things, bearing with one this spirit of restfulness and peace.

That such experiences gradually bring about changes in the outer life, everyone can testify who has faithfully practised this method. That they have even wrought marvellous transformations upon nervous and finely organised individuals, many, too, can bear witness. The development of this method of meditation seems, indeed, a godsend in these days when the worrying, nervous spirit of the age presses upon our peace with such

insistence. Surely the acquisition of this practice is alone sufficient to repay those who investigate the New Thought.

We have not, however, considered how and why these ideals of individuality and spiritual self-control, these moments of silence and divine communion, can become permanent possessions. This is due, says the New Thought, to the subconscious mind. The conscious state, whether that of sensation, intellection, or volition, passivity, definite thought, or activity, is not the whole mind or self. There is a deeper, hidden part of us, beneath the domain of consciousness, the "subliminal self," as F. W. H. Meyers terms it. This self never sleeps, but is ever engaged in turning and re-turning our ideas. Here is the great storehouse of ideas, and here our thoughts are gathered, to come later to consciousness as fully developed conceptions.

We all have evidence of this subconscious working, in the fact that ideas stay with us until they become ripened convictions. We decide to do a thing, then forget about it. But the subconscious self reminds us. We desire to write a discourse upon a certain theme, and the subconscious mind collects all ideas bearing upon it from the pigeon-holes of thought. We try to forget unpleasant experiences and sins, but the ever-watchful self will not permit them to fall into oblivion until they have been recalled a sufficient number of times to teach their full lesson. Yet this same subconsciousness which insists that we learn our moral lessons is, upon other occasions, our willing servant. It receives the decisive ideal suggestions as the words of one whose will is law, thereupon proceeding to execute the commands as rapidly as the laws which govern the formation of habit shall permit. For here again, it is attention which governs, that which interests, absorbs, makes a dynamic impression. It is only a question of time when, after due persistence and patience, the subconscious mind shall implicitly yield to the commands of the actively conscious self.

Our next point is to consider how a suggestion given to the mind transforms itself into the phenomena of physical forms. Here, of course, the New Thought is still a pioneer in a partly unknown realm. But since a

large part of human knowledge is in reality composed of hypotheses, we may well be as bold as our fellows and plunge hopefully into the uncertain realm. All that is needed, say the physicists, to construct the world is matter and motion. Surely, we are made aware of the physical world through its varied motions. A live, moving world could alone make itself known, and a live mind could alone know it. Life or motion, activity of some sort, we find, therefore, common to both mind and matter. The activity of the mind may, indeed, be deemed simply an infinitely finer, and therefore invisible, mode of motion of the one Life or Spirit, of which matter is the most objective, and, therefore, the coarser mode of motion.⁵

Starting with some inert substance such as a rock, we have first its definite outline, made such as it is by the balance of forces pressing from within it and weighing upon it. If we bring the body in contact with the rock, force meets force, and we have the sensation of resistance. This sensation is associated with the pressure of bones and muscles, running back to a feeling of effort as we try to move the rock. It originates a nerve vibration running to the brain, giving rise there to molecular motion, and finally the coarser vibration of the brain is transmuted into the finer motion of conscious sensation. The sensation is perceived and judged according to our state of development, finally giving rise to what we call an idea.

Let us now retrace the process. An idea arises in consciousness which arouses interest or attention. It is an objective need or want, and we choose or will to attain it. We then consider what actions are necessary to procure it, and formulate these actions into a mental picture or motor image. Then, by a mysterious process, we set the wheels in motion, or, in other words, exert ourselves, make a move, make an effort whose activity is translated into molecular motion, nerve-vibration, the feeling that we are contracting the muscles, and finally into a motion of arms and legs toward the desired object. Thus we have completed the circuit. In general terms, we can say

5. I shall elaborate this thought in the following chapter.

that the idea passes, through a gradual transition, into the physical act and back again to the idea. Thus is explained, in a measure at least, the secret of interchange between the mental world and the physical.

As the inception of motion, or its beginning in a conscious affirmation, is the central interest for the New Thought, we must again turn our attention to the development of the inner world. From the New Thought point of view, causation is always mental. Matter receives the impress of thought; it does not originate it, nor does it give rise to its changes. Yet it does not follow that I always consciously cause either my happiness or misery, my health or disease; for my subconscious mind is readily amenable to suggestion. When, for example, one describes a painful sensation to a physician, and receives, in return, an account of the diseases into which the trouble is likely to develop, the physician's description may have an effect upon the mind scarcely suspected at the time. One's whole habit of life, if one has lived under the old thought, has a tendency to create disease, if once the sensation be allowed to interest the attention and elicit fear. That "fear is the backbone of disease" the disciples of the New Thought have no question. In order fully to account for disease, one must, therefore, search deeply into the habits of life of the person suffering from it.

Accordingly, real entrance into the precincts of the New Thought world means that one shall pass through a long period of self-revelation, or coming to consciousness of that which has hampered, oppressed, sickened, and enslaved the spirit.

Consider for a moment the habits of life into which we are born. There are certain social conventions or customs and alleged requirements, there is a theological bias, a general view of the world, a theory of sin and salvation, of heaven and a future state, and some conception of a God, perhaps that of a great man reigning on a throne. There are conservative ideas in regard to our early training, our education, marriage, and occupation in life. Following close upon this, there is a long series of anticipations, namely, that we shall suffer certain children's diseases, diseases of middle life, and of old age;

the thought that we shall grow old, lose our faculties, and again become childlike, while crowning all is the fear of death. Then there is a long line of particular fears and trouble-bearing expectations, such, for example, as ideas associated with certain articles of food, the dread of the east wind, the terrors of hot weather, the aches and pains associated with cold weather, the fear of catching cold if one sits in a draught, the coming of hay-fever upon the 14th of August in the middle of the day, and so on through a long list of fears, dreads, worriments, anxieties, anticipations, expectations, pessimisms, morbidities, and the whole ghostly train of fateful shapes which our fellow-men, and especially physicians, are ready to help us conjure up, an array worthy to rank with Bradley's "unearthly ballet of bloodless categories."

Yet this is not all. This vast army is swelled by innumerable volunteers from daily life,—the fear of accident, the possibility of calamity, the loss of property, the chance of robbery, of fire, or the outbreak of war. And it is not deemed sufficient to fear for ourselves. When a friend is taken ill, we must forthwith fear the worst and apprehend death. If one meets with sorrow, we must console by rehearsing all the calamities of a similar nature we can think of. If one whom we greet upon the street looks ill, we should immediately say, "How ill you look!" Sympathy means to enter into and increase another's suffering by dwelling upon it. When we call upon a friend, we are to call up the pictures of the suffering we have witnessed, and furnish forth the most delectable tale of our own woes. If we are a professional nurse, it should be our special province to rehearse the sufferings of those whom we have attended in the past, and this, too, in the presence of the one whom we are at present attending.

Very true, says the critic, but man has accustomed himself to fear all this because it is actually present in life. Yet to think about it, dwell upon it, rehearse the details, and call up the mental pictures, is precisely the way for such misery to continue. To open the mind to it is to invite it. We create what we expect. Our thought ought rather to be turned the other way, and even though calamity and disease may come, we should take every means,

both mental and physical, to prevent their coming. The office of the New Thought is, therefore, to create an entirely different habit of mind, leading in the hopeful direction.

First, we are to become accustomed to the way of thinking about God and the soul which I have already suggested as the starting-point of the New Thought. We are to give fullest play to hope. We are to look for the good in people, and talk about pleasant, helpful events when we meet them. Sensational news and the details of crime and accidents are to have place neither in our thought nor in our conversation. We are to be duly cautious, but never to expect accidents. Prudence in the care of the body is emphasised as a needed principle by the common-sense wing of the New Thought, while many believe in systematic exercise for the body. We are to enjoy a little fresh air, if we like, without deeming it poison-crammed. We are entirely to disabuse the mind of the belief that a certain round of diseases must come to us. We should anticipate good health, strength, happiness, an abundance of physical comfort, freshened faculties, an ever-young spirit, being careful, of course, to adapt the general conduct toward that end. We should expect such salvation, such a future or heaven, as our own deeds prepare for us and therefore invite. We may confidently believe that money, friends, opportunities to do good, marriage, whatever the heart longs for, will come as rapidly as we deserve. In a word, we should be generally, definitely, hourly, always optimistic, hopeful, receptive to the good.

Our wiser mental life should not, however, end here, for we have the work to undo of all the gossips, meddlers, bad newsmongers, pessimists, and trouble-breeders of the world. When we think of people, whether foes or friends, we are to hold only good thoughts concerning them. When we speak to them, we are to express that which shall help them out of trouble, not, through wrong sympathy, keep them in it. We are to carry with us an atmosphere of hope and cheer, helping them to become calmer, less nervous, free from worry. We are to send out thoughts of the All-good whenever we think of humanity. We are to live in and for the good, think it,

be it, do it, spread it abroad, invest our whole presence with its beauty and love.

With this I surely have said enough to show that the search for mental causes means nothing less than a ransacking of one's nature, resulting in a complete change of front. One must be sufficiently self-conscious to observe the thought in the act of going forth in the old direction, inhibit it, and send out the New Thought instead. If, for example, a slightly painful sensation comes before your consciousness, as if to discover whether you are willing to harbour it or not, instead of naming and fearing that it may lead into disease, instead of shutting your consciousness into it, open out and away from it, as matter of insignificance, and permit no doubt or fear to mingle with it. Remember that the continuance of a sensation in the mind depends upon the attention bestowed upon it. Many a disciple of the new faith has caught himself in the inceptive stage of what would, under the old thought, have led to some well-known disease, but, understanding the power of the direction of mind, has given the tendency the other turn, and thus escaped the dread trouble.

That we may thus seize and inhibit, or redirect our thoughts in their first stages, when they may turn either toward fear or toward hope, into fear or out of it, is a fact which anyone may prove, and, proving it, learn to arrest undesirable thoughts before they have gone out to play mischief with our sensations. Throughout the day, ideas and emotions present themselves in this twofold form. The temptation to distrust comes side by side with the prompting to believe in the goodness of another. Hate and love come thus linked and opposed, also blame and charity, fault-finding and appreciation, despair and courage, weakness and strength, lower self and higher self, personality and impersonality, or, to put it more pointedly still, selfishness and altruism. We may enter into the one or the other, if we will—the choice is ours—and, entering, we reap the consequences of our choice.

This leads us to a yet deeper phase of the New Thought; namely, the close association between our moral and spiritual natures and the problem of

disease. Ultimately, from this point of view, one is not free from disease until one is free from self. This far-delving into the constitution of our moods has, therefore, a much deeper significance than the mere healing of the body. It means the purification of mind and heart as well—the perfecting of character, the development of the spiritual life.

Is this not Christianity? Yes. It is Jesus', doctrine shorn of the dogmas of the church, which the liberal exponents of the New Thought do not accept. It is practical Christian teaching during long ages neglected by the church; namely, the connection between sin and sickness, the application of Christian doctrine to the healing of disease. All, in fact, that the New Thought followers ask is, that one live the Christ-life, and, living it, apply it in such detail that the whole being shall respond, physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. Yet the New Thought has from the first been compelled to meet the prejudice of the church, which thereby gives the lie to its own doctrine. Its dogmatic claim that the day of miracles is past is no longer accepted, for it is believed that Jesus' works can be reproduced by those who understand the law that governed them. The New Thought, therefore, traces its descent from the Christianity of Jesus, elaborated and aided by the marvellous development of the practical psychology of to-day.

Yet, because of this close connection with Christianity, the student of the New Thought must be the more careful. For narrowness in religion is deemed one of the causes of disease, since it narrows the life, compresses and draws in the tissues. Breadth of thought is one of the essentials of admission to the realm of the larger hope and health. It is not strange, then, to see its followers advocating the brotherhood of man and universal religion, nor to see them, at Greenacre and other centres of thought, where the Vedanta philosophy has recently had a hearing, listening to all phases of spiritual and metaphysical doctrine.

The most laudable phase of the New Thought is, in fact, the broad sympathy, the social life, which it inculcates. Many of its advocates really live the theory they teach, even carrying it so far as constantly to call the outsider's attention

to his lapses into pessimistic thought. They believe implicitly in the All-good. "All is good" is, in fact, the motto of many. Whatever defects this statement may have, when taken universally, or when applied to the problems of ethics, it is sound, at least, in intent; namely, the belief that everything that comes is in some measure good. It is our part to be awake to the good, and think only of that. In the endeavour to be true to this ideal, the New Thought followers have shown a most beautiful spirit.

It is clear, therefore, that if the New Thought be a sovereign remedy for all ills, even evil itself, it must strike deep into the life. It is, in a word, the remedy of understanding. "Know thyself," for self-knowledge reveals that quality or tendency in us, in mind, doctrine, or temperament, which is still undeveloped, still hostile to the Spirit, still trouble-bearing and selfish. "The explanation is the cure"—the explanation of how we have stood in our own light and created misery and disease out of that which wisdom would have enabled us to turn into its opposite.

Hence has gone out the report that disease is deemed by New Thought advocates only "an error of the mind." This may be true of the superficial but not of the common-sense disciples, who frankly admit the physical conditions of disease, but say that it became disease because of a wrong attitude toward it—to ignorance and the trouble-making habits of life and thought of which I have spoken. More truly, disease is a product of our way of living, physically as well as mentally, and must be driven from the world by wiser life.

If you are to apply New Thought principles when you are in trouble or disease, consider what your life is, how your disposition colours conduct, how habit binds, how false belief limits, and fear enslaves. Penetrate even to the issuing point of thought, and by calm self-control learn to send out only wise ideas. Cultivate hope and the love of the beautiful. Whenever there is an alternative, lean toward the optimistic side, and cast the balance for all that is uplifting, outgoing, progressive.

As an aid to this process, the New Thought suggests, besides the use of ideal suggestions, the formation of clear-cut mental pictures of ourselves as we ought to be, in permanent health. Since haunting mental pictures are potent causes of disease,—such, for example, as the memory of death-bed scenes, accidents, scenes of intense suffering, and the like,—mental pictures of an opposite character are naturally helpful and health-giving. Some, indeed, go so far as to affirm that these ideal pictures are real now, while the sad pictures are illusory. But the common-sense believers regard them rather as incentives to action, ideas which may be gradually realised according to the laws of evolution; that is, they are deemed true of the soul now, and may slowly become true of the body.

The value, the potency of ideals, as I have tried to show, is the great practical truth on which the New Thought most strongly insists,—the development, namely, from within outward, from small to great: first, the prompting, the desire or aspiration; then the definite idea or thought-seed, the vision, mental picture, image held in mind; next, the period of regeneration, change, conflict, disturbance, opposition; then the accelerated period of growth; and, finally, the accomplishment in the outer world. Is not this the record of all mental growth, the power of mind that lifts the world, finally carrying everything before it? Is there any limit to accomplishment by this patient method of evolution?

Il faut reculer, pour mieux sauter, says the proverb. Study the past to see how the present has grown out of it. Study the present to learn its tendencies, to learn where to cast your vote. Then formulate your ideal and hold fast to it till it does its work. Life thus becomes a definite science. What I wish to emphasise above all, in this exposition of the New Thought, is the fact that it can become, that it is, in part, already a science. At the outset, I defined it as partly a reaction from the extreme physical science of the day. Reactions from extremes are apt to be extreme. But the balance is now rapidly being attained. That the New Thought philosophy contains a wealth of practical truth scarcely realised by its own disciples must be clear from

the foregoing. The possibilities have only begun to be sounded; no one yet knows the limits of dynamic thought. Already the New Thought practice has led many a person to study the profounder problems of exact metaphysics. Everywhere it has attracted medical attention and caused the physician to think that he, too, must study mental influence and apply the mental cure. Slowly, but surely, it is leaving its impress upon the church; while many who once opposed it now preach the doctrine from their pulpits. And the time must come when it shall win universal attention and prompt the investigation of followers of exact science.

I do not, however, wish to lose sight, in this discussion, of the eminently practical and spiritual side of the New Thought. Perhaps I can best suggest its more spiritual phase by a brief comparison with other schemes of thought. I have already said that it is in practical accord with Christianity. Is it in harmony with Spiritualism? So far as its belief in the soul is concerned, yes. But from the mental healer's point of view, spiritual help comes directly from the great All-spirit, instead of from disembodied or advanced souls. A few healers, it is true, believe in obsession by spirits, and many; no doubt, believe we can interchange thoughts with spirits; for the possibility of thought transference is universally accepted among followers of the New Thought. But possible relationship with spirits is kept in the background. The cause of trouble is found in the individual. Therefore in the individual must be found the pathway of escape. Mediumship generally means sacrifice of individuality, and is of course to be avoided. Moreover, there is much that is unhealthy, morbid, and weakening in psychic experience, so-called. Therefore the New Thought sage says, Keep clear of them.

Is the New Thought similar to Theosophy? In many respects, and one will find many New Thought doctrines advocated in the works of the leading Theosophists. Yet there are essential differences which radically separate the two systems. While many disciples of the New Thought are believers in reincarnation, by far the larger number are not, and that doctrine is an inseparable part of Theosophy. The New Thought does not adopt the

proselyting methods of Theosophy. It knows nothing about "elementals," or the seven planes; nor does it speak authoritatively of man's past existence. It has no brotherhood, no authorities, no inner or secret circle; and is far too young to have "mahatmas." Its emphasis is rather upon present, individual experience, out of which may grow a nobler spiritual life; and while it is friendly to Theosophy, it prefers to follow its own independent course.

It is also independent of the faith-healing movement since it depends rather upon accurate knowledge of law and the precise conditions of thought-influence and thought-control.

It is widely different from "Christian Science," so-called. It has no pope, no authoritative textbook, no church, and no rigid organisation. It denies neither the existence of matter nor the physical aspects of disease; but seeks to understand them, to free the soul from bondage to sense, and especially from such bondage as Christian Scientists are under with respect to their strange teacher. Freedom is the corner-stone of its temple. It seeks an alliance with all common-sense therapeutics and all practical wisdom. It worships principles, not personalities, and regards all deifying fanaticism as so much waste of force. It is accordingly moderate in its claims, and modest in the statement of its results. Its growth has been temporarily impeded by its close connection with Christian Science, and it has suffered from the confusion of thought by which the public has persistently classed all mental-healing systems as one. But its greatest triumphs are yet to come, and in the end it can only profit by its unfortunate associations.⁶

How far does the New Thought differ from the transcendental philosophy to which, as I have said, its metaphysical principles are closely allied? In not being concerned so much with truth for its own sake, not so much with speculative as with practical truth. Its advocates do not usually care for logical deduction. They do not trace out their theory of the divine nature

6. For an historical statement of the development of mental healing in its relation to Christian Science, see *The True History of Mental Science*, by J. A. Dresser. Geo. H. Ellis, Boston, new edition, 1899.

far enough to see that it is incompatible with the Swami's Absolute, or to discover its relationship to the Hegelian Absolute. Nor do they take note of the ethical philosophy implied in their belief in freedom, and its entire negation of the doctrine of fate, so widely held in the Orient. It matters not to them that physiological psychology implies that man has no soul. For them, man is this free, active individual soul which their own practice discovers and leads them to believe in, and God is ever-present Spirit. They might win wider attention among thinking people if they did thus delve into exact science. But, meanwhile, they are content to labour and to wait, leaving to the critic the opportunity squarely and sharply to define these issues. Since, then, it is the Spirit on which they lay stress, in the spirit we must meet them, and at least, before we pass negative judgment, make sure we apprehend their method and motive.

The spirit of the New Thought is "love of the best," love for the good, the hopeful, and restful. Into the deep precincts of the inner world it goes, in search of the heart of life. There it seeks communion with the Highest. There it seeks to be renewed and strengthened. Out from the sanctuary within it proceeds, carrying its messages of comfort, its word of hope and help. He who would enter there in very truth must remove the sandals of self. He who enters will find life's opportunities increased a thousandfold.

Chapter III: The Philosophy of Activity

We are taught by great actions that the universe is the property of every individual in it.

—Emerson.

OUR INQUIRY into the scope and meaning of freedom has now brought us face to face with a fundamental issue. We have traced the heart's deepest desire to the soul's longing for full self-expression, for spiritual power, love, service. We have found that freedom is progressive and becomes the characteristic of the man who not only gives himself to the world, but who knows the world through and through, even to the minute knowledge of mental influence which is the finest contribution of the New Thought. We have considered certain methods for the attainment of freedom—from circumstance, from dogmatic theology, doctors, priests, dominating personalities; from disease, fear, ignorance, habit, and self. And this knowledge brings satisfaction until we delve more deeply into the problems of psychology, philosophy, and sociology, and ask, Has freedom a real basis? Is it a part of the Cosmos? Is there truly a centre of spiritual self-activity within?

Otherwise stated, the issue lies between individualism, socialism, and pantheism; between fate and freedom, thought and activity. We make our advance into the territory of these ideas when we ask, How shall the individual adapt himself to his physical environment, his social surroundings, and to the divine creative activity? The question is a large one, and involves all the living issues in the philosophical world of to-day. We must, then, approach it from many points of view, with the hope that before the volume is finished we may at least agree upon a wise tentative attitude which shall find room for all the demands of our nature.

If, while we are searching for this broadly inclusive point of view, we ask, In what sense may life as a whole be said to possess a meaning? all philosophers would at least agree in expecting the universe to be rational. In terms of the Hegelian philosophy, "whatever is real, is rational." If our consciousness, our life, our freedom, even our spiritual vision, is real, it is also rational; it is capable of being rationalised. There may be much in our spiritual life that is, as yet, real only for feeling. But when it becomes the subject of thought, it must conform to the standards of thought and take its place in a rational system.

The philosopher asks, Why does this phase of life exist? What is its purposive or moral significance? He asks to know enough about life's mystery—even the dark problems of slavery, sin, and degradation—to enable him to justify or explain the conditions of existence as we find it, so that no sensible question could be propounded which he would be unable rationally to answer. If he did not believe it possible thus to assign reasons for things, to systematise or unify all knowledge in accordance with a universally valid principle, the philosophic task would obviously be absurd. And the one test which the rationalist persistently applies to alleged explanations of life, for example, pantheism or fatalism, is this, Do they really explain? Or, if not, what branch of science, what aspect of our nature, remains unsatisfied?

Here, then, is a criterion which will be of great assistance to us. Usually that part of our nature which is dissatisfied with a pantheistic or fatalistic scheme

is the moral or spiritual self, which wills to triumph, to play an individual part in universal evolution. Or, to put it more clearly, I think all would agree that human existence has no satisfactory meaning unless the soul is self-active, an agent, with probabilities of success in the realisation of ideals. For it is not a sufficient justification for all our pains and woes, to affirm that thought alone is the purpose of life.

