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ARMCHAIR PHILOSOPHY

DANIEL A. LORD, S.J.

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Armchair Philosophy

by

DANIEL A. LORD, S.J.

November 15, 1918

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Amchair Philosophy

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I

Armchair Philosophy

WHEN a philosopher of the impossible or the improbable wants to be really disdainful toward the philosophy of an opponent, he labels it "armchair philosophy." The epithet is more or less common. Every once in a while you hear of some philosopher pulling up his window shades, glancing out at the bright world that flits gaily past his door, and then uttering some caustic thoughts on the subject of common sense.

That is the inevitable prelude to remarks on the subject of armchair philosophy. Or it may be that he picks up in a dark bookshop, where as a rule there is not to be found any tome weighing less than two pounds, some little volume filled with hopeful, optimistic reflections on the life and destiny of man. Whereupon he is sure to turn up his nose, roll his shortsighted eyes toward where heaven used to be located, and mutter under his breath the pet condemnation.

The condemnation contains the quintessence of contempt. To refer to a philosophy as something that originated in an armchair is, in the eyes of men of this type, to brand it as hopelessly puerile, out of harmony with science and its laws, and bearing to genuine philosophy the relation of homemade fudge to bread and beefsteak. For gen-

uine philosophy must reek either of the laboratory where specimens and the experimenters alone are welcome, or of some library from which have been excluded all the comforts of life. Genuine philosophy must subtly suggest test tubes and microscopes even while it may be in opposition to any information ever gained through scientific apparatus; it must be very mysterious, technically obstruse, and by preference startlingly at variance with common experience. Philosophy has its natural shrine in austere studies in which the light of heaven is tolerated but not encouraged, or in laboratories where the perfume of chlorine is preferred to that of the rose.

To suggest mildly that philosophy might be suited for consumption in an armchair to the pleasant accompaniment of light gray smoke and fur-lined slippers is to debase the queen of sciences to the level of best sellers and magazines that sport pretty-girl covers.

When you come to the rub, I rather doubt whether most men would enjoy their firesides or their good cigars or their slippers very long in company with some of our most fashionable philosophers. Fancy any man's really enjoying the discovery that he does not actually see the things that he thinks he sees, that he manufactures an unreal wife and children out of his own evolving spirit. Fancy a man's drawing long satisfying puffs out of his cigar as he reads that the only positive feeling is that of pain, that "we ought to be miserable, and we are so," and that the highest point of happiness is annihilation. Does it not

make the gas logs look brighter and more cheerful when one learns that one has no free will, that one's great-great-grandfather was a chattering ape, and that one really ought to be up and fighting might and main toward the superhuman?

The one consolation about these current philosophies of gloom and contradiction is that few people are stupid enough really to believe them. They are ingenious, clever bits of sophistry; but the man who attempts them from the vantage point of an armchair is more likely than not to end by knocking the ashes off his cigar, pitching the volume where the dust will be sure to find it, and going out to live his life on lines that, judged by the aforesaid standards, are most unphilosophical.

Unquestionably a large percentage of the philosophers whose writings are current today are making the egregious mistake of supposing that no truth ever came out of any other room in the architectural world save out of a laboratory, and that any statement which can be grasped without the aid of logarithms or a series of mental acrobatics is on the face of it too childish to employ the cultured mind even long enough to condemn it. So the philosopher in the armchair and the reader in the armchair fall alike under the contemptuous glance. Armchairs and philosophers have no common denominator.

Let me begin with a confession. I am seated at this moment in an armchair. It is a very handsome one, plain wood of an unclassified variety, with a leather seat that is marked by an incurable

sag, and an iron brace that is a concession to age and long service. In just such a chair, to complete the humiliating confession, I have studied whatever of systematic philosophy I may have acquired.

But you must not imagine that the philosophy learned in my armchair came done up in a gift package with a red ribbon and sprig of holly. It is the philosophy that made Aristotle's pupils gather from the ends of the earth to fill the Lyceum. Thomas of Acquin wedded it to Christian thought and raised it to something almost sacramental. It is the philosophy that for centuries was taught wherever philosophy was worshiped; and not too long ago, after a period of exile, it crossed once more to England with Cardinal Mercier. It is a philosophy which has eagerly taken up the best in scientific thought and discovery. It has gone farther into the essence of things than has any other philosophy ever synthesized by man. But above all it is philosophy which lays its roots in an almost divine common sense and which is proudly and fearlessly the champion of human nature.

Often as I sat in my own armchair, I have thought of the many men and women the world over who likewise sit in armchairs. There is milady, who, when the children have been dispatched to school and the house has been set face about, sinks into her wicker basket chair in the warm sun parlor and reaches for a book. There is the lord and master, who after a long day at his desk fits his body into his favorite leather lounging chair and, after a long puff to assure himself that his cigar is burning properly, runs his eye over the

library table for the volume he began last night. Why after all should there not be armchair philosophy, since so much of our life is spent in just such bless-the-man-who-invented-them comfortable pieces of furniture? Why act as if philosophy were the mind food of an intellectual élite wearing glasses of extra thickness and afflicted with a mania for playing the various kinds of jujitsu that have various kinds of technical names? Why treat philosophy as false simply because it is simple?

Mr. G. K. Chesterton, a delightful philosopher of the armchair, did much to reinstate in his proper dignity the man who writes all his letters before his name. To Mr. Chesterton's farseeing mind, I'm sure, Mr. P. H. D. Brown had an intellect quite as capable of attaining truth as had Mr. Brown, Ph.D. And the fact that there are so many more P. H. D. Browns than there are Browns, Ph.D. would have made the former more worthy of the late G. K.'s attention.

So these chapters on armchair philosophy are addressed to the antelettered—it is unfair to say unlettered—men and women who like myself sit in armchairs. Philosophy is after all an analysis of life in its ultimate causes and destiny, and these men and women are living lives of tremendous import, and living them in the very midst of a riot of life.

The philosophies of so many writers of the past century and a half have just this to condemn them: They are out of touch with life. Many a philosopher who holds that there is no such thing as matter in the world does not know what it means

to worry about tomorrow's supply of buns and beefsteak, not to mention Charlotte's new party gown and the leg Algernon dislocated during a football game. It is one thing to sit in a study—the electric lights switched off—and concoct vast arguments to prove the theory that we have no free will; it is quite another thing to set one's jaws and fight off for the sake of a wife and baby at home the allurements of vice or an inherited tendency to drink.

These philosophers have looked too long through the microscopes to see anything larger than an amoeba. They have gazed so long at the stars that our little earth has slipped from their range of vision. It is hard to convince some of them that anything obvious—like love and babies, bricks and beefsteaks, the facts that two and two make four and that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time—is true. A little touch of nature, applied preferably in a way to rough one up, is often a splendid antidote for philosophical speculations which are spun out of star dust and the tenuous vapors of Mars.

Men and women often sit in armchairs because they are weary with the battle we call life. They are flesh and blood and soul, not theories; their long experience has made them keen appraisers of the true and the false. Philosophical jargon they have never learned; but they can understand the language of smiles and quickly raised eyebrows, of silent lips and set jaws. They know that a philosophy which does not fit with life's necessities

and which contradicts the cold, brutal facts of their experience may be as fascinating as phantoms of a heat-oppressed brain and yet offer no explanation of the riddles that underlie all life.

If then my armchair philosophy, which is not of course mine but the heritage of the great Catholic world, can do anything, it can explain the riddles at which modern philosophers vainly strain. As such an explanation do I offer it to all who are my companions in arms.

II

Intellectual Hara-kiri

SKEPTICISM, the theory that we can be certain of nothing, has—like flowing whiskers or Grecian fillets—its periods of vogue. The phrase “Really I believe in nothing, don’t you know” carries with it a dashing hardihood that has fascinated more or less intensely certain types of minds from the ages lost in Egyptian darkness to our own days of colleges and jive. Pyrrho and Arcesilaus made universal doubt the smart philosophy among the élite of Greece. Montaigne, whom our own O. Henry referred to as his bully old pal, spun this theory through the pages of his fascinating essays. In England, David Hume held positively that one can be positive about nothing. And a skeptical attitude toward all truth is not at all uncommon even in this present day.

Yet modern science, with its positive assurance that immutable laws underlie all things, has done much to make ridiculous the man who doubts about everything, who doubts that he doubts, and who is not quite sure that he doubts that he doubts. Ibsen could hold that *not even* on the moon two and two make four; but if he had gone the inevitable step further and doubted if anything was true, he would have been considered to have violated what is at present philosophical good form. The universal skeptic is not uncommon, it is true, but he

is rather a curious relic of a past age when men spun long arguments to prove that an arrow shot from a bow could not by any possible chance move toward its target. Many modern instruments of war somehow do not fit in with theories like that.

It is absolutely necessary to begin our essays in armchair philosophy by assuring ourselves that we are certain about a great many things. With this once established, we have a fine bedrock foundation for our structure.

The most cursory glance is enough to convince us that all our lives we act on the supposition that we are certain about any number of things. The man who acted otherwise would be worse off than the man who stood still. When we arise in the morning, we are certain that the sun will give forth light, and we put our feet out of bed in the calm assurance that they will find a floor under the bed. We splash around in our bath, assuming with certainty that the water will not suddenly burst into flames. We eat our breakfast in the certainty that the eggs and bacon and cereal and rolls are necessary conditions of our bodily strength. We make a five-cent purchase, tender the salesman a quarter, and are certain that the twenty-cents change plus five cents make the fourth part of a dollar.

Downtown we dodge a swiftly moving car because we are sure that a heavy object hurts the object that it hits. We enter our office building with the certainty that our office has not moved itself to a higher floor or dropped down the elevator shaft. All day we labor at our desk in the cer-

tainty that the earth will revolve without our worrying about it, that the letters we read have a real significance, that the letters we write will be intelligible to the recipients, that we are serving our loved ones with each tick of the clock. When we come home in the evening, we are certain that food is not poison, that armchairs are not to be used as tennis rackets, and that books are intended to be read and not smoked in a pipe. Life, even the most commonplace aspects of it, is grounded on a certainty that the average man would never be stupid enough to question.

Not so to my grave philosophical skeptic. He doubts everything. He is certain—or he says so—about nothing. Perhaps when he puts his feet out of bed, they will hang over the brink of the universe; the water may turn his bath into a miniature inferno; life may be sustained without food; twenty cents plus five cents may by some trick of elastic currency total a dollar; the oncoming trolley may pass over his form with the lightness of a zephyr. How is he to be sure? Poor chap! he lives in a continuous mental tremble for fear that the world will suddenly crumble beneath his feet. For who knows but that, like the children's moon, the world is made of green cheese and is honeycombed with mice?

Certainly if any theory ever deserved the title of intellectual *hara-kiri*, it is this theory of universal doubt. Like some Japanese suicide this theory rips itself open with its own knife. One prefers for the good name of mankind to believe

that it is after all a mere mental pose. Our philosophical skeptic fights against all the patent facts of life furiously and with all his subtle acumen. "I am certain of nothing," he summarizes.

Argument with such a man is like fox-trotting with an eel. But you attempt it. "Are you quite sure of that?" you inquire, ingratiatingly. "Absolutely," he answers. "There!" you retort, in triumph. "At least you are certain that your theory is correct, so you really do not doubt everything." He stammers. "That was a slip," he says. "I should rather say that I am not certain even of my theory." "Yet you are certain that you have a theory, and you are certain that you doubt it; you are sure that such a person as yourself exists to doubt the theory, and you are quite sure that other people do not hold that sort of nonsense. Anyway how dare you fight for a theory which you are sure is only doubtful?" To quote one of Father Benson's young Londoners, "Isn't it all dreadful tush?"

As a working hypothesis or a theory of life universal doubt would make the Mock Turtle smile. "Be sure you are right, and then go ahead" would be revamped by the skeptic to read, "Be sure you are right; and since you never can be sure of anything, do not dare move." In the quiet of his room the universal skeptic is quite sure that he is certain of nothing. But just dare him to leap from an airplane on the supposition that he might fall up and not down. Hand him a red parasol and invite him to walk in a pasture where grazes a bull

blessed with sharp horns and vicious disposition. Suggest that he try doing without food on the supposition that food may not be necessary for life. Pay him for fifty-dollars' worth of goods with two ten-dollar bills, explaining that you are not sure but what two ten-dollar bills add up to fifty dollars. In an instant his fine theorizing evaporates like alcohol left in the sun. Life and his theory lie in different planetary systems.

Philosopher of the armchair, I am not waging warfare on tin soldiers. Men have existed and do exist who persuade themselves that they are certain of nothing. And their theory undermines the whole edifice of philosophical certainty.

The chief difficulty in the way of the universal skeptic's sanity is his unwillingness to accept the obvious. To his mind philosophers are the only ones with any claims to knowledge. In the past man has made some rather large mistakes, believing for example that the world is flat. In consequence the skeptic doubts the value of all the truths grounded in human experience.

The sane philosopher on the contrary does not reject and deride the obvious; he examines it further, discovers the foundations on which it rests, and drives it to its ultimate conclusions. He does not claim to be an intellectual Balboa standing on the shores of a hitherto unknown sea. He knows that we are certain about many things, and he goes further in his effort to prove the sanity of this conviction. The philosopher who in the pursuit of truth spurns the natural certainty of all

men is simply diving into a cave open only at one end.

Universal doubt is then contradictory as a theory, and as a practical basis for action it is about as useful as are handcuffs on a juggler. We are so certain of some facts that we build our lives upon them. The amusing part of it is that the most blatant of skeptics is ultimately forced to do precisely the same things that the rest of mankind do.

Another point to be insisted on is that any philosophical theory that would lead us back to the point where we could be certain of nothing is on the face of it false and destructive. Men make mistakes, it is true, when without sufficient reflection they form snap judgments; they are often inclined to give a ready assent without investigating the reasons which should lie back of every affirmation. But for all that our minds are blessed with a certainty that no intellectual sleight of hand can ever cause to disappear. Any theory then that endangers the certainty without which we cannot so much as raise a finger, pet a baby, or converse with a friend must end in the philosophical scrap heap. By its side an ox team or a high-wheel bicycle is a tremendous vehicle of progress.

III

The World of Sight and Other Senses

WE do not need the poets to tell us that the world is beautiful. Rather the spirit which moves poets to symbolize human emotions in flowers and waterfalls and the impulse which causes artists to reproduce in marble and on canvas the loveliness of nature are merely the highest forms of an appreciation latent in the dullest hearts. Burns and Shelley, Claude and Turner were only the high priests who paid to nature the tributes which all men feel are its due.

And when tellers of fairy tales try to conjure up an enchanted paradise in which sleeps the bewitched and bewitching princess, they can do so only in words whose meanings are first known from sights and sounds and tastes and perfumes that reach our senses. The very wonders of the Apocalypse are the glorified splendors which the tangible world offers to our unceasing delight.

No one is silly enough to contest that we all have sensations of beautiful objects and enchanting sounds and delicate scents. If we didn't have these sensations, then why would we patronize art galleries and symphony concerts and flower shows? No more does anyone deny that we see toads and hear factory whistles and scent tanneries. But since the dawn of philosophy men have fought

about the causes of these sensations, and they are fighting about them today.

In broadest outline the contestants fall into two classes: those who in accordance with common sense claim that there are real, solid objects outside of us that correspond to our sensations; and the idealists, who in the face of experience maintain that sensation is the product of the soul alone, because nothing exists outside of the soul which is thinking. There are no mountains and streams, no fair faces and muscular arms, no houses or horses or motors. One thing alone exists—spirit; and spirit creates for itself without any real existence on their part all the objects that we call material. From our own bodies, which are mere illusions, to the sun in the heavens, which has no real entity, every gram of matter is the product of the thinking mind. If all thought were suddenly to cease, the material world with all its beauty would vanish like the dream of the sleeper suddenly aroused from his slumber. According to the idealists my spirit is so ordered by nature that it produces for itself the sensations of color, sound, taste, hardness and softness, and the like. I am the world's creator.

By way of experiment in this spiritual view of matter I thrust my finger into the shaving water which has been unexpectedly heated beyond boiling point. There is really no shaving water at all; my spirit by its peculiar and uncontrollable tendency produces in some way the sensation caused by a hot fluid. Looking at my finger, I really do not see it blistered; my spirit subjectively pro-

duces the impression of a very red and very throbbing digit. Like a hurt boy I thrust my finger into my mouth, and the peculiar hot, boiled taste I experience is not the result of my finger's acting on my palate; my spirit alone is responsible for the flat, disappointing sensation. Neither water, nor finger, nor burn, nor palate exists.

Put briefly, in the view of the idealist, souls or spirits alone exist; matter, such as shaving water and burnt fingers, though it appears to be the object of sense, is just a degree less real than fairy godmothers and Februaries with thirty-one days. Our souls are mighty workshops which by their nature produce constantly and uniformly the experiences we call sensations. Like spiders we spin out of our own substance the world in which we live. Recognizing the tremendous difficulties of this system, certain idealists, since they deny the existence of any material, extended objects, hold that God acts directly on the soul to produce the modifications that we call sensations.

