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JOURNAL OF  
THE TRANSACTIONS  
OF  
The Victoria Institute,  
OR,  
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VOL. VII.



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1874.

of rules be established such as are known in all public libraries. That is simply the scope of the last resolution.

The resolutions were put, and carried unanimously.

The PRESIDENT.—Before the Address is read, it is customary to ask if any Member has anything to urge or any remarks to make in regard to the general management of the Institute.

[An interval here elapsed, during which there was no response.]

Professor KIRK then delivered the following Address :—

## ANNUAL ADDRESS.

MY LORD SHAFTESBURY—LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—

**A**N annual meeting is in some sort a time of reckoning. That of such an institute as the Victoria is such a time, not so much in a commercial sense as in that of the navigator, or traveller, who observes and calculates, that he may know his true position and the direction in which he is tending. The winds and currents of contemporary thought have been acting upon us during another year, and it cannot but be well that we should, as far as possible, ascertain what their combined effect has been.

If I were asked to indicate the most dangerous set of the currents by which our course has been affected, I should refer at once to the doctrine of “evolution,” so-called. A writer in one of our popular magazines\* lately put the question as to whether this doctrine “makes it difficult to believe in immortal souls.” He was evidently inclined to answer in the affirmative, so he hoped that “some means” might “be found of reconciling those instincts of which the belief in immortality was a product”—that is, seeing the belief itself, at least in its present form, must die! He imagines that what he calls the “essence” of that belief must remain, but cannot tell what that “essence” may be! Should this utterance express a general state of mind among the most important classes in society, we are clearly drifting from our course, and are loudly called upon to inquire as to how our direction may be changed.

It is, I think, because this doctrine of “evolution” so powerfully affects men’s faith in all that is truly distinctive in human nature, that it has become of such importance. It appears, therefore, specially suitable to our present reckoning that we should consider one, at least, of those points of divergence in which this distinction is most clearly seen. The one to which I have been directed specially to call your attention

\* *Fraser’s Magazine*, for April, 1872.

is that which is found in the Moral sense. This, then, must be our subject for the present occasion. Popular philosophy gathers round this peculiar capacity of man, on the one hand in hostility to its peculiarity, and on the other hand in defence. Let us see how the conflict goes.

We may place one of ourselves as the instance of humanity under review. We stand, as it were, outside this individual, and with whatever openings and light we can command we endeavour to look within, so as to discover one, at least, of his grand characteristics. Specially, we wish to find out that element of his being in which he is moveable by the true and the right. This is properly his *Moral sense*.

The man is material, and may be controlled mechanically. He is animal, and may be ruled, as other animals are, by affections of his merely animal nature. Is the man more than can be expressed by "material" and "animal"? Like most animals, man is social, and may be moved by considerations arising out of certain of his relations to his fellow-creatures. He may be moved by considerations of this kind of a very lofty character; such as respect his country, his race, and even the universe at large, with the Great Father at its head. Yet in all this he differs in degree, rather than in kind, from the lower creatures. Has he any capacity by which he may be moved and regulated when not only no mechanical force is applied, but, also, when no merely animal or social element of his being can be addressed?

When we are in search of that which is generically distinct in the capacities of man, as a creature capable of being governed, we find ourselves, by careful thought, carried entirely beyond all ideas of personal, social, and even universal safety and comfort, into another region altogether. Every action that is *right* may appear also to be *useful*—if the sweep of thought connected with it be wide enough, it will, no doubt, always appear useful as well as right,—but that same "if" implies a great deal. In the vast majority of minds there is no such sweep of thought as is implied in the perception of the utility of all that is right. In these minds, in multitudes of instances, there is nothing but the idea of right to go by. May they be controlled when nothing but that idea affects them? May they be repelled when nothing but the idea of wrong repels? In other words, may a man appreciate the maxim that he should never do wrongly, even that good may come? These questions direct us in our search for that which is supremely moral in man, that, too, which supremely distinguishes him from the lower creation. Our moral constitution is not to be sought for in physiology, nor yet in our

perception of utility, but in those facts of our experience which are inseparably associated with ideas and feelings of right and wrong, or with duty and its opposite.

In this region of inquiry there are three great features of the soul's capacity which present themselves for our earnest study. These are, *feeling*, *idea*, and *will*. In search of a sense we might perhaps confine ourselves to the first of these; but to have a satisfactory conception of a *moral sense*, we must consider all the three. This will appear as we proceed.

*What, then, is a sense?* In order to furnish the answer to this question in a satisfactory way, let us take one or two of the ordinary senses. First of all we shall look at that of hearing. There is a certain vibration of the atmosphere; the wavelets of this motion reach the aural nerve; we may imagine (though we are not sure that any one can) some other affection than that called a vibration into which these wavelets pass as they enter the nerve or brain itself; but nothing of this kind can even be thought of as a *sensation*. The finest *movement* of matter is just as different from a *feeling* of mind as any one thing can be different from another. The capacity of movement and that of sensation are utterly diverse, and in the case before us are demonstrably separable.

Hutchison rightly remarks that "sensations bear no more resemblance to the external reality which is the means of producing them, than the report of a gun or the flash of powder bears to the distress of a ship."\* In the life of Beethoven, the great German musician, we learn that he composed his finest music after he had become stone-deaf. Harmonies that now charm the most critical listeners were created in his soul when he had no organ by which external song could reach it. In search of a sense, then, we must look for that capacity by which this master-mind could inwardly hear when vibrations reaching him so as to pass into sensations were impossible. That capacity is the *sense of hearing*. Air may be made to vibrate, and nerve may be affected in some way which is as different from vibration as light is from heat; but *mind alone can hear*.

It may be well that this should be more deeply impressed upon us. Take, then, the sense of smell. What is that which we call the sweetness of a rose? According to the best authorities, it is only a *movement*, like that of sound and all other affections of matter.† Let us suppose that we could get a microscope sufficiently powerful to enable us to *see an odour*. Would the material movement which we could then see have

\* Hutchison's *Moral Philosophy*, ed. 1755, p. 5.

† See Grove, *On the Correlation of Forces*.

any resemblance either to the *seeing* or to the *smelling* of which we should be sensible? Suppose again, that a person looking through the microscope and seeing the odour, had no sense of smell, would he be able to form the least notion of what smelling is as a feeling from the sight? Clearly, never. Hence there is no meaning for the word sense, or sensation, discoverable till you are beyond the material, which is capable of vibration or other movement, into that which cannot vibrate or move, *but can feel*.

This brings us close to the object of which we are now in search. If there be a feeling as real as that of hearing or smelling, which is as certainly the effect of the idea of right or wrong as the sensations of hearing and smelling are the results of sounds and odours, in that feeling we have the *moral sensation*, and in the capacity of it in the soul we have the *moral sense*. A glance at human experience shows us that there is such a moral sensation, and its existence implies the moral capacity for it. This sense is not equally keen in all men, any more than is that of hearing. It is even absent in some men, like that of seeing or any other sense; but just as certainly is it in man as man as either hearing or seeing can be. It is by fixing the truth of this capacity firmly in the mind as an indisputable fact of human consciousness, like that of any other sense, that we are placed in a position to review satisfactorily a world of conjecture as to the nature and destiny of man.

It may probably occur to some here to think that it is a mistake to call the capacity of feeling under consideration a "sense," and a still greater mistake to call the feeling itself a "sensation." Hutchison, who introduced the phrase "moral sense," and those who have followed him in its use, regard it as expressing what he calls "a higher power of perception."\* They regard all the senses as having the nature of intellectual faculties rather than as mere capacities of impression. Mr. Hutchison uses the word "sensation," however, as expressive of the effect produced through the moral sense. He says, "The approbation of moral excellence is a grateful action or sensation of the mind."† I am shut up to use the word for a stronger reason than that on which Mr. Hutchison used it, inasmuch as I regard the capacity as one of feeling, and not of perception. The affection is identical with each of those of the senses, as an impression of the nature of feeling, and nothing more. The sensation is *moral* because it is the immediate effect of a moral idea, just as sight is optical

\* Hutchison's *Moral Philosophy*, p. 24.