If, in pursuit of this clue, we analyse our relationship with the world of nature we find that the fundamental physical fact is the existence of force. We live amid a surging, struggling sea of forces, conservative, evolutionary, consuming, and constructive. So far as we know, there is no evidence that force was once created, or that its sum total changes. All the evidence, examined by reason, points to its eternal existence or conservation. We do not, then, need to ask why it exists, but, What is force, and how does it act? All that is needed to account for the stupendous variety of the universe is:

- (1) Ultimate force, capable of differentiation into all these forms we perceive, holding all elements in solution;
- (2) Life, or mind to direct its differentiation, the progress of evolution to higher and higher organisms, the mineral, vegetable, animal, and mental worlds.

For it is not enough to posit the existence of blind force; the evidences of design are too strong for that. There is both motion and the power that directs it. Force works upward toward definite ends. It accomplishes, it causes to evolve, it sustains, it lives, it loves; for, ultimately, it is guided by the Spirit of God.

Yet, even when regarded as the manifestation of God, the universe would have no meaning for man if he were merely played upon by this sea of forces. The true meaning of experience is soul-growth, the development of character. Yet this ideal means nothing without the power of action. All our activities imply that we hope and believe we shall accomplish something. Yea, observation has taught us that the world is an exact system. We know from positive experience that we can not only act, but see the results of

our action coming swiftly toward us. It is futile, too, to suggest that all this may be illusion, that we only seem to act; for we can at once disprove that hypothesis. And this appeal to fact and our power over it is coming to mean more and more among philosophers.

Formerly, the universe was assumed to exist simply for thought. It was futile to appeal to feeling. But now the analysis is not for thought's sake only. The search is for a conception of reality which shall also satisfy or include feeling and volition, the factor of activity or accomplishment. Moreover, life would be the most tantalising form of imprisonment imaginable, were we doomed to be mere helpless spectators of a wealth of possibilities, were we compelled to witness our own destruction, unable to lift a finger to save or to protect. It is also clear that a God would be hard and cruel in the extreme who should create us without power of action. For why should he send us here only to torment us? Why should he create us at all, unless we are capable, each and every one, of individual activity, of original production?

The possibility of individual action I take, therefore, to be the reason for creating sentient beings; and, among them, man, as matter of fact, is found to have the fullest active power.

In other words, force acts in two ways: (1) action and reaction are equal; (2) action yields to the action of some other force. A large part of our activity is reflex, conforming to the general reflex-action type. Yet we also possess the power of inhibition, the origination of a reaction differing from that which the nerve stimulus tended to provoke. The mind redirects for ends of its own,—ends which sensation does not supply.

That which in general directs and redirects force, gives a new turn, originates tendencies, refashions, causes to evolve, is the principle of spiritual activity. Considered thus at large, it is the outgoing life of God; in ourselves, it is the soul. The nature and place of spiritual activity is therefore the central problem of the universe.

The fact that man acts is the starting-point of all sound attempts to wrest from the universe its meaning. It is true, thinkers in the past have believed that

thought was the starting-point. Modern philosophy begins with an attempt of this kind, in Descartes's famous *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). But existence of some sort is clearly prior to knowledge. It is not merely through thought that I am made aware of the existence of a real world, but also through life, action. Feeling is ultimate, immediate, universal. We cannot leap beyond it to see what lies outside. We cannot for one moment escape from it. Thought, however, tries to comprehend feeling, to account for and picture it. Yet thought can never overtake and fully grasp feeling, for the reason that feeling ever surges on to deeper, fuller experiences.

The existence of feeling implies that I act. We become aware of pain, for example, as something pressing in upon us, as force making itself felt. It meets other force, or resistance, hence the painful sensation. "Force solicits force, and force only is, in so far as it is solicited." I must act, I must be active, in order to be acted upon. I become aware of the active world of nature only so far as I, too, am a living centre of force.⁷

Professor Andrew Seth therefore suggests⁸ that the proper statement of the case is, *Ago, ergo sum* (I act, therefore I am). But even this is inadequate. Activity and consciousness are conceivably co-existent and co-eternal. It is not that we exist because we are conscious, but that we are conscious because we exist; not that we exist because we act, but that we act because we are; and we exist both because we are conscious and because we are active.

The problem of activity is, however, the vital issue among present-day psychologists. It is far more difficult to assign it to its true place than to secure due recognition for consciousness. It is therefore necessary to examine the evidence for its existence, before we can consider the field of man's activity in the universe as a whole.

7. I am using the term activity as applicable to all our states of consciousness, including those usually termed "passive"; since a state of complete inaction is impossible. See Stout, *Analytic Psychology*, vol. i., p. 168. London: Swann, Sonnenschein, & Co., 1896.

8. *Man's Place in the Cosmos*, Blackwood, Edinburgh.

Two classes of philosophers have laid violent hands upon the property of finite activity, and assumed priority of possession. The one has described the universe in terms of physical substance and force, and deemed mind a sort of flame-like accompaniment of material action. The other has insisted that it is a mere affair of omnipotent thought, while some have assumed that even the qualities of matter exist because of the characteristics which the mind gives them. It requires little reflection, however, to prove that both are partly right, and both partly wrong.

The eating away of a piece of marble by sulphuric acid has very little reference to man's thought about it, and although the result produced by food and drugs is partly dependent on his physical and mental organisms, every material substance also possesses an independent quality of its own. On the other hand, there is a vast difference between static and dynamic thought, between mere thought and thought in action. In fact, the activity of which we are conscious must be classified under at least three distinct heads:

(1) It is largely physical and is not participated in by the mind, like the consuming power of an acid, whose activity the mind merely observes.

(2) It is almost wholly mental, with at best only a recording molecular, or brain response, such as an abstract reasoning process, which has no bearing upon conduct.

(3) It is voluntary, the quickened activity resulting from the pressure from within, the dynamic mental state which we term the sense of effort; when, for example, one arouses from reverie to hasten to the relief of a person in danger, setting the entire physical machine in motion by a single thought.

An ideal, a fear, the belief in disease, or a good intention *may* eventuate in action; but it is an unpardonable confusion of ideas to neglect these distinctions. Fortunate, indeed, is it that many of our hasty thoughts, sentiments of jealousy, revenge, and madness, perish before they become objects of action. On the other hand, the central problem of the reformer is, how to persuade man to act, how to induce him to take the step from

knowing to doing. The theory that all disease is wrong thinking, and all cure right thinking, is as inadequate as the idea that it is merely an affair of germs. *Disease is disturbed action*, and only by taking account of activity in all its phases may we hope to eliminate disease from humanity. To maintain a mere process of thinking about it, of abstract affirmation or "claiming" health and perfection, is as absurd as to assert that one is walking on the street, when one is simply sitting by the window wishing one were there. All this may be a help, and temporary change may result from such a process, but not a cure, since there is a vast difference between mental treatment which brings temporary relief through therapeutic suggestion and the cure which results from *understanding*, and leads to a wiser habit of action.

Thought becomes deed only when a certain amount of resistance is overcome.⁹ The kind of thinking which moves the world is of the sort that stirs to action. It is the expression of character, which, in Professor Huxley's terms, is "a sum of tendencies to act in a certain way." A strong character is one that possesses a strong will, or that persistent power of attention which holds to a certain object until it has been actualised. "The law of love," says David Starr Jordan, "is not the abrogation of the law of struggle: it represents a better way to fight."

What, then, is an act of the volitional type? The physiological psychologist reduces the sense of effort to a muscular sense, and he finds no need of a permanent ego, or spiritual principle of activity. According to this view, "ideas go off or explode, as it were, in movements of their own accord. There is first the idea of the movement, as in contemplation, and, second, the perception of the movement as executed."¹⁰ But why is it that one out of a

9. It is important, however, to remember that the tendency of *all* ideas is to eventuate in action. "Beliefs are rules for action." In his *Psychology*, Professor James shows that there is no kind of consciousness which does not directly tend to discharge into some motor effect. The active result occurs when the opposing ideas are out of the way.

10. Andrew Seth, *Man's Place in the Cosmos*. See his able refutation of Münsterberg's theory, chapter iii. In a recent work, *Psychology and Life*, Professor Münsterberg points out the

thousand ideas leaves the stream of subjective least resistance and breaks out through the objective walls to be realised in a physical deed? In the case of the person in danger, to whose assistance one hurries from the calmer world of reverie, it is of course a prompting of the heart. Yet the prompting is not of itself sufficiently dynamic. Considered by itself, it is only an ideal or mental picture. Another equally strong idea may arise, namely, to wait and let someone else be the Good Samaritan. Or, one may fear that one's own life will be endangered by rushing to the rescue. Accordingly, one must choose, and choose quickly. It is surprising what a number of factors play a part in an apparently instantaneous decision. When the mind finally decides, it leans toward one of the alternatives. It issues an unthinkably rapid fiat: Let this be done; and, if ethical, the decision may call for victory over the greatest amount of resistance offered by any of the alternatives.

Each of the many separate actions necessary to the realisation of the chosen act has, of course, been learned by past mental effort, or volition; such, for instance, as balancing the body, descending the stairs, running. All these activities are set in motion by instantaneous processes only because the body has been trained to accomplish many acts at once. The body is relatively an inert mass to be moved, and the great miracle is that we can move it at all. We are present somewhere within its depths, whence we can seize it at greatest advantage, an advantage to be gained in its fullest sense, however, only by minutest knowledge of its interior structure and the laws which govern it as an organism.

It is important, then, to bear in mind the distinctions between the actor, the motor idea, and the physical deed accomplished. There is an enormous difference between mere thought and thought followed by action. Ideas may direct, but there is an efficient energy that performs. As Fichte pointed out, the efficient force is not in the ideas, but rests with the will of the self

limitations of physiological psychology, and accepts the doctrine that the will is a reality in itself. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 18-

that chooses them. Any number of ideas may pass through the mind without leaving their traces behind, so long as the will does not choose them as ends of action, or subjects of continuous thought. Ideas become dynamic, they become real springs of action, *when I cast the die of activity in their favour*. A thousand ideas pass ineffectively through the mind, to one that we seize and make the motor image of action. "Ideas in themselves are pale and ineffective as the shades of Homeric mythology." It is absurd to think that they marshal themselves, and that one out of a thousand "goes off"; for they stand in need of an efficient governor, or chooser. To doubt that there is such a chooser, or agent within, is really to doubt the existence of the human mind, since its essence consists in this active difference from the states it contemplates.

"Among all the errors of the human mind," says Lotze,¹¹ "it has always seemed to me the strangest that it could doubt its own existence, of which it alone has direct experience, or take it at secondhand as the product of an external Nature, which we know only indirectly, only by means of the knowledge of the very mind to which we would fain deny existence."

It is customary among physiologists to describe the mind as conditioned by its physical states. But how came it that there is a mind to be so conditioned? The question still remains, What is the mind? To leave the question here would be like describing the structure of a prison-cell as such that it permanently confined a noted prisoner, without telling who that prisoner is.

It is equally true to affirm that matter is found only in association with mind, that our knowledge of it is conditioned by mind. In any case mind is nearest us, the given conscious fact is most fundamental; it is that alone through which we know of the existence of mind, matter, or motion. The acceptance of the mind, therefore, as ultimate, fundamental, primary, volitional, dynamic, seems to be imperative, if we are to believe in our existence at all.

11. *Microcosmus*, I., bk. ii., ch. v. English translation.

“A living being is, at the very least, a centre of reaction and sensation,” says Professor Seth. When we look into the matter, we find a wealth of evidence pointing to the existence of an active spiritual principle within. We find there a self capable of grasping the thought-stream, so to speak, and extracting new ideas from it,—a self that does not contemplate in bare, passive resistlessness, but is capable of originating new feelings, of giving rise to new efforts. Moreover, it is capable of self-control, of self-denial, of a flood of emotions and states unlike anything found in nature. It possesses self-consciousness, the marvellous power of unifying a vast number of objects under a single idea; it can introspect, and possesses the same identity throughout its marvellously varied and complicated moods. It is the continuous principle of consciousness which makes possible our knowledge of the discontinuous. For the *process* of change, the disconnected, is quite different from the *consciousness* of change,¹² the spiritual principle that makes us continuously aware of it. The contrast may be stated in terms of that which is “determined from within,” and that which is “determined from without;” the self-caused change or activity of the soul; and the externally-caused change of which the soul is an observer.¹³

How the soul can preserve the same identity cannot be fully answered, because the self is never wholly given as object. But that does not disprove identity, as some have thought. Like ultimate Being, we cannot grasp it all, yet we have evidence of both its identity and its unity. We are equally unable to account for the existence of variety amid unity, in the universe as a whole.

We have to accept the existence of contrasted and varied forces in one universe as a datum or gift of experience. We cannot look back of that experience to explain it. Yet such knowledge is conceivably possible to the Being whose experience it is. Likewise, identity of soul is conceivably

12. See Green's able analysis, *The Prolegomena of Ethics*, bk. i., ch. i.

13. Stout, *Analytic Psychology*, vol. i., p. 147.

possible, back of the endlessly changing, varied, and conflicting states of the soul.

As Lotze points out,¹⁴ the same ignorance of reality everywhere besets us: "We think we know what water is, what mercury is, and yet we can assign to neither constant properties belonging to it. Both at an average temperature are fluid, both at an elevated temperature gaseous, both at a low temperature solid; but, apart altogether from temperature, what are they? We do not know, we do not even need to know, since we perceive that nowhere in the universe can either of the two substances escape from the influence of those conditions....All our definitions of real objects are hypothetical, and they never denote the thing but as that which, under different conditions, will appear under different characters....Just as impossible as to tell how things look in the dark, is it to know what the soul is, before it enters on any of the situations in which alone its life unfolds."

We do not know either pure thought or pure act, because we cannot become other than self to observe these most intimate emanations of selfhood. "Volition," says Professor Seth,¹⁵ "is the action of the subject, and, as such, it cannot be phenomenised....To ask to know the will as a presentation, is to ask to know it *as it is not*." The feeling of effort is a direct cognition; the power to originate it is original, ultimate. It would obviously be impossible to discover whether the subjective aspect of consciousness exactly corresponds to, is limited by, or conditions the brain process unless we could examine each series separately, then compare them. Our conscious control ends with the idea or motor picture; we are not aware of the cell discharge. "It is a general principle of psychology," says Professor James,¹⁶ "that consciousness deserts all processes where it can no longer be of use." According to this "principle of parsimony in consciousness, the

14. *Microcosmus*, I., bk. ii. , ch. v.

15. *Man's Place in the Cosmos*, p. 113.

16. *Psychology*, ii., pp. 496, 497, 567.

motor discharge *ought* to be devoid of sentience...The terminus of the psychological process is volition; the point to which the will is directly applied is always the idea."

All attempts to supply the connection between volition and physical act are, therefore, hypothetical; we cannot slacken the process and observe the actual effect of the motor image. We find ourselves acting before we learn to act voluntarily.¹⁷ We know that we can exert ourselves long before we try to discover what the sense of effort is. The amœba did not have to experiment to discover that it could act. Even on the supposition that atoms are partly or wholly psychic, activity must have been present prior to any subjective attempt to act, anterior to volition. On this hypothesis there is still a mysterious transition from psychosis to physical movement, and the problem remains, How have we brought about this great centralisation of psycho-physical individuals, how does each individual economically combine the two aspects? Let us, therefore, try to carry our analysis a stage farther.

One of the first scholars to propose a theory of the interchange between mind and matter was John Bovee Dods,¹⁸ whose lectures on *Electrical Psychology* attracted widespread attention in this country half a century ago. According to this theory, electricity is the creative agent of God, the ultimate energy out of which all chemical and physical forces and substances have been evolved, and by which all planetary and stellar relationships are sustained. The will of God gives direction to electricity, sets up motion, whereupon all development proceeds; and all life is maintained by the involuntary or subconscious results of the creative fiat or divine volition. By a similar process, the mind or will of man commands and uses the body through the gradual transmission from will, or mental energy, electric action, nerve vibration, and muscular contraction, to movement. *All action is*

17. See James, *Psychology*, ii. , 487.

18. *The Philosophy of Electrical Psychology*. New York: S. R. Wells, 1870.

fundamentally mental, and electricity is the agent of transfer. God does not act directly upon the physical world, but there is a gradation or transition from spirit to matter, electricity being the connecting link. The human mind does not act directly upon the body, nor does the body immediately affect the mind. The nerve current is electrical and is capable both of setting up nerve vibration on the one side, and a thought process on the other. Thus are all sensations conveyed, and here in this intermediary world all diseases or disturbances originate and are cured. Thought can call energy out of this all-containing inter-world, and through its concentration can control the voluntary functions of the body.

That there is such a gradation of forces is evident from all our knowledge of nature. Nature does not leap, but gradually passes from stage to stage by almost imperceptible degrees. One cannot draw abrupt lines between the colours of the spectrum, because there is infinite blending and shading. Distinct colours can be distinguished without discovering all the shades that unite them. We have seen that in the same way one may, by persistent introspection, discover certain definite stages in the psycho-physical process, although the intermediary stages, from sensation to perception, and from perception to thought, utterly elude the subtlest analysis.

On the above hypothesis there is no real chasm between mind and matter, but matter in motion and mind in action owe their energy to spirit. Spirit is not a vague, unsubstantial somewhat; it is the ultimate basis of all substance; its activity is, if you like, the finest wave motion. The two aspects of life which we have been considering, consciousness and activity, are two aspects of spirit. As an acute philosopher puts it,¹⁹ "spirit is the only thing that can make effort or exert intrinsic power." As a partaker of spirit, man is a "creative first cause"; that is, he "begins and effects changes."

The soul, or spiritual principle in us, is known, then, only through what it aspires to and accomplishes. It is not the object known, the feeling felt,

19. R. G. Hazard, *Causation and Freedom in Willing*. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1889.

nor the act performed; it is that which knows, feels, wills, and acts. As such, the soul can exist, even though we have no adequate idea of it. The fact that "introspection is really retrospection," that I cannot know a state until it has gone, serves to differentiate the insistent self that seeks to know, from its knowledge, from what it does. There is, therefore, never an identity of knowing and being. Experience is ever greater than knowledge.

To be sure, the soul is obliged to adapt itself to the conditions and needs of nature, *e. g.*, the body requires sleep. The soul adapts itself to these needs by originating habits of alternate labour and repose. The body becomes fatigued, and cannot work as well. The soul could will to keep it awake. But it permits itself to yield to drowsiness and ceases to send forth its activity. For it can at will (1) merely observe, or (2) play a part in the states it observes. Sleeping and waking thus become habits. Sleep is like concentration on one idea, except that the background fades, and there is no longer consciousness because no ideas with which to compare the idea of sleep. But the soul is obviously of such power that its identity can persist through sleep, brain disease, etc., and once more command its full quota of consciousness and self-consciousness.

If, now, you ask where the soul is, one can only reply, in Lotze's words, "a thing is where it acts." The soul becomes active when and where its deeds are done, when it perceives, thinks, chooses, wills, and exerts itself in directive effort.

Perhaps the most comprehensive statement is, that the genesis of action is in the creative idea. There is somewhat in human creative genius which refuses to be analysed. "Talent," says Lowell, "is that which is in a man's power; genius is that in whose power a man is."

The highest office of thought is to direct action, the action which makes for character, freedom, service, truth. The highest office of action is to make it contributory, not to self, or even to society alone, but to the whole, including inmost spiritual co-operation with God. It is the motive power of our supreme triumphs over the flesh, over self, our deeds of heroism, our

real participation in life. For "it is life that avails, not the having lived." It is action that counts, action that breaks through the barriers of ruts, is made powerful through victory, pioneer work, originality, moral contests, and intellectual research.

The real worth of activity is therefore known only by individual observation, use, struggle, suffering, the endeavour to control and transmute our forces and passions through the highest idealism, the greatest courage. The contemplative philosopher can never know the supreme value of action, which is revealed only by persistence through repeated defeats, the victory over self, and the trials of the practical Christ-life. For the true man is he who makes the daring step from the theoretical world to the world of conduct. Anyone can "think beautiful thoughts." Everyone may develop and inculcate a system of egoistic optimism. But the ultimate test alike of truth and of manhood is the step from knowing to doing, from what is merely pleasing, conventional, and æsthetic, to that which may involve the soul in misunderstandings, hatreds, the battling alone for truth, for a holy cause.

The ideal is the preservation of the activity illustrated by the strenuous life in all ages, the devoted life of the "saint," the martyrdom of prophets, the zealous wrestling with sin, the earnest prayer for the "heathen" of our best missionaries. There is a health in this activity, a motive power in this religious faith, untouched by modern agnosticism and "all is good" optimism, which we can ill afford to lose. We must not forget the fidelity of the Middle Ages, the stern sense of duty of our Puritan forefathers, nor the tremendous energy of the great commanders and warriors of the past. For what is most needed, as the cure for this half-hearted, invertebrate optimism, is a return—on a higher plane and transmuted into engines of peace—of the fire of determined religious zeal, the unflinching energy that accomplishes, let obstacles be what they may.

Yet the wisdom of life is the knowledge that thought has its place, action another sphere which naught should usurp. We must become as strenuously alert as our sterling ancestors who cleared our forests, yet as inwardly

reposeful as the mystic, while guiding our intellects by the highly developed sciences of these post-Calvinistic days.

We are obviously limited in temperament that we may perform our individual functions. Emerson says, "The only sin is limitation," and Bradley, "The world is the best of possible worlds, and everything in it is a necessary evil." The value of just this mystery, this limitation that surrounds our activity, is its incessant emphasis of the one great lesson of life—concentration. There is power enough for each to do his work, but it must be traced to its fountainhead, mastered, and redirected from within, in that remarkable genesis of action which we cannot fully comprehend, because it is a sharing of divine power, and is sometimes to be inhibited, sometimes to have spontaneous expression through us; now to command us as genius, and now to be accumulated for unparalleled effort, to become a veritable Viking, braving the stormy seas and pushing its vigorous adventures where no man, no nation, dared penetrate before.

Without, however, giving further consideration to these enticing side issues of our central theme, it is clear that we have already established the point for which we contended. Psychologically, man has power to act, since otherwise there would be no real self to be aware of experience in this active world. Philosophically, man must possess the power of action, else life would be without meaning. Thought alone would be merely subjective; it is action which relates us to the objective world. The existence of spiritual activity, differing in each of us, is consequently the *raison d'être* of human existence.

Activity is real. This is the fundamental fact, without which freedom and the power of thought would be of little avail. Every mind is not only a "new classification," as Emerson declares, but every man is a new centre of creative energy. He need not be a mere passive spectator. He shall not know the true significance of life until he shall have made not only a subjective but an objective contribution to the universe. For knowledge of the forces that play upon him, and upon which he reacts, is as essential as the cultivation

of the intellect. What bearing this conclusion has upon the social aspects of our problem, we cannot at this point consider. But here at any rate, in the fact that man acts, is one point gained,—here is the clue which we are to follow to the end of our inquiry.