If ever there was a darkroom, anti-common-sense philosophy, it is the denial of the whole sensible world. On the basis of such a theory it is simply futile to explain as simple a fact as a falling brick or a scrambled egg, much less Urban's scenery or the Grand Canyon.

Our idealist decides to visit the Chicago Art Institute to see Breton's "The Song of the Lark." If the soul is the cause of all sensation, he might save himself the trouble of shaving his wholly spiritual face and getting dressed to make the trip. Reclining in his Morris chair, he might make

his spirit produce the masterpiece. As a matter of fact he is aware that a picture as it is really produced by his imagination in the quiet of his room differs from the original more completely than a twelfth carbon copy differs from the upper typewritten sheet—differs at least as much as the original picture differs from a living peasant girl and a singing lark.

So he shaves—though shaving is an operation difficult to explain in spirits—and then takes a south side “L” train—most annoyingly and unspiritually noisy—to the art institute.

Now how does his soul as it was in his own room differ from his soul in the presence of the picture? If the picture itself is spiritual, it can help not one whit toward the production of the sensations which would be caused by the actual picture. If his own soul is the cause of that delightful experience which he calls viewing a picture, why could not his soul produce the sensations in any other place except where the picture seems to be? Why did the enthusiastic student who is working near him in the gallery have to journey from San Francisco to see a picture which in all essentials his own soul produces? Why will “generations still unborn” experience this particular picture only when they are before the picture and in no place else? If there is no striking mass of color and lines called “The Song of the Lark,” if M. Breton simply fancied he dabbled in paint, if the Chicago Art Institute bought something which really has no existence outside of the thinking mind, then cer-

tainly men have been playing a gigantic and decidedly exasperating game of makebelieve.

We say that the beauty of children's faces is often in the eyes of the parents; the idealists go it a bit stronger and assert that children have no faces at all.

A wedding couple travel long miles of rail to spend a few weeks in the Adirondacks, where they fish for spiritual fish which they weigh in spiritual scales, climb diaphanous mountains in very tough (I could pun on the "sole") boots, and return home still dropping intangible rice from nonexisting suitcases. Before the tremendous act of creation achieved in the minds of this love-oblivious pair, God's act of creation becomes relatively the act of a careless child. According to the idealists, not one tremendous being, but two very imperfect beings, and with them all who were present in the Adirondacks, produced the wonders of sight and sound that made their honeymoon a dream of joy.

More than that: This same creation has been going on since the beginning of time. My mind produces the Rockies, fills the heavens with stars, stands with Shakespeare as the author of "Hamlet," and is as much the composer of "Lohengrin" as was Wagner.

If this be true, my whole internal consciousness is a continuous lie. For I never for a moment believe anything of the sort, nor can all the arguments from those of the Neo-Platonist down through Fichte and Hegel to Mrs. Eddy ever convince me that it is true.

Columbus stands on the shores of America. And since according to the idealist there is no reality but the thinking *ego* or "I," he not only discovers America but manufactures it. One would like to know whether according to this theory there existed before the microscope discovered them the cells of the human body, or the circulation of the blood, or the wonderful process of human generation, or the minute disease germs. If the reader of this book is convinced that the book really exists outside of his mind and that I wrote it and not he, then idealism would hardly be a working system of philosophy for him.

The theory which attributes directly to God the production of sensations without any reality to correspond to them does not in the least save the system. On the contrary the theory makes God the greatest deceiver, the most ridiculous scoffer conceivable. According to this theory God impels us always to believe that we live in a material world that does not exist, and He forces us to act according to that belief. We can imagine the Greek Zeus in a fit of Olympic mirth causing some poor mortal to pursue gold which has no reality, to fly terror-stricken from a bull which his own spirit produces, to water nonexisting flower gardens, and to sink peacefully into the imaginary shade of unreal trees. But to hold such a theory regarding the Christian God, as these idealists do, is simply to make Him a senseless, brutal humorist who uses His creatures for His mirth.

The theory that there is no reality outside of the thinker is so impracticable that a celebrated German philosopher said of it that any man who tried to live according to it would shortly feel something in his brain snap. No amount of argument will convince the most confirmed idealist that an erupting volcano can be mentally transfigured into a shower bath. No man would be fool enough to boast to his friends that his mind produced "Hamlet" or composed "La Traviata." The best that an idealist can do is use an intangible pen to write books which others will produce as they read them, or from professors' chairs teach bodiless classes in words which are the products of the hearers' spirits. On the same principle, possibly bewildered reader, the bursting shell does not bring about a crumbling fortress; the crumbling fortress produces the bursting shell.

I recall that as a youth I stumbled over a trick problem in algebra that proved conclusively that four equals five. Now four never could equal five, I reasoned; yet there was the proof clear against me. After fruitless effort I carried the problem to a professor of mathematics. He glanced at it casually and then laid his finger on a certain equation. "There's the flaw," he said. "At that point you begin to multiply zeros." A person can prove anything if he multiplies zeros. And all the arguments of the idealists are simply multiplications of zeros.

IV

Our Futuristic Senses

In the heat of the futurist craze a certain French sculptor, whose death was one of the minor tragedies of World War I, offered to an astonished world some mussy-looking groups in marble. He called them statues, so he unquestionably intended them to be such; but they would have cost Phidias or Michelangelo sleepless nights. Masses of stone, misshapen, unsymmetrical yet labeled conveniently "Stage" or "Caritas," they appear a cross between a half-carved Eskimo totem and a snowman after a sudden thaw.

Then a kindly interpreter, who wrote futuristic poetry, explained it all. They were not really statues; they were musical compositions in stone. They made their appeal, not to the eye, but to the ear. Yon heavy mass of marble was a symphony; that dainty triangular bit of porphyry was a waltz; this nervous bunch of ungainly angles and sharp corners was a fox trot orchestrated for banjo, saxophone, and traps.

Now since marble when it is not crashing down a mountain or off a pedestal is obviously incapable of sound, these musical statues presuppose only one thing: that a properly trained eye can be made to hear. After that futurism has nothing further to offer.

About the same time a volume of the "Book of Knowledge" found its way to my armchair. Under the heading "Senses" was a diagram in which a number of parallel lines had been placed so as to seem slanting toward one another, and under the diagram was the brilliant query: "Do our senses deceive us?" There was more than a passing similarity between the diagram and the musical statues.

If in our last chapter in armchair philosophy we arrived at anything, it was the confirmation of our common-sense view that there is a real world of tangible, extended objects outside of ourselves. It is of course obvious that we cannot perform the Marsyan feat of getting outside of our own skins to reach this world; we must rely on our senses—our eyes, ears, tongue and palate, nose, and the sensory surface of our skins—to bring us and that world in contact. If to the question proposed by the editor of the "Book of Knowledge" we must with certain philosophers answer that our senses do deceive us, it would really be better if no such things as the world existed. It is better to know nothing about a thing than to know something that is not true. And if our senses really deceive us, and we think that we know something about this beautiful world of color and scent and taste, then that something is absolutely wrong.

I have seen about a dozen ways to prove that the squares of the two sides of a triangle are equal to the square of its hypotenuse; but I have never seen any proof that two and two equal four. I know that the two pencils added to my fountain

pen and paper cutter make a total of four objects on my desk; yet if someone declined to believe it, I am sure I should not know how to prove it to him. I am quite ready to admit the difficulty of proving the perfectly obvious proposition that our senses do not deceive us. The best that one can hope to do is simply to explain how our senses cannot possibly deceive us.

No one who admits the tangible world about us denies that the eyes are by nature intended to see, the ears to hear, the sensory tissues to feel, the tongue and palate to taste, and the nose to smell. That is philosophy as obvious as the philosophy of "As You Like It." "Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd?" asked Touchstone, of Corin. "No more but that I know the more one sickens the worse at ease is he . . . that the property of rain is to wet and fire to burn . . . that a great cause of the night is the lack of the sun." Corin was a right hearty philosopher even in the eyes of Touchstone, and he might have voiced in the same context the truisms about the senses which every one perforce admits.

The question is: Do our eyes, which were fashioned to reproduce colors of the world, reproduce colors correctly? Are the mistakes which, every one admits, occur the results of a natural bent or of some accidental modification which here and now impedes the proper operation of sight? Is it the nature of the senses to reproduce objects correctly or incorrectly? There lies the crux of the whole matter.

If the eyes are made to see and yet because of their very nature do not see what they are looking at or see it incorrectly, then the eyes can be paralleled to a gun that of its nature was never intended to shoot or to an automobile that was built to stand still. It simply gives the lie to its own nature. The nature of the senses, as all admit, is to sense objects. If then by their nature they were so formed that they always sensed objects incorrectly, they would simply not be senses. They would be senses because they were ordained to perceive the material world; they would not perceive the material world because they would always perceive it incorrectly. Incorrect knowledge is no knowledge at all.

Imagine that some genius fashions a machine which he calls a camera. He offers me his machine; I take it, believing that it conforms to the nature of all cameras, which is to reproduce the object to which the sensitive plate is exposed. The first picture I attempt is a bit of marine landscape. I develop the plate and discover that just nothing has been reproduced. Having had the same experience before with other cameras, I try again, this time photographing a friend's new and ultra-modern roadster. When the plate comes from the developing bath, I find that I have the reproduction of a very old and spavined horse.

In wrath I rush to the inventor. "I thought you said that this is a camera," I bluster. "It is," he replies. "But it is a camera which by its nature either does not reproduce the object at which it is directed or reproduces it differently from what it

is." "Then," I retort, tossing the machine deftly at his head, "call it what else you please, but do not call it a camera. A camera which is made not to reproduce objects or not to reproduce them as they are is simply no camera at all."

On the same principle a sense that is by nature destined to reproduce objects incorrectly or not to reproduce them at all may be a subject for an anatomist or a poet, but it is not in any particular a sense. Senses must by nature be ordained to give us correct information about material objects; otherwise they are by no means senses.

The causes which impel philosophers to doubt this obvious fact may be reduced to two groups: There has not been taken into consideration the normal sense working under normal conditions, or the sense has been used for a purpose for which it was not destined or for which it was destined only secondarily. That probably needs explanation.

No one says that a motorboat that will not travel in the air is imperfect; a man does not give up faith in watches as timekeepers when he finds that his watch needs regulating. Yet with marvelous inconsistency men jump to the conclusion that their eyes are deceptive when they look at a stick that is thrust into a glass of water and seem to see the stick bent quite out of shape; from the color blindness of one individual they leap to the conclusion that all eyes are essentially deceptive; they pronounce their eyes imperfect because their eyes fail to do the work of a microscope or a high-powered telescope.

In order to have any correct judgment about our eyes, we must be sure that we are looking through a natural medium. Our eyes are not the eyes of mermen. The stick in the water has passed out of our normal medium, which is of course ether and air. The color blindness of a particular person is an accident and as such cannot affect the judgment on the essential character of vision. When we maintain that our eyes are not deceptive, our only contention is that the things they report under normal conditions they report correctly. To expect the senses to report everything, no matter how minute or how remote, is almost like expecting a single mirror to reflect the universe.

Each sense, if we except possibly the sense of touch, has one particular quality in bodies for which it is primarily suited. The eye perceives color, the ear sound, the nose odor, the tongue and the palate taste. Put a perfectly colorless body before the eyes, and they perceive nothing—unless of course the colorless body is made to contrast sharply with a colored body, in which case the eyes perceive a sudden cessation of color where the colorless body had been placed. But like the cowboys in one of O. Henry's yarns who used their gold watches as quoits, we want our single senses to do much more than report the quality for which they were destined. Like the futuristic sculptor we want our eyes to hear; like the editor of the "Book of Knowledge" we insist that our eyes tell us all about the direction of line. We condemn our eyes outright if they fail us in the task we have set them.

Taking the eye for our example, we find that when the eye looks at a color it perceives that that color terminates at a certain point, where a new color begins. My eye thus perceives that the white of the paper on which I write ends abruptly, and the green of my desk blotter begins at that point. This color becomes for me a way to determine shape. But if from the data given by my eyes alone I judge the shape of an object, I am certainly very likely to make an incorrect judgment. Color is the quality for which the eye is primarily destined; shape or size falls under the range not merely of sight but of touch as well. For a safe judgment on the subject of shape or size the testimony of two senses, not one, is usually required. When two senses have been thus applied, all that has been proved for the correctness of one sense holds for the other sense. Had the editor of the "Book of Knowledge" used in addition to his eyes his sense of touch on the puzzling parallel lines, he would not have deserved a place with the sculptor of musical statues.

It did not take much acute reasoning to show in an earlier chapter in this book on armchair philosophy the ridiculous and self-contradictory pose of a man who professes to doubt everything. Such a skeptic if he acts up to his creed is bound in an intellectual strait jacket. Yet one who believes that of their nature his senses deceive him is headed along a straight and level road toward this absolute skepticism. If my senses, on which I am ultimately dependent for all my knowledge of the

world outside of myself, are essentially unreliable, then every tangible fact I have ever experienced—from the conviction that I am grasping a fountain pen to the tremendous scientific edifice which men have built up through years of patient study with microscope and test tube—is whisked like Aladdin's palace into the realm of unreality. Without infallible senses we have no right to put faith in the patent facts of life.

V

Beyond the Realm of Sense

SOME time ago, just after the scientific hysteria of the "Silly Seventies," it seems to have been philosophical bad form for a person to call his soul his own. Souls were carefully card-indexed for the information of antiquarians. In the place of souls the world was given the omnipotent and all-explaining cell, the complex association of nerve fibers, or the brain that secreted thought as the glands secrete saliva. It was all so very simple that there was no further need for a soul. Did not the cell explain life? And did not the complexity of the brain fibers explain thought? A number of persons retorted very abruptly: "No they do not." But the human voice makes itself heard with difficulty amidst a riot of applause, and applause was showered pretty freely on the scientists in the limelight.

So those who believed that a fact is not disproved by violent screaming or name calling, those in fine who liked to fancy that they had a spiritual soul to distinguish them from their pet parrot or fox terrier, decided to possess themselves in patience for a time. Now it is becoming recognized that anyone who tucked his soul away in intellectual moth balls was very fortunate. Souls are

becoming fashionable once more. In fact they are quite the vogue.

By a soul men have understood a vital principle distinct from matter yet so united to it that soul and body make up but one person. The soul they have regarded as the thinking principle and the principle from which flow those actions that we call free. Those who deny souls maintain that besides matter there is just nothing. The brain alone thinks. As for free will . . . well if these men are honest in their materialism, they pass over free will with a flippant reference to popular delusions; their only alternative is to ignore what they cannot begin to explain.

All men stand in wonder before the tremendous capacity of the human intellect. There is something almost overwhelming in the intellectual attainments of men like the giants of the Renaissance. When Da Vinci wrote to the Duke of Milan the list of his abilities, he was not merely eulogizing his own mental powers; he was uttering a panegyric of the human mind. Socrates by his own unaided intellect leaping to the idea of a supreme Deity, Aristotle and St. Thomas stripping off the individuating qualities in things to reach deep into their essences, Newton arriving at the universal principle of gravitation, the astronomer attaining from abstract mathematics to a knowledge of stars he never saw—these men gave instances of the magnificent power of the human intellect.

Are such intellects merely the complex association of nerve fibers? Do they differ only in degree

of intensity from the faculty of cognition in horses and oxen? This is precisely the point in these chapters in armchair philosophy. It has always been the claim of the best philosophy that the brain alone does not think, that our intellectual life is such that it cannot proceed from mere matter. For an explanation of thought one needs a spiritual soul, that is, a soul distinct from the material body.

It is quite obvious that all our knowledge begins with what we learn through the senses. But the human intellect does not stop with the bare facts as they are reported by the senses. On the contrary the intellect is never satisfied with the information thus gained; it goes far beyond. The intellect knows for example not merely that two Pekingese dogs plus their two expensive pups make a kennel of four fine dogs; it knows that if such things as Pekingese pups did not exist, or for that matter if the person thinking were the only material object in the world, two and two would still make four. The intellect has jumped from the concrete dogs to the essential nature of two plus two—and the distance is a vast one.

As I walk down the avenue, a chauffeur in a fine touring car stops a few feet ahead of me and picks up two very ragged and very frail children. This individual act of a kindly man impresses me so much that I murmur to myself, "Courtesy is surely oil on the wheels of progress." My mind, not content with the individual case reported by my senses, leaped to a generalization: I saw a single act of a kindly man; I thought about that

highly abstract, that intangible quality of courtesy which fits not merely the individual case but all cases where tender hearts prompt men to deeds of unselfish gentleness. I have not been content alone with the facts that my senses reported.

Two litigants fight over a title deed to a piece of uptown property. There is an exchange of words, then of lawyers' visits. There is a session presided over by a modern "Solomon" in check suit and tortoise-shell glasses. After learned arguments by the lawyers and interrogation of the witnesses, the aforesaid "Solomon" pronounces that Litigant A has the right to the property. The judge uses the word "right" casually, believing that everyone in the courtroom understands him; and though not a man present, from his honor to the tramps who dropped in to get warm, ever saw or heard or tasted anybody's right to anything, Litigant B bows in submission and goes forth to drown his sorrow in the flowing bowl and in his attorney's flow of explanation.