† *Ibid.*, p. 53.

because it is the effect of the optic ray. By keeping strictly to this use of the word, we maintain a very decided advantage in such an inquiry as the present.

This moral sense has features that constrain us to class it with the other senses. For example, it is affected by ideas of right and wrong; so is the sense of hearing by harmony and discord; so are all the senses by that which distresses, as well as by that which pleases. This sense, too, is useful to man, as other senses are to their possessors. Like the feelers of an insect or reptile, or the wings of a bat, by their delicate sensibility of touch, enabling their possessors to find their way, so does the keenly sensitive moral susceptibility enable its possessor to find the right path in action when his intelligence as to that path is defective in a high degree. As the affections of other senses constrain by the pleasure they give, or the pain they inflict, so does this moral sense in man. Hence it seems to me most important that it should be recognized and cultivated, just as sight or any other sense, and even more fully and carefully than all the rest put together.

The true moral sensation is clearly and easily distinguishable from all affections of the lower animals. It is utterly different from the effect of approbation or its opposite, and also from that of promised reward, or threatened punishment. Many of the lower animals are susceptible of these effects, and very keenly so. A dog, for example, is made to cower, and even to run off and hide itself, when spoken to as having acted wrongly; and it shows signs of unquestionable gratification when praised, as for a useful or noble action. This is more readily mistaken for the action of a moral sense than the effect of threats or promises of reward. But it is to be observed that the dog is equally affected by the praise or blame, whatever be the right or wrong in the case. That simply shows that he has neither the moral idea nor the capacity of feeling in accordance with it. The moral sense is as distinct from the susceptibility of praise and blame as hearing is from tasting, or from any other sense.

In saying this, we do not deny thought to the animal. That in which one sensation is distinguished from another, so as to make objects of a material nature affect what may be called the lower mind, *as objects*, must be of the nature of thought,—must, in fact, be reasoning. So far as there is evidence of this in the lower creatures, it is unwise to deny it. But so is it unwise to mistake such thought and reasoning, and the feeling which results from it, for that thought in which true moral distinctions are perceived, and the moral sense made evident. Where there is no blame from others, nor the slightest idea

that such blame may ever come, there is in man that which gives the keenest possible pain when wrong is remembered; and in spite of even the greatest possible praise, this pain goes on increasing in the soul, in which the remembrance continues to show its power. There is nothing of this kind among all the facts which the naturalist gathers from the experience of the lower creation; and yet this alone is the moral sense.

We come now to the point at which it is necessary to remark that *sensation is not thought*. Sensation is feeling, and feeling is not thought. We may, no doubt, use the word feeling where we mean thinking; but we never can do so when careful to express correctly the states of mind of which we are discoursing. It is not necessary to a sensation that any attention should be directed even to itself, still less to the object by which it is produced. A little observation will satisfy any one that he may feel cold without directly thinking of his coldness, or of the air around by which he is chilled; and especially he will observe that he may have that comfortable, though not always honourable feeling, which is called "*lukewarm*," without thinking of his sensations at all. So he may have all sorts of sensations without referring them to external objects. Sensation is separable, and is often separated from thought.

The confusion of popular thinking is illustrated on this point by Professor Huxley, who gives us very remarkable words on the point now in hand. In criticising an article in the *Quarterly Review* lately, and denouncing the idea that sensation is distinct from thought, he says, "If I recall the impression made by a colour or an odour, and distinctly remember blueness or muskiness, I may say with perfect propriety that I think of blue or musk; and so long as the thought lasts, it is simply a faint reproduction of the state of consciousness to which I gave the name in question when it first became known to me as a sensation."\* Mr. Huxley apparently forgets that "blueness" and "muskiness" are abstract thoughts. No single sensation can give such thoughts. They are the result of the comparison of many sensations. They are possible only as such a result. They are no reproduction of a sensation or sensations, such as colour or odour produces, but the results of reasoning on a great variety of impressions. He could scarcely make a greater mistake, or one more fatal to his reputation as a careful thinker, than to confound such abstractions with simple sensations produced for the first time in the soul.

It would be every whit as rational to hold that a sight is a

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\* The *Contemporary Review*, vol. xviii. pp. 459, 460.



smell, and that both are hearing, as to contend that a thought is a sensation or a sensation a thought. Mr. Huxley says in the same paper from which I have just quoted, that "no amount of sound constitutes an echo, but for all that no one would pretend that an echo is something of totally different nature from sound." I am disposed to ask what is an echo but a sound? Because the vibrations in the atmosphere go off to a distance and return, they do not cease to be only vibrations. "No amount of sound constitutes an echo"! One can scarcely believe his own eyes when he sees such words from such a pen. It is amazing that one who can distinguish between an echo and a sound is unable to see the difference between a sensation and a thought, and that too when the sensation is a mere first impression, and the thought is a long-perfected abstraction!

We may look in passing at one or two other specimens of Mr. Huxley's philosophy. We do so, because of the vast influence of the man. He says, "It is wholly inconceivable that what we call extension should exist independently of such consciousness as our own. Whether, notwithstanding such inconceivability, it does exist, or not, is a point on which I offer no opinion."\* I not only conceive, but perfectly understand and believe, that my bed is six feet and a half long when I am sound asleep as it is when I am awake. The same as to the breadth. The same as to everything that is extended. Mr. Huxley has got his mind so twisted, that he conceives of extension as only a state of mind, and he cannot both conceive this and its contradictory at the same time. That inconceivableness need neither puzzle him nor any reader of the *Lay Sermons*. It is only the very simple fact that one who believes an error cannot at the same moment believe the truth on the point on which he is in error. With such examples before us, we may safely hold that sensation is not thought, though Mr. Huxley should not be even able to conceive of the difference!

Mr. Herbert Spencer says, that "to remember the colour red is to have, in a weak degree, that psychological state which the presentation of the colour red produces."† This is, perhaps, the foundation of Mr. Huxley's mistake. Is it strictly true? For the first time a red object is presented to the eye of a child, the peculiar impression which that red object produces is the "psychical state," as Mr. Spencer regards it, in its strong degree. Then, also, for the first time, a blue object

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\* *Lay Sermons*, ed. 1871, p. 327. † *Principles of Psychology*, p. 559.

is presented to the child. Another psychical state is produced, also in its strong degree. How is it that the one object is at length called *red* and the other *blue*? Can the mere "faint reproduction" of the first impressions account for *this*? Certainly not. And still less can such reproduction account for the abstract idea which is expressed by redness or by blueness. The psychical state, which is the result of a *relation*, perceived between a red object and a blue one, can never be confounded in true thinking with the mere result of a colour, or any other sensible quality. Nothing but helpless confusion of thought can account for any man's huddling together states so palpably different from one another. Hence we must dismiss Mr. Spencer as well as Mr. Huxley.

Yet we may glance at another illustration of confusion in popular thought. Professor Bain speaks of the "consciousness of a tree, a river, a constellation."\* His queer use of the word "consciousness" makes us naturally look for his meaning. Well, he tells us that "consciousness is mental life, as opposed to torpor or insensibility; the loss of consciousness is mental extinction for the time; while, on the other hand, a more than ordinary wakefulness is a heightened form of consciousness." Mr. Bain would probably join Mr. Huxley, and say that whether the tree existed independently of his consciousness is "a point on which he offers no opinion"! So with regard to the river, and so with the constellation! Hence these wise men could not say whether their "extinction" during sleep was not that of every body and thing too! Nor could they venture to guess even whether any "heightened form of consciousness" in them were not a revival in the universe! No wonder if they cannot see the difference between a sensation and a thought, when they fail to see that trees grew and rivers ran, while the stars held on in their courses, before they were born.