Chapter IV: The Freedom of the Will

"Only the tempted can be holy."

THE MOST noteworthy result of the foregoing analysis is that the pursuit of the activity principle in no way leads us outside of spirit and its manifestations. Although activity is fundamental and universal, it is ultimately divine, and is known only through consciousness. Whatever the nature of our activity, it is always apprehended and directed by an idea; it springs from an inner motive, from choice or conviction. Our manner of exerting ourselves depends upon our beliefs in regard to what we may accomplish. Even the chemical activity displayed by sulphuric acid, although external to our volition, is known only through the impression produced upon consciousness. At the same time, we found it necessary to distinguish between mere thought and thought transforming itself into action. We thus rescued activity from the dangers of subjectivism and mysticism, yet in no way departed from the conclusions of the philosophy which discovers the ground of all things in a system of divine ideas.

We have not yet escaped, however, from the haunting possibility that all phenomena are products of an inexorable necessity or fate. Man acts, but the sceptic might still contend that he is coerced. The activity of the physical

universe is translated into terms of consciousness and of spiritual experience. But with this transfer we have carried forward the law of cause and effect. The term *activity* itself suggests a mechanical constitution of things. By our very power of action, we seem to become partners to a law that binds us on every side. We must, therefore, reconsider the problem of finite activity from another point of view.

According to the mechanical theory, even the phenomena of mind are reducible to the mechanical type; moreover, the theory possesses much apparent plausibility. Stimuli are produced upon us, and we respond with the appropriate reaction, as the eye closes when a threatening object is brought near. Our reactions assume a higher form, to be sure, and character intervenes to select and reject. But character is the general product of inheritance plus our past reactions, and so surely determines our conduct, so the mechanical doctrine assures us, that we can predict what a man possessing a certain character will do under certain circumstances. Yea, more, what he does seems to follow necessarily from what he is; he could have done nothing else, we are told. What he is, the past has made him; and so on, through eternity. He was foredoomed to act as he did; and we have upon our hands a universe of hard-and-fast predestination.

Let us now apply the philosopher's test, and ask if this theory really explains the universe so that no part of our nature is unsatisfied.

If this be a true account of life, how can individual existence be said to have a meaning? How can life be moral, how can we become free; what becomes of love and the spiritual life, if all our attempts to realise ideals be the necessary impositions of a fate-driven existence? Why, indeed, should we act at all, why strive, why be heroic, if certain results are assured despite our efforts?

When we ask these questions, all joy is crushed out of life, the zest of which is due to our freedom individually to choose and act. We have returned to our starting-point in the foregoing discussion. There is no need of a soul

unless there is responsibility. There is no responsible action if absolute determinism be true.

The doubt therefore arises, Can the mechanical view carry us so far? Can we really predict the highest activities either in ourselves or our friends? Is causality mere sequence, as Hume would have it, or is there real purposive activity, even that which can interrupt and alter natural sequence, as an apple is picked from the tree instead of permitting it to fall by force of gravity?

Evidences of such intervention are indeed most frequent, even cases where people have postponed or hastened death by an act of will. That mechanism itself is in part a means "created and used by will" becomes evident when we inquire into the origin of habit. Habits—for example, walking, talking—are simply mechanical resultants of what was once acquired through repeated efforts to imitate. Of course a certain amount of involuntary activity would be needed to start one in life. But this is obviously the result of voluntary activity on the part of our ancestors, and the beings who originated habits, as far back as the amoeba. Even these are subject to volitional modification on our part. "All action of all living beings," says Professor Seth,²⁰ "was originally feeling-prompted...What we call reflex-action is everywhere a secondary product, a degraded form of purposive action." "Only if so, is action in any sense an action of the creature itself."²¹

We must then distinguish between causation and sequence. Sequence is mechanical; the second step is necessarily determined by the first. But in causation, effect is unlike cause. "If the effect is not different, causation does not exist and its assertion is a farce."²² It is when two or more factors join to produce a new result, different from either, that causation occurs. If I read a stimulating book, thinking deeply as I read, the author's ideas may

20. *Man's Place in the Cosmos*, p. 105.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

22. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 55. See his able discussion of the difficulties involved in the concept of causation.

combine with mine to produce new thoughts. But the new ideas are not the author's, and not simply mine. By reading his book or conversing with me, you could not tell what would result from the combination. You cannot surely tell what any effect will be by knowledge of its cause, until someone has made the experiment, as the chemist puts two liquids together to see what will happen. If one combination were bound to result, there would be only fate; in chemistry and physics the resultant is clearly mechanical—although it is often difficult to avoid the intrusion of unforeseen factors. But the higher we go, the less mechanical we find the universe, until finally we pass from mechanism to organism, and from organism to personality.

"But yesterday," says a recent writer, "the miracle of the world was life; to-day it is consciousness. That is, the psycho-physical theory of matter is very generally accepted; consciousness is coming to be regarded as the directive force of all evolution. "Consciousness," says Professor Cope,²³ "was coincident with the dawn of life. I think it possible to show that the true definition of life is energy directed by sensibility, or by a mechanism which has originated under the direction of sensibility."

That which seems to be a mechanical reaction proves susceptible of analysis. On the one hand, we live in the world, mingle with our fellows, listen to their enticements, and feel their influence. On the other hand, we are conscious of manifold desires and promptings—egoistic, altruistic, sensual, and spiritual. The will chooses its own amid this vast array; it cannot obey them all; it must select a master or an ideal. It passes through all the stages between (1) attention, wavering interest; (2) choice, decision, determination; (3) fiat, effort, or self-exertion; and (4) actual realisation, which we have considered in the foregoing chapter. The presence of alternatives, conflicting desires, struggling selves, is a fact of every day, of every hour of our lives. The fact of responsibility is so persistently impressed upon us that we could not escape

23. *The Factors of Organic Evolution.*

it if we would. The New Thought assures us that it applies to every state of mind, to every affirmation.

Therefore, man is in some measure free, life is moral, there is really a self; and fatalism is false. The fact that he acts proves this. The fact that he is free is the basis of his self-activity. The issue between fatalism and freedom is short, sharp, absolute. One theory implies a non-moral universe, the denial of individuality, of a purposeful social order; and leads logically to pessimism and a solitary Absolute. The other implies an ethical ideal, ethical selves, a moral republic, optimism, and an ever-present Father. I shall develop these implications until they are perfectly clear; for upon them depends our entire discussion.

The critic may argue that the Absolute chooses a certain work for each, and allows us to think we are free. To this I reply that if the supreme authority is permitting us to think we are free when in truth freedom is an illusion, it is the worst possible fraud. It would be more reprehensible than to grant the illusion of activity; for freedom is the basis both of moral, creative thought, and of activity. It must therefore be real. How else could the soul really exist, how else could one be original, fulfil a divine obligation, or realise the social ideal?

The beauty of service is that it is performed by one who might have chosen and acted differently. When I am coerced, there I really do nothing. All individual action primarily proceeds from my unconstrained self; I am responsible only so far as I freely act.²⁴ "When I judge my own act," says Martineau,²⁵ "I feel sure that it is mine; and that not in the sense that its antecedents were in my character, so that nothing could prevent its coming, but in the sense that I might have betaken myself to a different act at the critical moment, when the pleadings were over, and only the verdict remained."

24. See Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Essay I.

25. *Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. II., bk. i., ch. i.

The mechanical theory of obligation, that one must exactly compensate for every favour received, is not pure ethics; it is in fact little superior to a selfish or mercenary motive, and is obviously a part of the same grim old pessimism, fate. We need not necessarily give to those who have given to us, unless it be agreed upon from a business point of view. Give to those whom you are spiritually prompted to help, regardless of what they may or may not have done for you. Attribute the same spontaneous motive of love to those who give to you. Give full measure, running over, for giving's sake only. Give not even as you would have others give unto you, for the golden rule is ambiguous and is susceptible of an egoistic interpretation. But give as you would like to see people universally give, regardless of self or of compensation.

Does God love us merely because he ought? Did he create because he must? Does he compel us to love him? Rather did he create out of fulness of love that sought companions to share it,—with such love, in fact, that he leaves us to love him or not in return, as we may choose.

That God grants such freedom that millions of people may remain about the same for centuries, history clearly shows. The Chinaman may be conservative, if he wishes; the Mohammedan may continue to practise the morally atrocious religion of the sword; the miserable Sultan is permitted to slay one hundred thousand innocent Armenians—one of the greatest crimes of history—while the Christian nations are allowed to stand by in apathy, when, forsooth, their selfish interests are at stake. What better evidence could one ask that we are free?

If now you contend that God designed the Mohammedans to do as they did, that it was a part of the creative plan, that it was "good because it happened," that there was a purpose in the Armenian atrocities, I cry, Save me from such a God! I would not own him. He is not the God of the moral law. And why should one try to find any purpose in the Armenian atrocities?

Must every crime have a meaning? Only so, in case the universe is mechanical, fateful, pessimistic, not a moral order. And what better evidence

of degeneration could one have than the fact that man may sink even lower than the brute? What greater reason for believing in the goodness, the love of God, than the persistent possibility put before even the lowest of us, to reform, to regenerate, to become morally upright and pure? Is not this possibility the true hope of the world? Is not this great fact, that the God of the universe holds out the pathway of escape to each and all, the true basis of belief in his goodness?

Yet how is freedom possible? the critic insists. Freedom, he contends, is uncaused self-determination, and implies the independence of the chooser. In the world of fact, however, there is overwhelming evidence that man is related, or dependent, in every phase of life. The Absolute alone is independent. God alone is free, and the existence of an absolute will prohibits plurality of finite wills.

What is the difficulty here? Evidently the trouble is with our theory of the Absolute: we have assumed too much. If the universe be a solid, immutable whole, one all-complete Absolute Being, there is obviously no ground either for freedom or individuality. It is perfectly clear, furthermore, that if there is but one Being, there is no ethical life, no one to be responsible. If this be true, if, when we seem to be ethically responsible beings, we are not really such, we may as well at once cease all endeavour to be good.

Once admit the separate existence of free spirits, and, although you have abandoned your fixed whole, you have room for possibility, growth, novelty, morality. Which hypothesis do the facts of life render the more plausible? Obviously, the latter view. We find individual wills, we find ourselves existing apart: fact is better than theory. How we can exist in one universe we do not fully know. But the facts do not demand the existence of an Absolute.

According to the doctrine of freedom the chief problem is, What meaning has this particular fact in reference to my activity, in reference to ethical responsibility? But, according to the orthodox Christian view, when, for example, an accident happens, people immediately say, "It is the will of God," or, "God has seen fit to send it upon us." One lady I knew, who met

with a runaway accident, said that God threw her off the horse. The Austrian Emperor spoke of the assassination of his wife as "the bitter sorrow which the inscrutable decree of Providence has brought upon me."

Of course, if we assume that one Self rules all things, that he is all-wise, that all events whether good or bad are his means to ends, it follows that all events are in every respect right, they ought to have occurred, and it would have been wrong to prevent their occurrence. Common sense, however, says they resulted from natural causes; all possible means ought to be adopted to prevent them: it does not assume to know so much about God, nor does it deny responsibility.

No one has yet shown reason for believing that God's decrees are words of absolute fate. It is justifiable to hold the conception of a Being whose universe is furnished not only with laws, purposes, and actualities, but also with possibilities, with chances; a Being who gives rise to new events, and meets novelties in his republic of individual souls.

Let us hear Professor James on this point²⁶: "The notion that real contingency and ambiguity may be features of the real world is a perfectly unimpeachable hypothesis. Only in such a world can moral judgments have a claim to be." And again²⁷: "If this life be not a real fight, in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success, it is no better than a game of private theatricals, from which one may withdraw at will." "A world with a chance in it of being altogether good, even if the chance never come to pass, is better than a world with no such chance at all."

Having once attained a high moral level, is it possible to retrograde? Obviously, yes, else man is not free. Every sin is temporary degeneration. Do not, therefore, say of me that I *could* not do wrong. For if I could not, I should be unmoral. My inheritance, temperament, and moral enlightenment may be such as to render wrong-doing extremely improbable. The chances

26. *The Will to Believe*, p. 292.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

are that I shall not lie, I shall not steal, nor am I likely to commit murder. For what I am to-day—that is, the result of past moral choice and endeavour—precludes these possibilities. But circumstances might arise in which I should deny my conscience and do wrong. I am free to do so. It may be God's desire, God's hope, that I shall not. But if he willed that I could not, he would not be granting me freedom. "A brute I might have been, but would not sink in the scale."

It may be argued that retrogression is really progress. By many it is nowadays deemed wrong to admit the possibility of failure. But degeneracy leads to progress only when one learns its lesson. Evolution, through the survival of the fittest, is sometimes contrary to ethics, and is not necessarily synonymous with goodness, or with progress; for evolution involves wrongdoing, atrophy, and reversion, as well as victory, survival, and permanent advance. Retrogression is not to be concealed under soft names. Moreover, if there are no failures, there is no moral order; we have no need to exert ourselves, but may calmly float along the stream of life, wherever fate drives us. But, in truth, there are failures; otherwise we are without moral experience. Failures teach their lesson only when recognised as such. It is egoistical assumption to say that we have never failed. Humility, not assertion of infallibility and perfection, opens the door to growth. The true power and meaning of a faculty is understood only in the light of what it can do and what it cannot do. The admission of failure as a factor in our experience would lead us to ask, *Why did we fail? Why did intuition prove inadequate?* For the fact that there is a divine moving does not imply that it is always discovered and obeyed.

Freedom merely to do right is, therefore, no freedom at all. I must have freedom to do wrong. If I am to be whipped into obedience in case I do not choose the right, if individual right is to triumph any way, once more I am not free. "Either free will is a fact, or moral judgment is a delusion," says Martineau.

We talk about the “destiny” of things, of nations, of the world, of man, of the soul, as if only *one* outcome were possible. There is, indeed, system in things, and definite tendencies. But there are also counter-tendencies, a thousand and one contingencies. “Things cohere, but the act of cohesion itself implies but few conditions, and leaves the rest of their qualifications indeterminate. As the first three notes of a tune comport many endings, all melodious, but the tune is not named till a particular ending has come,—so the parts actually known of the universe may comport many ideally possible complements.”²⁸

There are at least two possibilities, until one has actually become a fact. “The one becomes impossible only at the very moment when the other excludes it by becoming real itself, [whereas determinism] professes that those parts of the universe already laid down absolutely appoint and decree what the others shall be.”²⁹

At first thought, the doctrine of free-will suggests the idea of uncertainty, as though we could not depend upon the universe. It seems like the discarding of our faith in the goodness of things. In reality, it is a strengthening of it; for it places responsibility upon man which was once thrown on God. If man is really free, the universe is moral; the outlook is the more secure. The very fact that morality holds so high a place implies that the universe is a cosmos of righteousness, a system on which we may rely.³⁰ Our freedom to choose or reject the moral law is itself a part of that law; the interplay of alternatives is a revelation of its wealth. The moral choice becomes subject to the law of natural sequence as soon as it becomes the moral deed. No power can hinder its effect, no one can shield man from the consequences. Its results are even more relentless than the most rigidly mechanical activity of the physical world.

28. *The Will to Believe*, p. 270.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

30. See Chapter VII.

The utmost Science can say of her exact laws is, if certain conditions occur, such results will follow. She gives no assurance that they *must* occur. The utmost we can say, even of our best-known friend, is, that he *may* act so and so, under given conditions. It is equally possible that he may do precisely the reverse. The "unexpected" is a factor in life, of which we must always take account. Common sense has long ago recognised this, and there would be no need of this long argument if our minds were not still bound by belief in fate, and threatened by new forms of absolutism and pantheism.

When we turn to actual life, there is no difficulty in discovering the basis of freedom. People show by their conduct that they believe in freedom, for otherwise they would not try to act or accomplish. As John Stuart Mill points out, there are no consistent fatalists; for fatalism means that it is useless to struggle, to endeavour to alter in the least degree the determinations of the past.

Even if one accepts the Theosophical doctrine of Karma, there is still room for belief in moral freedom. Karma, or the law that we reap what we sow and carry with us the results of action, is true, but it is the least important factor. The decisive factor is the free, creative spirit which, if it learns the lessons of experience, may give Karmic tendencies a new turn. We are not fated to spin out the results of our past deeds to the very end of the thread. There are infinite chances of escape.

Those who emphasise the Karmic law are inclined to overlook these chances, to forget that man is more powerful than the deeds he has done. Their vision is turned too frequently toward the past, or they are egoistically striving to avoid another incarnation; whereas the believer in chance looks toward the future; he is thinking not so much of what has been as of what may be. And no man can serve two masters. If the thought be absorbed in what one must suffer, there is a tendency toward resignation, similar to that inspired by the old orthodoxy: "I must suffer this because God sent it." Again, if one has accepted the doctrine of reincarnation as a law which it is

futile to question, there is a tendency toward conservatism; the prospect is dreary and dismal in the extreme as compared with the attitude of freedom.

According to another conservative philosophy, it is affirmed that God foresaw and chose the course of each soul once for all, because his perfect knowledge included all possibilities. But "why, if one act of knowledge from one point can take in the total perspective, with all mere possibilities abolished, should there ever have been aught more than that? Why duplicate it by the tedious unrolling, inch by inch, of the foredone reality?"³¹

No, we must have novelty, possibility, chance, if we are to have moral life, or any life of consequence. Whatever is, is both right and wrong. But whatever is right ideally, all that is good in possibility, may be made right or good actually by choosing and doing it. "Each detail must come, and be actually given, before in any special sense it can be said to be determined at all."

We are frequently conscious of taking our chances, of hazarding all, with the assurance that only our fidelity to continually developing chances will enable us to attain success. "Well, here goes," we say, as we plunge in, as we make the heroic leap in the dark.

It is necessary, however, to have a correct idea of the chances which experience brings us. I am not arguing for the "freedom of indifference," the liberty to do anything we will, to formulate our own laws. The laws, methods, and powers are gifts of experience. The moral law is a revelation of God, not a human creation. It is the discovery of ethical obligation to a higher ideal, and may be, and often is, diametrically opposed to human statutes and canons of justice. It gives us no opportunity to dictate to nature. We may have what we righteously choose only when we obey the conditions which the universe imposes. For we might wish for the moon, or to become old and wise in a day. To the little boy's question, "Can God make a three-

31. *The Will to Believe*, p. 271.

year-old colt in a minute?" the father replied, "Yes, my son." "Then," said the boy, "it would not be three years old."

"The ultimate question of ethics," says Paul Carus, "is not what we desire, but what is *desired of us*. "What we ought to do is given us by a higher power, else it would not be a duty. The ethical ideal is the means we must choose, if we will that the highest end shall be attained. Just as I must eat to live, so I must do right to attain the heaven of righteousness. Our moral consciousness gives us the alternatives; it is a chance which one we shall obey. Thus chance rules over a very restricted field, yet a field so important that without it the entire glory of the moral order would vanish.

Furthermore, freedom grows with the evolution of social opportunity. Natural law and legal restraint hold us in check until we awaken to moral consciousness. Right and wrong are factors in a highly developed state of cosmic evolution. "There is neither right nor wrong where necessity rules," says Professor Commons,³² "only success or failure. The history of civilisation is the evolution of opportunities for free choice, and, therefore, of moral right and personal responsibility, through the suppression of necessity. Metaphysicians dispute over the freedom of the will. Their contests are empty, because they overlook the fact that individual freedom depends on social conditions. Free will is illusory if it does not end in free action, and free action is impossible where society has not yet overcome the hard physical facts of necessity."

The central question is therefore ever the same, Is there somewhat in man independent of his Karma, of the forces that play upon him, by the free activity of which his relations to them may be modified and regulated? If not, of what meaning is the injunction to obey?³³ If so, man is more than a result of Karma or of natural forces; there is somewhat in him that is partly set free by these, and attains its full liberty when it consciously claims and exercises it. In

32. *The Arena*, January, 1899.

33. See Green, *The Prolegomena of Ethics*, bk. i.

a word, man is compelled for a time by a “beautiful necessity, by the pangs of hunger, by deprivation and pain, and the sharp spurs of evolution, until he realises the importance of certain actions which he afterwards performs willingly, and finally awakens to the fuller consciousness of freedom.

“In the life of ethical endeavour is the end and secret of the universe to be found,” says Professor Seth. One who accepts the ethical view of life not only believes, but wills, that morals shall triumph. For him, virtue, the right, the pure, is the central interest, as truth is for the truth-seeker. Likewise for the universe itself the moral ideal is conceivably the central endeavour of all evolution. For the universe, viewed as a collection of forces, owning possibilities and distinct individuals, has no unity. Unity is that which a directive purpose alone can give—an “end in itself,” as Kant called it, an end of absolute ethical value, an end which attains its full significance only through the attainment of all other noble ends. Thus far God is dependent on us. There is no evidence that he forces us to grow. But tendencies are planted within us which, when we freely and gladly choose them, become teleologically a part of his moral order.

It is hardly necessary to consider whether there be an alternative between freedom and libertarianism. There has been an attempt on the part of certain ethical philosophers to develop such a doctrine, under the name of determinism. But, unmasked, this doctrine proves to be fatalism in disguise. It traces all moral deeds to the determinations of character and the preceding states of the soul, but leaves no room for the indetermined, for chance, which, as we have seen, is the soul’s real moral opportunity. Like the doctrine of Karma, it is true rather on the superficial side of our moral life; it is secondary, whereas the will, free to choose between determinations, is primary.³⁴

34. For a discussion of the entire free-will problem in its relation to determinism, see Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*, pp. 50–54; Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, bk. i., ch. v.; Hazard, *Causation and Freedom in Willing*; Mill, *Logic*, bk. vi., ch. ii.; Lotze, *Microcosmus*, vol. I., bk.

I repeat, a thousand ideas may pass through consciousness, a hundred tendencies may arise and leave no marked impress, until the will seizes upon a tendency and makes it dynamic. Thus the will weaves into new Karma the revived experiences of the past. Thus the will, and its subsequent effect—binding us until we obtain freedom from it—makes us for better or for worse. Thus we are brought face to face with tremendous responsibility or a great moral and spiritual opportunity, as we chance to believe,—deeming life a burden, or a sphere where the will to do right shall create a heaven of earth.

Because the will is indetermined or free, it is impossible adequately to state why it chooses this or that alternative; it is an end in itself. We may find reasons for a choice—after we have made it, reasons which may possibly point to our pre-existence. We may discover many reasons in advance and carefully select the righteous motive or alternative. But that does not exhaust the fact of choice. The fact that it was a choice, followed by free activity, shows it to have been in some respects pure matter of chance until the deed was done. In the last analysis, all we can say is, that it is an ability of the self to enjoy freedom, morally to choose, individually to act, as a creative first cause—understanding by “creative,” the act of selecting and redirecting that which already exists. Belief or disbelief in pre-existence would not affect this moral fact.