Abbot Mendel gathers together the last batch of his hybrid peas from his monastery garden and sits down to put into writing his revolutionary theory of heredity. After all the number of pea plants he has investigated is relatively small, yet he dares to lay down a law applicable not only to pea plants in his garden but to the pea plants in Asia and Africa that furnished the tables of Confucius or Rameses II, or to plants that will bloom in the year of grace 2000. And other scientists seizing on this new law apply it to cocks, dogs, and blooded sheep.

The instances used are by no means extraordinary; the mind is constantly employed in acts of just such a character. The fact is that the human mind is practically never satisfied with just what the senses bring it. One sees a mother fondling her first-born and sits down to write a poem on maternal love. Right, justice, morality, things which the senses are simply incapable of seeing, are the subjects of our incessant thoughts and of tremendous import in our ordinary lives. Science would be out of the question were the human mind not capable of passing from the individual specimen under the microscope to the universal law that lies behind the fact.

Thorn bushes will be producing in the normal course of nature a large harvest of grapes long before the senses will be able to produce such intellectual thought. The mere matter that composes the brain and the senses cannot in the philosophy of the materialists explain the simplest abstract concept. Does the eye ever see the abstract quality of courtesy or of maternal love? The answer to that is simply that no such thing as abstract courtesy or maternal love exists in matter. Courteous chauffeurs exist, but not courtesy. Mothers who love their children are, thank heaven, still brightening the earth; maternal love is an abstract quality and as such is not found in material creation. The senses, as we know from constant experience, report only the concrete, individual type, the courteous man, the loving mother. Thus there must be another faculty in us which

reaches to the quality that is found not merely in one particular case but in all cases of like nature.

It is simply ridiculous to maintain that our senses can grasp a universal law of nature. Did anyone ever see the law of gravitation? or touch it? or taste it? or hear it? Men have seen apples falling to earth and the scuttled ship sinking in the waves, but the law that lies back of these facts they have never subjected to touch or sight or hearing.

As for those tremendous moral facts of truth and honor and duty and civil right, which are absolutely essential to the life of man, these have no material essence whatsoever. Fancy asking a policeman to show you his right to regulate traffic! Imagine asking the ruler of a warring nation to let you see the wound in its national honor! Yet for its honor that nation has plunged itself into a devastating war. For truth a martyr will lay down his life. The right of the traffic policeman will stop the most reckless driver. Here certainly are facts that move the world; and yet not one of them has ever been touched by our senses. If only matter existed in man, no amount of nerve action would ever make man know anything about these facts. Matter can attain to a knowledge of only the material; sense can know only the sensible.

History is a long record of that something within man that peremptorily refuses to be satisfied with mere matter or with bodies. The very fact that a man is constantly arguing over the question of souls is enough to show that his intel-

lect will not rest with the material. If merely our brains think, then the idea of a soul, which is a substance without extension or any of the attributes of matter, would never occur to our brains. The brain could only imagine the things it has perceived or things like them, and it has never perceived anything save extended, tangible matter.

That something within man which will not rest content with matter has throughout the history of all races been rising to a being that far transcends the realms of sensitive experience: God. Men have never seen or heard God with their senses, yet men's intellects have been either admitting Him or disputing about Him from the least known days of old. The very infidel who denies God's existence knows what is contained in the idea of Deity. To rise to such an ultrasensitive idea, something more than mere matter is required. Without a soul the thought of God is simply inexplicable.

VI

Necessary Egotism

WHEN dear old Rip roused himself from his rather protracted nap and stroked his unaccustomed white beard, he thought at once of his home and of the probable reception that awaited him there. Then he wondered mildly if he had better wait until it grew dark before he returned to his muscular dame with her sharp tongue and ready broomstick. In reality years had passed since he left that home; but for him the days of his vagabond youth with all the associations of cavernous pockets and tempestuous wife, of elfish bowling clubs and vast draughts of exhilarating liquor lay within easy reach of memory. He was, so far as he knew, the same old Rip that had taken his gun and his dog up into the Catskills, though his garments were tattered beyond recognition and the gun at his side had evidently been substituted by puckish gamins for his own fowling piece. About it all there was a certain overwhelming strangeness. But the one thing of which he was quite sure was that he was the same Rip Van Winkle who had lain down to rest in the mountains.

That is a strange link which binds the feeble old man on his last bed with the same man when he was a child at his mother's knee. Rip was unique

merely in that he skipped the entire period of his middle age. He went to sleep a fresh, blooming hunter and awoke a doddering relic. But for most men the various epochs of life dissolve gradually into one another. Childhood slips into youth; youth glides imperceptibly into manhood; manhood ripens and reaches a full maturity; and then begins the gradual descent toward that bed on which the inevitable last scene is played. Shakespeare's seven ages are not really acts bounded at each end by a rising and a falling curtain; they are rather one long act in which in various costumes a single actor plays his several roles. The realization of one personal identity throughout links the life of today with the life of yesterday, or of last year, or of twenty or fifty years ago.

The old man can no more shake off the consciousness that he and the child of five that bore his name are identically the same person than he can shake off his head by diligent nodding. A man of business takes a week off to run down to "the old home." He looks fondly at the orchard where he—then a lad in overalls and a torn shirtwaist; his feet innocent of shoes—stole the forbidden green apples. He boasts that he could in those happy days of unconscious digestion eat more than any boy in his "neck of the woods." He tells how he licked singlehanded a bully ten years older. And though when the old folks bring out a faded tintype of a very stiff and frightened youth in short-long trousers and a blouse starched like a strait jacket he screams with enjoyment at the thought that that puny youngster was once him-

self, he has not the slightest doubt that he and the frightened youth are the very same person.

The surviving members of the class of '97 are entertained by the alumni association. Smith, aged eighty-one, egged on by his fellow antiquarians, brags that in his day he was the swiftest runner in the college . . . "beat Harvard, by Jove! in the 100 at 11 flat." And though the dear old chap could not beat a snail even if the snail gave him a handicap, no one doubts that this is the onetime champion.

That tremendous sense of personal identity linking the man of the present with the man of the past has its grim features too. What has this prim, passionless professional man who is diffusing wisdom and majestic decorum from his very presence to do with the hot-blooded impetuous youth who in a moment of wild, blinding passion flung a trusting soul headlong to ruin? Yet in the quiet of his room, where no eye sees, wisdom and decorum fall from him like a loose glove, and conscience flings into his quivering face the crime of his distant youth.

This identity of personality is absolutely necessary for whole classes of intellectual operations. The composition of "The Canterbury Tales" took Chaucer some twenty years, but through that entire period he never lost sight of the single plan that he had formulated in the very beginning. Today it would be simply impossible for any man to take up the work as Chaucer left it and carry it to the conclusion that Chaucer clearly had in mind.

Or take the physicist who is employed on some delicate experiment that covers reams of paper and consumes years of time. Suppose that there were no identity of person there, that from day to day the experimenter could not recognize that he was the one who performed those experiments yesterday and the day before. It is obvious that in that case any completion of the experiments would be impossible. He must recognize the steps which he took to reach the present point in his problem; he must be able without any break in the sequence to bring his results from the first equation to the final answer; he must be in a position at the conclusion of his experiments to grasp the problem as a single, logical whole. And because the physicist is conscious of his identity with the man who began and continued the experiments, the ultimate solution is more than merely possible.

Everyone knows from his own experience that he is the same person throughout the longest and most varied life. In succession baby, boy, lover, soldier, justice, grandfather, ancient, he is absolutely the same individual. To brand such a universal and necessary conviction as a delusion is to incur the righteous laughter of those who have common sense. Yet unless the soul is distinct from the body, it is simply impossible to explain this perception of identity. If there is no soul, the problem is relatively simple.

Suppose we take first the materialistic attitude that there is nothing else in a man but his body. At some time in our lives we have all been amused to learn of the enormous quantities of food that

we consume in the course of a normal year. We realize the significance of this apparent voracity though when we learn that the simplest action of muscle or nerve literally burns up our bodies as a locomotive burns coal. We live—like the old-time racing steamboats on the Mississippi—by consuming ourselves as fuel, so much so that, conservative scientists maintain, in the course of every seven years every nerve and muscle and bone in our bodies are completely changed. In the case of the brain the destruction and rebuilding are much more rapid. Americans, who live at very high pressure, probably renew their brain cells faster than do people in other countries.

If then nothing exists but our bodies, our conviction, ineradicable though it may be, that we are the same persons today that we were seven years ago is simply false. We have nothing but our bodies, and our bodies have changed—as have our coats and hats. The child with its fresh, pink skin, its sensitive nerves, and its resilient bones is no more the sage with his wrinkled, parchment skin, his dulled senses, and his brittle bones than the baby's beribboned shoes are the sage's carpet slippers. If there is no soul, which would be unchanged substantially during all the changes of the body, to link together this ever decaying, ever renewing "mansion of flesh," then there is no greater fool than the man of seventy who believes that he is the same person that he was when he was a child of seven, a youth of seventeen, a bridegroom of twenty-seven. As a matter of fact if he has no

soul, he has been a new personality every seven years.

Absurd as materialism is, the modern theory of a world soul is a very dark shade more ridiculous. Briefly put, the theory is this: There are no individual souls; there is one huge soul, which, like Lake Michigan flowing through the hydrants of Chicago, trickles through the individual brain in a stream of thought. To use the favorite figure, the world of men is a great stained-glass window through which the cosmic mind flings its rays. The thoughts of course receive their individual character from the brain, through which they seep, just as the rays of the sun are colored by the individual bits of glass through which they filter. But the person does not think; the world soul does the thinking; and a man can be said to have a soul only in so far as the thoughts of the world soul filter through his brain. There is no thinker; there are only thoughts.

Some philosophers would be saved if only they had a sense of humor. For here is confusion confounded and compounded. My body is constantly changing, but so are my thoughts. The only permanent thing is a world soul, which is not mine. My body is not permanent; my soul is as common as a public drinking fountain; my thoughts are considerably less durable than the fountain's flowing water. I have a constant conviction of my personal identity, though the thinking principle in me is in no way personal to me and is as much the property of every man in town as is the air or

the sidewalk. As for my thoughts, they just "roll along."

In other words the idea of a world soul gives the lie to my conviction of my individuality, because I share that soul in common with Tom, Dick, and Harry. The succession of thoughts renders impossible any explanation of a continuous personality. For even supposing that Thought Two knows all about Thought One, and Thought Three knows all about Thought One and Thought Two, yet when I go to sleep, I make it a point to stop thinking, and the chain of thoughts is nicely riven in twain. Under this theory it would be very easy for a person to break with the past: He would just have to take an anesthetic.

As a matter of fact we could not run our world unless there were besides this mere belief in personal identity actually in every man something that kept him identically the same. Unless the thief or the murderer or the wife-deserter arrested years after the crime were absolutely identical with the man who committed the crime, all the judges, from the supreme bench to the courtroom of Alice's Wonderland, could not punish the offender. From the viewpoint of the materialistic theory a lapse of seven years, or under the successive-thoughts theory a single change of mind would annul all the marriages in the land, turn fathers into persons quite unrelated to their children, and set our little earth on its head.

Fortunately we do not manage affairs on such theories as these. Even while we dispute about it,

we presuppose something in a man that makes him responsible for all the acts of his lifetime, that binds him to his contracts through years of time, that keeps him in precisely the same relationship to father or children or wife. That something is nothing else than his unchanging soul, which is distinct from his changing body and is the cause of fleeting thought.

VII

The Pilot of the Soul

CONSISTENCY may be a jewel, but unfortunately in certain philosophical circles jewelry is regarded as frivolous ornamentation. It is of course as ridiculous for philosophers who deny a personal soul to talk of free will as it is for a turtle to brag of its wings. Yet some philosophers do just that. When in the cloakrooms of the philosophical halls they checked their souls, they renounced all right to any real freedom of choice; for chemical and physical forces — beyond which according to their theory there is nothing else—are governed by laws as fixed as the courses of the stars. The loose boulder on the mountaintop is not free to whip itself suddenly toward the sun. The early crocus is not free to withhold its bloom as a woman might withhold her spring hat until Easter morning. If he has no soul, man is like the boulder or the crocus, made up simply of chemical and physical forces which know no freedom of choice.

There are however many materialists who recognize that their philosophy has left no breathing space for free will. Matter is not free; man is but soulless matter. So when materialists are brought face to face with the fact of free will, like Tito Melema and his unwelcome father they simply deny the fact. Man is not free, they say; the glo-

rious power to choose a course is simple illusion, a vain flattery with which man has salved his own self-conceit. Like the lightning and the wind, the plow horse and the gasoline engine, man has not the slightest power over his actions.

Consequently if we prove that man has a free will, we prove that there is in him something besides mere chemical and physical forces, a something which is not governed by the laws of matter, a something that we call the soul.

Dogberry to the contrary notwithstanding, comparisons have their use, and we can get an idea of our free will if we compare it with the action of our intellect. A class in geometry sits fidgeting before an unsolved problem that has been placed on the blackboard. Step by step the instructor leads the students through a labyrinth of parallel lines and acute angles and hypotenuses and at length sets before them a completely satisfactory answer. A sigh from the class, and they settle back in satisfied acquiescence. Brought face to face with any truth clearly proposed, the intellect is simply forced to accept it.

But suppose we consider a businessman at his desk in the late morning of a summery Saturday. An afternoon in the office will mean clinching the good will of a rather desirable buyer. But through the window comes a delicious breeze elusively suggestive of greens and bunkers and long stretches of undulating sward. Here are two things, both of which the businessman knows to be desirable, and he vacillates to the rhythm of his swaying desk chair. Then with a sudden gesture he piles

his correspondence in a heap, bangs down his desk cover, gets his golf bag from its place in the corner and swings it over his shoulder, and heads whither the breezes call. Brought face to face with two attractive possibilities, he deliberately chooses the one and merely rejects the other simply because he desires golf more than he does the good will of this particular buyer.

That faculty which freely determines to select out of a number of possible attractions one particular thing we call the free will. Calmly and quietly a man considers a certain plan; he weighs motives for the accomplishment of the plan and dwells on those motives which militate against the plan. He recognizes that the plan would be a good thing for him, but he is aware that the plan has disadvantages. In the end with all the pros and cons before him he is free to choose or reject the plan, to act or remain inert, just as he wishes and because he wishes.

Our commonest conscious actions are proof positive of this freedom of choice. The alarm clock rings in the morning, and the awakened sleeper knows that he ought to rise promptly. Instead he flings a shoe at the clock and rolls over for another quarter-of-an-hour's sleep. At last he rises and rubs his chin regretfully. Really he ought to shave... still... "Oh let's get it done during lunch hour."... "*Journal or Herald?*" queries the newsboy. The purchaser hesitates. The *Journal* has a bully sports page, but the feature page in the *Herald* is always... "Give me a *Journal*," and he bolts for the "L" train. Free-

dom? Why in the simplest conscious actions, from the selection of a cigaret or a necktie to the choice of a candidate for President of the United States, man is aware of this sovereignty of choice, this power to cast a thing aside or take it to his innermost heart.

By way of contrast there are plenty of facts over which we know that we have no control. A man blessed with a normal appetite does not worry whether or not he can digest his dinner; he has nothing to say about it. He does not fuss because his beard grows in spite of his dislike to shave; all the worry in the world will not stop the growth of a tough beard. We know quite clearly the facts of life that are matters of our choice and the facts that do not enter the sphere of our choice; we recognize the difference between actions dominated by free will and actions that we cannot influence.

If man is not free, how explain the elaborate machinery that he has built up for his guidance when he has to make a choice in affairs of real import? Does the man who is about to embark on a new business enterprise feel himself physically forced into that enterprise, as a root is forced willy-nilly through the hard soil? If he does, then the careful counting of possible expenses and receipts, the consultation with Dun-Bradstreet, the anxious hours with lawyers and banking agents are all parts of an elaborate self-deception. The same necessity which drags the thrown rock downward toward the earth forces the man who has no free will into a particular business.

One striking difference between man and his animal servants is the fact of remorse. A chicken through some hennish freak pecks to death all the yellow chicks in her brood. Not even the most sentimental humanizer of animals fancies that Mistress Hen is haunted through long nights by terror-inspiring phantoms of the chicks she has slain. But the world is never without its Gretchens.

Indeed looking back over his life, a man becomes conscious of the thousand things he could have done and did not do and of the thousand other things he did do in the face of outraged conscience. The denial of free will makes the fact of remorse another of those unsolved mysteries. Why should Trynan in Eliot's tremendous sketch feel the sword turn in his soul when he looks at the painted face of the dying girl he had ruined? In that very agony of remorse he is admitting the fact that he might have saved the girl's soul but that he deliberately flung it down to destruction.

We recognize in our past lives two distinct classes of actions: those for which we were responsible and those over which we had no control. Two friends on a hunting excursion leap from a canoe, guns in hand; one of the men slips, his gun spits lead, and the other man falls face downward. There is agony of soul in the survivor, a dread of facing the relatives of the slain man, but withal a saving sense of innocence. He has not lost the right to face even the mother of the dead man. But suppose as he stepped from that canoe he coolly and deliberately shot down his companion. In this case precisely the same effect

would have followed—his companion would have dropped lifeless to the earth. Between this death and the death we call accidental there would have been only one difference: In the second case the shot would have been intended and freely, deliberately fired. Free will would have entered into the action.