Now we must go on to remark that the feeling which is the result of a thought does not generically differ from that which is produced by an external object. A strongly scented plant is brought near to me—a feeling which I call smelling is the result in my soul. An idea of wrong occurs to my memory—a feeling which I call remorse is the result, exactly as that of the smell was of the odour. Both these feelings are involuntary, and hence necessarily the effect of their distinctive causes. It may, no doubt, be truthfully said that the one feeling is from an external, and the other from an internal cause; but it is difficult to say that the mind has an outside

\* *Mental and Moral Science*, ed. 1868, pp. 1 and 93.

and an inside, or to tell how an idea affects it as distinct from the way in which it is affected, say by a state of the aural nerve. While it is of vast importance to mark distinctions when true differences exist, it is equally important to make the most that truth allows of likenesses such as this.

The moral sense is not the conscience. That is the judgment when giving us the moral idea, or when showing us right as distinguished from wrong; but this is not a judgment giving us an idea, but a capacity of feeling affected by the idea when given. This distinction is, I think, of great importance. The province of conscience is to judge so that the true right shall be presented in the soul as the right, and the real wrong as the wrong; but the moral sense has no more to do with such judging than the sense of hearing has to do in determining the character of the sounds which fall upon the ear. That which has in it as an idea the element of right will produce in the soul having that idea the feeling appropriate to the right, whether the idea is true or false, just as a certain state of the aural nerve will give the sensation of hearing, though no actual sound is in the atmosphere at the time; and a certain state of the optic nerve will give the sensation of seeing, though no light is falling upon the eye. It is the work of conscience to decide whether the right is real; but the moral sense must feel in accordance with the idea entertained, whether that right is real or unreal.

It is interesting and important, even repeatedly, to trace in some measure the likeness of the moral sense to the other senses. One man does not hear so well as another; so there is great diversity of moral susceptibility among men. One has the sense of hearing so keen that it is impossible for him to be comfortable unless in the midst of silence; another is not affected amid deafening din; so is it with the moral sense. One is so easily affected by the least wrong, real or imaginary, that he can scarcely be said to be fit to live under the ordinary conditions of social life; while another is unaffected even by many and serious instances of iniquity. As sounds affect the ear, whether emitted by ourselves or others, so do actions in their moral character affect us, whether our own or those of our fellow-men. As it does not at all affect the reality of hearing, that sounds that are delightful to one are horrible to others; so it does not affect the reality of the moral sense that men differ ever so widely in their feelings of what is right and what is wrong.

I am thus particular as to this sense in its true character, because sufficient place is hardly given to it in the discussions of morality, or, perhaps, I should rather say moral philosophy.

It has not yet ceased to be true that *thought* on this point is made to take more than its proper place, to the exclusion of feeling. Dugald Stewart said, "If health and leisure allow me to put in writing some speculations which have long been familiar to my own thoughts, I shall endeavour to place the defects of our common logical systems in a still stronger light, by considering them in their application to the fundamental doctrines of ethics; and more particularly, by examining how far, in researches of this sort, our moral feelings are entitled to consideration; checking, on the one hand, our speculative reasonings when they lead to conclusions at which our nature revolts; and, on the other, sanctioning those decisions of the understanding in favour of which the head and the heart unite their suffrages. According to the prevailing maxims of modern philosophy, so little regard is paid to feeling and sentiment in matters of *reasoning*, that, instead of being understood to sanction and confirm the intellectual judgments with which they accord, they are very generally supposed to cast a shade of suspicion on every conclusion with which they blend the slightest tincture of sentiment or enthusiasm."\* These are wise words, and they go with all the force of their wisdom to show how high a place must be given in such discussions as that now in hand to the moral feeling, or sensation, as distinguished from judgments in moral things. If any proposition sounds harshly on the moral ear—glares badly on the moral eye—smells offensively in the moral nostril—or rasps painfully on the moral touch,—it must receive more than average scrutiny from the moral reason.

I may give an illustration of what I mean. Mr. Tyndall, in his *Fragments of Science*, institutes a comparison between the building of the pyramids of Egypt and the formation of a crystal of common salt. The former he represents rightly as the result of the action of men on the stones of which the pyramids are composed; but the latter as that of the self-action of the molecules which constitute the crystal. He speaks of the "forces" with which these molecules attract and repel each other, and so on, with his account of their wonderful work.† He says, "While thus the blocks of Egypt were laid down by a power external to themselves, these molecular blocks of salt are self-positing, being fixed in their places by the forces with which they act on each other." Mr. Tyndall says, in the same volume, "Where the aim is to elevate the mind, to quicken the moral sense, to kindle the fire of religion

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\* *Philosophical Essays*, ed. 1816, p. 62.

† *Fragments of Science*, ed. 1871 pp. 114, 115.

in the soul, let the affections by all means be invoked; but they must not be permitted to colour our reports, or to influence our acceptance of reports of occurrences in external nature.”\* The occurrence in external nature before us is the rearing of a crystal of common salt. We at once admit that, so far as this mere fact is concerned, the feelings can have little to do. But Mr. Tyndall reports not only an occurrence, but states something entirely different from an occurrence. He affirms the idea of self-determining power as an attribute of a molecule! There is no question as to the occurrence; it is the *doctrine*, not the fact, which is of moment in the case. Self-determining power, such as Herbert Spencer denies to *mind*, is here predicated of a material atom! By this doctrine the Author of Nature is excluded from Nature! Have the affections no claim here? If not, how can they be rationally invoked to kindle religion in the soul? If there is no living God to be known, how can there be religion, either with or without fire? So if that God is to be shut out from the universe with which physical science has to do, where else is He to be sought for? And, moreover, if there be no God, from whence is the moral sense to derive its quickening? It is, to say the least of it, a grievous mistake to imagine that the distressing feeling which rises in the soul in view of such ideas as Mr. Tyndall here promulgates is the result of prejudice or priestcraft. You may as well imagine that any other sensation of the soul is the creation of such causes. The sense which revolts at the denial of God in the changes of material nature is beyond all question a momentous part of the soul of man, and never can be safely ignored or mistaken for a moment.

The culture of this same moral feeling is essential to the life of nations. If a people show to a great extent indifference to the great principles of morality, and hence spread mischief and misery in society, it will be found more important to cultivate their moral sense than merely to expound morals after an intellectual method, and to condemn their immorality. That culture will be secured by an education which tends to draw out the capacity of moral feeling itself, rather than by one which drily gives them the rules of conduct.

The idea which above all else is essential to the culture of the moral sense is that of the *unchanging right*. As the diversity of view which prevails regarding what is really right does not at all affect the reality of the moral sense, so neither does it affect the reality of this vital moral idea. There is one, and only one, best route from Liverpool to New York, though

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\* *Fragments of Science*, p. 48.

it may be that no two navigators could be found exactly to agree as to what that route is. Because one will take the worst route for the best one, and that in perfect sincerity, it does not follow that the worst is the best, or that a man may choose any one of them to equal advantage if he is only sincere in doing so. There is one way of acting which is in itself the right way, as certainly as there is one route between the two ports I have mentioned which is the best of all.

Darwin seems to teach that the strongest impression is our only rule in morals. The idea is in keeping with his strangely defective notion of what a moral being really is, coupled with his equally defective notion as to the unchanging right. He says, "A moral being is one who is capable of comparing his past and future actions or motives, and of approving or disapproving of them." Here he misses entirely that by which morality, or moral nature, has its significance. A thief, for instance, compares his past clumsy attempt to pick a pocket, on account of which he has got lodged in prison, with the much more dexterous practice by which he hopes to get the money and escape the next time! He exceedingly disapproves of his past action, and as strongly approves of the future—is he therefore "a moral being"? The right and wrong of his conduct escapes him as entirely as it does the dog which worries a sheep simply because of his "impressions." Moral nature in its essence is seen in neither of the cases, though in both Mr. Darwin's definition might be realized. That thought of the unchanging right on which morality hinges seems to have dropt out of his remarkable mind.