Still, the critic contends, if free will is the condition of moral existence in a republic of individual souls, it has more than a teleological relation to the cosmos: it is limited by society and by nature. This may be, and yet not affect our argument, which asks for no more than the chance freely to exercise one’s limited temperament, the opportunity to reject or accept moral obligation, to reconstruct one’s given experience and adapt to one’s particular ideal and genius the consciousness which we share with man and God.

ii., ch. v.; Münsterberg, *Psychology and Life*, p. 7; James, *Psychology*, ii. , 559–579; *The Will to Believe*, ch. v.; Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, chs. xii. and xiii.

On this point Professor Royce says³⁵: "Every finite moral individual is precisely as real and as self-conscious as the moral order requires him to be. As such, every finite, moral, and self-conscious individual is unique, and, in his own measure, free, since there is an aspect of his nature such that nothing in all the universe of the Absolute, except his own choice, determines him to be what he is, and since no other finite individual could take his place, share his self-consciousness, or accomplish his ideal, because only in so far as he has an ideal is he a person at all...The uniqueness of the Absolute Individual...hinders in no whit the included variety, the relative freedom, the relative separateness, of the finite moral individuals, who, in their own grade of reality, are as independent of one another, in their freedom of choice, but also as dependent on one another, in the interlinked contents of their lives, as the moral order requires."

Thus we return each time to the supremacy of the moral ideal. There is every reason to act on the probability that we are free, until freedom be proved impossible; every reason why life has a meaning, so long as we find ourselves living individually at all. Hope, freedom, activity, morality, and selfhood stand or fall together. We have cast our vote in favour of freedom, because to deny it would be like denying the existence of the mind itself. Chance steps in where logic fears to tread, and wins for the heart its freedom, and for righteousness the joy of life. Life has a meaning, since man acts. He acts because he is responsible and because he is a living soul. He is responsible because he is a moral being; he is a moral being because the universe needs him, and the universe needs him because he is a free citizen in the moral republic of God. Thus the steps of our argument form the links of an endless chain.

We have therefore established one more point in our argument for free, finite, moral, and spiritual activity, as opposed to mechanics, fatalistic monism, predetermined rounds of Karmic existences, and absolute identity

35. *The Conception of God*, pp. 272, 273.

in a solid reality. Freedom has a real basis not only in spiritual activity, by virtue of the unfettered relationship of the soul to an eternal spiritual world into which it often peers with unhampered intuition, but a basis in our moral responsibility. All philosophy must begin with these fundamental facts of individual consciousness; it must rationally account for them, even if by so doing it surrenders allegiance to some favourite theological or mystical doctrine. Any posterior or future existence, any ulterior meaning which life may have, must bear an intelligent relation to these central facts.

Since all philosophy is a theory of human life, from this fundamentally human point of view the universe is to be described. The universe is comprehensible only in relation to the active conscious experience which knows it, which qualifies it, and which is both bound and made free by it. From this point of view, therefore, we have our only logical approach to God; for it is unfair to describe the universe as if only God existed.

That this point of view involves a reformation in our terminology, in our approach to many abstract problems of philosophy, is equally clear. For, instead of assuming to speak for God, to define and publish his decrees, to describe his nature in itself,—as though all his “plans” were known to us,—we accept the universe, as thus far revealed to our finite consciousness, as a progressing moral organism.

The relative point of view is in reality the only point of view which can be rationally defended. All attempts to speak for the Absolute are *prima facie* inadequate. With an Absolute who decrees all things, with a dogmatist who tells us *ex cathedra* how all things are in all incarnations and on all planes, past, present, and future, we have no concern.

The future is by no means settled. We do not know what perfection is; experience alone can tell us. We know not all that we personally can do until we have repeatedly tried. Perhaps we are not courageous enough. Possibly we are but on the verge of creative activity. We may not be half-awake. Let us therefore be empiricists for a thousand years. Let all our statements reveal humility, moderation, hope. Only by this free progressiveness may

we hope to know what we really are. Only by being truly individual may we know either God or the world.

Yet our inquiry is by no means ended. It may still occur to the critic that the argument for pure monism or spiritual pantheism is at least as strong as that for the existence of distinct ethical individuals. And although we have accepted the existence of spiritual activity and freedom as fundamental facts, it may still seem plausible to believe that there is really but one Self, spiritually active and eternally free. Before we pass to a consideration of the wisest attitude and the meaning of our social freedom, let us therefore reconsider our problem from another point of view. In order to make the argument as forcible as possible, let us consider that form of spiritual pantheism which at present claims most widespread attention.

Chapter V: An Interpretation of the Vedanta

All this universe is Brahma; from him does it proceed; into him it is dissolved; in him it breathes.

—*Chandogya Upanishad*, iii., 14.

AMONG THE important results which sprang from the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, none is more significant than the propagandism of the Vedanta philosophy. The Swami Vivekananda, one of the most striking figures in that parliament, soon became a popular lecturer, and was followed by other exponents of the great Oriental system. Regular societies for the study of the Vedanta have been founded, books and papers devoted to the subject have been issued; and the Vedanta has held a prominent place on the programmes of summer schools founded in the interests of universal thought. Aside from the mere fad—hundreds have followed, if not worshipped, the Swamis, because of their novelty,—it is evident that the philosophy has taken a firm hold of the minds of highly developed people; and while the people of our country are far from accepting, or even listening to, the Vedanta with the enthusiasm with which we are credited, yet the Vedanta has had its place, and its presence is not to be ignored as a factor in recent thought. Perhaps, then, we have had

the Swamis with us long enough to form some estimate of their teaching in accordance with the criteria of Western thought. To make such an estimate, undertaken in the spirit of broad fellowship and the love of universal truth, is the purpose of this chapter.

The term "Vedanta" signifies "end of the Vedas," which are the sacred books of the Brahmans. The fundamental principle of the philosophy founded on these sacred revelations is that there is but one existence—the Atman, Self, Brahman. One cannot see this being, for it is that by which all seeing comes; one cannot formulate it, since it is beyond all definition. It is *ekam advitiam*, one without a second. "Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else, that is the Infinite." It is described in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* as "unseen, but seeing; unheard, but hearing; unperceived, but perceiving; unknown, but knowing. There is nothing that does but it, nothing that perceives but it, nothing that knows but it." This One is both subject and object; the beholder and the thing seen are one. It is all that ever existed or ever will exist, self-sufficient, all-embracing, unattached, unfettered, attributeless, actionless, feelingless, and perfect.³⁶ If you try to define it or describe its attributes, the invariable reply is, *Niti, niti*" (not this, not this).

Some of the noblest passages in any literature voice this sublime transcendence of the One, the eternal Spirit, the great All. The reader forgets all else in momentary oneness of spirit with the universe, in worshipful contemplation of the Ineffable, the Perfect Whole.

Yet sooner or later the mind turns again to the finite to ask, What of that? Granting that reality is One, indivisible and indefinable, what is this world we see, and what are we who perceive it? The answer of the Vedanta is, It is *maya*, it is unreal, the play of the spirit, the "show" of the infinite. There is in reality only one soul, sunk into seeming difference, only appearing to be divided into the souls of men and animals. In truth there are no finite

36. See *The Advaita Philosophy*, by N. Vaithianathan. Walter Goodyear, New York.

individuals, for "in reality they cannot exist... How could it be that I am one, and you are one?... We are all one, and the cause of evil is the perception of duality."³⁷

The physical universe and the human soul cannot be explained as creations of the One, because we would then be predicating the attribute of creation. "You cannot ascribe any motive to the Absolute," says the Swami Saradananda,³⁸ "without making him imperfect." Accordingly, the world arose, not through purpose or plan, but is due to *maya* (illusion), and this in turn is due to *avidya* (ignorance). We are bound by ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, desire, the limitations of space and time, which we misapprehend as realities. We think we are beholding reality, or we deem the visible world a manifestation of reality. But the real Existence is without manifestation. The real being in each of us is this one Self; "our individuality is God." You are this One, I am It, all is God. We seem to be separate, you and I, but the separation is due only to name and form; this separation will continue only while name and form endure. When these illusions vanish, we shall return to the true Self, from whose infinity of bliss and wisdom we wandered through ignorance. Hence the goal of all existence is to throw off illusion, to gain freedom from the world, and return to true life. For each soul is potentially divine, and may obtain oneness or divinity through "work, worship, psychic control, or philosophy; by one, or more, or all of these."³⁹

The first impulse of the Western mind is to reject such statements as these as highly unsatisfactory. But let us not be deceived by words, but seek the truth in this difficult doctrine of *maya*. We may hope to grasp its significance only by making repeated attempts. For the Vedanta is the profoundest of all spiritual monistic systems, and no one should expect to grasp its true

37. Swami Vivekananda, *Address before The Graduate Philosophical Society of Harvard*, p. 14.

38. *The Journal of Practical Metaphysics*, February, 1897.

39. See *Râja Yoga Philosophy*, by the Swami Vivekananda. Walter Goodyear, New York: 1897.

meaning until he shall have penetrated beneath the letter to the spirit, beneath the Sanscrit terms, which are often mistranslated, to the deep spiritual insight which prompted their use.

Shoshee Chunder Dutt,⁴⁰ attempting to explain this doctrine, says: "Dissatisfied with his own solitude, Brahma feels a desire to create worlds, and then the volition ceases so far as he is concerned, and he sinks again into his apathetic happiness, while the desire, thus willed into existence, assumes an active character. It becomes *maya*, and by this was the universe created, without exertion on the part of Brahma. This passing wish of Brahma carried, however, no reality with it. And the creation proceeding from it is only an illusion...The universe is, therefore, all illusion, holding a position between something and nothing. It is real as an illusion, but unreal as a being. It is not true, because it has no essence; but not false, because its existence, even as illusion, is from God. The Vedanta declares: 'From the highest state of Brahma to the lowest condition of a straw, all things are delusion.'"

This explanation, however, is only partially satisfactory. Vivekananda informs us⁴¹ that *maya* is mistranslated "illusion," since illusion would also have to be explained by illusion, and that by some other illusion. *Maya* is not a mere abstract term, but a statement in regard to life as we find it to-day. The present life is only the mystic twilight of real existence. We are but half awake, and all our knowledge, our religion, science, philosophy, betrays the haziness of this dreamy existence. In the world of physical sensation we see nothing as it truly is. We were born into this mystical realm, we live, think, and dream in it, continually seeking to grasp it as it really is, but constantly failing. From the Vedantist's point of view, it is impossible while within *maya*, or this dream-life, fully to know its meaning. For the intellect cannot apprehend reality; it is bound by unconquerable limitations; it sees all things in the form of a paradox, a contradiction. It perceives or represents things under the

40. Quoted by James Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions*, vol. i., p. 118.

41. *The Brahmavadin*, May 8, 1897.

forms of space and time, but cannot for that reason know things as they are, or in themselves, outside of space and time. The intellect separates, divides, analyses, but the reality of things is One. We are under the spell of this encompassing *maya*, "which is the belief which your dreaming self has, for a time, in the independent or separate existence of the vision,—as a thing apart, with an objective existence about which you think or feel. It is this mystic peculiarity of thought, hiding its real character and assuming an aspect which gives rise to an independent world of material existences, that is *maya*."⁴²

We must not then attribute any ultimate significance to *maya*. It is that from which we are to seek absolute escape. It is no part of the one existence, nor does it manifest the One. "The Absolute does not come within *maya*."⁴³

Creation is but an illusion and has made no noumenal or real addition to the one permanent entity which alone comprises the universe.⁴⁴ Ignorance creates in us the false conviction that this is a real, substantial world. With the destruction of this ignorance all its creations disappear.⁴⁵ We do not know how this ignorance came into existence and acquired such power for evil, and why Brahman permitted himself to be conditioned by *avidya* (ignorance) and enter upon the work of creation.⁴⁶

Yet the statements of exponents of the Vedanta are not always consistent on this point. First, we are told that the world is purposeless, and does not manifest the One, then a meaning is attributed to it. A writer in *The Dawn*, August, 1897, translates a passage from the *Gita* (chap. iv., sl. 9) as follows: "Even though I am unborn (having no birth), even though I am imperishable,

42. *The Dawn*, August, 1897.

43. Swami Vivekananda, *Harvard Address*, p. 29.

44. *The Advaita Philosophy*, p. 7.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

even though I transcend the elements, yet through *maya* (the power of making things appear what they in reality are not) I incarnate myself."

Again,⁴⁷ we are told that the Vedanta teaches that the Infinite has become the finite, that the universe is the Absolute under limitations; it is Brahman trying to express himself in the finite. But a time will come when he will find that this is impossible and will "beat a retreat." This beating a retreat will be the beginning of the real discovery of his true self. There is a degree of reality, therefore, in *maya*, for it is in truth the One Existence, perceived through the limitations of finite consciousness, precisely as we seem to be groping after something in our dreams, something that is ever intangible while we dream.

"All that we call the world is really the Brahman, because nothing else exists; but we do not see it as it really is, on account of our 'ignorance.' The world we know is not real, nor is it unreal. We may compare it to our view of the sun as we see it from the earth. With a telescope we see it differently, yet it is the same sun. If we can conceive ourselves as gradually travelling toward it, we shall see it apparently changing, until, when we reach it, we shall find it as it really is, undoubtedly totally unlike the sun it first appeared to be. Yet all the time the sun must have remained unchanged, and only our point of view has been the varying factor. So it is with this world of ours. No two of us see it just alike, because of the differences in our points of view. In fact, we literally make our own world, each for himself or herself. The suggestion comes from outside, but that is not the world we see. All we know is the reaction from that suggestion, which we ourselves project and which forms the world for us."⁴⁸

The Vedantist does not, therefore, say that the world is mere delusion; it is real. But its reality is only relative, for it exists and can exist only in and through Brahman, the changeless substance. When Brahman is realised, the

47. *The Brahmavadin*, August 4, 1897.

48. *The Brahmavadin*, January 16, 1897.

world of *maya* no longer exists; until then it is an existence which no one should deny. We can call a dream a dream only after we awake; similarly, no man should call the world an illusion until he has awakened, realised the Brahman, ceased to be man, and become God.⁴⁹

From the Vedantist's point of view, then, there is no permanent value in finite experience. All things in our human world are classified together; good and evil, individuality and nature, pleasure and pain are alike products of *maya*. A man may search the world in vain to find anything continuously satisfactory. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." Even love shall prove disappointing, illusory.

"Surrounded by fools on every side, we think we are the only learned men. Surrounded by all sorts of fickleness, we think our love is the only lasting love. How can that be? Even love is selfish, and the Yogi says that in the end we shall find that even the love of husbands and wives and children and friends slowly decays. Decadence seizes everything in this life. It is only when everything, even love, fails, that with a flash man finds out how vain, how dreamlike is this world... It is only by giving up this world that the other comes; never through holding on to this one."⁵⁰

So long as there is desire, no real happiness can come.⁵¹ Happiness, peace, and satisfaction come only by transcending all that is illusory and temporary, by entering the superior realm, through *samâdhi* (superconsciousness), where the illusion vanishes. As creation, with its accompaniments, misery, transformation, and death, began at that point where the mind ignorantly thought it was separate from the Atman,⁵² so freedom shall come with the return to the former state. "Man comes from God in the beginning, in the middle he becomes man, and in the end he goes back to God."

49. *The Prabuddha Bharata*, September, 1897.

50. Vivekananda, *Râja Yoga Philosophy*, p. 162.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

52. *The Awakened India*, April, 1897.

The truth, then, which this doctrine of *maya* seeks to express, is that all outer or visible things are perishable. This is not the reality which we taste, touch, and see. This is not that for which the heart longs, which shall satisfy the soul. It is the appearance, the veil or covering, precisely as the perishable garment worn by your friend is not the real object of your love, but the spirit, the heart, behind this fleshly tenement. The universe is but the representation, the projection of the great All. We are encompassed by a great mist; we behold only fragments of the real being. We cannot see or know anything as it really is, because we are unable as yet to see all things at once, to dispel the fog and rise to the limitless vision. But, meanwhile, there is that One without a second, that Essence lying in eternal repose, of which we now dream, toward which we aspire. All that now is shall pass, and we shall know even as we are known.

The same illusion or impermanence applies also to rebirth or reincarnation. It may surprise some to learn that the theory of rebirth is not regarded as a part of the real truth of life. It is true only of our sense-life. From this point of view, reincarnation is said to explain the injustice, the inequality of human life, to account for our suffering. We are personally responsible for our misery; it is futile to charge it to someone else, to believe it the work of Providence, who has seen fit to send it upon us. Ignorance is the sole cause of bondage, the only reason we are compelled to work, to be born again and again. We suffer and accumulate misdeeds, or bad Karma, because we erroneously deem ourselves separate beings, because we do not yet know that we are Brahman. In reality, we are eternal and perfect, and have no need of rebirth.⁵³ When we learn this great truth, we attain the true vision of ourselves; then shall our self-imposed misery cease; then shall we be no longer slaves, but free; then shall all Karma cease, and with it all that separates us from the infinity of peace and bliss, the eternal oneness which all along has been the only true existence.

53. See *The Prabuddha Bharata*, May, 1897.

Reincarnation is only a working hypothesis to account for a phase of our dream-life or *maya*, while we are still bound by it. "It is not a dogma that must be believed in order to obtain salvation. The various *yogas*, or methods of reaching liberation, can be pursued successfully by any earnest and sincere follower without his having heard of reincarnation. The Advaita, or the purely philosophical side of Vedanta, throws this doctrine entirely out of the question, as being, at best, only an explanation of the apparent, and as having no place at all in the real, which is One and not many."⁵⁴

I have quoted thus at length from recent expositions of the Vedanta in order to avoid all possibility of misconception, and to let the doctrine speak for itself. The fact that it has been successfully stated in English by the Hindus themselves is an evidence of the universality of the Vedanta. On the other hand, the constant employment by the Swamis of the terms and data of Western science is a tacit confession that our science is a distinct advance on that of the Orient. It is also a noteworthy fact that the pessimistic and fatalistic elements of the Vedanta are left in the background. There is a tendency to adopt the more hopeful doctrine of the West. A wise man has said that if a Swami should live six years among us, those years would witness a marked change in his views.

It is important, therefore, to remember that the expositions of the Vedanta, which we have recently heard in this country, state the doctrine of the Vedas in a modified form. For the original doctrine, shorn of modern terminology, we must turn to the sacred books themselves; while in the works of Schopenhauer, and his disciple, Deussen, we may read the pessimistic phase of the Vedanta, where "the will to live" is carried out to its logical consequences, and the whole fabric of nature is treated as a representation of our transitory intellects projecting a phenomenal universe through the (Kantian) forms of space and time.⁵⁵ A more thorough study of the Vedanta

54. S. E. Waldo, in *The Brahmavadin*, March 27, 1897.

55. See Deussen, *Elements of Metaphysics*, English translation. The Macmillan Co., New York.

would, therefore, lead us to consider this philosophy in its relation to Kant and post-Kantian idealism, to the modern doctrine of evolution and the latest results of psychology and psychical research, concluding with an analysis of its pessimism as brought out by Schopenhauer, and its pantheism as interpreted by Emerson.

Without attempting this more technical analysis, I pass now to a consideration of a few inadequacies of the Vedanta, looked at from our Western point of view, a prejudiced point of view, if you will, but, at the same time, a point of view. I approach this part of the discussion, however, with considerable hesitation; for one dislikes to speak adversely of a doctrine whose hymns and sacred books are of so high a character. Surely, nowhere on this earth has a higher spiritual revelation been given than in India. One feels its spirit to such a degree that one is sometimes tempted to say, It is all true, after all. And yet, and yet—is it infallible? Does the spiritual vision reveal all that is good and real? Does it solve all problems and absolutely account for the mystery of life? If not, there is every reason to ask wherein it fails, to apply the tests of reason, to persist in the belief that reason can solve the great mystery.

In the first place, let us apply, with Professor James,⁵⁶ the test which is coming to be regarded as the ultimate criterion of philosophy, What effect does it have upon conduct? It inspires peace, tranquillity, passivity, contemplation of the Absolute; surely a noble result, and we cannot have too much of this spirit in our nervous Western world. But will contemplation solve the social problems which press so appealingly for solution? Does it settle the difficulties we are considering in this volume? In his lectures on the Vedanta, Max Müller says that the self of the Vedanta has but three qualities: it is, it perceives, it rejoices; the Anglo-Saxon believes, as we have contended throughout our inquiry, that the free individual self also acts, progresses, that "the world belongs to the energetic man," as Emerson puts it. If it be

56. *Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results.*

true that *aham brahmâsmi* (I am Brahman), then I am perfect, absolute, free; why should I break my repose to succour suffering humanity, whose slavery and sufferings after all are unreal? For, if I have once accepted the Advaita or non-dualistic philosophy, that there is only "One without a second" and that I am he, there is no incentive to finite action, no room for individual existence, regarded as a life of ultimate ethical and spiritual value.

The inspiring doctrine that each of us exists for an active, creative purpose, and may contribute permanently to the moral and spiritual order, has no place. Consequently, there is no vigorous stirring to life, no reason for the emphasis of individual thought, the cultivation of genius, the expression of self through art, literature, conduct, and a better social state. The Vedanta offers no inducement to the human heart, eager for personal fellowship, love, marriage. It does not encourage the scientific interest, it does not stimulate the traveller's spirit, the inventive genius, the creative impulse. All this is rather to be avoided; for it passes, and proves disappointing. The true individuality is God, each of us is really God; instead of cultivating individual genius, we should cultivate oneness or Godness.

The Vedanta says unqualifiedly that you and I are God. We are not parts of God, appointed to stand for separate gifts, thereby adding glory to him. Says Vivekananda: "You and I and everything in the universe are that Absolute; not parts, but the whole. You are the whole of the Absolute."⁵⁷ "*Tat tvam asi*, Thou art That, Thou art one with this universal Being, and every soul that exists is your soul, and every body that exists is your body."⁵⁸

Under the Swami's pine at Greenacre, Vivekananda said⁵⁹:

"I am neither body nor changes of the body; nor am I senses nor object of the senses. I am Existence Absolute. Bliss Absolute. Knowledge Absolute. I am It. I am It.

57. *Greenacre Voice*, I., xxii.

58. *The Brahmavadin*, May 22, 1897.

59. *Greenacre Voice*.

"I am neither death nor fear of death; nor was I ever born, nor had I parents. I am Existence Absolute. Knowledge Absolute. Bliss Absolute. I am It. I am It.

"I am not misery nor have I misery. I am not enemy nor have I enemies. I am Existence Absolute. Bliss Absolute. Knowledge Absolute. I am It. I am It.

"I am without form, without limit, beyond space, beyond time; I am in everything, I am the basis of the universe—everywhere am I. I am Existence Absolute. Bliss Absolute. Knowledge Absolute. I am It. I am It."