As for the elaborate system of medals and awards with which the civilized recompense their heroes, this is simply another contribution to the gaiety of nations unless the actions that are rewarded were freely done. Medals are not hung on a tree that served as a shelter for a daring sharpshooter; a drunkard is not treated as a hero even if his fall from an upper window kills the enemy's general as he was passing through the streets below. A hero is rewarded for a brave act simply because he was not obliged to do that act. He shares in some slight degree in the praise that St. Paul tendered Christ, "who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame...."

The defenders of free will by no means maintain that the will acts without adequate motive. But most emphatically we maintain that the object which furnishes a motive for a choice is not necessarily the best that is presented for consideration, that it has not, considered in itself, qualities pre-eminent over those of other objects. Put a bit of iron between two magnets, and it flies inevitably toward the magnet which has the greater attractive force. Put a man between two objects, and the object which he chooses will not be necessarily

the better; it will be the one that he wants. A man will refuse a fortune to spite a relative that he hates; like *Cyrano* he will fling his whole month's income onto the stage for the sake of a fine gesture. The ultimate reason for his action will be that his free will chose so to act.

Readers of Joseph Conrad will recall how Captain MacWhirr guided the *Nan-Shan* through the terrors of the typhoon on the China Sea. In one of those gripping descriptions Conrad sums up the taciturn skipper's battle with the elements.

“Jukes could no longer see his captain distinctly. The darkness was absolutely piling itself upon the ship. At most he made out movements, a hint of elbows spread out, of a head thrown up. Captain MacWhirr was trying to do up the top button of his oilskin coat with unwonted haste. The hurricane, with its power to madden the seas, to sink ships, to uproot trees, to overturn strong walls and dash the very birds of the air to the ground, had found this taciturn man in its path, and, doing its utmost, had managed to wring out a few words. Before the renewed wrath of winds swooped on his ship, Captain MacWhirr was moved to declare, in a tone of vexation, as it were: ‘I wouldn't like to lose her’.”

The hurricane had hurled its force against the strongest power in the created world, a man's free will. Material force fell helpless before the power of that spiritual faculty.

VIII

Dynamiting the Moral World

THE question of Shakespeare's religion will always delight the sophomoric debater. But Catholic or not, Shakespeare was heir of a Catholic principle which is the motif of his greatest tragedies, the principle of personal responsibility. It is a free step deliberately taken which starts his Macbeth and his Lear down the sharp incline toward destruction. In this Shakespeare differs from the old Greek tragedians, whose heroes were overshadowed by a compelling fate, a fearful and inexplicable Ate which plunged them struggling and protesting into final ruin.

Our modern dramatists do not believe in the Greek fate, but many of them write as if they did not believe in the power of free will either. In the place of the traditional conflicts of wills, we have among the moderns contests of the individual with environment, with heredity, with his own fierce passions, with economic conditions. The will is ultimately displayed as powerless in the face of the foes arrayed against it. When the hero, or more usually the heroine, falls, we do not blame or pity; we merely accept the inevitable.

The denial of free will is not an unimportant bit of dramatic machinery or a piece of fine philosophical cobweb spinning. It is one of those denials which would, if it were logically followed out, shake the foundations of the universe. For cen-

turies men have been trained—when they have been trained at all—to fight against the allurements of what under accepted morality has been called sin. Youths have been taught to stand firmly against their personal wishes and inclinations when a higher duty to God or to country or to fellow men was in question. The wishy-washy principle of our sentimental novelists that a man or a woman must follow every whim and fancy, especially in matters of sex, has never made any man lay down his life for his country or caused any woman to pluck from her heart a guilty passion. The line of least resistance has not been the road leading to heroic glory. Precisely by their accepting the things that bring physical and mental anguish, precisely by their resisting the attractions that almost tear the heart from the breast have heroes and saints attained their eminence. All this is swept away by a denial of free will.

For if a man has no free will, he must of his very nature follow the line of least resistance; chemical and physical forces cannot act otherwise. When Jack and Jill fell down the hill, they probably—in an unwritten sequel—picked themselves up and, broken crowns notwithstanding, went up for a second pail of water. But the spilled water taking the line of least resistance flowed with iron necessity to the foot of the hill and stayed there. The water was not free to mount after the clumsy pair.

Send an electrical current through an iron wire and through a copper wire, and you can measure with mathematical accuracy the percentage of the

charge that will flow through each wire; the greater amount of charge will always flow through the copper wire. Without free will man can no more avoid the line of least resistance than can water or electricity.

The logical consequence of this denial of free will would startle any but the most willful dogmatist. There are moments in each man's life when everything inside of him and outside of him seems to fight for an object that he knows he must not touch. Every fiber of his nature cries aloud for it. A malignant chance has thrown it in his way; he can take it and still avoid the consequences that attend most wrongdoing. Yet one faint, blurred, sometimes almost inconsequential factor—like Kitchener's picture in the "Unfinished Story"—holds him back, that one factor and a sense that the power of choice is in his own hands. Suddenly some philosopher whispers that he is not free, that he must follow the line of least resistance. Who can doubt in such a case whither the line of least resistance leads? Who can blame him if his conviction that he is not free sends him whirling toward the longed-for object?

After all why shouldn't he accept that object? If there is no freedom of will, it is ludicrous nonsense to talk of one's responsibility for one's acts. The parrot is not responsible for its hair-raising profanities; the lightning is not blamed when it blasts a mother and her week-old baby, nor is it praised when it brings the usurper's palace crashing about his throne. Unless a man who does evil is free to do good, unless the saint who lays down

his life in a leper colony is free to stay at home with his feet in carpet slippers, then the wife-beater and the savior of his country, the betrayer of innocence and the Sister of Charity, the murderer and the martyr, Nero and St. Paul, Lucrezia Borgia and Joan of Arc, Benedict Arnold and Washington differ in no moral essential. On the contrary since the dawn of history men have been sending to prison, to the lash, and to the gallows fellow men who have committed theft, arson, and murder for which they were in no way responsible. If there is no freedom of will, then our whole criminal code, from preamble to final clause, is a vast and hideous hoax at the expense of human nature.

Just what would happen to the world were all men suddenly to throw over their sense of responsibility is a picture that no imagination cares to construct. Even were it true a thousand times that free will is a vain delusion, men would be forced in self-defense to use this delusion in order to build up in themselves and in others a sense of personal responsibility. Without this sense of personal responsibility the sins of Sodom and the crimes of Caligula would write themselves with terrifying iteration in the ordinary history of the world.

It is pitiable beyond words to see philosophers teaching young people a doctrine that is applicable in life only in so far as from it one learns how not to live. It is hard enough for youth to fight back the hot surgings of passion, to close eager eyes to the fascinating sin which beckons so

alluringly even when he feels that should he consent he is personally responsible for the evil that will follow. If on the contrary he is told that wild oats are the necessary fruitage of life's spring-time, that broken hearts and blighted hopes are the inevitable wreckage of passion's restless flood, it is madness to blame him when he flings to the winds this hampering delusion of personal responsibility.

If the professors of such a philosophy really practiced their creed, the jail, not the classroom, would be their proper habitat. Happily they really prove throughout their lives, if they are moral men, the truth that man is distinguished from soulless matter and from the brute creation in this: that he deliberately chooses the things which are hard and rejects calmly and coolly the line of least resistance. A very large portion of the lives of these professors, like the lives of all other mortals, is spent in learning by sheer force of will to control the natural impulses that are banned by morality or by the necessary conventions of civilized society. Certainly the hard patient life of a student is incomparably less attractive to young blood than is a free, self-indulgent existence. Yet youth chooses the student life largely because, being so hard, it leads to the fame that he has set as the goal of his ambitions. Young people feel a thousand times in their lives the desire for rest and comfort and luxury; yet they set all aside because it impedes them on their way to their goal. And though man clings with an almost insuperable longing to his own life, few men would hesi-

tate freely to lay down that precious life for the sake of a national peace and prosperity—which probably they will never enjoy. Free will lies so deeply at the root of our moral life that the destruction of it would send our universe reeling. Good and evil, innocence and guilt—the burden of so much of our literature, the scales in which we weigh our associates—are terms which become as meaningless as the gibbering of apes if free will is denied. Deny it as he may, the philosopher of slave will could not avoid the penitentiary, retain the friendship of a single individual, merit a line of praise from an educational journal or the warm handclasp of a grateful pupil unless he was constantly giving the lie to his own doctrine by his incessant use of personal freedom. He never argues more strongly for free will than when he employs it to dynamite the moral world.

In the matter of free will, as elsewhere, Shakespeare was writing out of the great heart of humankind. The modern dramatist bases his dramatic thesis on the morbid, the pathological, the neurotic individual; Shakespeare drew his men and women from all time. And Shakespeare was right. When the warning bell for the final curtain on each man's life is sounded, the protagonist, looking backward through his little play, will see that he it was who determined whether life should end as a comedy or as a tragedy. Environment, heredity, passions were with him, acting on the stage. But it was his free will that wove these factors into fitting roles in the drama of his life and wrote the final lines.

IX

The Eternal "Whence?"

INTELLECTUAL life is a history profusely punctuated with question marks. When a child lifts a puzzled face to his father and propounds his first "Why?" intellectual life for him has really begun. And as long as a man continues to use the rising vocal inflection and besprinkles his conversation and his thoughts liberally with interrogation points, no matter what his years or his infirmities, he is still very much intellectually alive. For thought would almost cease were it not for the question mark. Now like an automatic the question mark is leveled at nature, forcing her to yield up her most jealously guarded secrets. Now like a steam shovel it digs deep into the foundations of things, giving us philosophy. Now like a lever it dares pry up a little corner of the curtain which shuts off mortal vision from what may lie beyond. The question mark is the spark plug in our intellectual motor, the condiment in our mental cuisine.

It is a historical fact that just this ubiquitous question mark following on the monosyllable "Whence?" has driven every race of men to acknowledge a being they call supreme. The least civilized races have had an intellectual life suffi-

cient to formulate that inevitable "Whence?" with its inevitable answer; the more civilized peoples have answered this "Whence?" with the temples of Karnac and Olympus and the Capitoline and Jerusalem, with the cathedrals of Rheims and Canterbury and Cologne. All men, as they looked out over this tremendous world, have asked, "Whence?" And the only satisfactory answer has been: from a supreme being beyond and above this world who made the world and rules it. The name that men gave that being is aside from the question. It is His existence that alone solves the riddle hidden in that "Whence?"

The fact that a vast majority of all men in all times have been forced to bend their intellects before a supreme Deity is in itself a most powerful argument for the existence of such a being. Only the intellectual waster flings to the winds the cherished convictions which have satisfied the minds and consoled the hearts of the world's greatest geniuses. But my argument is taken from the nature of the world as it exists about us. For the rational mind, even when it is untouched by the light of faith, cannot fail to see in the world a clear reflection of some power above and beyond the world. The world is the hand glass of the Deity.

There seems to have been a time in history when men believed that they had exhausted the possibilities of science. Every savant possessed encyclopedic knowledge. He had memorized the information or misinformation which previous ages

had committed to writing, and there was simply nothing more to be said. A man might be at the same time an accomplished physicist and a metaphysicist, a mathematician and an astronomer, an alchemist and a botanist, confident the while that he knew all that the world had to teach him in each branch of knowledge.

In that respect at least the world has grown very modest. Men used to study the universe; now they concentrate on a ray of light. A tiny fragment of one of the great branches of science is now enough to absorb the exhausting and exhaustive study of a lifetime; for through his microscope and telescope man has begun to realize the tremendous and undreamed-of complexity and magnitude of the universe.

To the ancient Assyrian watching the stars from the temple roof, the universe seemed gigantic; to the modern astronomer the universe is just this side of infinite. Yet quietly and undisturbed these gigantic masses—sun, planets, whole solar systems—swing through their measureless cycles, clicking off the days and the centuries and the eons with a precision that the most accurate chronometer pitifully imitates. And on our own little planet season follows season, each with its myriad mysteries, lawbound, definite in its purpose.

Only the professional pessimist denies the order of the universe. Of course no sane philosopher or scientist claims for the world an absolute perfection; in fact he emphatically denies it. It was consequently possible for fanatics like Haeckel, by

their focusing their microscopes on the imperfections of some deformed sea urchin and deliberately shutting their eyes to the unfathomed perfections of the solar system or the human organism, to fling sarcastic jibes at the world's order. As well say there is no beauty in Michelangelo's "Last Judgment" because there are places in the wall that are cracked.

Admitting even the many defects, and admitting too that science has yet to learn the purpose of many seemingly useless things, one can go through life sublimely convinced that no stray planet will crash into our world, that crop will follow crop, that living things will be born in pursuance of some definite scheme. As a matter of fact order is so universal that from crystals and cocci to mountains and mastodons we have the bases of systematic sciences, each with fixed laws, each bound up with two unquestionable facts—matter and force. Whence then the universal world order? Three solutions suggest themselves: The order comes from chance, or from the essential nature of matter and force, or from some directive intelligence.

Listen, I prithee, to a fairy tale. Once upon a time a certain humorous giant decided to build something, he did not much care what. So up to the top of the mountain he lugged vast quantities of mortar and stone and iron and wood and nuts and bolts and wheels and springs and water and gasoline and fire. Then he sat him down, and upon the plain below he playfully tossed great handfuls

of his materials. A truly humorous giant, this. At last he exhausted his supply. So into the valley he strode, where, wonderful to relate, he found that his mortar and stone and iron and wood had formed themselves into a wonderful city with fair streets and stately buildings, with bridges and car lines. The gasoline was running the engines, which had been formed of the nuts and bolts and wheels and springs. And over the fire, water was boiling in preparation for his tea. This is a real fairy tale—and, curious reader, you must not ask where he got the mortar and stone and iron and wood and nuts and bolts and wheels and springs and water and gasoline and fire.

The ancient rhetoricians demanded that an allegory be clear as crystal. I am trusting that this allegory would not have made any of them shudder. In any case chance as an explanation of the universe makes the cosmology of a head hunter seem scientifically adequate. Originally everything was chaos; then just by accident stars began to form, and planets to revolve, and grass to grow, and birds to fly — until by a final and crowning accident man was formed, and he began to think. That is nonsense unworthy of a serious man. Chance does not explain how order once entered the universe; chance is simply incapable of accounting for the still more remarkable fact that for ages and ages order has continued to reign.

Matter and force have during the last century been used as twin levers in an attempt to lift the creator out of the universe. According to the theophobic scientists matter and force are eternal.

By their essential, necessary nature they have been working together until they have given us the universe as it is today. Together they made the universe with its wonderful order, which regulates our watches and inspires our poetry. And they have been everlastingly at it. Simple, is it not?

The theory rather puts to blush our old adage that practice makes perfect. Matter and force in this staggering postulate have been eternally—that is, without any beginning—working toward perfection. And yet after an eternity of practice they have not reached anything like absolute perfection. In an unlimited amount of duration they have achieved a limited amount of perfection, though they should have reached absolute perfection ages ago. On the contrary the present imperfection of the universe indicates with absolute certainty that matter and force began to evolve the universe at some definite time. Put it as far back as you like; nonetheless the theory of the eternal duration of matter and force falls with an appalling thud.

Yet for all that they have been working only for a limited time, they really have put a marvelously intricate order into the universe. The question then which naturally arises is: Did matter and force, when they set out to evolve the universe, know what they were doing? Or did they act without knowledge?

To suppose that this order was introduced without any knowledge of what was being done is as

ridiculous as an appeal to chance. Let us suppose that when the last exquisite building had been added to the Acropolis of Athens someone rushed up, clasped the architect's hand, and cried, "It is almost divine." The architect then stood back and looked at the buildings which have been the despair of all subsequent builders. "It is marvelous," he remarked. "And do you know? all the time we were working on them, no one in this world knew what they were eventually going to be." Matter and force according to this second alternative have been working diligently until they have accomplished the present order of the universe, though all the while no one in this world had any idea what their labor was all about. An intelligent child would turn up a contemptuous nose at such nonsense.

Even to the scientist who does not want God the idea is so absurd that we are gravely informed that matter and force are really acting intelligently all the while. So electricity and rocks and fire and the falling seed and hydrogen and the star nebula really think. The tiny atoms of oxygen and iron and cobalt, the forces of gravity and affinity and centrifugal motion set out with a definite plan in their nonexistent heads; and while men, hitherto supposed to have the intellects par excellence, were vainly trying to discover how it was all coming about, these factors actually mapped out the universe and made it according to the plan.

The "Arabian Nights," with its thinking horses and talking birds, has nothing comparable to this.

Matter thinks; force plans. How proud a bit of gold must be when it finds itself made into a magnificent watch! And how delighted the explosive power of gasoline must be when it is driving an imported limousine!

Perhaps my chapter on idealism sounded absurd, but as a matter of fact what really lies back of this "thinking matter" is a denial of all matter. Many of the scientists who talk of "thinking matter" mean that matter really does not exist. Only thought exists; thought evolves itself into appearances which we call matter. Fortunately we don't have to waste more mental labor on that precious philosophical legerdemain.