This is not the case because Mr. Darwin is unaware of the importance of the moral sense. He says, "Of all the differences between man and the lower animals the moral sense or conscience is by far the most important."\* In common with many others, he fails to distinguish between the feeling and the judgment; but what is vastly more serious he fails to see the true nature of both. "Acting for the public good" is his highest idea of duty, and "public opinion" his highest view of the standard of that duty. The habit of acting according to public opinion is with him "conscience." He says, "If, for instance, to take an extreme case, men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their daughters, and no one would think of interfering. Nevertheless, the bee, or any other social animal, would,

\* *Descent of Man*, vol. i. ed. 1871, p. 70.

in our supposed case, gain some feeling of right and wrong or a conscience.”\* If I understand at all what the term right truly means in moral discussions, “the public good” which can be promoted by killing the individual who merely stands in the way of it, and from no fault of his, has, and can have, nothing in common with that meaning. It cannot be *right* to promote such “good,” nor can it be *wrong* to abhor it. The moral sense is just that capacity of feeling by which we are shocked at such a representation of “good,” and the moral idea is essentially that eternal thought which underlies that capacity.

It may be well to remark here that I do not find it possible to cope with the more popular of philosophical errors while adhering to the common use of certain terms, or even when following in the beaten track of thought without deviation. It is forced, I think, upon one who reasons impartially to observe that the strongest points in sceptical argument are laid to the sceptic’s hand by authors whose aim is directly opposed to his. The Christian thinker is bound to consider this, and to let go his own most cherished terms and notions, when false, and fitted only to favour the foe. You will see the bearing of this remark as I proceed.

In seeking to clear our way more fully to the true moral idea, we come strongly into collision with the too common notion of “*instinct*.” Darwin says of the moral qualities, that “their foundation lies in the social instincts,” including in this term “the family ties.” He says further, that “these instincts are of a highly complex nature; and, in the case of the lower animals, give special tendencies towards certain definite actions; but the more important elements for us are love and the distinct emotion of sympathy. † It is, so to speak, the friction caused by the crossing of instincts that gives rise to the idea of “ought,” or “duty,” as Darwin views it. He says, “Any instinct which is permanently stronger or more enduring than another, gives rise to the feeling which we express by saying that it ought to be obeyed. A pointer dog, if able to reflect on his past conduct, would say to himself, ‘I ought’ (as, indeed, we say of him) ‘to have pointed at that hare, and not have yielded to the passing temptation of hunting it.’” ‡

What is really meant by “instinct” in such connections as these? The “instinct” of pointing at the hare is contrasted with the “instinct” of hunting it. Why should we call these “instincts”? If we look into the mind of the dog by means

\* *Descent of Man*, vol. i. ed. 1871, p. 73.

† *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 394.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

of any light which we can bring to bear upon it, we see, first of all, certain *sensations*, then certain *thoughts*, and last, certain *volitions*. We see all these states as surely as in any mind among men. Why should we call their combination "instincts"? The senses in at least some animals are keener than in men; the thoughts are much more rapid, as a rule; the volitions are more vigorous; but that gives no ground for calling their combinations by a name implying their blindness or unaccountableness. Similar questions rise as to "love" and "sympathy" when called "instincts." Why, for example, should the gregarious actions of either animals or of men be called "instincts"? The sentinel of a flock has certain sensations; he sees an enemy approaching; he has instantly thoughts of danger; he clearly thinks of the enemy's designs; he gives the well-known signal to the flock;—why call all this "instinct"? Then the love of animals is as real as that of man, and so is their sympathy; and both are as really the results of thought. Both are the results of processes perfectly well known to us through our own experience. Lay the states of the animal soul out in all their variety, and value them at their utmost; then search, not in something to which you are blind, and which you call by an unmeaning name; but in the sensations, thoughts, and volitions of animal life, so as to see if you can find anything that can be identified either with the true moral idea, or with the true moral sense. If you find it, then tell us that you have; if you do not find it, then cease to fancy it under the meaningless term of "instinct." This alone is worthy of science. Conjecturings are offensive when put in the place of good, honest facts, in the search for what *is*, not what may be imagined.

But in following this matter we come to the "*ought*" of Mr. Darwin's pointer dog. What does that mean? As represented, it comes to nothing more than the difference between two "instincts"! Perhaps he means two feelings—that of desire to chase, and that of the desire to point. That to point, it seems, is permanently the strongest, and the creature's "*ought*" means nothing more than a perception of the difference. "*Ought*," then, really means nothing more than that it is more comfortable in the long run to act in one way than in another! This is something all but infinitely different from the meaning of that "*duty*" which contemplates the loss of being itself as preferable to the doing of *wrong*. We turn with sorrow from the sad proof which Darwin furnishes of his having lost the true thought in this momentous matter.

Giving up altogether, then, the notion of "*instinct*," we come to that of "*intuitive*" ideas, as giving explanation of



moral nature. And here I must confess that I have insuperable difficulty in finding the origin of any experience in what are called "innate" or "intuitive" conceptions. Every idea is born in the soul, and in that sense is "innate." No idea is born with the soul, so none can be "innate" in that sense. An idea, or conception, is not a capacity of thought, but a thought itself; so every idea is an inward teaching, and hence an "intuition." I can understand how men plead hard to be granted certain starting-points of discussion, and so cling to what they imagine "*necessary truths*" or "intuitions;" but their feeling of need for such starting-points springs simply from their having as yet failed to go back to the true starting-points. Bring two dissimilar sensations up in the soul, and more or less of a thought is the result. Continue to vary the sensations, and the thoughts will vary. Gradually more and more of the nature of intelligence will be the product in such a process. The thoughts will, by-and-by, have, in some instances, the character of "intuitions"; such as that "two and two make four," or that "all the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles"; but that distant goal will be reached only after years, it may be, of progress. It will be long ere such ideas as those of space and time have any place in the soul, though these are so firmly believed to be "necessary."

That notion of "innate" ideas, for which Dugald Stewart and others so energetically argue, is, as I think, groundless. Speaking of what he calls "many of our most familiar notions (altogether unsusceptible of analysis)" he says: "The point at which these thoughts first arise in the mind is of little importance, provided it can be shown to be a law of our constitution that they do arise whenever the proper occasions are presented."\* Here I remark that it is a law of our constitution that any truth whatever, when placed before the mind with sufficient evidence, is necessarily believed. Take any fact that can possibly occur—let it be as far from one of the notions to which Mr. Stewart refers as anything can be, only let it be in idea before the mind with sufficient evidence, and unbelief is impossible. Why, then, call one idea "innate" or "intuitive" more than another?

If we seek an instance of an intuitive idea which seems the same as that which Mr. Stewart would not scruple to call "innate," he gives it thus: he says, "It is surely an intuitive truth, that the sensations of which I am now conscious, and all those of which I retain any remembrance, belong to one

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\* *Philosophical Essays*, by Dugald Stewart, ed. 1816, pp. 102, 103.  
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and the same being, which I call *myself*. Here is an intuitive judgment involving the simple idea of *personal identity*.\* The question which first arises here is as to the simplicity of the idea. Is it impossible to analyze the idea of personal identity? Let us try both from the particulars of which it is a generalization, and from it, as a generalized thought, to these same particulars. Is the "me" possible as an idea without the "not me"? Then, is either the one or the other possible, apart from a vast number of perceptions that must all be in the soul as thoughts before the thoughts of objects, such as the "me" and those which are "not me," can arise. Again, is not the thought of "myself" resolvable into at least the thought of a person, and those other thoughts which fix that of a person to me, so that it makes me known to myself as myself and not another?