The confusion of the part with the whole is, therefore, a fundamental objection to the Vedanta: "It first says, truly, 'There is nothing *without* God.' It next says, falsely, 'There is nothing *but* God.'"⁶⁰ It is thus pure monism or pantheism, the absolute identification of subject and object, with no room for the splendidly elaborate system of nature as the realm of divine manifestation. It endeavours to put off the creation of the world upon man, but he proves unreal. It tries to put it upon Brahman, but cannot, because that would imply imperfection. Thus our fair world, infinitely rich in design, which has ever been the wonder of men, is put off with no one to father it, unreal because it is not God, yet existent because it is not pure delusion. The Vedanta fails to *explain* the world, and thus failing, it puts aside as too difficult the great problem which all philosophers are trying to solve.

"Oriental pantheism," says Sterret,⁶¹ "is justly the horror of the religious mind. Instead of making God the spiritual, ethical unity of all things, it makes him either the quantitative sum total of them, or denies any reality to them. In either way it makes far too little of the place, and worth, and destiny of men."

Again, it subordinates human reason. The Vedantist declares that when the philosopher says, "Whatever is real is rational; whatever is rational is real," the converse is true. "The very fact that we have a knowledge of the

60. James Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions*, i., 83–

61. *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 206.

material universe," says N. Vaithianathan,⁶² "presupposes its unreality; for, if real, it cannot be known."

The Vedantist first assures us that no attribute can be predicated of Brahman—"attributes belong to perishable illusions and perish along with them,"—he then proceeds to describe Brahman, namely, that you and I are "That." "He is such that he could not create with a purpose, yet permits himself to be covered over with blinding *maya*." "From his state of eternal bliss, he descends to the act of creation only when the pre-existing *maya* envelops him in utter darkness." "He is the spectator of his creative work and stands unaffected by it. He perceives the world as we perceive it, but does not fall into the illusion that it is a true entity, as we do."⁶³

"This universe is one connected mass, so that if you start from the external you come to the internal, and *vice versa*. It has come out from the infinite ocean and will go back into it again. The creation is as eternal as the Creator himself. It sometimes remains in the manifested state and sometimes in the seed form—an eternal flow of evolution and involution—the play of the infinite."⁶⁴

A writer in *The Brahmavadin* of January 2, 1897, explains that according to Sankara, the great expounder of the Vedanta, the Brahman is ever one and the same, the diversity of nature being due to our ignorance; while according to Râmanuja, the Brahman is the real source of the marvellous variety which we behold all about us. Sankara's "ultimate reality is a unity without plurality; Râmanuja's reality is a unity in plurality, a potentially composite unity, . . . endowed with all imaginable attributes and excellencies, and comprehending within himself all power. . . . The universe is regarded as one mighty and majestic organism fully permeated by the spirit of God."

62. *The Advaita Philosophy*, p. 10.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

64. Swami Saradananda, *Metaphysical Club Address*, Dec. 15, 1896.

The "One without a second" is the potential condition, out of which all souls and worlds eventually proceed.

Here we have evidences of a more advanced intellectual system, approaching the Western ideal. But the Vedanta in its pure form is emphatically monistic and inconsistent. The Advaitist declares that "the Brahman alone exists; it is all-embracing, attributeless, and unknowable." The world is an "*absolute* illusion." Yet the world is also declared to be the work of "ultimate causes." "The Creator has to adapt his creative work to the results which necessarily belong to the Karma of each soul, and creation is but an evolution out of the germs, material and spiritual, embedded in the conglomerate *maya*."⁶⁵

According to the Vedanta, however, these inconsistencies are of slight consequence, for one should not expect to know reality through reason, or that in us which seeks consistency. Vivekananda knows enough about the "unknowable" to state positively that "God does not think; he does not reason; why should he? Is anything unknown to him? ...When you step beyond thought and intellect and all reasoning, then you have made the first step toward God."⁶⁶

But why, the critic asks, is it not right to reason about the universe, and deem it rational, if, as Vivekananda assures us,⁶⁷ the universe is "the Infinite Existence projected into the plane of consciousness," and since "the universe is harmonious, it must be the manifestation of one will"? The Western mind insists that whether the universe sprang from purpose or from caprice, whether real or illusory, it is still capable of being understood in accordance with one rational principle. There is nothing which shall not yield to reason, though it be irrationality itself. Rationalisation of things is systematisation in the light of their origin and meaning. If, therefore, we really *know* that the

65. *The Advaita Philosophy*, pp. 9, 19, 25.

66. *Rāja Yoga Philosophy*, p. 102.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 136.

world is either *maya* or a purposive system of self-manifestation, we know something about Reality as the rational ground of the world. Or, if we know with Vivekananda,⁶⁸ that "the real existence is without manifestation," once more our knowledge is rational, and on this basis we can develop a system.

But the objections to the Vedanta are not alone philosophical; it leaves room neither for ethics nor for morality or ethics in practice. This seems an astonishing statement, one which lovers of the Vedanta and of the Swamis would at once emphatically deny. "No one," says the Swami Saradananda,⁶⁹ "can rise to the highest stage of spirituality without being perfectly and absolutely pure and high in morals." No one would dispute this. I would not for a moment doubt the high purpose which inspires the Swamis. One of the gentlest, sweetest, most broadly sympathetic and spiritual men of my acquaintance is a Swami (master), who once declared to me that if he ever found a larger system than the Vedanta he would at once accept it. But it is one thing to inculcate and practise morality in a universe of *maya*, and quite another to regard the entire real universe as moral, every human soul as an ethically distinct self, and the moral law of supreme purposive worth to the living God.

If we say with Vivekananda, "you are all God....Is not the whole universe you?" what ground is left for righteous conduct, the basis of which is individual power of action, finite freedom, responsibility to a superior Power, to a high moral ideal? The Vedanta replies that one ought not to injure one's neighbour, because one would be injuring one's self. "If a man cuts your throat, do not say no, for you are cutting your own throat."⁷⁰ "In loving anyone, you love yourself." But this is egoism. The essence, the beauty of love is to love another, to deny one's self for another. The moral ideal is

68. *Harvard Address*, p. 46.

69. *The Brahmavadin*, December 5, 1896.

70. Swami Vivekananda, *Rāja Yoga Philosophy*, p. 246.

that which inspires me to rise above myself.⁷¹ It is a duty, an obligation. The existence of the moral law implies that there are at least two beings in the world. It implies that individual, ethical man really exists, not merely seems to exist; that he possesses powers of choice and will; that he acts separately; that his acts are right or wrong, not in *maya*, but in reality, as judged by an eternal law, or by the higher Being who imposes the obligation.

Let us hear from an authority whom the Swamis quote because of his hearty acceptance of Vedantism and of the philosophy of Schopenhauer.

"There can be no such thing as duties toward ourselves. For all duty... rests on an express or tacit contract according to which I freely undertake to perform certain things. If I do not fulfil these, I do wrong, unless the other releases me from my obligations. Now, if I am that other myself, no release is necessary. Thus it becomes clear that the conceptions wrong, right, and duty can have a meaning only in reference to others."⁷²

Again, an ethical authority of the highest standing, James Martineau, says⁷³: "Nothing can be *binding* on us that is not higher than we; and to speak of *one part of self imposing obligation on another part*—of one impulse or affection playing, as it were, *the god* to another—is to trifle with the real significance of the sentiments that speak within us.... I am deeply persuaded that no monistic scheme, whether its starting-point be Self, or Nature, or God, can ever interpret, without distorting or expunging, the facts on which our nature and life are built."

It is absurd then to say, "Do not tell a lie," if you are really telling a lie to yourself. You, of course, know the truth, and therefore cannot lie to yourself. A lie becomes such only when told to another who is deceived by it. Is not this fact of ethical separateness worth more than all the speculation in the world? Is there any real basis of philosophy but the starting-point we have

71. See *Ethical Religion*, by W. M. Salter. Little, Brown & Co., Boston.

72. Deussen, *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 258.

73. *Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. ii., Introduction, 5.

accepted in the foregoing chapter, namely, this actual, present, struggling world of finite beings, conscious of right and wrong, and living in a beautiful world of nature, thinking, searching, evolving, trying to formulate the conception of a Being who is achieving some high purpose through nature and through our moral conflicts?

The Vedanta tries to escape from the difficulty by an appeal to the same inconsistency which we have noted throughout. Freedom is declared to be the very essence of Karma. One should obey the precept of the great lawgiver Manu, "Think not on destiny, but act thyself." Karma is, therefore, an incentive to action and is opposed to fatalism, which means the denial of ethics. But the doctrine of the freedom of the will is only the exoteric doctrine of the Vedanta. Free will depends on self-consciousness, or "false individuality," the destruction of which is the one lesson of the Upanishads. "The individual soul [consequently its freedom and activity] is really a figment of nescience (*maya*), and when it realises its falsity and loses itself, like a river in the sea, into the one Reality; in other words, when the truth of such sayings as 'O Svetaketu, that art thou,' 'the self is all this,' and the like is realised, the individual will disappears and with it its freedom and its bondage."⁷⁴

Of what value, then, is moral freedom, if it belongs to our dream-life? Is freedom truly such unless it is eternal? Is the ethical individual of any consequence if he be a figment of *maya*? If we really knew this to be so, we might try to escape from the present life of duty, precisely as we are told to throw off the bondage or necessity of rebirth. But this would be holding ethics in slight regard; egoism would be more laudable than altruism. This conclusion follows irresistibly if we first agree that all existence is One.

The Western mind, however, proposes another alternative: Granted that the present life is a dream-life, may not we who dream be real moral individuals whose future or waking state shall be, not less, but more, moral

74. *The Prabuddha Bharata*, September, 1897.

than the present existence? Surely, if we are real, ethical beings, partaking of a dream-life which shall presently give place to true vision of things as they are, monism is disproved. As the veil of *maya* falls from our eyes, we shall be more distinctly ourselves, the variety of the universe shall be richer, and all that *maya* revealed shall be there—in an ideal society, in the diversified republic of God.

The demand of the Anglo-Saxon is for a heaven which shall give ever freer scope to his longing for individual action. The Vedanta proposes *Karma-yoga*,⁷⁵ or the life of action suited to those in whom the active nature is predominant, and it offers an admirable doctrine of self-mastery and introspection. One admits that many of our precepts must be adapted to the needs of our transitory existence. One agrees that the inner life is the real life, and that one should not become too strongly attached to the present order. Life will surely be very different when *maya* ends. But, admitting all this, admitting that in some respects the Western mind misunderstands the Eastern, we must accept one of two alternatives: either these present duties are of ultimate worth, reason is to be trusted, and one is to believe in one's *finite* self; or, having concluded that all is God, one is to make all else correspond. For no man can serve two masters. We must decide and we must act. And if we decide that the meaning of life is to be found in individual ethical conduct, we must proceed on the basis of the real existence of our fellow-mortals, the belief that even our dream-life is purposive, and that the universe is the real manifestation of an ultimate Being, in whose diversified nature the ground of all variety, of all individuals, and all worlds, is to be found.

One should not, however, expect to find all truth in one system. The Vedantists have symbolised the great universe as it appeals most strongly to them. The chief beauty of the Vedanta, as expounded by the Swamis, is in the diversity of their interpretations. I think all who have heard the Swamis

75. See an admirable book on this subject by Vivekananda. Walter Goodyear, New York.

would say that each produced a Vedantic poem whose specific beauty was attributable in the last analysis to personality. People cared more for Vivekananda than for his metaphysics. Thus Western individualism receives fresh emphasis from the teaching of these Eastern men.

They are specialists in the interpretation of the spiritual synthesis of things. For knowledge of the wonderfully wrought world of nature we must turn to the Occidental specialist, as, in the study of the moral law, we should follow ethical philosophers of the highest order, such as Martineau, Green, Kant.⁷⁶ There is the art world, the literary world, the world of human society. These must be interpreted by the artist, the literary man, the father and mother; not by one who has never lived in a home where woman holds highest place.

If we are true to this larger ideal, and do not become mere Orientalists or mere Occidentalists; if we retain a place in our philosophy for the individual, moral, and social ideals; if we still believe in and try to express unselfish love, while looking beyond all finite approximations to the One who is in deepest truth all love, all beauty, and all reason, we may yet unify in one great philosophy all that is noblest in both hemispheres of thought and life. Thus shall dawn the universal Christ consciousness, a realm of life toward whose comprehension the seers of all ages have contributed their share; not Jesus alone, nor the Hindus, but Socrates and the other great Greeks, Kant and his followers, the life of the Anglo-Saxon, and the spiritual gentleness of the East. In the East this great light has dawned. In the West its full glory shall shine.

76. Récéjac has developed a system of mysticism founded on the ethics of Kant, true to reason, to the heart, and God, which avoids the objectionable conclusions of the Vedanta: *The Bases of the Mystic Knowledge*, translated by S. C. Upton. Scribners, New York, 1899.

Chapter VI: Is There an Absolute?

Only the final and absolute humanity, only the ultimate and perfect civilisation, would possess, were such a civilisation possible on earth, the final and absolute philosophy.

—Josiah Royce.

THE RADICAL defect of the Vedanta philosophy is its unexplained residuum. While we regard the universe from the point of view of spiritual contemplation, there is no difficulty; it is easy to classify all data as descriptive of the immobile Brahman. But when we ask, What of nature, individual souls, the moral law, and the inequalities of finite existence? the Vedanta has no rational answer. Like all spiritual absolutisms, the Vedanta is therefore really dualistic.

The same is true of pantheism in all its forms. It is a beautiful thought—that all is God. It draws the soul near to him. It lifts the universe to the divine level, and the “God-intoxicated” men who have promulgated it are among the world’s greatest philosophers. But if it be absolutely true, what of our problem of freedom? What of the individual power of action? If all be God, and God be absolute perfection, how can there be human experience, with all its ignorance, suffering, and marvellous complexity? Or, if man be

“God in embryo,” as some aver, does this not imply ultimate sameness and absorption? Again, if it be only God who incarnates and reincarnates, how can God reincarnate in himself, any more than he can be at once immanent in himself and transcendent beyond himself?⁷⁷

As matter of fact, no one believes pantheism to be absolutely true; for man shows what he believes by what he does, and human conduct every moment gives the lie to this philosophy. The disciple of the New Thought, for example, is no more a believer in pantheism than in fatalism. For the meaning and value of finite individuality is a fundamental precept of his philosophy, and the entire process of spiritual healing is intended to free the individual. Pantheistic statements are widely accepted, it is true, and fatalistic beliefs one meets on every hand. But this is mere theory, like that form of pantheism which identifies God and nature, then treats nature as practically distinct. When the need for action comes, the New Thought follower acts on the supposition that he is free, that he is a creative agent, precisely as the believer in “all is good” finds himself compelled to discriminate between right and wrong.

With practical life, therefore, we are to have little concern in this chapter. But absolutism still haunts the theoretical world. We are not quite convinced of the democratic view. I therefore propose to consider certain arguments for and against the Absolute, in order to clear the field for rational consideration of the demands of practical life.

What, then, is the Absolute? It is One. There is no other, nothing beyond it, either past, present, or future, in spirit or space. It is perfect, omnipotent, omniscient. It knows no space, for it is everywhere. It knows no time, because it is eternal. It requires no experience, since it possesses all things. It does not travel, for there is nowhere to go. It does not move, since movement implies a new moment of experience, and with the Absolute novelty is impossible.

77. This confused doctrine constantly appears in current thought, and the author has been guilty of advocating it in an earlier volume—*The Power of Silence*.

No companionship comforts its heart, for there is none besides. It does not think, it is not conscious; for thought or consciousness implies a subject and an object, and the Absolute is one. It does not feel, it cannot love, for the same reason—poor Absolute with no one to love him! He lives neither in heaven nor in hell, because these are finite conditions. He is neither good nor bad, for there is naught with which to compare him. He is simply the same, ever the same—monotonously, endlessly, up and down, in and out, through and through; as dreadfully identical as a dream, where the solitary soul faces the limitless vistas of a desert, or falls unflinching, down, down, persistently down, through the colourless abysses of space.

Not to be too severe with our Absolute, let us befriend him a bit, and consider a single feature of his absolutehood. On the supposition that he possesses perfect knowledge, that is, complete knowledge of all past, present, and future events, real and fictitious, and that all finite beings—never mind how they can exist—are included in him, he must know the minutest data of consciousness, however insignificant, of every creature that lives—all the countless millions upon trillions of billions. He must remember every detail in the life of each, for nothing is outside of the Absolute. He must be the cause of every thought, every deed, however foolish or cruel.

“If the red slayer thinks he slays,”

if the lover thinks he loves, if a man seems to sin, he is mistaken; for it is only the Absolute that lives, only the Absolute that does wrong. Incredible and repulsive, but let that pass. Suppose it true. The Absolute is, *en masse*, all finite moments of being. But since he is absolute he must look beyond all finite moments and comprehend all things as one whole. For his point of view is exhaustively absolute. Then note the result. He cannot know a moment of finite consciousness precisely and simply as the finite knows it.

It is true, the Absolute has been accredited with the vision of both the whole, or absolute, and the relative included parts, as such. Surely, unless he

is thus literally the all, he is not the Absolute. But is this possible? Can the Absolute really see as I see, with all my limitations, my particular sentiment of joy, with all the zest that desire for truth and novelty brings? How could it know myself simply as I know myself,—ignorant, undeveloped, evolving, contemplating unattained spiritual ideals and beautiful hard-and-fast snow mountains,—yet also know me as it knows, whose life is devoid of ideals and of ice-clad Alps outside of itself? It might enjoy and work with me, it might observe the gathering mists, or clamber with me up a mountain slope—provided it could persuade itself that it was ignorant, that it was not already at once the mountaineer and the mountain. But I am only one among countless trillions, all of whose minds are filled with a complexity of imperfect ideas, struggles, and diversities of tastes, and all of whom it must simultaneously and exhaustively know.

To make this relationship clearer, suppose that each of us is at the bottom of a different hollow in the ground, whence our vision is limited. The Absolute is looking down upon us, seeing all that we see, knowing all that we know, doing all that we do. Is it conceivable that he, all-wise and omnipotent, could also know and labour precisely as each of us sees and acts, being both above and in all the finite hollows? His consciousness might indeed be a total consciousness, a comprehensive vision, observing that which lies beyond, unattained—but would it be individual as individual?

Yet grant for a moment that his consciousness—which we have dismissed as impossible, but rehabilitated for logic's sake—could put itself in our place. He is still by hypothesis timeless, spaceless, and perfect. He therefore knows and is through all eternity precisely each and every detail of this finite experience which we are trying to rescue for him; he foreplanned it, therefore he could not zestfully labour for it. But this is absolute fatalism, and therefore impossible; for where everything is absolutely predetermined in one changeless moment, there can never be a second moment—there is nothing to observe, as the Absolute spies into our holes.

As an illustration of the individual characteristics of the finite point of view, take the anticipation, the eagerness, coloured by one's entire past experience, with which one for the first time approaches a strange land. Add to this the actual experience upon the foreign shore, the wealth of novel impressions, the forethoughts verified, the theories modified, and the conclusions contradicted. Compare this first experience with the *blasé* state of mind of a tenth visit to the same country. Would not the foreknowledge of the Absolute preclude the possibility of knowing these successive experiences precisely as the finite knows them?

Is it even possible for two sympathetic finite souls to have identically the same experience? The cosmic emotion known as the mystical "transport," or ecstasy—when one forgets who it is that is contemplating—probably approaches nearest to entire oneness of finite souls. One seems then to be the Absolute, and the conclusions of the Vedanta seem highly plausible. But this is because the attention is absorbed, so that for the time being there is no consciousness to devote to the detection of illusion. Since we know only through contrast, such an experience can be understood only when it has ceased. There must then be a second moment by which to judge the first. There is strong probability that the experience is really different in each of us, because the antecedents are different and the descriptions are different.

But it is a *free* experience. True, but the differently determined antecedents are still present. The organisms are different. There is an individual ingress and an individual egress. The psychological moment is different in each of us. Your experience could not become mine, even if I were accurately to repeat every detail of your entire life. For my having it would not be the same as your having it. If I could have it as you had it I should be you. And even if I could have an experience identical with yours, how could I be objectively certain that it was absolutely yours?

Consider for a moment what a tremendous distance separates the lives of two who contemplate even the same scene in nature. Before me, as I write, extends one of the fairest vistas which our earth affords, a scene of

great variety and striking harmony. The day is cloudless. The atmosphere is ideally agreeable. No sound, save that of the steady, unobtrusive roaring of a far-distant waterfall, breaks the delicious stillness. Above and below me, beautiful pasture slopes, dotted here and there with picturesque chalets and peasants raking hay, rest my eye and suggest a joyful peace which makes it a supreme pleasure to live. Beyond a deep, smiling valley in which, thousands of feet below, rocky and wooded slopes reach a foamy river, rise the great glacier-covered summits of the Bernese Oberland, crowned by the majestic Jungfrau, queen of her attendant society. Surely, I conclude, one must live a pure and joyful, ever young life, amid such grandeur, where the eye rests only on the spotless snow and the graceful slopes of green and grey.

Yet try for a moment to look through the eyes of yonder peasant, old before his time, gathering his supply of hay for the long, monotonous winter, who gazes listlessly into the eyes of the green-coated Teuton with his Baedeker, entices what money he can from the chattering Gaul, and whose Catholic religion is as unknown to me as are my glaciated speculations about the Absolute incomprehensible to him.

It is conceivable that for the all-seeing Father there may be much in common as we one and all project our points of view outward to the beauties of the Alps. It may be a source of unending delight to watch the hard-working peasant as he tosses the hay, to encompass in one great love the annoying chatterer who intrudes upon one's contemplation, and the mechanical repeater of prayers in yonder chapel whose dismal little bell now breaks discordantly into nature's symphony. But for an Absolute who is to know, and be, and absorb it so that all this richness of complaint, intolerance, æstheticism, peasant simplicity, and cold logical speculation shall be no longer itself, it is incomprehensible that there should be a world the very beauty of which necessarily consists in the ultimate mystery and distinctness of its parts.

For the abstract philosopher who starts, not with such an environment as this around me, but with some metaphysical premise, there may be such

an Absolute. But for the empiricist, alive to the demands and awake to the infinite complexity of our delightfully mysterious human world, each human consciousness is practically infinite. Such an one is compelled to admit at last that you cannot transcend your consciousness; I cannot transcend mine, except so far as inference may carry us.