The order of the universe is a fact as unquestionable as mother love, or the multiplication tables, or an aching tooth. Chance could not have produced it, nor could matter and force if they were left to themselves. We have only one remaining alternative: a directive intelligence. Here at length is common sense. If the order displayed in a clock or a mousetrap or a torpedo or a linotype could not come into existence without someone to plan it down to the most minute details, it is perfectly ludicrous to talk of the order of the universe—so complex, so constant in its manifestations—unless there is implicitly admitted an intelligence which conceived it and directed it in accordance with a definite plan.

And if the human mind is still struggling to understand the order of the universe, what must

we think of the tremendous intellect which introduced this order where otherwise chaos would reign? Men may differ in the names they apply to this intellect, but they cannot but stand in awe before its gigantic proportions. And though as yet I have not proved its personal character, I shall feel justified—when in these chapters on armchair philosophy the words again occur—in spelling Directive Intelligence with capital letters.

...for which golden crown and robe of
 green robe may be the occasional industry is a
 consistent and wholly adequate ideal of a man
 here with oneself. I am not sure that the
 with a battery that would have gained a supply
 from (a) it is, that we are good.
 Under various names parliament has looked up
 in the mystical poetry and an intellectual theology
 of the past. It is a scientific hypothesis under the
 name of religion. The latter is a term which all
 the world disdains. It is the Christian religion
 the ceremonial show who like to believe that
 he thinks the things that we men say that he
 before is a whimsical, almost childish, theory. The
 theory is essentially the same in all cases. All is
 good. There is only one substance in the universe,
 divine essence, and we are all of that essence, and
 as such we ourselves are divine.
 The moon as a person makes up the sun, that
 there is only a kind of substance in the world, in
 fact that he has to give up other matters as well.
 It is a hard proposition, but the point is that
 it is not. According to the materialist, the
 fact that is identified with physics and solid matter

X

A God of Contradictions

IF ever a philosophy seemed to pour gratifyingunction on man's vain soul, that philosophy is pantheism. For while golden calves and gods of green jade may do for occasional idolatry, as a consistent and wholly adorable idol none can compare with oneself. Pantheism assures its votaries, with a flattery that would have gained a smile from Caligula, that we are gods.

Under various names pantheism has floated up in the mystical poetry and unintelligible theology of the East. It is a scientific hypothesis under the name of monism. Mrs. Eddy taught it—though all the while disclaiming it—as Christian Science. And even Bernard Shaw, who likes to believe that he thinks the thought that no man ever thought before, is a whimsical if diluted pantheist. The theory is essentially the same in all cases: All is god. There is only one substance in the universe, a divine essence, and we are all of that essence, and as such we ourselves are divine.

As soon as a person makes up his mind that there is only one kind of substance in the world, he finds that he has to give up either matter or spirit. It is a hard renunciation, but the pantheist makes it bravely. According to the materialistic pantheist God is identified with hydrogen and gold and

the sunflower and the elephant and the college professor and the street sweeper; and if you put them all together and run them all through a strainer, you would not find a single bit of spirit in the lot. Wrong, says the idealist pantheist; nothing exists save one great world spirit, which manifests itself in different forms, like men and mountains and puppies and pineapples. Matter is a delusion; it is the all-spirit manifesting itself. That is small consolation for the troop that has to charge a machine-gun company. Bullets are such a painful sort of delusion.

Now if, charitable reader in an armchair, you wish to give up your soul and with it your free will, you have my leave to fraternize with the materialistic pantheist. But souls are precious things—if one looks for the slightest essential difference between the pebble which the genius in a moment of abstraction flings into a lake and the genius himself whose intellectual gifts blossom forth in a supreme poem or a masterpiece in marble. With the materialistic pantheist pebble and poem and poet are just the same kind of substance in various stages of complexity—nothing more.

Besides, this form of pantheism destroys with a quiet and effective conclusiveness all idea of a designer or an architect of the universe. You do not expect the undeveloped intellect of a baby to be able to design a new cathedral; and it is folly to think that the intellect which put order and plan into the unguessed reaches of our heavens

could have elaborated this vast scheme until it had reached a marvelous state of development.

On the contrary, says the materialistic pantheist, the intellect which designed my world is identical with the world that that intellect designed; hence it can reach perfection only after the various parts of the universe have been evolved into an exact order and harmony.

So even were such matter as sticks and stones able to think, the intellect would be in no condition to plan out its intricate perfection until after it had reached a point where its plan had already been executed. It is much as if the San Francisco Exposition had not only evolved its own order and beauty but, while doing so, had actually evolved the intellect of the architect who designed it. And does it not seem a little strange that man, who has the highest intellect in the world, not only cannot plan and order the universe but actually cannot understand it with anything like comprehensiveness?

Personally I prefer to be soundly asleep before I start to dream. I should be loath to think that I am dreaming during all my waking hours, wandering through a vast world of delusions and unrealities, flying from poison and from wild beasts, which are merely the divine spirit in one of its manifestations, and craving food and the comradeship of faithful friends, which are merely the divine spirit in another of its deluding manifestations. If after all the only substance in the world is the all-spirit, as the idealistic pantheist maintains, then we are poor fools who wander in

a world of ghosts and hug to our heart of hearts shadows less real than the images one weaves from smoke. For such a contention wipes out everything that we in accord with our common sense call material and brands all matter as utter delusion.

Pantheism, no matter of what brand, certainly does not leave much room for real individuality. In fact it makes individuality simply impossible. For if we are all identified in one great undivided essence, we are really not individuals at all but inseparable and unseparated parts of the one divine being. And since we are identical with God, we are also identical with one another. For is there not an axiom that two things equal to a third thing are equal to each other? If that is the case, I am, not myself, but Fainting Bertha and Percy MacKaye and Jack Dempsey and King George. At this statement one feels inclined to shriek with laughter. Indeed one could find grim humor in a war in which the armies of the enemy, which are really essentially identical with the armies of the Allies, could fight so strenuously against others who are really themselves.

This difficulty however reaches a climax of absurdity when we realize that not only our fellow men but the pig and the carp and the water rat are as much identified with the divine essence as are we ourselves. They, like us, are not distinct beings, but are united by an essential unity in one divine essence and hence are essentially united to us. Though I have never felt any consuming desire to claim descent from a Darwinian monkey, I much

prefer such remote ancestry to this pantheistic identity with a hog.

As an American I feel an unconquerable impulse to fight whenever I see my liberty endangered, and I fail to see where the pantheist leaves me any more freedom than has my image in the glass. What freedom can you expect in a "manifestation"? Just the freedom that the manifester grants it—simply none at all. My image in the glass does not have to be there, but it cannot be there unless I make it possible by my placing myself before the mirror; and once my image is there, it does as I make it do.

If we are merely parts of the great divine essence, then like any other mere part we move and think and act just as that essence directs. My arm is not free to scribble these sentences unless I direct its action, for my arm is a part of me and as such is subject to my direct dominion. And if men are parts of God, it is as absurd to speak of the individual human liberty as it is to speak of brains in a clothesbrush. This the consistent pantheist admits without much reluctance. We are the toys of divinity, flung either by its free will or in obedience to fixed laws into a seemingly separate existence. Once more philosophy has thrown away free will and with it all law and duty and obligation and morality.

For without individual freedom of will there is no place in the dictionary of pantheism for our meaning of a wrong act. Matricide, rape, the defrauding of widows and orphans, and that catalogue of crimes which make desolate the land can-

not in any sense be called moral wrongs. The murderer, the seducer, the firebrand, the traitor are merely parts of the Deity, and hence they act under direction and cannot do otherwise than they do.

In what possible sense can we say that this universal Deity acts wrongly? It has no duty to any one, for no one but itself exists. There is no one to place a binding law upon it or oblige it to carry out such a law if such a law did exist. If this be true, then the criminals in the world, who are after all only the manifestations of the Deity, do not the slightest wrong when they betray innocence, snatch the very food from the mouths of the poor, and spit screaming babies on the points of their swords. All of which implies that our moral codes can stand a thorough overhauling and that some extremely primitive concepts of life must go by the board in a trice.

Supposing however that the Deity is really the author of the world's crime—and I am using the word crime in its properly understood sense. Then we have the disgusting picture of a Deity, a being of essence divine, who freely burdens itself with the atrocities of Cain and Messalina and Sir Henry Morgan and the Paris apaches. We find ourselves confronted with a being which by its infinite intelligence put into the world a wonderful order and plan and yet by senseless crimes deliberately frustrates that order in a thousand and a million cases. Though incomprehensibly vast in the breadth of its understanding, that Deity either does not recognize, even as men

recognize, the inherent destructiveness of sin, or else, recognizing its true nature, it freely and deliberately embraces the things which set at naught the plan that that same Deity has fixed in the universe. In either case we have reduced our Deity to the level of the lowest degenerate that walks the streets of our cities. Thus pantheism, which started out to make all men gods, ends by reducing God to the condition of the most disgusting criminal.

There is no denying that at first sight, especially when it is draped in the opalescent robes of the East, pantheism seems a fair priestess for our souls. But if, logically followed out, it first makes us equal to God and then makes God equal beneath our feet and the feet of the criminal whose presence we feel to be a profanation, if it deprives us of our individuality, if it strips us of free will and makes us the toy of some irresponsible Deity, if it inevitably makes the philanthropist and the murder alike unworthy of praise or blame, it is a doctrine, not to flatter the vanity, but to pervert the human intelligence. Man must by force of his nature bow before some Deity. Yet who dare say that the savage who enshrines in his hut a flat-nosed idol of clay is more to be ridiculed for his cult than is the scientist who admits to the sanctuary of his mind this pantheistic god of contradictions?

XI

World Builders

A FAMOUS scientist once remarked in a bragging mood that, given matter and force, he could construct the universe. The boast sounds like an echo of old Archimedes' vaunting offer that, given a lever and a fulcrum, he could move the earth. Each had little fear that his boast would be taken up. Possibly both the scientist and his Grecian predecessor thought that they could make good their brag; certainly the Greek set himself the far simpler task. But in either case the instruments needed for the contemplated operations were admittedly beyond the power of the boasters to obtain; each felt his incapacity to furnish himself with the needed material and tools. The difference between them lies in the fact that Archimedes never expected anyone to furnish him with his gigantic toys, while the scientist would take his matter and force as actually existing and patent facts.

Matter and force and the Directive Intelligence separate from them were the three factors which together brought the visible universe to its present state of development. The question arising immediately is whether that intelligence, according to the prescription of the boastful scientist, was "given" matter and force to work with, just as

the architect is given bricks and steel and concrete and the power of the donkey engine. Are matter and force beings which exist by the strength of their own nature and quite independently of any outside agency? Or do they owe not merely their direction but their actual existence to the gigantic intelligence which ordered them?

To answer this question, we must apply to matter and force the two principles without which any scientific investigation would be as futile as the questioning of a parrot: Nothing begins to be without some cause that is capable of producing it; and nothing exists without a sufficient reason to account for its existence. These are the principles which have enabled scientists to ascertain pretty exactly from a handful of flint arrows and a bit of broken pottery the intellectual development and culture of races that perished before the plans of the pyramids were drawn and to plot out from a knowledge of the Pennsylvania coalbeds the vast, marshy forests that bloomed at a period when fish spawned on the peaks of the Rockies. A slight variation in the orbit of some planet is sufficient to show that some unknown and as yet unseen body is drawing that planet from its course. The presence of a characteristic that was unexplained by known elements led Madame Curie to the discovery of radium. Indeed these two principles that we have enunciated here are the commonplaces of every scientific experiment. So if matter and force began at some time to exist, they must have had a cause sufficient to produce them; if they have been eternal, still they must have

some reason sufficient to explain their existence.

Our everyday experience in the world has made us acquainted with the constant appearance of beings that have their origin in other beings that in many cases are doomed to disappear. We meet everywhere the constantly recurring phenomena of plant life developing and propagating itself through seeds; we see on every side the mystery of birth and death and the passing on of life through generations that arise and fall like successive waves on a beach. Even the waters of the seas and the rocks of the mountains were formed in a prehistoric past from the union of elements which bore but slight superficial resemblance to the forms they assumed in composition. We are in fact surrounded by links in a chain of causes and effects which traces its beginning to a period that no mathematician has as yet computed.

The mind is staggered at the idea that this chain of causes and effects has been in existence from eternity, that there really was no first cause. In fact, as was previously noted, such a hypothesis simply destroys the theory of evolution; for in an infinite duration matter and force should certainly have attained an infinite perfection, something which no sane man claims for matter and force. Suppose then that matter and force did exist eternally but began to evolve themselves only at a definite time in the past. Then we have a hypothesis which plays hob with the established law of inertia. For a body at rest continues by the force of its nature to stay in that state unless it is moved by some outside agency. A stone lying in

the Grand Canyon will lie there until it is weathered into dust unless some tourist pitches it into the rushing stream, or an earthquake jars it from its resting place, or some other external force rudely moves it from its position. That is kindergarten science. The idea of matter and force having been from eternity quiescent and suddenly springing into motion indicates clearly that some other force must have caused that first motion. In this case we have another indication of the influence of the Directive Intelligence on the matter and force of the universe.

The extreme unlikelihood and even impossibility of an eternal series of causes and effects force us ultimately to a first cause which gave the rest existence or at least set in motion that long course of evolution. This first cause was itself either caused by some other cause, or it was the cause of itself, or it always existed—and this by the force of its own nature. Since it was the first cause, obviously it was not brought into existence by some other cause. The problem of a thing not yet in existence being the cause of itself makes the trick of lifting one's self by the bootstraps seem the simplest athletic exercise. So if there was a first cause, which itself had no cause, it must have had an external existence due to its own inherent nature.

Such a being differs essentially from any other being in the range of experience. For every being we know from actual experience has the reason for its existence, not in itself, but in some other being. Conceive then a chain of causes and effects stretch-

ing back as far as you wish, even into eternity: corn producing grains and the grains fresh stalks; birds laying eggs which are nurtured into small, gaping-mouthed fledgings. In each individual case the reason for the new being lay in the fact that a previous being had produced it; and since any one of a thousand or a million possible misfortunes—the dropping of the seed on a rock or the addling of the egg in the sun—could have prevented its coming into existence, each cause might easily have failed to act, and each effect was no more inevitable than are the pansies which the amateur gardener hopes to see sprouting from the seeds that he trustfully planted. In fact whole races of plants and animals, like the famous extinct race of trilobites, completely dropped out of existence, leaving behind only bits of fossil embedded in the forming rock. And man himself for all his superlative gifts of mind and will finds traces of whole nations of beings like himself which some unknown disaster swept completely from the records of the past.

Not one single link in the chain but owes its forging to some outside agency; not one link but depends on a hundred doubtful circumstances; not one link which by the very force of its nature had to come into existence. We have in consequence a chain made up of links each one of which does not have the reason for its existence in itself but which depends on some other being; and it must be remembered that no chain is stronger than its weakest link. So if no single link is self-existing, the whole chain has the reason for its existence,

not in itself, but in something outside of itself. And unless that being is self-existing and contains within its own nature the reason for its existence, we have to continue our search until we come to a being that does exist by the force of its nature and owes the reason for its existence to itself alone. Make then the chain eternal if you wish; still each single link and hence the whole chain by their very nature demand some being which does not owe its existence to someone else but which exists because it is its nature to exist. Once more we are driven back to a first cause which differs essentially from all other things in this universe and on which all other beings necessarily depend.

So matter and force not only owe their direction to something outside of themselves, but they depend on this outside agency for their very existence. Now comes the question of how that outside agency, that Directive Intelligence, brought them into existence. Obviously it did not find them ready to hand. If it did, then they are actually independent beings and they in no way rely on the outside agency—the theory which we have been disproving. The Directive Intelligence then must have produced them since they owe it their existence. This could have happened in either of two ways; Either matter and force are parts of this self-existent being; or they were called into existence, which they did not before possess. Certainly matter and force are not parts of the Directive Intelligence, for that would drive us back once more to pantheism with all its absurdities. So we are forced to admit that the intelligence which

directs the universe called matter and force into being, nothing but itself having existed previously. That is what we call the act of creation.

The unbelieving philosopher and essayist, whose sense of humor is often strikingly redundant, has had titillating fun laughing at the Christian God whom he loves to describe as a doddering old man seated on a glittering throne, surrounded by bored angels and saints, and occasionally breaking the monotony by wielding the lightning. Unfortunately that is humor without any point, for the essayist made not only the joke but the god as well. The Christian God is not a sort of superminister in a black coat, starched tie, and possibly a wobbly tiara. He is the infinite intelligence which put order and plan into a world that without Him would be chaos. He is a being distinct from the world and hence enjoying a personal existence, an existence which He owes to none but Himself. We find Him exercising in the creative act a power which surpasses all power that we know anything about. It is not the man who adores such a God that is the fool. The fool is he who prefers no God—or a god of his own making, even if that god has clay feet or wears the image of imperfect man.

XII

The Dream of Immortality

THE mad anxiety of certain modern philosophers to run away from the idea of immortality is what Thomas Hardy would have called one of life's little ironies. Toward the beginning of World War I, Haeckel, goaded by the carnage of the battlefield, remarked bitingly that after all immortality is a dream—a beautiful dream, but a dream nonetheless. Whereat many nodded solemnly assenting heads.