Then as to the *necessity* of the idea of personal identity. Certain memories and reasonings make it impossible for me to discredit the fact that I got my dinner yesterday, so are certain memories and reasonings necessary to my belief that I am myself, and not another person. It seems, therefore, absurd to call certain ideas "innate," or "intuitive," or "necessary," when all are equally so, if the proper occasions are presented. The plain state of the case is merely this—a truth cannot be both known and unknown in the same mind and at the same time. Take the ideas of my personal identity and that of my having had my dinner yesterday. What does it really amount to that these ideas will inevitably and infallibly spring up in my mind whenever the required conditions are present? Simply this—that when these truths are known, they cannot be unknown. Mr. Stewart quotes Locke as affirming exactly what he himself means, when the former says,—“He that hath the idea of an intelligent but frail and weak being, made by and depending on another, who is omnipotent, perfectly wise and good, will as certainly know that man is to honour, fear, and obey God, as that the sun shines when he sees it.”† What is this but that he knows the sun shines when he knows that it does, and so he knows that God is to be worshipped and obeyed when he knows that too? Locke confirms this when he says,—“But yet these truths being never so certain, he may be ignorant of either or all of them who will never take the pains to employ his faculties as he should do to inform himself about them.” That is, if he is ignorant he is ignorant, and if he knows he

\* *Philosophical Essays*, by Dugald Stewart, ed. 1816, p. 98.

† Locke's *Essay*, book iv. chap. xiii. § 3.

knows—which has really nothing to do with the intuitive or other character of the truths themselves, further than to show that they are by no means necessary notions in the human soul.

What are called necessary truths refer, in many cases, neither to truths nor falsehoods, but only to words without meaning. "A thing cannot be and not be at the same time." This is given as an instance of *necessary thought*. But the words do not refer to a thought at all. They refer to a sentence in which the meaning of the one half neutralizes that of the other, leaving the sentence, as a whole, meaningless. This is clear at once, on our trying the two halves of the sentence as two sentences,—"That thing is"; "That thing is not." What is the effect of these two statements jointly? Merely this, that nothing is either affirmed or denied—that is, nothing is meant. No thought cannot be a necessary thought, nor can it be the opposite of necessary—it can just be nothing. Take the sentence, again, that "two and two cannot be five,"—it is said to be a necessary truth. What is it really? Merely this, that the word *five*, if used to mean one more than two and two, cannot also mean two and three, minus one. It must mean just what it means. To say that it does not mean what it means is only to utter another sentence in which the one half neutralizes the other, rendering it literally nonsense. It is a great mistake to regard arguments of such a character as the basis of reasoning—the starting-points of safe thought. The eternal value of truth does not depend upon its necessity as thought, any more than the value of virtue depends upon the fixity of fatalism. However freely it is accepted and cultivated in the soul, its reality and worth are the same.

The mind of man is so formed that certain impressions made upon it, and certain states within it, are the necessary results of certain conditions. Some of these conditions are provided, so that they are not under human control, but by far the most important are made to depend for their existence, so to speak, upon that which is neither a sensation nor a thought—neither a capacity of the one nor of the other—while yet it is the helmsman of the mind. The sea over which this pilot has to steer is not one on which we *must* reach the haven of even so much as one truth, however rudimentary. The starting-point in so many speculations, the *ego* itself, is utterly denied, and that by some of those who are of the greatest rank among what are called "thinkers." The idea of "infinite space," which passes with so many for an "intuition," Professor Bain calls "an incompetent, irrelevant, impossible conception."\*

\* *Mental and Moral Science*, ed. 1868, p. 34, *Appendix*.

I will not, therefore, seek the origin of the moral thought in "intuition," and hence cannot associate the moral sense with such intuition. I would just as soon seek the origin of my capacity of hearing in an innate or intuitive sound. The moral thought is really a judgment, the result, like all other judgments, of *reasoning*, and that, too, of reasoning for which man is responsible, inasmuch as he ever may, within certain limits, conduct that reasoning as he will. The moral idea, when it is reached in the soul, finds more or less, as a rule, the capacity of feeling ready to receive it as a moral sense. Just as sound finds hearing, or light finds vision, so right and wrong find this peculiar capacity, and in the degree in which the capacity exists and the idea is presented, in that degree is there the moral affection now in hand.

Here, then, I must remark that there is nothing in man so inseparably connected with morals as *will*. Voluntarily the moral idea may be cultivated to a high degree, or obliterated. So may the moral sense, like that of hearing, or any other. By certain processes a man may destroy the susceptibility of any so-called outward sense, and so may he destroy that of this so-called inward moral sense. Tappan says, "We know we are exercising will when we have this presentation in the consciousness; viz., certain phenomena, and I myself the cause of these phenomena, either immediately or by instrumentality."\* Cause here does not mean a mere link in the chain of occurrences. The use of the word in such a sense is an absurdity. It is so because, if the word cause is equally applicable to all such links, it is absurd to use it as if applicable to one alone. John Stuart Mill says, that "a volition is a moral effect which follows the corresponding moral causes as certainly and invariably as physical effects follow their physical causes. Whether it *must* do so, I acknowledge myself to be entirely ignorant, be the phenomena moral or physical. All I know is that it always *does*."† Mr. Mill should have said, "so far as I have observed and choose to remember!"—that is, he can *know* that effects, such as we call volitions, follow what he calls their causes certainly and invariably, *so far* as he has observed and chooses to remember the facts he has noticed. It is really childish to talk as if *he* could possibly settle the truth in relation to the whole universe, and for all eternity, that volitions *always* follow the experiences he calls their "causes." He can know that in a few cases which he has observed, certain volitions follow the presenta-

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\* Tappan *On the Will*, ed. London, 1860, pp. 196, 197.

† *Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, ed. 1865, p. 501.

tion of certain inducements to volition, as he can know that in physical changes certain things, so far as he remembers, follow certain other things; but that no one else even in England, or in London, or within a dozen yards of him, has observed otherwise, is what he assuredly cannot know. Mr. Mill's language is absurd, if volitions are as certain and invariable as physical effects. Bring a red-hot wire into contact with gunpowder, and the powder will explode. If a certain motive to will has its result in a volition as certainly and invariably, and as much of necessity as is the case with the explosion of this gunpowder from contact with the wire, why call the one thing "*moral*" and the other "*physical*"? The distinction is without a difference. Above all we should say, why *blame* the volition and not the explosion?

Mr. Mill says, "I am told that, whether I decide to do or to abstain, I feel that I could have decided the other way. I ask my consciousness what I do feel, and I find indeed that I feel (or am convinced) that I could have chosen the other course if *I had preferred it*; but not that I could have chosen one course while I preferred another"!\* This is surely lame philosophy. To prefer a course is, all the world over, to choose it; and Mr. Mill's consciousness tells him only this,—that he cannot choose to act in two opposite ways at the same time or in the same volition! We shall lack manhood among us soon, if we have not a more vigorous style of thinking than this.

Man, in having true will, possesses true cause as an element of his mental constitution. He is capable of being the first cause—the uncaused cause of his own actions. In believing this, we need have no dread, as Sir William Hamilton had, of what he called "an absolute commencement." Nor need we place such an idea, as he did, among "inconceivables." Sir William held that such a thing as free will must be believed, though it could not be conceived! I am not philosopher enough to see that he meant anything when he said so; but, as to the conception of an absolute beginning, so far as that is found in an act of free will, no one need have any difficulty in its conception. Take an instance as an illustration. A stack-yard is burning: what "absolutely commenced" the fire? A volition in the mind of an incendiary, or, more correctly, the incendiary himself, by an act of free will. You say that there was a process in the mind of that incendiary before that volition. No doubt there was; but no part of that process would have fired the stacks, and *all* that process has passed in other minds without

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\* *Ex. Sir W. H. Phil.*, p. 504.

any such volition as constituted the crime in this case. The very thoughts and feelings that came next to the volition might have all been there, and yet no such volition; but once that, and all else followed. It was the "absolute commencement" of the act of crime.