For my consciousness—in other words, my experience—is impossible without precisely and solely this particular ego, absorbed in certain ideas or contemplative sentiments, and thereby necessarily excluding any other point of view, either yours or the Absolute's. Even if you could know the minutest details of my consciousness, see all that I see, think all that I think, and compare notes with me at every point, it would be my experience as you would know it. If the Absolute could look through my eyes, it would be my life as he saw it; for he is powerless to tear from me my point of view which, even though it be a mere point, is the universe considered as I alone see it, in successive finite moments, partly conditioned by my own limited selfhood. The problem of my relationship to the universe is, through and through, individual. My struggle is precisely mine, in an indescribably intimate sense. Love is love as I feel it. It is my victory that I am seeking, my poise, my adjustment, my communion with God. My intuition is intimately mine; so is my ideal, my will, my freedom. I cannot will, act, or love for another. No one can will or act for me, not even God; for if this were possible, there would in reality be no finite self at all.

From any point of view we approach it, the Absolute beats a retreat, and proves to be a meaningless abstraction. Evolution is not absolute, for there would then be no enduring reality. Permanency is not absolute, since it could exist but a moment. Neither motion nor rest could be absolute, light nor sound, heat nor cold, nor any colour; since these are partners of contrast, like the centrifugal and centripetal forces. There is no absolute point of view from which one can say "all is good"; for injustice and strife, sin and selfishness, are not yet eliminated. Even if God decreed that one (hypothetically absolute) ideal should be the outcome of all relative, contributory ideals,

there would be no assurance that this end could be attained by but one means. If there were an absolute plan, its originator would be bound by it; and if bound, he would not be absolute. If the world-plan be absolute, what opportunity exists for progress, for novelty, for human creative genius? On this supposition, there is absolute foreknowledge, and consequently, in order to insure its success, absolute predetermination, and absolute mechanical unfolding. It would then follow that the Absolute foresaw and permitted or planned every detail of the Windsor Hotel horror. A world of infinite contingencies is preferable to this.

Why need one even conceive the existence of an absolute first cause, unless one accepts the hypothesis of an absolute beginning or creation out of nothing? F. C. S. Schiller points out⁷⁸ that “no evidence can prove an infinite cause of the world, for no evidence can prove anything but a cause adequate to the production of our world,” which is obviously a world of evolving finite lives whose beginning and end we know not, whose destinies may be shaped by ideals yet unconceived.

We speak of an infinite past, but infinite as applied to time must include present and future; since there is but one eternity. A thing or ideal is therefore infinite or absolute only through eternity; God could be or become absolute only through eternity, that is, only through the progressive attainments of our evolving universe. Even on Professor Royce’s supposition,⁷⁹ that the Absolute, outside of our time world, embraces all our experience in one moment, as one might hear a symphony as one whole, his experience would be complete only when the last note sounded; and the enjoyment of a symphony consists in its successive, distinct movements, each of which possesses individual beauty, each detail of which is contributed by a particular musician whose participation and enjoyment necessarily differs from that of any other and from the whole.

78. *Riddles of the Sphinx*, p. 311.

79. *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, ch. xii.

The critic may now contend, with certain idealists, that space and time are unreal, and that consequently one of our objections to the conception of the Absolute is removed. He may, for example, argue that there is no reality, no past, and no future, except as a point of view in the present by which we account for the present. As a matter of fact there is no past, as given, no tangible yesterday; and what we mean by the future is simply an attitude toward a possible present.

Yet on this hypothesis the present is not only real but continuous, unescapable, eternal. Life is possible only on the supposition of the persistent going and coming. Thought is real only in relation to or as a product of the present pulse of consciousness, changing while we think; it has a living psychological aspect. The consciousness of time, which intrudes while we think, is a succession of ultimate units actually given. An eternal symphony is impossible without successive moments of harmony.

Time is real, else were the universe already dead. Space is real, else were the universe merely a point. Wherever there are objects, there is necessarily space; where events, there is time. The real world is concrete—the given, immediate world of actual feeling.

Even if the Kantian analysis of experience were absolute, namely, that the universe is a representation of our temporal and spatial forms of intuition, if our world were merely a subjective projection of finite consciousness, it would still bear a real relation to the Reality which thus conditioned us; it could not be mere *maya*, springing from absolute *avidya* (ignorance).

On any hypothesis, there is no escape from relatedness as opposed to the Absolute, "the Unconditioned," the "*Ding an Sich*," the Brahman, alleged to exist beyond experience, outside of *maya*. Existence is relatedness. "If there is nothing that is unrelated," says Lotze,⁸⁰ "we are entitled to say that it belongs to the nature of existence to be related."

80. *Microcosmus*, II., bk. ix., ch. i.

There is a growing tendency among philosophical thinkers to regard relations as real. In an able work entitled *Dynamic Idealism*,⁸¹ A. H. Lloyd contends that relationship is not only essential in things, but is the things themselves; it is not a formal condition of them, but is substantial. "In activity lies that which makes relationship actual," he says.⁸² "Relationship means activity...relationship and activity are one....Relationship is real only if dynamic."⁸³

All this points to the conclusion that the universe is a live organism of beings and selves, not a pantheistic unit or Absolute. It means that Ultimate Being is not divorced from the trials, errors, and trivialities of finite life. Differences are not "lost," or "absorbed" in an Absolute; our struggles are known to God, otherwise they could not exist, otherwise intelligibility would be surrendered. Reality is not a mere sea in which every drop is like the next drop; it is infinitely, minutely diverse. Hegel shows that there is nothing which is a mere one, an eternal self-sameness. Reality is essentially a many in one; identity exists only through difference. "There will neither be selves nor things," says Bradley,⁸⁴ "nor, in brief, *any intelligible fact*, unless on the assumption that sameness in diversity is real." Our deepest experience or consciousness every moment reveals this unity amidst multiplicity as the fundamental fact, a concrete unity behind which we cannot go. "Thought involves analysis and synthesis," again says Bradley, "and if the law of contradiction forbade diversity it would forbid thinking altogether... Thought cannot do without differences, but, on the other hand, it cannot make them."

81. Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co.

82. *Dynamic Idealism*, p. 43.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

84. *Appearance and Reality*, p. 351.

Again, Green argues⁸⁵ that “the uniformity of nature does not mean that its constituents are everywhere the same, but that they are everywhere related.” Nor can we retreat at this late day to the point of view that this relatedness means absolute predetermination, since one of its relations is precisely the freedom, the chance, the indeterminateness, for which we are all along contending, and which we find in actual life.

“Not what it comes from but what it leads to is to decide” the fate of the universe. The highest ideal may give place to a higher. The most exalted vision may some time be transcended. Ever on and on. Life never pauses. Nothing is wholly destroyed. Nothing merely ends. It leads to somewhat else, and that to a somewhat beyond. With every new development new possibilities are likely to be suggested. The Absolute is the unattainable ideal which gives zest to our search, and every supposed absolute ideal is but the relative masquerading in enticing disguise,—“the flying Perfect, at once the inspirer and condemner of every success.”

If our experience, then, is a manifestation of the activity, or dynamically related life of God, in whose republic we are self-conscious agents, reality is not a fixed quantity, but is real only through our progressive experience. God is the power necessary to carry forward this given, concrete, related experience. Causation is not the Absolute, but the ultimate, eternal, relative life, fundamental to all design, antecedent to all (relative) beginnings. It is due to the perpetual presence of God.

But, objects the sceptic, perhaps change itself is an illusion. Then illusion brings change. The oak is different from the acorn: we do not perceive the two simultaneously. Change is a fact in our most persistently sceptical moment of consciousness. Ere we can examine the doubt, it is gone. To attribute illusion to illusion is to cherish an infinite regress.

The existence of the universe cannot be a delusion. Even if its real nature is partly veiled in illusion, there must be a reality to produce the illusion,

85. *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 35.

since there is no presentation without something presented, no evolving world unless God lives and moves in it. The universe cannot be a succession of shadows cast by shadows; something real exists, whose nature perfectly accounts for the character of the shadow. We return each time to this concrete world as the real world; not to the world of a hypothetical Absolute.

The critic may once more plead, as a last resort, that all this relativity is implied in the Absolute, else were he not perfect. But the relative has meaning only by being of worth in itself; it is organic, dynamic, progressive. Relativity also implies imperfection, but no imperfection is permissible in the Absolute.

If there were an Absolute, and we could know it, we should know it only in relation to ourselves. But anything known through relations is not absolute but relative. We start with them; all our experience is based upon them; we never get beyond them. Only relations are knowable. All knowledge is knowledge of relations. The Absolute is by hypothesis unknowable. But the unknowable is the non-existent.⁸⁶ Therefore the Absolute does not exist.

It is said that God is absolute peace, unaware of our suffering; consequently people try to cultivate the same peace, and thus become unsympathetic. But how could this be while there is discord in the world? He would not be absolute if he did not know of our suffering. On the other hand, a God who should know of our suffering would not be absolute; for he would know it as one who, while understanding its meaning, would permit us to learn from experience, would love and help us, yet become absolute only through our perfection. God forbid, however, that perfection ever come; for it would be intolerably dreary.

How could God be perfect peace while Windsor Hotel horrors are occurring? Is the Absolute that devouring flame?

If God were not in some measure limited, he could upset evolution, and interfere with law, reproduce the Athens of Pericles in a moment, recover

86. See Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, pp. 364–368.

the identical Alexandrian library, or cause the carboniferous and nineteenth-century periods to occur simultaneously. Anyone may believe this if he will, and repeat the unintelligible dogma that "God can do anything." One might doubt that there really is system in the universe, and so plead with God to interfere with nature. Possibly the sun's energy will dissipate and the universe become uninhabitable; no one knows absolutely. But the probabilities point the other way, and in our saner moments we believe more in the God of teleology, or creative design, than in the Absolute.

The God of teleology, that is, the Father of all evolution, is necessarily limited because he possesses a world-order. For evolution requires time; it is a relative process of gradual change. God himself cannot upset law; it is eternal. Therefore we can depend upon the universe. It is just because there is and can be no arbitrary interference by an Absolute that we have reason for our faith in the beneficence of the universe.

The most plausible attempt to formulate a conception of the Absolute Whole as the only reality, in Bradley's great book, *Appearance and Reality*, resulted only in a doctrine "riddled with inconsistencies." Bradley is forced finally to confess that "the Absolute *is* its appearances." In other words, all related things are in some measure real; sentience, not abstract thought, is reality. There is no mere appearance.

Our total problem, therefore, is to know all the relations of the parts; for the real is the progressively revealed sum-total. The many individuals and relations—God, man, nature, society, thought, feeling, activity, freedom, the moral law, service, and the spiritual ideal—constitute the true cosmos.

If we reject the Absolute, our alternative is the conception of an ultimate Being aspiring to become absolute, but never permitting himself to pause in this endeavour. This perpetual Presence, abiding in the eternal becoming, whose relations, whose world of nature, and whose democracy of souls are never absorbed, is the true basis of the meaning and beauty of life—the "Power which cradles and encompasses all our lives."

God is greater than the Absolute. For the Absolute is a poor, bloodless, mathematical, bachelor hermit, while God is the tender Father, unutterably near, loving, and wise, more a Person than an abstraction, because of his almost human fellowship with his society of souls. Love, not the Absolute, is the greatest power in the world, and love is never solitary, never egoistically peaceful. Its ways are scrutable, because it dwells with us. All our power at its best is that, yet it is made our own because God so loves us that he grants us liberty to choose or direct it as we will. In him we live in a far deeper, nobler sense than if we were literally he. We possess that power which, if Absolute, he would selfishly monopolise. In deepest truth, I am a part of him; we are spiritually inseparable. Yet I am so truly myself that I manifest his glory only by utmost fidelity to my special gifts from him. He reappears in every part, he is manifested through all lives, contemplates through all eyes, and is the more beautiful because no two visions are identical. He comes not to destroy but to fulfil; not to absorb, but to glorify.

To say that he is All is to blaspheme his noblest creations. Either to identify him with or separate him from nature and humanity is to overlook the supreme beauty of his life. His is the grandeur of these matchless Alps, yet he is not they. His is the purpose of every finite life, yet the finite may be lost in the wilderness of its own finitude. To attain entire freedom is to lose all sense of separateness from him, yet the highest summit of freedom is, like the mighty Matterhorn, the most persistently individual of all points of view. And beyond, man cannot go. Above, below, around, extends the infinite atmosphere of beauty—God and man and nature evermore distinct.

Chapter VII: The Ideal Attitude

When a man lives with God, his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn.

—Emerson.

IT MAY now occur to the critic that we have not offered an entire substitute for the pantheistic universe, the chief merit of which is unity, the entire absence of discord. If there be no Absolute, one may contend, if individuality be ultimately mysterious and self-active, if the divine ideal be subject to the modifications of universal evolution, what assurance have we that beauty or system reigns at the heart of things; that righteousness, not chaos and evil, shall triumph?

Surely, goodness must triumph. It is also a demand of our nature that the universe prove ultimately harmonious and rational. The mind is dissatisfied with a description of life in terms of fundamentally distinct and possibly hostile parts. The heart refuses to believe that even the most unruly members of society shall remain eternally at war, or forever unreconciled. If life as now constituted is a republic of finite wills, a field of strife, a complexity of discords and systems, chance and mechanism, freedom and law; if nature and ethics are pitted against each other, selfish greed and altruism at strife,

we ask, How is the universe constituted that it may own this wealth of incongruities, yet ultimately achieve the divine ideal?

We may find the universe beset with unsolved problems, and wisely conclude to await the solution which further experience shall reveal. Evil may temporarily triumph, and in that case we are willing to be particularly strenuous in the exercise of our moral privilege and our creative spiritual activity. The transition called death may throw great light on problems now utterly dark and mysterious. But even as empiricists, we demand unity as the ultimate ideal, and believe we have as good a right to deem life ultimately congruous as to believe it fundamentally moral. Indeed, it is difficult to see how the universe can be moral without being congruous. And difficult as it may be to harmonise the strangely diverse data of sense experience, spiritual aspiration, and philosophic thought, the question persistently presents itself, How can things cohere, yet appear incoherent?

Before we undertake to formulate a doctrine which shall meet these demands, it is highly important to note that we have rejected pantheism, absolutism, fatalism, and the mechanical theory precisely because they leave no room for just this triumph of righteousness, this unity and fellowship for which the heart longs. These doctrines are all dualistic. On the one hand, they offer a conception of a stern, solitary power with no place whatever for finite selves and human conduct. On the other, they are haunted by a series of facts, namely, the existence of nature, freedom, activity, and struggle, which they had tried in vain to coerce into silence and oblivion. In a word, that for which thinkers really created their Absolute proves to be the characteristic which above all others is lacking in his life.

Again, it is essential to note, and to reiterate until it shall not be forgotten, that there is naught in human life to warrant the belief that man can do anything to defeat either the course of nature or the laws and ideals of the moral cosmos. We are not pleading for unlimited freedom, nor do we acknowledge the existence of a separate power called evil. We are arguing only for the facts of our moral and spiritual consciousness, presented to but

not created by us, and the power spiritually to direct an energy, an inner life which in deepest reality is the energy and life of God.

Our liberty is simply the freedom to have experience, to maintain an individual attitude toward a life which we share, and to react upon this presented experience with sufficient freedom to reap the individual consequences. The sole reason, therefore, for characterising an experience as good or bad, a statement as true or false, or a deed as right or wrong, is that all those who are concerned in it may derive from it the lessons of the moral law and the benefits which make for spiritual progress.

Half the wisdom of life, therefore, is the discovery of what we cannot and ought not to do, because of the laws of God in the realms of nature and of ethics. The other half consists in doing what is highest, noblest, most moral and spiritual, in co-operation with the divine creative, progressive activity, with whose tremendous motive force we have become painfully acquainted by ignorantly trying to oppose it.

We are not, then, pleading in the slightest degree for the personal point of view, the anxious, righteously indignant attitude, by which man delegates to himself the responsibility of the universe, and earnestly pleads for lost souls. There is no viceregent of God. There are none whom God has left without righteous and adequate promptings. As surely as every individual life is a fresh revelation of God, so surely has God made known to each the wisdom which, if followed, will enable the higher self to triumph; so surely is the perpetual Presence an unfailing spiritual resource—of strength, of love, of guidance, of the joy and beauty of fellowship with him.

Our problem is, first, to consider the ultimate harmony of the universe, and, second, to ask, What is the wisest attitude of adjustment to it?

In the foregoing chapter, we have accepted the persistent upwelling of life, the continuous forward movement, as the fundamental fact. Within and about us this is most significant. And our chief line of departure from the old absolutism has been the endeavour to adapt our conception of reality to this most impressive fact of our existence.

Yet we must avoid the opposite extreme. The theory of absolute flux or change is as unsatisfactory as the old conservatism. There must be somewhat that endures; a reality which persists through all the mutations of the cosmos. The perpetual Presence which animates and develops the perpetual flux must at least possess such unity of life, power, love, purposes, ideals, that, however free the activity of the parts, permanent chaos shall not come upon the whole.

This statement is clearly warranted by the fact that system everywhere characterises nature; that the moral cosmos itself is a purposive system; and because of the persistent conviction of our hearts, of our higher selves, that goodness must be victorious.

Modestly and cautiously speaking, the least we can say is, that at the foundation of the total universe there is a balance of harmony over discord. Whether or not this ultimate harmony be essentially immutable as a unit I do not venture to say. I hazard the statement only that there is no other reality, no hostile power; that its sum-total of energy is ever the same; it always and universally functions according to law; it is eternally alive; and if it does not change in essence, at any rate its activity is continuously manifested in gradually changed or varied forms. Its unity consists in the fact that it is one Power, its variety in the fact that it is a differentiated life, forever passing forward to a new moment of being.

The existence of ultimate Being as one Power, manifesting itself in a uniform manner, implies beauty of character, a coherence, which omnipotence regulated by wisdom alone could give. Such a Being need not at any given moment possess all knowledge, for this may be the gift of eternity, the contribution of universal experience through all the ages in all worlds, and through the intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth of all men in search of the absolute ideal. But if perfection is to characterise the total eternal life, the ultimate nature of such a Being must be at all times sufficiently harmonious to render possible this objective or manifested and progressively attained perfection. Life at any moment and in minutest

detail is founded upon harmony; not immobile harmony, because the next moment may reveal the entire universe in a new light, but the advancing harmony, the eternal experience of the perennially revealed, progressively present God. Certain aspects are potential only, some are active, and some are quiescent memories. The Power remains, harmony abides, law endures, forms come and go. Ideality is anterior to actuality, and actuality leaves its impress upon the face of time, preparatory to the realisation of a higher ideal.

The fact that the harmony of the universe is ever going forward to accomplishment implies that there is constant adjustment of means to ends, continuous endeavour to realise types or ideals. The method which ultimate Being chooses to attain this end I take to be precisely the method of evolution which we observe in our human world to-day.

Everywhere

The lower doth ascend from law to law,
In growths that brook no hindrance and no haste,
Vast-organised, unstaying.

Since these contrasted conditions of failure and success exist, it is clear that they are recognised and deemed purposive by ultimate Being. In this sense, the entire world-system is good—the effort of harmony to achieve its full self. But the fact that man as a part of this system is allowed to experiment and act on his own responsibility, implies that discord also reigns. For he alone achieves harmony who is wise. Man is born in ignorance, and inharmony is the inevitable accompaniment of his evolution. Belief in ultimate harmony, in system and purpose, does not, therefore, contradict the moral law, nor does it compel the classification of all deeds and circumstances as good—a confused doctrine which neglects the necessary distinctions of the moral law. From the present point of view, it is the divine tendency, the purpose only that is unqualifiedly good. The divine power achieves the greatest

good through us only when man freely chooses and expresses it. The doctrine which starts with abstract perfection or harmony as the only reality, then concludes that, because goodness is omnipresent, there is no sin, no sickness, no evil, has no place in rational thought, nor does rational thought inculcate *laissez-faire* economics or invertebrate optimism.

What people need is not to be made contented with the present social conditions, but made to think, to become ethical, to co-operate with the higher order which is seeking to achieve harmony. The golden age is yet to be. Man has not fallen, he is rising. Misery and evil are not illusory, they are actualities—not realities—and must first be understood before they can be eliminated. The harmony of the universe still has an incalculable amount of work to achieve. And never will the ideal be made real by complacently sitting back in the chair of pseudo-metaphysics, with the belief that all is bound to end well. This is fatalism. Whereas the universe needs action. It demands thought. It calls for persistent effort. It requires us to study the principles of harmony, health, happiness, freedom, and social equality, and calls upon us to do our utmost to secure the realisation of these ideals, to inculcate those ideals which stir men to action.

My argument, therefore, is in every detail a revolt against all abstract systems of thought, a contention for the living, striving Power which “makes for righteousness,” whose presence each soul may discover, both within and without. It is an affirmation, not that things are now harmonious, that justice is done, that man is free, but that there is an eternal equity, an encompassing beauty which wills that justice shall reign, and calls upon you and me to hasten the day by displaying justice to our neighbour. The harmony of life is, therefore, very far from life as we find it to-day, filled as it is with inequalities, strife, and selfishness. This is but the raw material out of which the Achiever proposes to evolve harmony, and we are to look not to the present social order to discover what shall be, but to the higher order yet to come; for the present social order is already condemned by the presence of the higher order, the spirit of love, of justice, and beauty, which calls upon

all men to turn from the god of selfishness and hate and adore the God of righteousness, the omnipresent Wisdom, the omniscient Harmony.

Out of the deeps of ultimate Being, then, proceeds the outgoing or achieving life, the energy behind all evolution, the progressing consciousness of God. It touches the tiny atom and makes it psychic; it breathes upon the air and sets it in rhythmic movement. It draws force to force, and gives birth to heat; moves upon the formless and lifts it aloft in form; quickens inorganic matter and causes it to pulse with life; calls the animal cell forth from the vegetal, and the human from the animal. Beginning with the lowest, upward through every phase of activity or life which the universe knows, all things exist in order and degree; all things are to be understood by us in order and degree, as lower and higher.

All change, all growth, is primarily due to the quickening of this achieving harmony; the result is due to the reaction of the individual moved upon. Man, who possesses the greatest power of reaction, can cause the greatest discord. If God alone were here, we could classify all results as harmonious. But God does not live alone. Man acts, man is ignorant, hence the need of distinctions. Whatever comes from God is right. Whatever comes from man reveals his imperfections of development. The world, as we know it, is a mixed quantity; the understanding of it involves both knowledge of discord and of harmony.

Here, then, is the meaning of our belief in harmony. Each moment of life a Power is present with us which faith and reason assure us is good,

The immanent and all-pervading Presence,
The one vast, throbbing pulse which moves the sphere.

How are we to know this upwelling harmony from our own discordant selves? By experience. No criterion has been proposed which shall infallibly tell us of its presence; no such criterion is possible. Nor have many arisen who have obeyed its inspirations in every detail, nor many who could tell

another what it means to obey; for it has an individual message to each soul. It continually reveals the better way, showing where we have erred in the past and how we may take advantage of our mistakes. We thus learn more and more clearly to distinguish between the divine prompting and the finite interpretation of it.