It takes a man who has the calm assurance of Haeckel to stigmatize all mankind—save himself, a small coterie of materialists in our day, and an insignificant scattering of ancients—as deluded dreamers. A high-school pupil's acquaintance with the literature of Greece and Rome, the most casual dipping into Egyptian archeology, any slight knowledge of Hindu or Chinese beliefs, the burial rites of the Mound Builders, the traditional beliefs of the American Indians show that in their belief in immortality pagan nations were scarcely a pace behind the Hebrews and the peoples of Christian Europe. But of course they were all sound asleep. How fortunate for our generation that we possess a human alarm clock to wake us from our dream, beautiful though it is! Unbelief is astoundingly modest.

To begin with, I freely admit that if there are no souls there is of course no immortality. We are only too grimly aware of the death of the body and its consequent decay. But the previous chapters in this book on armchair philosophy have been love's labor lost if the reader has not been confirmed in his belief that he has a soul distinct from his body, a soul that performs intellectual acts and free acts of the will which no mere body could perform. Naturally though as Haeckel did not own a soul of his own but believed himself to be a blood brother, or at least first cousin, of the bull and the chamois and that most fashionable relative the ape, it would have been simple nonsense for him to have expected immortality. A plump turkey at Thanksgiving time would have had a far better chance for immortality.

But you, faithful reader in your armchair, and I in mine know that we have a soul, a something more than our shifting, changing body. We know too that that soul can understand right and justice and abstract physical and moral laws, that it can form an idea of God and of other souls—all of which no sense of our body ever experienced because these are not material objects. One wonders by the way how Haeckel could have talked of immortality if he had no soul; for he never saw anything immortal, and he was a thousand miles from having heard or felt the abstract thing we call immortality. We know as well that we have a free will—though our bodies are bound by the laws of physics and chemistry. So we have within us at least something which performs actions

essentially higher than any action performed by our body. Such a soul might conceivably be immortal.

Our own experience has shown us too that the destruction of the body does not necessarily mean the soul's destruction. For you will recall that every seven years the body is completely destroyed and rebuilt, while the soul remains essentially unaltered, binding in a unity of personality the man who is tottering to his grave and the child who used to toddle to his mother's knee. At least during life our soul is not destroyed with the destruction of our body.

One infallible recipe for the making of a successful materialist is carefully to ignore or condescendingly to pity the higher beliefs and aspirations of man. If, instead of pitying his poor dreamers, Haeckel had at least glanced at the dreams of these men, he might have felt some slight fear that his pity was misplaced. For oddly enough it is as impossible for a man to be absolutely original in his dreams as it is for him to be in his poetry. Dreams, much like poetry, are the fragmentary and often inconsequent reproductions of real convictions and passionate aspirations. The stuff of dreams are the things we know and crave in our waking life.

Supposing then that immortality is a dream, it is a dream based on an aspiration as firmly embedded in human nature as is hunger for food or a craving for love. It is a dream which has for its basis in man's waking life a continuous, unconquerable craving for perfect happiness. May it

not be that the designer of the universe when He gave man that craving intended at some future time to gratify it?

If man is, as Haeckel would have maintained, just a step higher than the beast, it is remarkable that his horizon is not bounded by a soft bed of straw and a bit of juicy meat. But man has a craving for a happiness greater than any that life can give us. The most terrible pain does not come from the diseased or aching body; it comes from man's failure in his constant striving after happiness. Like Nevill Fanning in "Initiation," men build their dreams of happiness on love of woman or love of nature; and dream after dream fades; and the insatiable, almost maddening craving for happiness remains.

Since the days of Schopenhauer it has become part of a philosophical creed to sneer at the place of happiness in the world's economy. Yet strike happiness from man's life, and you have a race of galley slaves ambitionlessly inert save under the lash of hunger or lust. Replace the desire for happiness, and you energize the world. At the kiss of Prince Charming the sleeping world awakes: Poets write, explorers plunge through the frozen entanglements of the poles, merchants pile up fortunes, scholars add knowledge to knowledge, and soldiers seek glory at the cannon's mouth. Even the poor fool whose guiding star is a flickering red light is being lured on by an insatiable craving for happiness. Every cocktail that is mixed, every hypodermic syringe that is filled, every tavern

that makes hideous the night, is a sop thrown to man's hunger for happiness.

If in all this broad world any man at any time has found the secret of perfect happiness, he has hidden it more effectively than the inhabitants of that fabulous place hid the city of the Caesars. Surely experience, that safest and most expensive of teachers, should by this time have convinced men that their dream of perfect happiness is a dream indeed if they seek it in this world. History and the daily papers keep dinning into our unwilling ears the fact that happiness cannot be measured in terms of stocks and bonds, languages learned, pictures painted, titles conferred, or even in souls saved. Like so much salt water all the possessions that one can heap up only render more insupportable our thirst for happiness; for as long as men shall live, at the moment of their greatest power they will weep—in tiresome imitation of Alexander—for more worlds to conquer.

Recall the fable of the fisherman and the enchanted fish. Like all fables it is truth crystallized. Men ask first for a cottage, then for a palace, then for a patent of nobility, and at last for the sun and moon to be their playthings. Vast knowledge whets the appetite for greater knowledge; the controller of a factory strives to control the whole industry; the emperor who had dominion over the earth would dream of an airship expedition against Mars. Even should we possess the earth for our throne and the heavens for our canopy, we know that our ultimate and fearfully anticipated earthly possession is a mound deep and dark

and shunned by even our best beloved. That terrible realization is enough to turn to wormwood any pleasure that time can offer us.

Jove, said the old mythology, tortured Tantalus by creating in him a devouring thirst and keeping the water just out of reach of his parched lips. In that Jove was like the small boy who loves to pull a live beetle to pieces. Yet if the creator of the universe, having planted in the soul of man an unconquerable thirst for perfect happiness, made it impossible for man ever to quench that thirst, Jove would have been by comparison a merciful, beneficent deity. Jove tortured one guilty mortal; God would be torturing the whole human race.

It is strange that persons who pride themselves on their superlative virtues and think most kindly of their friends will talk as if the world's creator had neither common sense nor common justice. We must at least grant the person who put order into this universe the virtues that we would not deny a chance acquaintance.

Yet unless the soul with its intellect and will is immortal, there is no justice in God. In the heart of every man in every age has been that passionate craving for perfect happiness; that craving has been consistently and inevitably denied fulfillment in this life. We have but two alternatives: Either God has been using men for His sport, driving them on blindly, irresistibly after a phantom that flies as men approached it; or He has put perfect happiness within the power of man in a world beyond this world.

In the first alternative God would be, not God, but a brutal tyrant worse than those Oriental monarchs who chained their starving prisoners close to the banquet boards. Worst of all He would allow men to dream their beautiful dream of immortality while all the while He laughed them to scorn.

In the second alternative perfect happiness must inevitably mean immortality. No happiness can be perfect unless its possessor is sure that that happiness will never end; the mature happiness of a devoted husband and wife fails in this very regard, that it will end. If God in common justice meant to make possible the satisfaction of the thirst which He has created in man, He must have granted to human souls the gift of immortality.

God has also given us an intellect, which man has not even begun to plumb to its depth. Has He allowed us only the few years on earth in which to fill the limitless bounds of that intellect? Is that the sort of common sense we should expect of the designer of the universe? That would be like the act of the man who, to store the grain crop of a single summer, built an elevator which covered the western continent and when summer was over leveled the immense structure to the ground. At the end of the longest and most studious life man has stowed away in his vast intellect only a few tiny grains of knowledge, just enough to make him crave more. It is an insult to God's intelligence to suppose that these gigantic intellects that He created He destined to end when their work was just begun.

If we are not immortal, then the lot of the snake in the grass and of Burns's field mouse is happier than ours; they at least have neither intellect which craves knowledge nor will which thirsts after perfect happiness. But we cannot suppose that the God in whose universe such wonderful order reigns would by His intellect and will raise man above the beast only that he might use that intellect and will to make himself more miserable than the lowest reptile. On the contrary we are certain with a divine certainty that while there is a God in the universe and while in man's heart throbs that insuperable craving for happiness the dream of immortality shall not have been dreamed in vain.

XIII

Moral Immorality

THE world is at present so full of moralists that it is in imminent danger of becoming immoral. For it is seldom healthy for any man or any generation to talk too much about anything. Often enough such excessive talking is a sign that a man is trying to talk himself into the belief that he actually possesses something that he would like very much to have, as a bank president boasts the unassailable solvency of his institution when the thought of a bank inspector gives him cold chills. Decadent ages are usually rife with seers who propound for the populace wise maxims and grave epigrams to serve in place of otherwise forgotten virtues. In the same way that an age which is sterile in pure literature turns critical and talks about books, an age which recognizes that its own morals show to best advantage only by gaslight talks learnedly and lustily on the beauty of virtue and the inner significance of morality, hoping by noise to distract a too inquisitive attention.

But our moralists—and we are inundated with novelists and playwrights and essayists and poets who play with morals as the Lake poets played with flowers—have coined for our age a new set of moral epigrams whose burden is a consistent and insistent negation. There is no such thing as absolute morality. No act is by its nature either

good or bad. Moral law is an antique that passed out with whatnots and haircloth furniture, very serviceable in a mid-Victorian parlor, but without either use or beauty in a world of arts-and-crafts furniture and geometric wallpaper. While each literary season brings its supply of literary moralists who chatter gaily of right and wrong and the futility of moral codes, they differ chiefly in the breadth and sweep of their denials. The best moralist seems to be the one who rejects the largest section of the moral law.

In the midst of this blithe chorus of denials a person feels impelled to clap his hands to his ears and pause for a moment's silent thought. Did our devoted ancestors after all suffer from an age-long delusion when they refused some actions the light of their countenance and bade others welcome to their homes? Our lusty-lunged moralists, with their revolutionary creeds and their literary bad manners, are shouting that our ancestors were wrong. Poor ancestors!

All acts, comes the protest, weigh the same in either scale of the moral balance. Custom, some cry, is what makes an action good or bad. Morals are as much a fashion as is the cut of a coat or the length of a skirt. Custom has banned murder along with the unpleasant habit of the gnawing of bones that are held between the fists. Yet since it is not such a far reach from the gnawing of bones to the eating of corn on the cob, murder may in time become a popular parlor sport. Nay! protest others. Before civil laws were enacted, men were as innocent of morals as they were of monocles.

With the introduction of law some actions became bad and others good. Wrong, all of you! shouts the moral anarchist, who hides his red shirt under "immaculate linen"; the only moral man is the Nietzschean hero, who recognizes no law, no custom, no morality, who rides on an iron-shod charger over the shams and shadows that we call the moral law. "The golden rule is that there is no golden rule."

Under the old moral code a moral act was one by the frequent repetition of which a man became good or bad, worthy of praise or blame. A person who frayed his pockets by his constant dipping into them for money for the needy was considered to be performing an essentially moral act; one who dipped into the pockets, frayed or otherwise, of others was considered guilty of an essentially evil action. On one side of our moral ledgers men wrote a list of acts for which praise should be bestowed: patriotism, continence, honor, devotion to parents. On the other side men inscribed a second list of acts for which men incurred the scorn and blame of mankind: treason, lust, lying, filial ingratitude. In their literatures men crystallized these moral acts: in Leonidas and Ephialtes, Lucrece and Pasiphae, Regulus and Simon, Cordelia and Regan. Were those men wrong thus to catalogue acts as one catalogues diamonds as against paste imitations?

Our ancestors were not stupid enough to think that the acts of a baby or an idiot could be moral acts. Our ancestors insisted that for an action to be moral there were required consciousness of the

action and liberty of choice. They too, quite as much as our clever moderns, recognized that custom might influence a man's mental attitude toward right and wrong; the simple matter of what constitutes sufficient raiment in an instance of that. But if custom or law is all that makes the difference between good and bad, our ancestors would have vehemently insisted that there is really no essential difference between good and bad.

Custom determines for example our table manners. It is not unlikely that the table manners of Simon Stylites would have shocked inexpressibly Don Juan — though no one debates about the respective morals of these two men. Law is the public expression of the will of the governing portion of the community. Yet a man wouldn't feel that he had to slink off and hide his head because he used his garden hose at a time of day when such use was prohibited by public enactment. Neither does he expect to have his neck weighed down with a medal just because he has decorated his terrier's neck with a license tag. If customs or laws that favor certain actions are all that make these actions morally good, and if other customs or laws that bann other acts alone make those acts morally evil, then between truth and lying there is precisely the same difference that exists between eating peas with a fork or eating them with a knife. While peas that roll from a knife may not delight the esthetic soul, such an action leaves our moral sense intact.

But is this really the case? Is there no essential difference between actions that we call morally

good and those that we call morally bad? The answer is simply to see what would happen were customs to be reserved and the laws altered by the insertion of negatives wherever they are not found and the deletion of them wherever they occur. Our attitude toward patriotism and treason for example would promptly suffer a complete change, and we would be forced to shoot patriots at dawn and commemorate traitors in immemorial bronze. If laws alone make morality, then law might at some time in the little-known but often-felt past have enforced universal fratricide, established schools for the instruction of youth in vice, forbade children to care for their aged parents, and banned as quite immoral purity and temperance and the cardinal virtues. A whim of some mighty law-giver, a fad successfully established by some ancient culture club might have made murder praiseworthy and placed piracy among the honored professions, along with medicine and law. For all actions, say our new moralists, are morally colorless until law or custom makes them either black or white or crimson. The commonest of common sense revolts at the possibilities which this theory suggests if it were logically followed out.

On the contrary even where custom has acted directly against what we call morality, men have recognized the real difference between good and evil. In the degenerate days of the Roman Empire, when the customs of the imperial city sanctioned an almost universal unchastity among its women and set a premium upon craven sycophancy among its men, poets, with the same pens which had writ-

ten glowingly of their mistresses' shame, paid reverent tribute to a Cornelia or a vestal virgin, and philosophers paused long enough in their flattery of the Caesars to praise the unbending knee of Cato the Younger.

One important point cannot escape even a new moralist: Laws are, not the makers, but the recorders of men's attitudes toward the facts of life. Sanitary laws are enacted only after the public mind has been educated to a belief that dirt and unhygienic conditions are necessarily bad. So you may be sure that murder and arson are not bad because the laws forbid them; the laws forbid them because men saw that murder and arson were morally bad.

It is unquestionable of course that there are actions which we might call moral cosmopolites, actions that dwell on the hazy borderland of morality and defy all attempt at strict classification. But there are a sufficient number of obviously good or bad actions to indicate quite clearly what in the act itself marks it for what it is. An action is morally good if it conforms to the nature of a man as a free, rational being. Any action on the contrary which perverts his nature, humbling his will and intellect under the hoofs of his wild passions, is, essentially and prior to any law that may forbid it, morally evil. Charity is essentially good because it is an action which befits a being whose will has been made capable of loving his fellow men. Lust is a crime because it allows the passions which we possess in common with the beasts to gain a dominion over the very faculties of will and

intellect which make us men; on the same principle when these passions are controlled and ordered by right reason, they become instruments of untold good.

A man is worthiest of praise when through a long course of moral actions he has attained to the full heights of his manhood. All that helps him to true manliness is morally good; all that holds him back is morally evil. The woman to whom we lift our hats in a spirit of reverence is the woman who radiates from her whole person the purity and fragrance of soul without which woman is nothing more than Kipling's three disgusting elements; everything that has dragged her down is morally evil.

The race of new moralists, who really should be called "no moralists," will continue, I suppose, their career of feverish negation. Yet even if all the laws and customs of men were suddenly to be dropped into oblivion, were chairs for the new moralists to be set up in every university and their plays produced on every stage, men would still recognize that between good and evil actions lies a chasm which all the magic of poetic expression and all the witchery of beautiful prose can never close. As the good man pauses for a brief, horrified glance at the hill up which the new moralists are mockingly leading the way, he feels in his heart the rising of a prayer like the prayer which rose from the lips of Him who taught us the meaning of morality by His living and dying for it: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

XIV

Our Friend the Utilitarian

NOT for the world would I suggest that modern philosophy might be plagiarized. Still less would I hint that it had taken to its heart a principle which Jesuits have grown weary in the repudiating. But sometimes it looks suspiciously as if the dear old despised principle that the end justifies the means had got a new dress and a new name and become utilitarianism. When the old-line moralists raise a voice of protest against birth control, its defenders do not contend that birth control is a moral action; but with frenzied accents and a tremolo stop they point to the mothers whose lives birth control will save, to the overpopulation it will prevent, to the resulting benefit in quality in the race as against mere quantity. You are given the same answer when you question the morality of euthanasia and divorce and half the other modern evils: They're useful and therefore moral.

Normally we say that the willing surrender of one's chastity is distinctly a moral wrong. But when Monna Vanna goes to the general of the besieging army to deliver up, if need be, her chastity in order to save her people, one would think from the pitying sobs and patter of approval that she were a Christian martyr walking into the jaws of a lion. The end she had in view was the saving

of her people; it really did not make much difference about the means that she employed to attain her end. Monna Vanna is only one heroic-size example of the thousand heroines and heroes who do wrong that right may come of it. From this to utilitarianism is not even a short step. For, says the utilitarian, any action is moral which is useful for the happiness of the individual or the race.