Writers on the side of true will are often rendered helpless by false notions of *motive*. Mr. P. P. Alexander gives us a notable instance of this. When arguing against Mr. Stuart Mill in favour of freedom of will, he admits, and even repeatedly insists, that it is an inexplicable mystery! He does worse still. He says, "The motive, considered as an act, must depend on some previous motive, by which it in turn was determined; and so through a regressive series, in which freedom fleets for ever, or steps back from us, and is never to be caught and detained."\* It is surely absurd to speak of a motive as an act, and equally so to speak of an act of will as *determined* by anything. The latter is as much a contradiction in terms as "a free slave." Motives are simply objects of thought. They may be considered externally in relation to the soul, or internally. A shilling is a motive to a lad, if offered to him, when his "volitions" are required for a short time. This is neither a feeling nor a thought, if you take it externally; it is just a shilling. In the soul of the lad, "psychologically," it is an object of thought. Professor Bain would say that the lad is conscious of the shilling. It probably awakens desire, and brings the lad into a favourable state of consciousness for the volitions in request, and, as a consequence, their muscular results. But it is in the very essence of these volitions that they shall be determined by nothing but the lad himself. The lad is just as free to will in the very opposite direction to the wishes of those who require his services, as if the shilling had never been offered.

Mr. Herbert Spencer says that the "passing of an ideal motor change into a real one is that which we distinguish as Will."† I decidedly object to being included in that "we." "An ideal motor change" are to me words without meaning. All ideal states have the nature of thought, not of volition; and thought is just as different from volition as seeing is from walking, or indeed as any state can be different from another. Ideal movement is like melodious sugar, so far as I can make anything of the language. Motor change, too, is muscular—not ideal. Volition is not motion, nor is it necessarily connected with any motor change. The volition which in one

\* *Mill and Carlyle*, by P. P. Alexander, 1866, pp. 18, 19.

† *Principles of Psychology*, p. 261.

case moves a limb in another case fails to do so. Volition is an act of mind, motor changes are effects in matter, and hence Mr. Spencer's explanation of Will is more illusory than even he imagines Freewill itself to be. He has a curious explanation as to how we distinguish between voluntary and involuntary movements. He says, "The difference between an involuntary movement of the leg and a voluntary one is, that whereas the involuntary one takes place without any previous consciousness of the movement to be made, the voluntary one takes place only after it has been represented in consciousness; and as the representation of it is nothing else than a weak form of the psychical state accompanying the real movement, it is nothing else than a nascent excitation of all the nerves concerned which precedes their actual excitation."\* What is a truly involuntary movement of the leg? If the limb is moved by some one else than its possessor, we should say so far the movement is involuntary. If the limb is convulsively moved, whether the owner will or not, this also is involuntary. But it is neither of these Mr. Spencer contemplates. He has in view merely a case in which a man moves his limb without thinking of his doing so. There is the volition, only there is not the thought of it. Because there is no thought of it, Mr. Spencer concludes it is non-existent! He supplies us himself with a perfect correction of his own mistake. In speaking of Berkeley, he says that that author confounds "*the having a sensation with the knowledge of having a sensation.*" Again, "while the reception of a sensation may be a simple undecomposable mental act, to observe the reception of a sensation is decidedly a composite one. The knowledge of a sensation so far from being an act of immediate consciousness, presupposes a much-involved process." He goes on to enlarge the same idea. Now, let us only put "volition" for "sensation," and it is clear that Mr. Spencer simply confounds the act of volition with the knowledge of our performing that act. Mr. Spencer abundantly refutes his own explanation.

This author has a remarkable piece of logic which he gives as his strong reason for rejecting "the dogma of Freewill." He says, "Psychical changes either conform to law or they do not. If they do not conform to law, this work, in common with all works on the subject, is sheer nonsense: no science of Psychology is possible. If they do conform to law, there cannot be any such thing as Freewill." What does Mr. Spencer mean here by "law"? We learn from another utterance. He says, "Freewill, did it exist, would be entirely

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\* *Principles of Psychology*, p. 614.

at variance with that benevolent necessity displayed in the progressive evolutions of the correspondence between the organism and its environment."\* This clearly indicates that Mr. Spencer's idea of "law" is simply that of "necessity." Only he says "*benevolent necessity*"! What can he mean by the use of such an adjective? Benevolent is really good-willing, and *willing necessity*, I confess, is to me a refractory phrase, whether the willing is good, bad, or indifferent. If I understand the word at all, necessity can be neither benevolent nor malevolent; it cannot be "volent" at all, any more than "yes" can be "no." Moreover, it cannot be "law," for it admits of no "breach," nor does it admit of "obedience." "Necessity has no law" is an irresistibly evident proverb. No doubt, Mr. Spencer dreads the admission of that which would make his works "sheer nonsense;" but the heavens might not fall even if that calamity should come. A good many authors, and their readers too, would still see sense in those works, which contend that volitions in very many cases do not conform to benevolent law.

I, for one, am greatly easy as to the fate of necessitarian psychology when I venture to think that true law not only may, but must, involve free-will; in other words, it must be a part of, at least, benevolent law that there should be true freedom. It surely may be one of the decrees, and as fixed and irrevocable a decree as any other, that within certain limits, a scope of action shall be provided for minds, so that they shall be truly free to conform to benevolent order, and so to act in breach of it. If a philosopher declines to see that this is the case in reality, and is no "illusion," it furnishes only another instance of human folly which will sometimes show itself even in the very "greatest." Books must be very bare of sense if the admission of such an idea converts them into nonsense.

There is a remarkable tendency to leave out by far the most important fact in an argument manifest in a certain class of minds. We have an illustration of this in the case of Professor Tyndall, when speaking of "matter and force," and one which is to the point in our present subject. Look at him performing an experiment before a meeting of working men, and you will see what I mean. He takes a drop of water, in which a crystal has been dissolved, and places it on a piece of perfectly clean glass.† Listen to what he says, and notice how completely he forgets *himself*. He is the only efficient cause in the case;

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\* *Principles of Psychology*, p. 620. † See *Fragments of Science*, p. 84.



he alone does anything that is done; that force which performs the entire experiment is *his own force*. How is it that he so completely forgets this truth? His will, or he himself in volition, is the "absolute commencement" of every change that takes place; yet he never once mentally refers to this in all he says, though speaking of "matter and force"! According to his teaching, the matter arranges *itself*, divides *itself*, unites *itself*! though in every instance he gives that *initiatory motion* which merely passes through certain changes till it is balanced by other forces and then ceases. How wonderfully (as we might put it) John Tyndall forgets John Tyndall, and yet all the while speaks of him. He says "I can show you something." Then he adds, "I pour a little water in which a crystal has been dissolved." He tells us that "all force may be ultimately resolved into a push or a pull in a straight line." We thus learn that that which pushes or pulls alone has force. Suppose that fifty people stood one behind another,—the last man of the row *pushes*, the next to him is *pushed*, and so on to the last. All are affected, but one only has used *force*. So it is with all Dr. Tyndall's experiments, as with those of every one else. However numerous and interesting the changes are in matter which take place, the experimenter alone *pushes* or *pulls*. He alone has the *force*. It is only because he fails to consider his own personal position in such experiments that he is involved in the far more serious error of failing to recognize the actions of One whose force is so much more vast; and yet nothing can be more palpable than the truth that mind alone is cause, and is cause alone in *will*.

This is the truth in which, so to speak, morality has its foundation. The word has absolutely no meaning, if true will is denied. Right and wrong have no meaning in a necessitarian philosophy. If all is "invariable," all is as it must be, and hence it is absurd to say that anything is as it ought not to be, or as it ought to be. Moral sense—moral idea—moral anything—are phrases which express not even *illusions* if all is necessary; for then the illusions so-called are among the necessary changes, and form part of the "benevolent" whole! The "*ought*" of Mr. Darwin's pointer dog is unworthy of even canine sagacity, if his hunting was necessary and his pointing at the moment impossible! Reason rebels at the idea of changes being both *moral and necessary*, and manhood scorns the ignorance which refuses to know. The moral sense groans under the effect of those teachings and actings that would, if successful, make its very existence an "invariable" blunder. We fall back, then, on the perfect

freedom of the soul of man in its volitions, and hence on one grand element of the ideas of right and wrong.