Consequently, from the present point of view, the past is not defended as absolutely right or good, because "it happened so and must have been right," as optimistic fatalism says. Only on the supposition, I repeat, that all is simply God, that God alone acts, would this be true. Only on the assumption that we perfectly understand and adapt ourselves to circumstances can we declare that they are the best possible conditions. Omniscience alone could know how far our action is wisest, how far it emanates from ourselves, and to what degree it comes from God. Circumstances may have a wisest lesson to teach, they may be such as to bring only good, if perchance we are enlightened enough to learn their lesson or discover their goodness. But the wisest circumstances, those which are wholly good, will naturally gravitate to us only when we are wise and good enough to invite them. For, remember that man acts and reacts, and life has such worth or meaning for him as his own state of development makes possible. Life is for him what his own activity and wisdom make it. While he is imperfect, his life is imperfect, his thought is imperfect, and the circumstances he gathers about him are such as his imperfect state draws to a focus. Life shall become wholly good and wise to the degree that he learns the distinctions upon which our moral consciousness insists. It shall be wholly good only when, instead of accepting all circumstances as the wisest and best, he discovers that some are bad, some good, some better, and best; while the truly good is not the circumstance, but the moral and spiritual life which makes it so. Thus right thinking, wise action, shall make things good; for goodness and wisdom come from within, where the moral law obtains.

Scientifically speaking, whatever is may be the correct result of the factors that produced it; but this statement does not include the moral factor.⁸⁷ From a mechanical point of view, it may be true that even a murder is a natural consequence or necessity of circumstance; for, physically speaking, a man may not be above it. But we have discarded this doctrine; the physical man is not the whole man; circumstance is not the whole of life. Man has powers of thought, and is a moral agent. He did not think, you allege. Aye, but he ought to have thought. Moreover, the world teems with crimes committed by those who, like the murderer of the Austrian Empress, carefully planned a deed and gloated over it when it was done. There is surely no room for doubt here. Circumstance is never an excuse for crime, although circumstances may explain the conditions of crime.

It is no excuse, and it is unethical, to affirm that we do the best we can, or the best we know. In our heart of hearts we are conscious that we know far better than we do. If it be true that we do the best we can, the soul is a prisoner; it has no spiritual power to break through its imprisoning states. Once more, in our heart of hearts, we know that we can do better when we try, when we bestir ourselves.

No theory of life's harmony is, therefore, adequate which unqualifiedly or passively accepts whatever circumstances man's condition attracts. The attitude of religious resignation is entirely unlike that of intelligent, ethical adjustment. "All things work together for good for them *who love the Lord!*" One may safely allow the power of attraction to operate only when one's life is dedicated unqualifiedly to truth and virtue. Previous to that stage, the acceptance of whatever comes, simply because it comes, may lead into innumerable difficulties.

"'All is good' means all is growth," says a recent writer. But even this modification is not worthy of unqualified ethical acceptance, for if all is to

87. For the distinction between ethics and science, see W. M. Salter, *Ethical Religion*, chap. i. Little, Brown & Co., Boston.

be growth, we must first select that which is worthy of growth; it must be rightly understood and developed. Thus understood, namely, in the light of moral evolution, one is ready to admit that the spirit, the intent of this precept has accomplished great good, by teaching that every tendency in man may be turned into good. From this point of view, the body is good; every part of it, every function is good. But its use results in good only when its functions are understood; *it is good only in its place*. That place man has learned to recognise only through mistakes, the mistakes of the monastic life, the erroneous doctrine that the entire human world is fallen and depraved, that all materiality is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Nor is it a sound argument to declare that, because one has attained to the intuition of the spiritual harmony of things, "the moral law is overruled by the spiritual." It is not a law, nor is it moral, unless it is true on all planes, everywhere and at all times. To contend that it applies to "the external," while love applies to the inner world, is an equally futile attempt to deny its universality. If the inner or spiritual life be really higher, it is righteousness, it is a life we ought to pursue. Every ideal is an "ought." The term "higher" implies ethics; it involves choice. And what deed of the spiritual life could be higher than the choice of the Father's will, the entire dedication of self to the great ought-to-be of God? If there is nothing higher, it is impossible that the moral law can be overruled; the summit of spirituality and the height of morality are the same.

You may have a lower form of morality without a high degree of spirituality. A lower form of spirituality is possible, where unethical statements like "all is good" are made. But the perfection of the one is the perfection of the other. Never, until human experience shall cease, will there cease to be a lower and a higher. There is always a beyond, just as there are higher forms of mathematics than twice two are four. But in these more complex forms two and two are still four. The law is absolute, imperative, eternal. God himself cannot make it otherwise. It is an expression of the nature, the harmony of God. For by the term God, we mean the perfect Being, he who knows the

right, who is so moral that all knowledge, all thought, all conduct is of this precise, perfect type; it is complete righteousness.

Of course, if one has decided that the moral law is "overruled," it is a logical procedure to be inaccurate, even dishonest, while contracting debts without knowing how one can possibly meet them, and practising methods to which a business man, if honest, would not stoop. But true spirituality is entirely consistent with righteous financial methods. The dogma that the intellect is secondary is responsible for much of the confusion of thought which has recently obtained. But what standard should govern our powers of expression, if not intellect? How can business be conducted except upon honest business principles? Is not the theory that all this is of the "external" a relic of the Middle Ages, when the body was looked upon as evil? And is not this dogma responsible for the unethical thinking which has crept into current thought?

It is not necessary, however, to multiply illustrations of our deviations from the pathway to the harmony of life. The essential is to know that they are deviations; that every discord may teach a harmony; that the truly harmonious life is not only spiritual, honest, and sincere, but expresses its beauty both physically and socially. There is an instinctive love of the harmonious implanted in every living soul. The great essential is recognition of its presence. When the musician elaborates and perfects his theme, until every note voices its harmony, he is applying this principle. His inner sense is not pleased until unity pervades his composition. The careful writer is equally attentive to the sense of beauty; his sentences must possess a certain rhythm, not one word too many, not one too few. The poet, opening his soul to the universal melodies, embodies the same rhythm in his verse, and we say of an unhappy figure or misplaced word, that it is a "false touch."

These are familiar illustrations, but they prepare the way for the application of the principle to obscurer themes. Seek those friends, those opportunities for service which rhyme with your highest state of development. Ask concerning all mooted questions, when you are hesitating how to act, Is this in

harmony with my better self, with the moral law? Is it a loving, righteous act? Or, if you cannot immediately decide, start out in some direction tentatively, then examine the result. Does it bring satisfaction? Do you conclude that you have acted wisely? If you are still perplexed, make several trials, each time pausing to test your action in the light of the highest standard you know at the time. The universe can ask no more of you than this.

Again, seek harmony of physical surroundings. Each article of food, for example, has its specific quality. If you crave a simple diet, such as fruits, grains, and vegetables, follow this moving as far as possible. Seek a higher range of harmonies, as you would seek a new circle of friends. All progress is composed of similar readjustments, and what is one's meat is sure to be another's poison, to the end of time.

If it be advisable to live where the climate is not what you would prefer, seek the beauties of weather, learn to enjoy a rainy day, find delight in a snowstorm, discover the soft lights and shades of cloud-land, the relaxing tendency of summer's heat. This sounds like a mere platitude, but it is a possibility worth considering.

He is happiest who has the widest range of likes. That one may greatly enlarge one's sphere of interest becomes evident from close observation of those who are always complaining,—that they do not like and do not try to like, they decide that they can never endure, even before they have made the attempt, and their very attitude invites annoyance.

It is asking much of those who are ill at sea to enter into harmony with the rhythm of the waves, to rise and fall in thought and motion with the pitching and rolling of a steamer. But the victory has been won, and it is a delightful sensation to those who can enter into this swaying and heaving. A storm at sea inspires fear or the sense of grandeur, according to the sentiment of the voyager. One readily understands why the sea possesses such fascination for the sailor, why he is happiest in a storm; for he is in adjustment to the ocean's vibration; the harp of consciousness responds to the vigorous music of the wind and waves. Such men, as well as great lovers of nature, woodsmen and

hunters, impress the beholder as souls who have communed with God, and borne away a life, a spirit of beauty, which most of us miss who live in cities.

There is a corresponding rhythm in every machine, every vehicle, and the motion of animals. Many have learned to observe this rhythm in walking, thus practising economy of motion, and deriving more benefit from the exercise. If our voices were better trained we might attain, by careful modulation and intonation, a harmony of utterance now seldom heard.

The same symmetry of inner and outer man is realised in a measure by those who dress artistically, those whose attire expresses individuality. One's entire environment may, in fact, not only find harmony within, but be so adapted as to express harmony externally.

We may some time learn to rear our houses and construct bridges, monuments, and other buildings so that they will not yield to the ravages of weather. We may learn how to live so as to be ever young, so as to weather all calamity. There is no detail too small to deserve study. Freedom from worry and nervousness, the cultivation of serenity or poise is, perhaps, the most effectual means; for it tends to lift the entire life to its high level.

In the beautiful economy of nature no energy is lost. Every detail of your life and mine is provided for with a care, a foresight, unutterably wise; that is, the moving is here—the tendency. It is a chance whether or not one accepts the opportunity, but nature does not fail.

In order to test the presence of this prompting, pause again and again and await its coming, ever remembering that harmony is progressive, that its interpretation, and the adjustment to it, is an individual problem. Begin the day in this spirit, and do not rise or resume work until you feel that the right time has come. When you do not know what to undertake, wait until you do. If you are at a loss to know how to settle an important question to-morrow, ask yourself if you have something right and wise to do to-day. If so, do it well. When to-morrow comes, someone will come to your assistance, you will meet the right person at the right time, guidance will come. For if you are doing a work which is necessary to the universe, the universe

will see that you are clothed and fed. When you are moving in harmony with Ultimate Power, know that the regular march of events will swiftly bring what you require when you require it—never before. Impatience is discord; trust is harmony. The law is as exact as mathematics.

But remember the conditions: the integrity of the moral law, the necessity of careful discrimination, the standards of lower and higher. One is likely to be deceived again and again. There is one persistent remedy: Begin again, experiment, watch and pray. After a time one shall feel the inner harmony distinctly enough to say, This is a part of the cosmos, I will obey. I have nothing to do with that. This is the dictate of the Highest. That, I will not waste energy upon.

For all things that are harmoniously a part of the cosmos there is a fitting time, a proper occasion, not a time which fate has decreed, for no one can foretell the hour of its coming, but an opportunity which shall reveal itself unexpectedly—when the conditions are ripe. "There's a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at its flood, leads on to fortune." While we are living and thinking, out of the apparently fruitless present the occasion shall arise and one will say, This is my opportunity. As one looks back upon life, one sees how everything tended toward the climax of that hour. But no one by reading the tendencies could have exactly calculated the coming of the occasion. It was not truly your opportunity until you seized it. That it would come, knowledge of evolutionary law led you to believe highly probable. Yet you could only await its coming.

When the seeds were ready, one by one
Through the earth they broke;
When the bud was ready, lo! the sun
Touched it, and it awoke.

When the heart was ready, half a breath
Rent the veil it wore;

When the soul was ready, loving death
Oped a wider door.

One may apply this principle in every phase of life. Someone gives me a book which I am urged immediately to read. No, my friend cannot tell when that book will do me the greatest good. I lay it away upon the shelf. A year hence I am writing an essay and need enlightenment upon a certain point. I recollect the book. Behold! it was written for me.

Or, suppose I try to write a letter that ought not to be written. I misspell a word. I drop ink. I omit a sentence. By and by, when I have ruined two or three sheets in a vain attempt, I bethink myself and conclude that I have strayed from the main highway to harmony. Again, I begin to write to a friend simply because I have always written to him, and think I must. But I discover that I have nothing important to say. Then I will not write. Perhaps we are no longer to play a part in each other's lives. The hour is too precious to waste it upon a negative occupation.

At another time, a desire arises to travel. Accordingly, if I am not yet fully convinced of the comprehensiveness of this great law, I map out my course, engage my passage, and go. I have a fairly profitable trip, but I have to contend with obstacles from beginning to end. Somehow I seem to have gone away to please myself, and I am conscious of having lost my inner adjustment to the ultimate harmony.

Suppose that when the desire came I had said to myself, Very well, I will go when the time comes, be it next year or five years hence. When the time comes, everything opens before me. Nature is giving me a vacation because she needs my services when I am rested.

Does not this running of all things together to a common end explain what is called "good luck"? The lucky man is one who by instinct, temperament, genius, or understanding has fallen into line with the harmony of the cosmos. He is not fated to be lucky. Each time he must choose, must adjust himself or take the current when it serves, follow the line of least resistance, strike

while the iron is hot. His less fortunate neighbour complainingly looks on and cries aloud, in ignorance, misery, or idleness, that the universe is unjust, that fortune falls in the lap of the lucky man. But this "child of fortune" is an indefatigable worker. While the idle complainer thinks the lucky man is also idly awaiting fortune, the latter is incessantly studying, labouring, achieving. All that comes to him is the exact result of his persistent, unsparing toil. He moves along the line of least resistance because careful observation has taught him its law. He is rewarded because he is faithful. All things work together for good because his work is essential to the evolution of the cosmos.

The understanding of this law also explains the place and meaning of prayer. One man prays for manifold things which do not come. He prays in a loud voice and uses the formulas of others. Another's prayer is the spontaneous welling of desire, clothed in words of his own. All that he prays for comes, because he seeks that which is in line with his development. He does not want things for himself, but for the cosmos. He prays, formulates an ideal, aspires, then immediately does that which shall prepare the way for what he desires. He answers his own prayer, for answer to prayer, the realisation of ideals, work, and co-operation with evolution, mean the same.

Since the harmony of the universe is poise, balance, fitness, beauty, there must be moderation, equanimity, poise, in all our endeavours to answer prayer. There must be a balance between spirit and form. Do not be either too precise, intellectually exact, on the one hand, or vaguely, indiscriminately spiritual or loving, on the other. Law is the intellect, the precision, the form of God. The energy of evolution is the spirit, which gives life to the form. Intellect, law, renders the spirit definite; wisdom gives balance to love. Never shall either the beauty or precision, the spirit or meaning of the universe be adequately interpreted until man shall attain poise of intellect and spirit in his own life, in his thought. Man must both feel the spirit of life and think its law, must both enjoy and study, appreciate and understand. Neither beauty nor law is adequate alone; neither spirit nor form, love nor

wisdom, receptivity nor activity. Life's prose is the mate of its poetry; utility is the other half of beauty.

In this practical age of ours we are in danger of becoming sordidly practical, to the exclusion of the imagination, the sense of the beautiful, the music of life. But beauty, rightly understood, is the clue to utility. The universe does not exist for utility alone, but for beauty. It was wrought in beauty or order. Without beauty it could not endure, yet law alone would be barren without morals, the spirit, love, service. The exclusion of the one for the other is a prime cause of inharmony in life. The time will come when the one will be as much sought after as the other. With the dawning of that day the age shall witness the waning of the power of materialism, and a fresh revelation of the spirit.

Whenever you hear man or woman decrying intellect, you may at once know that there is oneness somewhere, since intellect is that which discriminates, individuates; the definite type, genus, or species is one-half the glory of creation—that which lies at the basis of all differentiation through evolution—and is founded in the ultimately differentiated character of God himself.

Or if, on the other hand, intellect be exalted and spirit degraded, you may know that the life, the love element has been deprived of its true place. Therefore the more acutely intellectual one can be without sacrificing the spirit, the nearer the approach to the heart of life; and the more spiritually receptive, without permitting that receptivity to become indiscriminate, the better will be the general result. Each time we find ourselves becoming too intellectual, we must give ear to the spirit. When we observe ourselves becoming vague, we must reverse the machinery and cultivate precision of thought. Thus by continual interaction shall harmony be finally attained.

Is the spirit the higher? It would seem more accurate to say that it is the more comprehensive. The spirit perceives, feels; the intellect formulates what it can. But what the intellect cannot define to-day, it may to-morrow, because the spirit has moved forward. It is therefore unfair to the intellect

to affirm that its limitations are such as to preclude rational definition. Await the fuller vision, and when the spirit sees farther, the definitions of the intellect shall be improved.

One shall, therefore, attain full adjustment to the achieving harmony of the universe by making this adjustment not only spiritual, but by developing the intellect as far as it demands, by being true to the moral sense, by neglecting no call of physical nature.

Life is a poem whose beauty we seek to interpret, whose meaning we try to formulate in terms of beauty. There is harmony among the atoms, as truly as among the stars, a wealth of musical interplay amid infinitesimal motion. But the fact that it is a living poem requires our rendering of it to be progressive. Found your desire to know its beauty, therefore, upon the law of evolution. Much energy has been wasted in the past, on account of the mistaken idea that harmony is a motionless mosaic. It is a beauty that pauses not nor fades. It ever vanishes upon one horizon to appear upon another.

There is a wise, ethical, best way to do everything. That way is made known, the guidance discovers itself, when the need arises. Await the fitness of time and you shall know this wisest way and have power given you to pursue it. There are times when the universe has less for us to do, when we may rest, knowing that God will call us when the next need arises. There are times, too, when we are puzzled, troubled. Then, happy thought! I have forgotten God. What has the universe in store? What ought I to do? Straightway comes the guidance, and I am happy again.

Is this not the entire secret, namely, on all doubtful occasions, on all subjects whatsoever, to pause, observe, listen, then move forward again, co-operating with the prompting that has come, following the guiding wisdom? If so, spend all your energy here. Quicken your moral sense that you may be alive to the right in minutest detail. Try to feel the harmonious tendency in every emotion, in every sensation coming from the physical world. Sharpen your intellect that it may discover the finest structure of ideas. Repose in

watchful reverie until your consciousness reveals the next step in personal evolution.

If the train of thought breaks and you lose touch with its beauty, wait for the word you lost, the idea that escaped, that which joins with the last wise word you wrote, the last good deed you performed. Only through this exquisite touch of thought shall the vast world of beauty about us be known. Each must be poet, musician, philosopher, artisan, in his special sphere. Vicarious oneness with God is utterly impossible. The harmonious soul shall be made so only at home. It is futile to lean upon others. It is of little avail to speculate. For the harmony of the universe is divine, and is truly known through divine revelation. All that God asks of us is that we shall cultivate all our senses, neglecting neither mind nor heart, body nor soul. Then forth through our instruments shall stream the poetic strains of his eternally progressing beauty; the heart shall know it as love, the mind as truth, the conscience as goodness, and through this perfect trinity from out life's darkest mystery the meaning shall be called.

Chapter VIII: Individualism and the Social Ideal

In the ideal order every man shall be an end as well as means.

—W. M. Salter.

A CERTAIN tantalising doubt has from the outset haunted our discussion. The fear, namely, that our doctrine may end in sheer individualism. For every objection to pantheism, fatalism, and the Absolute resolves itself into a plea for the individual. We have argued for self-activity and free-will that the beauty of the universe may be unmarred, yet that beauty proved to be largely matter of personal consequence. The New Thought is unquestionably the consciousness of individuality. Every new approach to our subject has given fresh emphasis to the ultimate mystery of the separate ego. All depends on the personal choice, the incommunicable volition, the private experience. The individual acts, the individual suffers. All experience is known in terms of the "I" and the "mine." The individually relative point of view is the clue to the meaning of life. And although we have at last, in the foregoing chapter, found our way out of the fatalistic swamps of pantheism into a stronger faith in the ultimate goodness of things, and discovered an attitude which, tentatively at least, does justice both to the divine and the

human, we seem to have purchased that harmony at the expense of a long-neglected factor—society.

I have stated the doubt thus emphatically in order to point out the more clearly that it is not an objection at all, and with the hope that this last assembling of forces may result in the permanent overthrow of some of the strongholds of current individualism.

We need not tarry long before the alleged fortress of solipsism, or the doctrine that one individual alone exists; that our life is merely subjective and owns no social world. For the exploitation of that doctrine as applied to the Absolute has already taught us that no self, no individual, can exist except *in relation*: it must both limit and be limited. Nor is our self a mere transient phenomenon—"a pulsation from the tide of reality breaking into consciousness."

It is both real and permanent. Moreover, the possession of a subjective organism of consciousness, although a necessary condition of our existence, is not the only condition. The individual lives in a real world, surrounded by a real society. All this is a fact of experience, a gift of life. Scepticism need not detain us here. The individual is as surely indescribable and inconceivable apart from humanity, as he is inconceivable and unknowable apart from nature and from God.

We are interrelated, dependent beings, from the first moment, during every moment, of existence. The most beautiful characteristic of life is our mutual dependence. Furthermore, God makes for social harmony, equality. The real meaning of our argument for activity, freedom, and harmonious self-adjustment is the freedom, the ultimate perfection of society. It is throughout an argument for a new order of things.

The old order was absolutism, changeless perfection, a cloak for selfishness; the appeal to logic; frigid separateness; a creator who made the world out of nothing, then became a solitary aristocrat on the throne of grace. The new order is brotherhood, progress, altruism; the appeal to living, concrete

fact, aspiring experience, common sense; the accessible God, perennially present, perfecting his social republic.

The key-note of the new symphony is love,—the theme of the universal harmony itself,—and love, above all else, is social. All theories must err, all lives prove inadequate, which do not test all things by love. A man's power, a man's freedom, his happiness, is measured by his capacity for loving. The purity of his life, and the value of the results he achieves, depend on the quality of his love. The supreme individual attainment is revealed in that love which is outgoing in such measure that it forgets itself.

The harmony of life, therefore, means something quite different from a mere floating down the egoistic stream of serene self-gratulation. It gives scope to the strenuous life by showing how we should meet it—namely, by first understanding and mastering ourselves. It reveals the higher mode of being strenuous, not the anxious, personal, nervously tense contest, but the divinely prompted labour of love whose end is social liberty and equality.

Yet from the point of view of this book the entire achievement of this high social ideal depends upon its wise beginning in the life of the individual. Centralisation must precede distribution. True self-analysis is the basis of true social synthesis. Liberty and equality are, first of all, spiritual and individual terms. The particular is the clue to the universal, and the individual must first recognise the presence of the universal within before he can rightly manifest it without. The Vedanta erroneously assumes that the particular is the universal. The socialist falsely claims that the individual may be set free by levelling the universal. The individualist egoistically declares that the universal must be levelled to make way for himself. The labourer condemns the capitalist because he claims the full right to the fruits of his manual toil. The missionary condemns the heathen, since forsooth the former is of the "elect," and believes that his special revelation is the sole truth for all. While the wise man knows that only through universal reciprocity can complete virtue be attained.

The perfect organism results only from the Individual development, yet the partial imperfection, of its members. "Mutual supplementation implies mutual defect." "You cannot be a whole unless you join a whole," says Bradley; "our true being is not the extreme of unity, nor of diversity, but the perfect identity of both."⁸⁸ "The form of the social ideal is equality," says W. M. Salter⁸⁹; "not indeed similarity of place and function for every one; not that all should do the same work, or get the same returns for their work; but simply that all should be in turn ends as well as means."