Most certainly, he continues, there is a difference between actions that are morally good and actions that are morally bad. Anyone whose brain has not been permeated with the fog of moral skepticism or addled by the heat of passions long indulged can see that. But the only difference between them is their ultimate effect on the temporal happiness of the individual or of the race. If he stresses the effect of happiness on the individual, he calls himself a hedonist. If the happiness he has in mind is the greatest temporal happiness of the greatest number, he calls himself a social utilitarian.

Hedonism, as you can readily imagine, is a delightful moral system for any pagan age. Epicurus was the first to form it into a clear philosophical system, and every young blade in Athens or Rome who sought to dignify with the name of philosophy his passion for wine and pretty slaves called himself an Epicurean. Today hedonism is chiefly a working hypothesis, and one does not brag too loudly if he works by it.

But social utilitarianism, with its large-minded affectation of sympathy for the majority, is dis-

tinctly in favor. Your social utilitarian points to the factories whose smoke is the ubiquitous symbol of a nation's prosperity, to the universities and art museums and dramatic renaissances which stand for a nation's culture, to the polling booths and the free hospitals and the labor pensions and the public playgrounds which mark the century's social development. Any act, he contends, that promotes these things which result in the greatest good for the greatest number is morally good. Any action which impedes this good of society is morally bad.

It is not surprising that in this day of King Motor one should forget the use of harness and hitch the cart in front of the horse. This is precisely what the utilitarian does. An act, says the utilitarian, is good if it is useful. The whole difficulty with that sentence is that the clauses have been inverted. It should read: An act is useful if it is good. There is a vast difference between saying, "I like this machine because it can make sixty miles an hour" and "This machine can make sixty miles an hour because I like it."

I quite willingly concede that every good action is ultimately—and I stress the adverb—bound to serve the interests both of the individual and the community. But there are certain good actions—like dying for the truth or sacrificing a nation in the interests of justice—which certainly bring little temporal happiness compared to the temporal ruin they involve. These actions would seem to be good in spite of their inutility to the individual. So when I say that good actions are always

ultimately useful, I have my eyes fixed not merely on the utility in this life but on the higher utility of an immortal soul in another life. Still even in this case an act must be good before it can be ultimately useful.

Once more we must resort to a comparison. A vacuum cleaner, if one may trust the hyperbolic pages of the advertising section, is eminently useful. But before it can be useful, it has to be a good vacuum cleaner or — to be specific — the vacuum cleaner mentioned in the particular advertisement you happen to be reading. No one nowadays—at least not in theory—questions the utility of dentists. But long before a dentist is trusted to preside at the obsequies of a pet nerve, men make very certain that he is a good dentist, technically skillful, and acquainted with the science of his profession.

In very much the same way the utility of an action will depend on its inherent goodness. Just as a Naval expert can, by examining it, tell what benefit a turbine will bring our Navy, so a moralist can tell, by examining the nature of it, the bearing of an act on human happiness. But the reason which makes a certain turbine a good turbine and a certain act a moral act must be sought elsewhere than in utility.

In justice to Epicurus it must be admitted that he never intended his followers to burn incense and nerves and manhood to Bacchus and Aphrodite, or to top off philosophic debate with philandering debauches. But if the followers of his rule of morality did in fact make his name synonymous

with glutton and libertine, the fault was largely that of Epicurus. For to say that the morality of an act depends on its effect on personal happiness is to leave room for as many interpretations of morality as there are interpretations of the term happiness. History is witness to the innumerable meanings that have tucked themselves into those three short syllables.

Happiness for a scientist and for an American Indian, happiness for a nun and for a dweller in hotels and taverns, happiness for a bibliophile and for a baseball fan can scarcely be said to have a common denominator. If all forms of personal happiness are in themselves morally right, then Raffles and that long line of gentlemen pirates ancient and modern whose supreme thrill lay in a bit of artistic buccaneering were moral men. And what of the duelist who, like D'Artagnan, loved the flash of rapiers better than the flash of diamonds? Were the duels he fought with an enthusiastic zest moral actions? If not, then who is to determine what constitutes man's true happiness and what is but its shadow? And how is man to know exactly wherein lies the difference between happiness and its shadow?

The fact is that men have clearly distinguished between morality and mere utility. Socrates once said that a courtesan contributed perhaps more than anyone else to the happiness of the world. Yet he never intimated that such happiness was moral. The wealthy tenement-owner who distils his wealth from the blood of the poor is serving the purposes of his own personal gratification.

Dare he flatter himself in the depths of his heart that he is a moral man? And what of those actions which, like the self-sacrifice of Sidney Carton, lead inevitably to death? Judged by the Epicurean standard, they are essentially immoral acts, for they result in the destruction of all possibility of further temporal happiness.

The social utilitarian has little better success when he tries to determine just what is useful and what conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. On the meaning of that exasperating little word happiness, nations have differed as widely as have individuals, and they have frequently enough felt that their highest utility lay in actions which they never dared to dignify as morally good.

Many a Roman statesman was convinced that the bloody gladiatorial fights because they kept alive the martial spirit and instilled a contempt for death served the best interests of the state. This by no means proves that they were equally convinced that the butchering of men was an essentially moral act. Our Pilgrim Fathers thought that the wholesale extermination of the Indians would be highly useful and conducive to the peace and happiness of the struggling towns. Possibly it was, though one would hesitate to pronounce the murder of Indian tribes through the deliberate introduction of smallpox a morally good action. The economists of Elizabeth's day felt that the introduction of the slave trade was a good thing for the mother country and the colonists, just as in former days Greek economists built their sys-

tems on the foundation of universal slavery. I doubt very much if either the English or the Greeks debated the morality of carrying off a free people into servile captivity. Utility and morality in this as in a thousand other cases—for example in every war of conquest—were never for a moment confounded.

In fact statesmen whose eyes have been open to the facts have plunged into courses of immoral action which they felt to be for the utility and happiness of their fellow citizens. By a diplomatic lie or a bit of trickery a statesman averts a war. He is convinced that he is serving the best temporal interests of his fellow men, though he may be sure that the lie is wrong. The statesman who for the sake of right and justice chooses to see his people destroyed rather than stain their honor proves that mere utility and temporal happiness are by no means the ultimate tests of what is good and honorable. The nation that goes down to ruin fighting for justice has in annihilation found something far higher than mere temporal prosperity.

Happiness and utility are such flexible, shifting terms that they are altogether unsafe guides for the determining of a morality which is independent of all changing conditions. Murder is not good today and wrong tomorrow, even though a man sees that his best interests lie in the slaying of a foe. An action is not morally good unless the happiness which it produces and the utility it conserves are in themselves morally good. For this end we need a standard as unchangeable as the nature of right and wrong.

A Cure for Caprice

ROUGHLY considered, there are two general classes of moralists: the moralists who invent theories, and the moralists who live theories. The second class follows the first as inevitably as a tail follows a comet, or a small boy a circus parade. There precisely is the danger of all moral theorizing. If every man were a hermit living ten miles from his nearest neighbor and absolutely barred from communication with anything more human than a woodchuck, he might sit quietly in the midst of the forest and spin moral theories from dewy morn to dusky eventide.

But moralists love solitude in the same way that they hate print. As soon as a moralist has gathered a dainty little handful of fantastic moral principles, he rushes furiously to a university or a publisher's office, blows a bugle, clangs a gong, and assembles the populace. Whereupon some pliant idiot takes the new teachings hot from the master's lips and runs to try them on the neighbors. (Why have the neighbors never thought of organizing a moral home guard?)

Geographers may not mention the fact, but among the most important products of our country and among our staple importations are lawless heroes and wayward heroines. They romp through

our current novels and over our subsidized stage, "living their own lives." (We can be grateful that they're not living our lives.) Through the medium of special newspaper writers they tell the credulous public that their particular murder or adultery or robbery was the expression of their eager, panting souls. They did no wrong. How could they do wrong when they were following their esthetic conscience? What we call crime, they call necessary self-expression.

Irritating and ridiculous as these criminals in evening clothes may be, they are after all only the camp followers of a very definite school of morality. Morality for them is so much a matter of private interpretation that any crime from manslaughter to the wholesale production of literature reeking of vice is justified by the smug criminals and hysterical feminists who hold office in the "Soulful Society of Sob Sisters." We must not be too hard on them when they carry to its ridiculous conclusion the theory of subjective morality.

Since the days of Kant, the ablest exponent of this theory, the subjective school of morality has flourished mightily. Kant held that a morally good action is one which my reason decrees and which I feel could be made the universal rule of action for all men. "Shall I die for my country?" asks the soldier, as his officer calls for volunteers in an enterprise that means certain destruction. "Yes," he answers, "because my reason bids me die for my land, and because the best rule for all men under these circumstances is to die thus for their country."

“Shall I leave my husband?” asks the modern heroine, in and out of the covers of our best sellers, when her butterfly affection has flitted to the handsome coast guard. “Yes,” she cries, placing her hand where her heart—if she had one—would be located, “because my reason bids me leave the place where love no longer dwells, and I should wish all women to do as I do under the same circumstances.” An ethical society of self-respecting Eskimo squaws would sniff at such morality; a professor without a sense of humor would begin to explain the distinction between reason and caprice. But why should the moralist who accepts as his moral standard the individual conscience condemn her? In his theory each one is moral dictator for himself, not only judging what is right or wrong but actually making it right or wrong. Since dictators are notoriously irresponsible, we need not be surprised at the sickening procession of men and women in fiction and in real life for whom the whim of the minute has become the law of life. Nor need we flatter ourselves that the end is yet.

Why will people persist in talking as if our reason were the only unreasonable thing in the world? Unlike the German philosopher in the famous yarn, we do not pull down the blinds and fling all our natural histories into the fire when we want to know what a camel is like. We trot out to the zoo and look a camel straight in the eye. If we don't, ten to one we will believe that a camel is a hippogriff or a dodo. In the same way the reason does not go into a dark room to spin unreal

theories out of nebulous data. Reason, not nonsense, bases its operations on the facts of life.

Our moralist friends are looking through the large end of the opera glasses. An action like murder or kidnapping is not wrong because my reason forbids it; my reason, if it makes any pretense to being reasonable, forbids it because it is wrong. My reason, as soon as it knows anything about the nature of the drug, mildly suggests the inadvisability of my consuming arsenic with my meals. Arsenic however is not slightly deleterious because my reason forbids it; my reason forbids it because arsenic is not conducive to long life or proper digestion. Some kind grammarian ought to write a guide to the uses of the word because. Glance swiftly at any of the thousand actions which from the dawn of history man's reason has classified as good or bad. In every case you will find that there is something in the very act itself which forces man's reason to approve it or disapprove it. Every reasonable man recognizes the moral goodness of patriotism because through it alone our national life, so necessary to true peace and temporal prosperity, can be conserved. In a parallel way men recognize the evil of treason because like the ambushed assassin it aims with cowardly malice at the peace and happiness, not of a single individual, but of a whole people. There is something inherent in every good action which forces the human reason to approve it; there something inherent in every evil action that forces the reason to condemn it. That something we claim

is its conformity or lack of conformity to man's rational nature in all its aspects.

Perhaps the foregoing looks a bit vague and cryptic; if so, blame a new combination of words; the fact itself is familiar to every moral man and woman. You, kindly reader in your armchair, act upon that principle a thousand times a day.

Suppose for example that an honorable man feels within himself the sudden wild impulse to grip the throat of the scoundrel who ruined him in business. Almost immediately however his better nature (see how we slip into the phrase?) rises in protest, and he casts the impulse aside as unworthy of him. Why? Because he sees clearly that murder reduces man to the level of a beast of prey, makes him worthy fellow of the wolf and the panther; murder is against his whole rational nature.

Why does a pure woman shrink so swiftly from the slightest stain upon her honor? Because she realizes that her nature as a woman entitles her to a niche just below the angels, and every impulse that tends to cloud her stainlessness causes her to be less the being whose purity makes men honorable and more the mere animal whose passion makes men beasts.

Eating and drinking are in themselves actions that we share in common with the brute. They are absolutely necessary for life. But we are instantly aware that when a man eats, as the Romans did, for the sheer joy of eating, or when a man allows a craving for drink to ruin his poetic genius, he

works against his human nature and commits a morally wrong act.

For all their arguments to the contrary the hedonist and the social utilitarian could not remain moral men for a single day unless they were constantly recurring to their human nature as the moral metric stick by which to measure their conduct. That action, say they, is morally good which promotes happiness. But surely all happiness is not moral. We have only to glance at the dens of our cities to realize that fact. Only that happiness is moral which conforms to man's rational nature, which elevates it and ennobles it. The libertine and the drunkard have no right to call their bestial pleasures man's true happiness; such pleasures drag the intellect and the will through the gutters and make the victims false to the duties which constitute man's highest dignity.

In this day of men whose favorite study is their image in a glass and of women whose horizon is bounded by the hem of their skirts, one must pound with monotonous repetition on that tiny additional phrase "taken in all its aspects." Is it not maddening to hear our cant writers harping on "self-realization," as if men and women were isolated beings, with the breeze and the sea foam for their parents and the upper regions of the air for their habitat? There is no genuine self-realization which does not take into consideration human nature in all its aspects and—very importantly—in its essential relations to others. We are bound, whether or not we like it, with woven steel to our parents, to our children, to civil society, to God.

The mother who in her enthusiastic pursuit of culture has to inquire her baby's name each time she goes to see it may be wise as Aspasia; in one very important relation she is not a moral woman. A lie may here and now be to the eminent advantage of a lawyer; yet because of his essential duties as a member of the state he may not perform an act that weakens mutual trust and confidence, without which society would be worse than a confederacy of picaroons. While other moral systems which regard man's epitaph as the end of all may see no good in a man who contributes nothing to society's temporal prosperity, we find place in our moral world for the martyr, the missionary, the Poor Clare, and the man who lives to see his noble hopes and dreams crushed into pitiful fragments.

It is the proud boast of Catholic philosophy that here as elsewhere she is the valiant champion of human nature. She stands for all that is best and noblest in man's nature; she points a moral guide that cannot but lead man aright. Our moral standard is the sure cure for caprice.

XVI

The Reign of Law

MAN is at once the master and the anomaly of the world. Beneath him the creator has subjected all things, so that by their very nature they minister to his needs or by the force of his God-given intellect and will he bends them to his service. On the soft pelt of the man-eating tiger, stretched now before the domestic hearth, man's children tumble and play. The wind that can uproot whole forests becomes for man hewer of wood and drawer of water. Fire and flood, the swaying grain, the mettlesome horse, gold and the forces of steam and lightning serve him as no slave ever served a king in Babylon. All the order of the universe verges upward toward man, and on the pinnacle of the universe he stands, the world's greatest anomaly.

For in the midst of unchanging order he alone is free. All else must yield in blind obedience; he can lift his head against the world's designer and cry a proud defiance. He who is the appointed master of the world's order most often sets that very order at naught, most often puts chaos where order reigned. That is the mystery of man's free will.

It is perfectly absurd to talk and act, as many modern philosophers talk and even act, as if in

the midst of this universal order man, the most perfect of visible beings, were himself without any order. It is ridiculous to suppose that the intellect which set a course to the stars and implanted an unchanging law in a scarcely visible seed allowed man to be lawless, the one lawless creature in a law-bound world. God would be, not a wise director, but a fool of fools if He had left man free to scatter his talents, to squander his powers of intellect and will, to ride heedlessly over his fellow men, to spread along his path the ruin of souls and the death of bodies. God could not make it right for man, his supreme visible creature, to thwart the order of the world. He has given man an intellect and a will, but He could not give him leave to become inferior to the brutes by means of the very faculties which raise him above the brutes. A beast is bestial by force of his nature; a man becomes bestial in spite of his nature.

Our own experience and the history of mankind prove that there is implanted in our natures a law which binds us to a definite course of action and forces us to avoid the contrary course. It is perfectly true that we have a free will and that consequently the law does not coerce us as it coerces the horse and the ox and the rose and the comet—by a blind physical force which cannot be resisted. It is a law which is in accord with our free wills, a law which leaves us physically free to act for or against the law but obliges us to choose with the law and not against it if we would act as befits our human nature.

There precisely is the anomaly: The law of our nature has been made to depend on our free will. We can live according to the law and thus attain the fullness of our manhood; we can set the law at defiance and deliberately ruin all that is best within us. This is at once the glory and the peril of our freedom.

Natural law has an unpleasant connotation in certain philosophical quarters. Law implies restraint and obligation, words sadly in disfavor. The revolutions which swept away first much of canon law and then more of civil law have been aimed against natural law as well. But though we can destroy the laws of the land by pitching them—as was once done in Russia—into a bonfire, the only way that we can destroy the natural law is expressed so clearly and forcefully in every rational being that even though he may run each man must read. From the dawn of reason we are conscious of the mandates of the natural law, and we can read in the eyes of others—the frank, pure eyes of the nun not less than the brutal, shifting eyes of the roué—that they too feel its binding power.