It will be necessary now to show what is the other grand element of that idea. I have already indicated that *utility* is not *rightness*. A river flows for the general weal; a tree grows for the same; even a hill raises its head, and catches the passing cloud for the same; but no one will call these moralities. The acts of insane persons often produce great calamity, yet no one will call these immoralities! Mathematics are as much moral philosophy as ethics, if we have no difference by which to mark them off but utility. It is consequently absurd to speak of an "ethical standard" as found in the mere usefulness of action.

There is a relation existing between minds and minds, and between minds and things, and in that relation an *order*, the declaration of which is *perfect law*. Free accordance with that *law*, or, in other words, with that *order*, or, in still other words, with that *relation*, is moral right. Free discordance, moral wrong. This relation, order, law, forms the twin grand element, along with true freedom in the moral idea. It is the office of conscience to make sure of this accordance, and to mark it off from all discordance; while it is the office of the moral sense to give force to the judgments of conscience.

Let us look at the most important instance of what I mean. There is a relation between man and God. No amount of false thought can affect that relation. Even the most ardent denial given to the very idea of his being, leaves that relation untouched, as much so as does the most perfect faith. There is an order which arises out of that relation which is as unchangeable as itself. No conceivable subjective state, or states, of the soul can modify that order in the least degree, any more than the fancy of an enthusiast can produce the perpetual motion. The relation makes a certain thing right and another wrong,—in other words, a certain thing *in order* and another *out of order*; the law is simply the declaration of that which is in order, and of that which is out of order, or out of "keeping," as we say, with the relation. That man, who depends, as he does, on God, and is treated as he is by God, should supremely regard Him to whom he stands thus related, is pure reason when considered as thought in the soul, and true order, as it ever must be in reality, whether it is thought of or not.

Relations similar (more or less) to this exist between man and man, and between man and all other creatures; an order similar (more or less) arises out of these relations; true law is just the declaration of that order. These relations are the

true foundation of the moral idea considered objectively: the capacity of perceiving the order which they involve is its foundation considered subjectively. The origin of the moral sense is found only in the origin of the soul itself.

But here we come into the presence of the philosophy of "evolution" as it makes one of its formidable points. Mr. Herbert Spencer, in a letter to John Stuart Mill, says: "There have been, and still are, developing in the race certain moral intuitions,"—"these moral intuitions are the results of accumulated experiences of utility, gradually organized and inherited." These same "intuitions,"—like, for example, "the intuition of space" in an individual,—"have arisen from organized and consolidated experiences of all antecedent individuals who bequeathed to him their slowly-developed nervous organizations." The "moral intuition," according to Mr. Spencer, is only a state of nerve matter. His account of "the ego" is curiously in keeping with this notion. He says, "Either the ego . . . . is some state of consciousness, simple or composite, or it is not. If it is not some state of consciousness, it is something of which we are unconscious—something, therefore, which is unknown to us—something, therefore, of whose existence we neither have nor can have any evidence—something, therefore, which it is absurd to suppose existing. If the *ego* is some state of consciousness, then, as it is ever present, it can be at each moment nothing else than the state of consciousness present at that moment."\* Here is philosophy every way worthy of the theory of evolution!

It may be tried on our conception of the philosopher himself. First of all, then, the only substance recognized is *nerve*. What is called the "organization" of this substance is the result of a process which reaches from Adam downwards, or, if you will, from the first "pre-Adamite" man, or from some "primordial cell" of vastly more ancient birth! Probably some similar unit would call this almost infinitely elaborated unit of nerve Mr. Herbert Spencer; but, if he did, he would soon, we hope, find out that he must not call it Mr. Spencer's "ego,"—that is, Mr. Spencer *himself*! My *ego* is just *myself*, and Mr. Spencer's *ego* is just *himself*; and, as he teaches, neither *ego* is anything—for he insists that it is only a state of consciousness. It is not even a permanent state, it is only that of a moment—the *ego* of one moment being one, and that of the next moment another! I confess that reading such philosophy makes one hunger for a grain of common sense.

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\* *Principles of Psychology*, p. 618.

But Mr. Spencer's fallacies are palpable. What can be more so than his confounding consciousness with knowledge, and unconsciousness with ignorance? It is surely absurd to hold that everything of which I am unconscious is unknown to me, even if you take the word in the meaning which we have already quoted as that of Professor Bain. If I am not at a particular moment "conscious of a horse," it surely does not follow that I am ignorant of all such quadrupeds. Is it true that everything of which we are unconscious at the moment is "unknown to us"? If Mr. Spencer should insist on holding "unconscious" to be equivalent to "unknown," then what is the force of his "therefore"? He would thus simply argue that what is unknown to us is unknown to us! And if there is a difference between the true meaning of "unconscious" and "unknown," his reasoning is worthless; for the one cannot logically follow as the necessary consequence of the other. Then, if an object is "unknown" to us, does it follow that we "can have" no "evidence of its existence"? And is it "absurd to suppose existing" everything of which we are either unconscious or ignorant? Is it absurd to suppose that when one has passed the night in sound slumber he has nevertheless existed? Is it absurd for the man himself to "*suppose*" even that he was not quite annihilated—that he ceased not to be for some hours—and was not created afresh? We hear of "cultivated minds" that cannot get on without something like this sort of writing. Surely it must be strange "culture" that makes a man capable of relishing such confusion of both idea and language.

Look a little at the fallacy of the *ego* considered as a *state*. That which is a state of nothing is only nothing. It is not at all "unthinkable," it is perfectly intelligible; but only as it is, and that is as nothing. A state which is a state of something is a mode of being belonging to that of which it is a state; but a state which is only a state of nothing is just nothing. If, then, there be not an *ego*, of which consciousness is a state, consciousness as positive is only an unmeaning term—that is, it means *nothing*. If Mr. Spencer should wish us to think of a state which has no *ego* of which it is a state, then let us try how his idea will stand a very simple test. Here are the vocables—"I am conscious." We remove the pronoun "I," for it has no meaning—it represents nothing, and need not stand there. Then we must remove the "am," for if the "I" is not the "am" is false. The "conscious" alone must remain; and the inevitable question arises, "*Conscious what?*" There is no answer but "*conscious nothing*," which is just *nothing*.

This is very much akin to Mr. Spencer's "intuition of space." What is *space*? It is "*room*," says one whose "intuition" has got at least two words by which to express itself! Then, what is "*room*"? We are not anxious as to words, but we do desiderate that they shall mean something, or at least an honest "*nothing*." "*Space*," or "*room*," in which there is nothing else but "*space*," or "*room*," what is it? There is a certain space, and it is at present full of something. Take that something away, and allow nothing else to enter, the space or room remains; but what is it? Nothing remains. But nothing is not something. The "intuition" of this philosopher called "*space*" is the same as his "*ego*," the intuition of only nothing!

We cannot rationally seek the origin of the moral sense here; if anything be evident that is evident; nor do we seek it in any organization of nerve. The sense that feels an idea is something never to be confounded with nerve, though, like all other senses, it is associated with nerve in our present state of existence. The poisonous liquid or fumes that affect the nerve affect the sense, just as the harmonious wavelets of sound affect the soul; but that does not necessitate our confounding ear and soul. Water has an effect on rocks, and rocks affect water, too; but we do not think it necessary to confound the two: neither do we need to confound nerve and mind.