The point of departure for this ideal social realm is the discovery, the understanding, and development of the individual consciousness, as the home of creative thought, the inceptive point of action, the sphere of moral and spiritual freedom. For this discovery involves the understanding of our relationship with "the Power that makes for righteousness," the awakening of conscience, the prompting of the heart to service. It is the discovery of inner causes, as opposed to the alleged external causes of our misery. It is the great turning-point in life, the contest with life's greatest temptations. For when the soul learns that it is free, that it can act, that an eternal power assures results in proportion to its actions, it must face the decisive issue between the personal and the impersonal, the merely human and the divine, the sort of activity which exerts pressure, and the kind which adjusts itself to the promptings of the ever-advancing spirit of harmony.

The true meaning of individuality is therefore revealed when we penetrate beyond the personal to an understanding of the meaning and beauty, the opportunity and joy of our existence as members of the creative democracy of God. The sacredness, the fatherhood and sonship, of the soul's inmost life is the clue to one's highest relationship to society, the knowledge that the inner life is the holy of holies which witnesses the supreme revelation of God; that it is love's world,—the manger wherein is born the Christ ideal.

88. *Ethical Studies*, p. 68.

89. *Ethical Religion*, pp. 123, 115.

In order to realise this sacredness, and the possibilities of its outward manifestation, let us pause for a moment in our discussion and enter the inner world as we would enter a great cathedral, to worship in spirit and silence. This spirit is best illustrated by those occasional moments when there is a brief cessation in our restless, every-day life, when we seem for the time to possess perfect freedom, the love or spirit of which we are in search. In such moments a consciousness is revealed which transcends the highest endeavours of self-consciousness, yet is that which inspires and guides it. When that spirit comes, one feels a sense of awe, of calmest humility, a desire to become truly and fully receptive, that no obstacle in self may impede the divine inflow. All problems are, for the time being, thrown into the background; all fears are banished. There is almost no questioning, no attempt to dictate the form which the inspiration shall take. Nor is one inclined to apply the tests of scepticism. All that is for another time. Now the one deep desire is, not to reason about reality, but to possess the thing itself. As the sky raises its pure azure above the highest mountain, so is this spirit superior to all that aspires to attain its boundless beauty and love. And I offer no proof that there is a divine presence which each may perceive in his inner sanctuary but the perpetual presence itself, the immediate consciousness that one has transcended the finite to abide for a season with God. Were I to undertake an adequate description of this great love and peace, my words would defame its sacred presence, and the cold analysis would convey, not the poetry of the inner life, not the warmth of love, but the dull prose of mere science, the grasping hate of selfishness, which insists that the last citadel of sentiment shall yield.⁹⁰

When the mind thus contemplates its highest relationships, and considers every-day experience, one is brought face to face with the great issue of

90. The above is a brief restatement of the method of entering the silence which I have elaborated in other volumes. It is impossible to avoid repetition, since the experience is characterised by unchanging laws, and is precisely this sacred experience because it is given to, not created by, us.

the inner life. The implications are so deeply personal that one can hardly suggest them to another. Yet the law is universal, namely, that we find what we seek; we see what we are; every experience is coloured by individual consciousness, which must change before the world will change. The inner world is, therefore, either the point of departure for the spiritual life, inspired by a constant sense of sacredness, the presence of divine creative power; or it is the inceptive point of a merely egoistic life, according to the attitude of the soul.

The law is brought home to the mind with fearful emphasis when one realises its tremendous consequences. Hitherto, one has cast the blame upon the world. One has complained at the conditions of life, found fault with friends, criticised society, condemned the government, blasphemed God. One has sought salvation through belief, laboured for temperance reform by securing restrictive legislation, tried to destroy disease by doctoring effects, to idealise society by imposing an artificial ideal upon it. One has lived an external life, a life of the flesh, in pursuit of happiness, the mere accumulation of possessions. Now it dawns upon the mind with the force of unshakable conviction that salvation through character is the only way; that all permanent reform begins within; the only cure comes through self-help, the only freedom through self-knowledge and self-mastery. Then follows a gradual realisation of all that these great facts involve. Peace is to be found only within. The individual advances so far only as he understands and makes effort for himself. All change comes about through evolution. All development is from an inner centre or seed. We make our own happiness and misery. We are injured, contaminated, oppressed, when there are corresponding and inviting conditions within. Environment is such as our own constitution attracts. Not one moment of life is exempt from the steady march of events instantly, impartially, and irresistibly modified by all that we are at the time, by all that we think, by all that we do.

The law of the inner life, then, is, Know thyself: seek first the creative kingdom, the spiritual centre of calm, poised self-control, then regulate the

entire outer life in accordance with this high ideal. Begin each day, begin each new undertaking, by first turning to this holy of holies, that you may consecrate yourself afresh. Transcend sensation, the merely personal inclination and desire, and ask, What is the highest ideal, what is demanded of me as a son of creative Spirit, of all-encompassing Love? Then test each detail of daily conduct by the same high standard, that every hour may be inspired by conscious co-operation with the creative Father. For it is not enough to seek the inner kingdom, then passively wait for all things mechanically to be added unto you. It is the habit of righteousness, not merely the seeking of the kingdom, which shall cause all things to be added.

In our discussion of the ideal attitude, we have seen that each phase of the advancing Perfect calls for understanding and adjustment on our part. The inner life is made complete only through wisely and specifically regulated outward, physical, and social life. Introspection simply intensifies egoism and indifferentism, unless it is followed by service. Solitude, silence, receptivity, is good only as a means to an end. One should not sacrifice an atom of Anglo-Saxon energy and enterprise, yet should possess one's self, that one may avoid the tremendous waste of energy of our modern life.

Practise economy of motion, but begin always within, by first arresting the nervous scattering of force. Centralise conduct. Forever forego the attempt to transform your life by merely altering your surroundings and working upon effects. Concentrate upon the inceptive point of all activity in the inner world.

Consciously or unconsciously all life is an outpouring from within. From hence are issued all the commands that lead to good or bad action. Fear springs from within, causes one to shudder and draw back. Anger throws its stern power into the features and clinches the fists. Sorrow melts the hardened frame and joy lights it up. All our moods—for example, jealousy—grow into huge proportions because we first harbour an inmost sentiment, then permit it to expand and add to itself.

From another point of view, our problem is the reconciliation of opposites. There must be equality between the inner and outer life, as there must be mutual adjustments between the individual and society. No rule is adequate. It is impossible to sum up the wisdom of life in a single precept such as "Resist not evil," "All is good." For in, reality,—

All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone.

Whatever is, is in some measure right; yet whatever ought to be is more truly right. Every individual is dependent on society; society shall be perfected only through the full development of every individual. Every man must be receptive, yet every man must be active. Sometimes it is wise to accept circumstances as they come; sometimes they must be strenuously altered. There are conditions in which it is wisest to hold still and wait, letting all things become adjusted. Again, if one were non-resistant, one might harbour a trouble months and years when a few strokes of wise positiveness would have put an end to it.⁹¹ Every occasion must therefore be met by the wisdom of the occasion, the highest, newest guidance from within. Every effort must be made to keep the faculty of receptivity alive and pure.

In whatever way we regard the inner life, therefore, we find that it is fundamentally conditioned by the individual. Everything that develops me depends upon my thought about it, my reaction upon it. All that comes to me, comes because I sought it. I may forget that I prayed for it, but nature does not forget, my subconscious mind does not forget. We attract what we fear, as well as what we hope for. Whatever strongest thought we associate with certain surroundings, certain persons, and experiences, is likely to be continuously associated with them in our minds.

91. This attitude of non-resistance, inspired by belief in astrology and the doctrine that we are reaping the results of past Karma, and so must suffer contentedly, is responsible for a great amount of unnecessary misery.

"The hope of somehow getting something which we have not earned, whether in power or privilege or enjoyment, is the chief source of human misery," says David Starr Jordan, in a recent address. "Happiness comes from striving, doing, loving, achieving, conquering, always something positive and forceful... All in life worth having has its price. It must be paid for in effort, in tears, in prayers, and can be had on no cheaper terms. The gods maintain no bargain counter. Their favours are never marked down, never going at a sacrifice. Their prices are always the highest, but they always give full measure. They yield the best, and the best is their demand."

This law of action and reaction is the law of justice—one of the promptings of the instinct for harmony, one of the ideals which reveals most clearly the utter inadequacy of mere individualism. So far as the universe is concerned, to each without partiality all things are measured according to what he is, what he thinks, and what he does. The East End pauper and the royal aristocrat are on the same basis in this respect. It is only man who is unjust: the universe knows no preference. Love is justice. God is love. You will be just to your neighbour when you truly love him. You will love when you put self aside. Selfishness is the real enemy of justice, the great discordant note of human life. The cure for selfishness rests with the individual. Once more, the inner world, the ideal realm of the soul, is the true starting-point in all social regeneration.

But it seems a hard saying,—that the circumstances in which every soul is placed are due to the inner life of that individual; that the pauper in the slums, the oppressed labourer, and the slave are such because of their own state of development. Can it be true that the oppressor, the deceiver, and the thief are not to blame, but the innocent victim who is drawn into misery through his own ignorance? Such a conclusion would seem harsh and cruel in the extreme; it would excuse the wrong-doer except so far as he himself suffers; it would call for a complete change in all methods of social reform.

The believer in reincarnation puts in a word here which seems to him to solve the difficulty. The miserable, degraded, and oppressed souls have

gravitated into conditions of hardship in this life because of misconduct in a previous existence; their own Karma is the cause of their present misery, and they must suffer until the debt be paid. But how happens it that some souls gravitate into downy beds of ease, why are some so gifted, some so "lucky," while some are born into conditions where they can recline in luxury and evolve theories of justice to account for the sufferings of the under half,—theories in which it is perfectly easy for those to believe who are not themselves condemned to misery? If you carry all this a stage farther back and attribute these inequalities to past incarnations, is not your problem as difficult as before? When did the inequalities begin? Is it credible that a poor, ignorant, downtrodden slum-dweller once had the same opportunities put before him which lead to the development of a Beethoven, a Browning, a Lincoln; that he rejected these, and personally laid the foundations of every phase of his present misery?

The mystery of our inequalities is obviously made the greater by such a doctrine. We have found that nothing is fair or good alone, that the individual is a dependent, related, social being, and that no precept is adequate by itself. Our circumstances come both from ourselves and from our ancestry. In many instances the parents are responsible for bringing children into the world under unfavourable conditions. *The individual is responsible only when he is given a choice.* He awakens into conditions of which he can become master only so far as he understands them or learns that he is spiritually free. To the degree that he has come to consciousness, his attitude is responsible for the results which circumstances produce upon him. The majority of the oppressed are still ignorant of the inner life and of the law of individuality. If the oppressor be enlightened and the oppressed ignorant, the oppressor is at fault.

We must therefore reject not only the Theosophical explanation of our inequalities, so far as it claims to have solved the entire problem, but all theories which lay stress either upon the mere individual, upon his environment, heredity, the society that oppresses him, or any factor which

is singled out from its co-relative causes. We are all related each to each. All are in some measure responsible. All must contribute toward the universal solution. Egoistic reincarnationism, individualism, socialism, modern physical science, and the rest, are only halting-places by the wayside.

The final solution of our problem must offer some other theory than that of mere mechanical gravitation into our environment. It must take full account of the ideals of both personal and social liberty. It must reserve the proper place alike for the law of action and reaction, on the one side; and for choice, conscious activity, freedom, and chance, on the other. It must show how the divine ideal of progressively attained justice is to hold compensation for those whose lives on earth are ruined by unprincipled men. It must account for the sufferings of the innocent, must solve the problem of the merciless infliction of pain upon animals.

The critic may now argue that our philosophy of freedom and individuality is no better off than the Vedanta, since it postpones as too difficult certain problems of human justice and of man's origin. He may also contend that, by the very criterion proposed in Chapter III., our doctrine is inadequate, for it fails to explain the mysteries of evil and injustice. We are no nearer satisfaction, he might continue, with our theories of freedom and activity, than when we believed in the existence of the Absolute, with whom there is naught but justice and goodness.

To these objections, I reply that the prime object of this discussion is to secure recognition for all facts. A philosophy which finds room for all demands of experience, reason, and our higher nature, even though it cannot yet systematise them all, is more satisfactory than a metaphysic which purchases unity at the expense of fundamental characteristics of the universe. The doctrines which we have rejected are confessedly exclusive; they put off as insoluble the very problems, or pass by as insignificant the very qualities, of human life with which we are, first of all, concerned in any philosophical inquiry.

In our philosophy, we must have room for (1) ethically free, spiritually active, finite individuals; (2) for a progressive society; (3) for all the manifold forms of life found existing in a real world of nature, not a mere shadow-picture; and (4) for a perennially present Being, whose manifesting power, wisdom, and love give rise to the varied world of this our richly beautiful experience. God must be all that pantheism says, all that the Vedanta means when it endeavours to symbolise the One. Man must be all that in our truest moments we find him, all that the Christ-life implies. Yet life must be large enough so that God is made complete only through man, society only through the individual, the individual only through society; and the whole natural, social, moral, and spiritual organism made perfect only through the progressively revealed life of God.⁹²

We have first our universal data; then a knowledge of their laws, ideals, and tendencies; then an interpretation of all this so far as it has yet evolved, and finally a segment of our circle left open for the possibilities of future experience whose extent no one knows. We must first be true to life as we find it, however dark, then shed as much light upon it as possible.

The outcome is already clear in many directions. We have greatly strengthened our belief in the goodness of things by the admission of freedom, individuality, a central moral purpose, and the spiritual creative fellowship of man. We have found our world girdled by law, although it owns chances and unfulfilled promises. We have discarded the Absolute only to find the Father. We have rejected mere individualism, but found the finite soul given back to us in fuller glory as the angel of service. And we

92. The term "progressive" as applied to God is subject to misinterpretation, and chapter xi. in *Voices of Hope*, entitled "The Progressing God," has been severely criticised by those who misunderstood its purpose. My object in using the term is to avoid the utter monotony and deadness of the term "Absolute," to suggest the continual welling up of evolutionary life, mounting higher and higher; not that all of God advances, but that his foremost characteristic, as evolution reveals him, is the perpetual weaving in of all the incidents and activities of his progressing beings, his unceasing creative work.

have found in the divine law the progressively revealed love and justice of God, the promise of a full realisation of the ideals of personal and collective liberty and justice.

But our entire argument has been a revolt against dogmatism, against all final systems of philosophy. This book is only an attempt, a tentative appeal for the down-trodden, the neglected, and the rejected. It would be the quintessence of dogmatism, at this early day, to propose a complete Utopian theory and an ultimate doctrine of justice. For it would be contrary to a principle which has been of great assistance from the outset. A thing is really known when it is done. We know what liberty is when we are wholly free. Justice becomes real when it is socially attained. The perfect social theory shall be formulated when perfected society is present to serve as a model. All forecasts must err in some respect. Experience is at once the beginning and end of knowledge.

Life is not yet complete. Our compensation shall come with other phases of life. We shall know what awaits the innocent sufferer when that sufferer is actually set free.

Yet we already know that, however severe our present circumstances, however great our servitude, we may begin to attain freedom from the moment the power of individual consciousness is discovered.

Let us then sum up the processes of thought by which we have arrived at this conclusion, that the individual life is the centre, yet only the starting-point, in all endeavours after the social ideal. We awaken to consciousness to find ourselves members of a great stream of events and experiences. Everywhere, within and without, the most impressive fact is the perpetual march of forces which carry us resistlessly forward.

We find ourselves prisoners of inequalities, hostile forces, diseases, sorrows; at the same time possessors of ideals, pleasures, and of occasional experiences far transcending in value the hastening, surging life of sense.

We desire to cleave to these moments of joy and peace, of health and harmony, that the discordant may cease and the soul become free. Personal

desire for freedom is followed by an aspiration for social liberty and perfection.

What shall be our method? How shall we emancipate humanity?

First by learning that there are three great bondages—ignorance, the flesh, and selfishness. These three are perhaps reducible to one, but they demand specific attention.

No man shall be free until he understands himself, until he controls his appetites, and transmutes selfishness into love.

If any man would be sound, let him then look to his life and consider how he lives: hived in impure buildings, living chiefly upon animal food, stimulated by intoxicants, a prey to impulse, a participant in an artificial society, artificial when compared with his higher nature.

For man is primarily a spiritual being. He is a soul, a creative agent, a member of a divine commonwealth, where his true function is spiritual service.

Shall any man be free while he is untrue to the spiritual ideal? Is not his ignorance of the soul's endeavours to attain freedom and perfection the prime cause of the misery he suffers while immersed in the sense-life?

Beneath the surging march of forces by which we are carried forward there is in each of us an awakening soul. Life really begins with us when we become conscious of the perpetual presence of God, moving upon this soul, seeking to perfect it.

The circumstances of our inequality, ill-health, and personal bondage, are precisely the conditions wherethrough we may learn not only how to express the divine, but by that expression to free humanity.

The starting-point, then, is to come to judgment, to learn where we stand, how far we are in bondage, how all that is discordant is due to our manner of life. Nothing can take the place of this frank self-confession, no affirmation of abstract ideals, no external tampering.

The second step is to begin to conquer,—to redirect our forces, that they may make for physical purity and health, for beauty, morality, service, and the spirit.

The essence of this process is repose, not in self, but in the Father. Merely personal repose is of little value. Blissful subjectivity, the “vain cheerfulness of unchastened optimism,” will not suffice.

It is not enough to perceive the law. One must live the life.

It is not a virtue to be so poised that one regards pain and pleasure alike, as many Eastern sages advise. Instead of the retreat into individual peace, miscalled “the Absolute,” we need more heart, more sympathy; our poise must become social.

Not affirmation but adjustment is the ideal, adjustment to the harmonies of nature, the needs and beauties of society, the promptings and inspirations of the perpetual presence of God.

It is not we who are building the world. It is untrue that “your only real world is the world you build by your thought.” The real world is the kingdom of the Father, whose realities we shall know both in the physical realm and in the world of mind when we put our own thought aside, asking, What dost thou declare? What wilt thou have me to do?

He who thus harmonises his soul with the divine upwelling shall know life as it truly is and as it ought to be; he shall be taught his part in the evolution of the ideal society.

For the glory of the whole, all things exist. Each soul lives that it may enhance that glory; the whole is here that each may be complete.

The earth is for humanity, not for the few. No man, no society, can own it, or rightfully exclude men from their proportionate enjoyment of it.

The absolutism of wealth must cease as the absolutism that “might is right” is dying.

Yet the equal distribution of money will not bring the freedom men seek.

True wealth is of the spirit. Ideas and soul-power are its agents. Its standards shall some time rule the earth. Not until then shall the problems of labour and of social position be solved.

We are in the throes of that solution. Let us realise how short a distance we have travelled. Let us awaken to the possibilities of reform now that we have discovered the causes of our misery.

Wherever we stand, whatever our theory, the law of cause and effect is eternal, and all our efforts are sure to bear fruit in proportion to their worth, and in accordance with the methods of evolution.

Therefore let us begin here and now, where our problem is most pressing.

Instead of complaining at one's lot, heaping blame and abuse upon one's employer or ruler; instead of seeking escape from oppression by running away from it or by forced external methods, the method of the inner life would be: Formulate the higher ideal; aspire; seek the inner kingdom; believe that changed circumstances are coming to you; create them in thought, hold firmly to them, and cultivate an attitude of mind tending to invite them. Meanwhile, learn all that the present circumstances can teach. Philosophise about them each day. Concentrate your energy within, instead of wasting it in anathemas and by application of physical force.

The reformation of society, the perfecting of the race, depends upon each individual. Each soul must understand, each soul must find, its own method of adjustment to society. Never will the millennium come by legislative, artificial, and levelling methods. True equality is liberty for each individual to become truly himself, fully express himself; and individual self-expression necessarily begins from within. The individual is far more likely to command the conditions of equality, if he first understands what they are to mean for him, than by joining some movement to compel them to be granted before he truly understands and deserves them.

Any social ideal is tentative, experimental. Meanwhile, the best way to further social progress is through educational methods. Discover people to themselves. Explain the law of individuality. Inculcate the ideals of moral

freedom and spiritual liberty. Call their attention to the inner life. Point out the higher way. Use positive methods. Persuade and help people to think, to be ethical rather than political, spiritual rather than sectarian. Encourage originality and tolerate all new or promising points of view. Seek the good in all social tendencies, and instead of unsparingly condemning trusts or other temporary menaces to society, study their evolution, search for causes, and analyse them to discover the law which governs them. Constantly broaden your horizon; be more tolerant and more eager to listen to an opponent's statements. Thus shall every experience be turned to account, thus shall your own freedom help forward the emancipation of humanity.

Above all, be true to the highest inspirations of the soul. In that sacred inner world, whence all creative power rises, there is a Wisdom, a Love, a Power, that will lead and prepare the way. Trust that. Commend yourself to that. Seek its presence; seek its inspirations. Ask whither it is tending, what it desires of you. Try to harmonise your life with its promptings. And set apart periods of waiting, in silence and receptivity; dedicate your life anew to its service, to its beauty, its peace, and its love. Thus shall the inner life enlarge into the larger social life of constructive co-operation, the life of sympathy and justice. Thus shall the individual discover the true meaning of his life with God.

Perennially free, ever-smiling Nature suggests the noblest ideal of all; Whether you court her by the seaside, or amid the mountains, she is delightfully shy at times. For days and days her choicest beauties are hidden, and one must live in the memory of her more communicative past. Yet she is ever there, behind the clouds, confident, at peace, biding her time. Anon, a faint glimpse of her forthcoming grandeur is revealed. She compels you to attend to the beauties of her darksome days ere she permits the fuller vision. You must work and think, and adjust yourself as best you may, taking her time, not yours. You must discover unsuspected resources and find opportunity to cheer those who are not as free as you. Then, as if by magic,

when you are nearly hopeless, out bursts her radiant beauty in the warmth and joy and exhilaration of a cloudless day.

Her voices of hope mingle with her voices of freedom, as she beckons onward to the greater glory yet to be. Not merely in her visible features, but in the retrospective beauty of thought, does she become fully your own. Her presence with you is symbolical of that yet deeper Presence whose coming and going likewise owns its laws. The grandeurs of both are so wealthy as to demand every possible description which all individuals can give. "All are needed by each one," and the One is revealed through the fulness, the fellowship, and the freedom of the All. The One must triumph in the end because it beholds the end, although it leaves to the many the choice of myriad details. The One must triumph because it is love, beauty, the spirit. It must triumph because it is the Father, because when man awakens to the full meaning of sonship, to full liberty and power, no greater choice is possible than the realisation of the Father's ideal.

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