Among the first judgments of which we are conscious is this: This action is right; this action is wrong. Blurred and hazy at first, such judgments grow for us clearer and more definite with advancing years and extend their scope to include a range of actions which hitherto had not touched our lives. Independently of any outside suggestion, frequently in the face of systematic training men recognize with more or less clarity the difference

between actions which are good and actions which are bad. We need no instructors to tell us that murder and lying and the fleshly sins are wrong, and all the professors in the college of crime could never convince our reason that these actions are right.

Almost simultaneously with these judgments comes a second group of judgments which imperiously and with appeal bids us to do the good and avoid the evil. No one rests satisfied with the purely impersonal, objective opinion that to strike one's mother is a grave wrong. Immediately man feels within himself a peremptory mandate: You shall not raise your hand against your mother.

Who does not recall with shrinking the first time he resolutely shut his ears to some exasperating command and ran heedlessly into a course of action against which every fiber of his better nature was struggling in vain rebellion? Then came the rush of self-condemnation which follows on every wrong, the bitter, relentless, accusing judgment: You should not have acted thus. We have all felt in a greater or less degree the remorse that made Macbeth see murdered men where others saw but empty thrones, the remorse that caused his wife to wander in her sleep and to try in vain to wash away a stain with water.

Here is law expressed more clearly than if it were written, like the Roman Law, on brazen tablets or, like the law of the Hebrews, on tables of stone. We have only to glance at the literature of the nations or to read their written codes of law to discover that no matter how much men and

nations may differ in their culture or in the religion which they follow, in the more general precepts of the natural law there is not only identity of thought but almost identity of expression.

These commands of which we are all conscious are not in any sense mere directions suggesting the most profitable course of action. They are real laws whose binding force we feel even when we struggle against them. A businessman finds himself so placed that by a single dishonest act, which no one could possibly discover, he could make a fortune for himself and for those he loves best; honesty in this case would mean his inevitable ruin. But where the law is concerned, he has no choice; the law is absolute. Though disaster fling him and his family into irretrievable poverty, though he see his family starving before his eyes, he must take the course which his reason knows is honest. Should he choose the dishonest act, not the clinking of gold across his counters, nor the healthy laughter of his carefully tutored children, nor the adulation of an adoring wife could drown within him the voice which condemns his dishonest course.

Put into one pan of the balance fortune, honor, life itself and into the other a mandate of the natural law, and the mandate must prevail. For her child the mother sacrifices health, her own pleasures, and the thousand luxuries which a woman's heart craves; she does this because the natural law makes her duty to her child a paramount obligation. A soldier captured in battle receives from the enemy a choice: honors and

wealth with a grateful foe if he will turn traitor to his country, or at dawn a line of glistening rifles directed at him. If he follows the command of the natural law, he has no choice but the blinding handkerchief, the sharp order, and a grave in quicklime.

All men acknowledge this. Our literature teems with the praise accorded men who chose death with torture rather than violate the natural law. Even the pagan could not but admire the Roman martyr. An almost casual gesture, the flinging of a bit of incense into a brazier, would have meant life for him; he chose rather to become a living torch in the gardens of the Caesar. We stand in awe over the mangled body of the maiden who plunged down a cliff to certain death rather than yield her chastity.

Here is a law which no mere man could have implanted in the human soul. By what right can any man oblige me to lay down my life rather than transgress his precept? And it is ridiculous to suppose that such a law is self-imposed; for after all my first instinct is to self-preservation, an instinct which in a thousand cases the law obliges me to conquer. What relative proportion is there between a short lie and my life? Yet something within me commands me to die rather than utter that lie. Indeed the simplest human law is inconceivable unless there was first in my nature a law obliging me to obey rightfully constituted authority. This is a law which is beyond all possibility of human repeal. Man can tomorrow blot out the laws he made today; but when any written law

contradicts the natural law, the instinct of all men rises in rebellion, and we refuse to obey. We may ignore or rebel against the natural law; we cannot repeal it or blot it from our hearts.

Such a law, so weighty in its commands, so binding that to observe it I am obliged to sacrifice all that I naturally cling to, would be utterly impossible were there not some being beyond and above me who has a right to command obedience. The same Deity which set the wonderful order in the oak and the swallow and the whirling planet set an order in my soul. But there is this difference: Neither oak nor swallow nor planet can do other than obey blindly and by a physical coercion the law of its nature; the Deity has left me free to obey or resist the law, as I choose. But whether I obey or resist, one fact I cannot escape: The natural law is for me the imperial voice of God.

XVII

The Philosophical Rules

THE interest of unbelievers in St. Francis of Assisi is to my mind one of the most encouraging signs of the present day. If any man stood for a life different in every least detail from modern paganism, that man was Francis of Assisi. He loved the simple, the unaffected, the natural. The sun and the rain, the north wind, birds, flowers, little children he drew close to his heart in a passion of simple love. In all things he saw God, the maker of all he loved, so that his heart sang all the day long. To him our artificial, intricate, hectic life with its preference for electric lights to the sun, for ventilation systems to the north wind, for swing bands to larks would have seemed unreal, hideous. The frank conspiracy today to keep little children out of God's world would have stricken the song from his lips.

In spite of Francis's utter dissimilarity to the neopagans, men cannot but admire the troubadour who with an unconquerable optimism saw beauty everywhere, who loved creatures with a Christlike love, and whose soul throbbed with a long sweet canticle to his God. Unbelievers admire St. Francis of Assisi even though he is the embodiment of Christian optimism.

But it is not a matter of ancient history that the optimism of St. Francis was preceded in popular favor by the pessimism of a very different stamp of man. Schopenhauer was read and discussed and admired; and Schopenhauer taught that "The only positive feeling is that of pain" . . . that "The world is a hell which surpasses that of Dante" . . . that "Life is a path of red-hot coals with a few cool places here and there." Delightful philosophy for armchair consumption, is it not?

Yet of the two classes of modern pagans, those namely who affect to admire St. Francis and those who follow Schopenhauer, the followers of Schopenhauer are by all odds the more logical. A pagan has not the least right to be an optimist. Anyone who has the slightest knowledge of the ancient classics knows of the drab melancholy which formed the background of pagan life. A logical follower of almost any of the modern unchristian schools of philosophy is by his own choice doomed to pessimism. The philosopher who adopts the optimism of St. Francis and does not accept St. Francis's beliefs in God and Our Lady and the brotherhood of all men in Christ is simply a parrot who has mimicked human laughter without any understanding of why he laughs.

There is no other conviction more chilling, more destructive of joy than the one by which a man is persuaded that he is being consistently deceived. Deception by those we trust, even though we only suspect it, is enough to ruin our lives. It throws about us a mordant distrust that affects our attitude toward everything. It breeds suspicion, takes

the firmness from the handclasp, deadens the love light in the eye. A generous man can forgive an honest blow struck him in the face far sooner than he can forgive a deception practiced upon him by someone he has trusted. If all the misanthropes of the world were mustered in one grisly army, it would be found that those who had not been soured by the deceit of some trusted friend would number scarcely a corporal's guard.

Certainly there is no friend on whom we are forced to rely half so much as we are upon our own senses. We are obliged to depend upon them for at least the beginnings of all our knowledge. What then is the logical effect of a philosophy which teaches that our senses are constantly deceiving us, that we have no bodies, that whatever information we acquire through sight and hearing and touch is false and chimerical? Here we are confronted by a deception as constant as our waking lives, a deception which no effort on our part can ever hope to overcome.

If such philosophy does not breed the blackest pessimism, a distrust of everything, it is because the philosopher or the follower lives a life quite independent of his beliefs. Though from a professor's chair the philosopher may preach that all matter is illusion and that only soul exists, he does not neglect to bandage a cut finger or to take his daily exercise in the university gymnasium. He may write learnedly about the untruthfulness of the senses, but for all that he gets out of the way when he sees a steel girder falling from a skyscraper. Living, as he claims to do, in the midst

of constant deception, supplied with faculties that continually play him false, he should logically believe in nothing, trust no one, plunge himself into the utter depths of pessimism and despair. But because he lives quite independently of his philosophical creed, he can smile trustingly into the eyes of his friends and speak glowingly of St. Francis of Assisi.

If our democratic world has one overpowering hatred, it is the hatred of slavery. We cannot bear the thought of it even when the yoke presses on another. The rattle of chains that bind soul or body will drown the most entrancing music. Unless then a man's philosophy teaches that his will is free, it is impossible to see how he can logically escape the misery that is the birthright of every slave. Bound hand and foot, driven forward under the lash of blind chance or an irresponsible fate, he could no more lift his voice in song than could the galley slave chained to his oar. Difficulties impend over his terrified head, and he knows he is powerless to ward them off. Temptations sweep down upon him, threatening his dearest happiness and the happiness of his loved ones, yet his philosophy tells him that no effort of his can stem the overwhelming tide of disaster.

For the philosopher of the slave will there can be happiness only in so far as he uses his God-given freedom to ignore his own creed, since happiness is the companion of freedom alone. There at least the dour old Puritan disciples of Calvin in England and in colonial America were brutally consistent. Their philosophy of life taught them

that men are not free; so with relentless logic they put out the lights of the theaters, plucked the Maypole from the green turf, and banned from their vicinity the music of organ and of voice and of human laughter.

Readers of current philosophy will have noted the recurrence of phrases like "passing the torch of life on to future generations" and "the immortality of the life spark." When these expressions mean anything more than vague sentimentality, they are a poor sop thrown to a world hungry for immortality. These philosophers dole out, not a genuine immortality, but a diluted substitute: the assurance that we live again in our children and that immortality is found in the memory of our friends. There is no doubting man's longing for an immortality not only for himself but at times even more for the loved ones that he sees passing into the silence beyond. Even at the end of the longest life no man feels that he has lived long enough, that he has exhausted the possibilities of knowledge, that he has sounded the depths of love. No man can bear the thought that his wife or his mother has ceased to be, that death is a barrier which means irrevocable separation. Without immortality or the hope of it the longest life must end in pessimism, in the conviction that all is lost, and forever.

But for the philosopher who denies a personal soul, immortality in any true sense is beyond the possibility of hope. If he believes that we have nothing but our bodies, he bounds human life by a pitiful span of harried years. If as a substitute

for immortality he offers absorption in the great all-spirit, he is offering a solution that is positively repulsive to men, who cling passionately to their own individuality and who devotedly love the individuality of other persons. In such absorption into a pantheistic god all individuality is lost.

Only a philosophy which like ours gives man the positive assurance that he has an immortal soul can take the horror from death. To most other philosophies death is a breaking with all that we cling to most ardently, or at least the sacrifice of the individuality, which is dearer to us than is any other possession. That way lies pessimism drear and unrelieved.

No man can be happy in mere denials; no mind can be satisfied with negations. For that reason modern philosophy is so largely a dreary waste, repulsive to the man whose life is in touch with the beautiful and the real. Modern philosophy has denied or questioned the certainty of our commonest knowledge, doubted the very faculties on which all our activities depend, shackled our free will with bonds of steel, torn God from His heaven and substituted a blind chance or a machinelike evolution, stripped man of almost all his glorious prerogatives, and offered the grave or oblivion as man's ultimate bourn. No wonder that a series of such pitiful denials was climaxed with Schopenhauer and his systematic pessimism.

But the philosophy that woke the song on the lips of Francis of Assisi and has made Christian philosophy the only source of consistent systematic optimism is the philosophy which rests firmly on

positive affirmations, which upholds man's faculties in their quest for an attainable truth, which points out the glory and the responsibility of man's free will, which lifts the finger of hope to a directing Deity, who is the source of man's life and the guardian of his destinies, which marks man as the chosen son of the most High with a life unlimited by range or years or ages.

XVIII

The Final Goal

PHILOSOPHY, which should above all else help a man to live, must be characterized by three things: consistency, common sense, and joyousness. In just these three elements is Catholic philosophy supreme. Every conclusion follows from proved premises with a consistency which its very adversaries must admire even while they withhold agreement. Its teachings are so eminently in accord with common sense that they read like a commentary on and a guide to our universal human nature. Its proud boast of human freedom, its confidence in man's power from the higher plane of his spiritual-material nature to meet and cope with the material forces of the universe, its constant looking forward toward life to meet a full satisfaction, its conviction that above all is a Directive Intelligence of undreamed-of power and beauty—these impel the student to almost lightness of heart.

I have not hoped or even desired to do more than introduce my companions of these few half hours to the beauties of this philosophy. Subjects which have filled the minds of the world's greatest thinkers and crowded the libraries of the civilized world can hardly be treated with anything approaching adequacy in the space I have allowed

myself in this book. At most I have tried to bring the great truths of that philosophy with the proofs that underlie them within the range of readers who either from lack of time or lack of acquaintance would be repelled by the sight of large volumes filled with terms that are like a strange language to them. I have tried to make these chapters the genial mutual acquaintance who brings together people who might otherwise not meet. It is almost time for me to withdraw myself and leave you and my chapters together.

But before we go, I must call attention to a fact which has no doubt struck every thoughtful reader of these pages, the fact that every road of true philosophy leads upward toward a single goal. Though the student start his search for truth as the Greeks did, from pagan Athens, or as the Arabs did, from Cadiz, his road must ultimately lead him upward toward the supreme being. The bypaths and the downward trails are ever the roads of error. The same instinct which in moments of intense emotional crisis wrings even from the reluctant heart the cry to his maker has forced logical thinkers, willing and unwilling, to recognize, even if only to attack, the creator.

For without Him philosophy is a murky blur. The unquestionable plan and order of this wonderful universe, a fact so fundamental that no satisfactory philosophy can ignore it, is a mystery dark and impenetrable and filled with contradictions unless He exists. The admission of a Directive Intelligence has been and is the only adequate explanation of the fact that the world, far from

being a void filled with meaningless chaos, is filled with planets that roll on with mathematical precision, that in all the vast reaches of space there reigns order—harmonious, intelligent, unailing.

If without God the material facts of sticks and stones and motion are mysteries, the human soul with its free will and its tremendous intellect is simple contradiction unless there is a God. Here is a spiritual being, a thing, not of material elements, but transcending all. Whence could such a being have its origin? Certainly not from the chemical and physical forces of the world; for the power of this being to understand and freely to will is precisely the power which no physical force possesses. These powers, which surpass anything else in nature, must have their origin in some being beyond and above nature, some being who first possessed them in himself before he gave them to the human soul. Once more the mind finds itself face to face with the being that Christians call God.

That insatiable craving for happiness which is the occasion of so much of the world's fairest romance and so much of its most sordid misery has no adequate satisfaction unless the philosopher turns to an infinite being. Not the fairest creature in all the world has been able to satisfy the human desire to love and be loved. Every human affection—the love of Dante for his Beatrice, of Petrarch for his Laura, the beautiful idealized love of the Brownings—has fallen far short of the capacity of the human soul to give and to receive love. Our hearts, even those the

ardor of whose love has burst forth in the world's finest lyrics and most exquisite melodies, have never been more than moistened with the love that they are capable of containing. Fully to answer our need for love we need a being that we can love without fear of disillusionment or weariness or loss. Such a being is God, the all-beautiful.

The man who rejects no less than the man who follows the moral law does so with the consciousness that a direct mandate binds his conscience. The moral law is a force that no one can escape by flight. The stern command is in the depths of wickedness, poisoning the sweetest pleasures of sin and sowing in the soul the seeds of bitterness and remorse. The stern command is in the heights of sanctity, rendering sweet and pleasurable the obedience freely given, blessing with a peace that defies pain and misunderstanding and the contempt of man the martyr's physical agony or the confessor's trials and neglect. No sane man has escaped or can escape that binding, ubiquitous law; and for it there is only one adequate explanation: a powerful lawgiver above and beyond our nature who has bound it with His commands, which we can refuse to obey but which we spurn at our peril. Again does pure logic arguing on an incontestible fact turn our faces up toward God.

There is then only one goal toward which every road of truth inevitably leads: God the supreme and perfect truth. Whether we look into the reaches of heaven or into our own souls, whether we read the triumphs of man's intellectual achievement or study in the face of a saint or a criminal

the individual record of man's subjection to the moral law, we are forced to recognize the presence of that powerful being to whom an inborn instinct impels men to bend the knee.

The very act which with primitive people is pure instinct or a custom consecrated by the history of their race may become for civilized man the highest tribute to the sanctity of truth and the compelling power of beauty. No physical compulsion bends our knee before the power above our nature. We may stand before Him and to His face defy Him; that is the privilege and the peril of our human liberty. But who that loves supremely truth and beauty, that feels within him a stirring at the thought of true greatness and power can stand unmoved before the being who flung the stars into their endless orbits and planted in the human soul its tremendous powers and capacities?

There is no slave service in our reverence of the world's creator. It is the proud homage that free beings pay to the one who represents in the highest degree all that the human heart supremely craves—beauty, truth, and boundless power. It is an acknowledgement on our part that the world—whose color leaps up to charm our eyes, whose waterfalls and singing birds drown our souls in music, whose extent astounds and whose beauty is our constant delight—and human souls, whose companionship robs pain of its torture and makes imperfect mortals loving and lovable—and our very persons with their powers of soul and body

... these are gifts from a God who holds out to us a blessed immortality in return for our love and service.

Philosophy has no higher destiny than to lead the mind into the sanctuary of God.

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THE QUEEN'S WORK

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