But, even if we should so far give way to his confusion, a very brief appeal to the facts of the case would dissolve Mr. Spencer's view of evolved intuitions. Is it true that one man bequeaths to another his experiences of Utility? Is it matter of fact that a father bequeaths to his son any experiences whatever, organized or unorganized? What are experiences? Are they not facts of consciousness? If they are organized, they are still facts of consciousness. Can the facts of a father's personal consciousness become the facts of his son's? If Mr. Spencer means that the effects of these experiences on the father's brain, or nerves, become states of the brain of his son, we must still insist that the idea is not in the slightest degree borne out by fact. The rule in society is, that the son is found utterly unfit for the path which his father has pursued with success, and fit for one altogether different. And even where there is special fitness for a similar path, an amount of training of no inconsiderable measure is required, in order that the son may follow in his father's track. If Mr. Spencer's theory were true, there would be no training required to make the son follow the father. Leave him to grow up as he lists, and the "organized experiences" must

show themselves. Who does not know that such never is the case? Inherited "moral intuitions" are only figments of the wildest fancy, whether we understand the phrase to mean moral ideas as thoughts, or states of nerve, as Mr. Spencer seems to understand it. The "moral intuitions," in either sense, instead of descending from sire to son, are, in innumerable instances, found to be just the reverse in the one from that which they are in the other. Hereditary morality, like hereditary wisdom, has not hitherto *evolved itself* to the satisfaction of mankind. Neither in the keenness of the moral sense, nor in the clearness of the moral idea, can men rationally trust to inheritance. If anything be evident, that is.

To what, then, shall we trace this moral sense as to its origin? We are looking to an individual man—one of ourselves—what efficient cause produced in that man the capacity of feeling to which our thoughts have been directed? Who gave the talent upon the good use of which so much in the present and future is depending? I feel shut up to reply that He who gave that soul being gave it the capacities which are its modes of being. He who gave the talent, and He alone, can require his own with usury. This is the result of the purest reason, and scorns the aid which is supposed to come from a merely credulous faith. It is of the nature of that faith which is the conclusion reached by the most severe logic of which the human soul is capable. Begin with two of the most "undecomposable" states in which that soul can be conscious, these two states differing from each other. There will be a thought of the difference. Let there be another state differing again, and another thought will be the issue. Sensations will be compared with sensations, thoughts with thoughts, volitions with volitions, and all among each other—results will follow such as reach the highest truth. Let this process but go on honestly and fairly, and the Great Author of all being, and of all its essential modes, will stand in His divine majesty and goodness before the soul as the true origin of every capacity of both the lower and the higher creations.

If this grand result is to be reached, however, there must be no wilful halting at points in the progress of reason, such as are some of those I have indicated—no saying that you *know* the sequence of moral affections to be always certain and invariable, when you know only a fraction of even your own experience of these sequences, and yet saying that whether these sequences are necessary or not, on that point you can offer no opinion. There must be no bewilderment

about unthinkables and inconceivables, that are only words without any meaning. All that sort of thing is unworthy of reason, and fatal to its purest and highest issues. We must compare and compare—remember and remember—ponder and ponder—listen and learn with unshaken trust in the Divine Teacher, who will never deceive us, nor suffer us to be deceived, when looking to Him for guidance. This is pre-eminently what is needed in the present state, especially of what is called science, and it is most cheering to know that it is not so much wanting in society as some would lead us to imagine. There is here and there a group of proud, and consequently misguided, minds; here and there a cry is heard as if in despair, or in madness, because God is thought to have hidden himself, or been found out to be the enemy of man. But, in spite of all that, and all else to be deplored, there are millions of souls bathing in the light of Jehovah's countenance, and cultivating their highest capacities in the fellowship of Christ.

Admiral HALSTED.—I beg to propose a very gratifying resolution; namely, —“That the best thanks of this meeting be presented to Professor Kirk for the Annual Address, and also to all those who have read papers during the present Session.”

Rev. J. W. BUCKLEY.—In seconding this resolution I need add little to what has been said by Admiral Halsted, as I am sure we have listened with very great attention to the Address which has been delivered by Professor Kirk; and we must all have been impressed with the idea that it required great thought and study in its preparation. We are deeply indebted to him for the attention he has devoted to the subject. (Cheers.) I have myself given some thought to the Darwinian question, and matters of that kind, and it appears to me that they are modern theories based upon very few facts. What is produced to us is nothing like a theory founded upon distinctly proved truths, but is generally an idea connected with an immense amount of hypothetical matter. If we are to come to the conclusions which Mr. Darwin proposes, we must arrive at them on a very much firmer foundation than any which he has yet given us. (Cheers.)

The resolution was agreed to.

Mr. BROOKE.—My Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—I feel certain that it must be a great satisfaction to all the members of the Victoria Institute that we have on this occasion in the chair, a nobleman who has ever set such a high example in devoting his life to that good cause which is the soul and life of this Institute, and which I feel satisfied that all now assembled together have come here to support. (Cheers.) I have great pleasure in moving that the thanks of this meeting be presented to Lord Shaftesbury for his occupancy of the chair this evening. (Cheers.)

Rev. J. G. WOOD.—My Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—It is with

the greatest pleasure that I second this resolution, and the more so in consequence of a remark made by his Lordship on a recent occasion, when he stated that we need not be so much disquieted at the scientific facts which were supposed to contradict the Scriptures, because, in the first place, it very often happened that what was considered one day to be a fact was known the next day not to be a fact, and that very few so-called facts which were thought to upset the Scriptures, stood the test of many months, much less years. (Cheers.) He added, further, that when certain matters are brought forward that are really facts they are found not to contradict the Scriptures at all. (Cheers.) Now we find that all the way through. When the fact was discovered that the earth positively went round the sun, and not the sun round the earth, it was at first thought to upset the Scriptures altogether. But now we have learned to understand that it does nothing of the kind. Then we come to the discoveries of geologists. Certain facts have been made known which are facts, but a good many theories which have been put forward as facts have been proved to be but theories. (Hear, hear.) The consequence is, that we do not find the slightest part of the truth of Scripture upset by anything the geologists have discovered. Just now the question seems to be with anthropology. I had a letter addressed to me a short time ago, in which the writer, quoting certain words from the Prayer Book, begged leave to be delivered from the Jews, Turks, and Anthropologists. (Laughter.) I think I rather alarmed him by stating that I was an Anthropologist myself, that I thought all the clergy ought to be Anthropologists, and that they would not do their duty unless they were. We never find any real fact that can upset Scripture, and it is impossible that it could do so. Every fact when it is first brought forward is called a phenomenon, and it is called so more truly than people think. It is rightly a phenomenon, because it shows forth and makes plain something that was hitherto obscure, or something of whose very existence we were not aware. Remember it is not the discovery that makes the fact, but the discoverer has been enabled by the Divine Spirit to show forth something that was there from the first. And there is not a fact in nature that has not some deep reason for it. There is not a pore in a blade of grass, not a scale on the wing of a moth, that the Maker had not some good reason for making in the particular shape and colour in which He has made it. I am perfectly certain of this also, that whatever our Maker takes the trouble to make, we His creatures may take the trouble to examine; and the more we do so the more we shall find that not only are Scripture and Science not opposed to each other, but that they are one and the same—the two books of God. (Cheers.) I have great pleasure in seconding the resolution, thanking Lord Shaftesbury for taking the chair on the present occasion. (Cheers.)

The resolution was passed with acclamation.

The PRESIDENT.—Ladies and Gentlemen: It can only be in conformity with long-established rule that I am entitled to a vote of thanks this evening. I have discharged but very little duty, and with respect to the Institute itself, I understand almost less; not from any want of interest in its proceedings, but simply because I have not had adequate leisure. When I was



first invited to the honourable position which I now hold, I accepted it with a view to aid, so far as I could, in founding such a Society. I think the time has now come when a better man is required to be at the head of the Institute, more adapted to the present position of its scientific dignity. I cannot aspire to any position of that kind, therefore I only hold my post until you can find some one to occupy it with more efficiency than myself. I have been very glad to hear what I have heard to-night, and I am very grateful for the vote of thanks which you have passed. At this hour I will not enter upon the subject which has brought us together. We have been engaged in some abstruse and yet at the same time interesting subjects. There are points which we might touch upon with a great deal of feeling and propriety on this occasion, and which we might hear with advantage. But the best thing I can do now is, I think, to say in the words of old Hooker—"My words shall be wary and few." (Cheers.)

The proceedings then terminated.