

## NATURALIZING THE SUPERNATURAL

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No conception of ultimate causes seems to be present in the minds of a vast number of men to-day. All thought of the necessity or the possibility of the supernatural has been obviated by what they regard to be the findings of science. For them, what men for want of knowledge have long termed "the supernatural," has in these latter days been quite completely naturalized. The writer has had a number of conversations with recent university graduates, and with a professor in one of our great Eastern universities, in which the position has been taken that chemistry and biology explain all things. Such concepts as "soul," "immortality," "God," are regarded as nice thoughts for those not yet educated to the sufficiency of "matter" as an explanation for all that is, but are quite untenable for a man of scientific training. As a matter of fact the impression conveyed is that Science, with astounding facility, has naturalized the Supernatural; and that whatever the major portion of humankind may be to-day, all men will be materialists when the results of scientific study have fully become known.

This attitude, of course, ignores all other disciplines. What used to be regarded as the "Queen of Sciences" is now regarded as the "King of Stupidities." The permanent function of philosophy is entirely ignored, or, as in the case of metaphysics, is treated as a sort of by-product of Science. But philosophy is the Mother of Science, and its indispensable adjutant when the question of the meaning and value of observed facts is raised. Therefore we must insist upon certain definite considerations which give pause to this process of naturalization.

Naturalism and materialism are simply different names for the same popular outlook upon the universe. The one

regards the world from the standpoint of its processes; the other regards it from the standpoint of its constituents.

Many people hail the dogmatism of the naturalists as the declarations of a desired deliverance. The spiritual and the ethical seem to demand too much of mankind. Others not well grounded in the facts, but earnestly interested in religion, think all is lost, and echo in their several ways the idea of the melancholy lines of Clough,—

“Eat, drink and die, for we are souls bereaved;  
Of all the creatures under heaven's wide cope,  
We are most hopeless who had once most hope,  
And most beliefless that had most believed.”

But this is not the limit reached by some in their despair. These might well express their feeling in the words used some five and twenty years ago by Professor Henry Rogers: “For my part, I should not grieve if the whole race of manhood died in its fourth year. As far as I can see, I do not know it would be a thing much to be lamented.”

Youth seems to have supreme confidence in what it has come to regard as the finality of the now “assured results of Science” and in the ability of Science to demonstrate the fallacy of religion. This enthusiasm for Science is the product of first impressions. I do not in the least disparage Science nor desire to be understood to minimize its work or its results. Fully appreciating its contribution to knowledge and its sphere of operation, I am concerned to have its limitations understood and appreciated. Sober second thought would show that the facts of Science which to first thought seemed to furnish an adequate though materialistic conception of the universe, are really incapable of sustaining the load put upon them and really offer no final solutions. In reality Science is the friend of and makes for Religion. The world's greatest scientists have been very simple religious men, for Science is a great inspirer of humility and faith in those who have faced the evidence at first hand.

The present great trouble lies in a confusion of issues. Loose thinking, ill-considered conclusions, a demand for

immediate results and applications, have brought about this confusion. "Confusionism" even more than pragmatism appears to be the dominant philosophy of many of our young men. While there is a buoyant optimism there is little complementary sanity. A selection of convenient facts is made the basis of what in consequence are unstable conclusions. This procedure is neither honest nor scientific.

There is a whole-hearted disparagement of dogmatism in religion which, all unconsciously, is dogmatically materialistic. In fact, materialism is the product of unwarranted dogmatism and would cease to exist should scientific dogmatism cease. In far too many cases the facts do not support the dogmas resting upon them. Apparently our collegians are taught their science as dogmatically as ever our theologues were taught their theology.

Theories about facts have largely been substituted for accurate knowledge of the facts, and various metaphors, drawn from the physical realm, have wrought no small damage. Language in this, as in other spheres, is figurative and metaphorical, not absolute. What passes for Science with many is merely a species of philosophy and without sufficient foundations. So-called Science as a dogmatic presentation of suppositions is not science in any proper sense. Too many take the reiterations of dogmatic thought for the laws of existence.

Science deals with observed facts. It ceases to be science when it invades the field of guesswork and supposition, having lost contact with real facts. Huxley called himself an "agnostic" only because those with whom he was associated in scientific interests were so dogmatic about the gnosis they had attained—a knowledge about so many things regarding which he was quite sure they knew no more than he whose knowledge of them was very limited. This is the very type of gnosticism which is responsible for much of the agnosticism of the day. "Critical expectancy" was the attitude Huxley described himself as having taken toward the Darwinian hypothesis, and might well be the

attitude of people in our day toward the presentation of the facts which seem to lead to scientific materialism.

All philosophy intends to be monistic, for the whole problem of philosophy is the problem of unification. To be content with a permanent antinomy—a universe of irreconcilable and disparate elements or agencies acting in utter independence of each other—would be to deny the whole witness of life. Experience has continuously shown this position to be both untenable and utterly unthinkable. But monism is not of a single type or class. Three forms may be distinguished. Materialistic monism is that form which holds that matter absorbs mind, so that mind is but a manifestation of matter. Idealistic monism is the type which asserts that mind absorbs matter, so that matter is but a manifestation of mind. Agnostic monism is that type which regards both matter and mind as manifestations of some deeper but unknown and unknowable reality which underlies both as their common source or cause. In the last analysis, then, the theist, being an idealist, is just as much a monist, and has just as certain grip upon the unitary world-ground, as the materialist; but he does not, as the latter, exceed the bounds of probability in his interpretations.

Modern philosophy has insisted upon one thing in particular: we ought to be very careful in the matter of arbitrary verdicts resting on appearances, eschewing general affirmations on the one hand and sweeping denials on the other. Spencer's "First Principles" and Bradley's "Appearance and Reality" indicate, on Reason's own showing, the limitations of reason. Our fundamental working ideas, — our ideas of time, space, duration, motion, causality, — when analyzed show as absolutely self-contradictory. Behind our logic is a more fundamental one. At best we can only approximate solutions. Reality is something infinitely more subtle than our syllogisms. There must, therefore, be a place for feeling and emotion. The position that feeling is less trustworthy than reason ignores the fact that they are coördinate elements of the self-same

personal experience, inter-acting upon and re-acting from one another. The whole personality is involved. But let us consider the attitude of which I have spoken.<sup>1</sup>

The "conservation of energy," "the indestructibility of matter and the continuity of Nature," "the universality of law," "variation through chance alone," and "the atomic origin of emotion and will" are held to be the adequate explanation of the universe, including man. The nebular hypothesis is regarded as standing behind all these "laws" as the description of their origin and sufficient cause. Those who insist upon this point of view are either ignorant of certain considerations which militate against this position or else purposely disregard them.

"Energy" is itself a generalization. Until "heat" was included in the list of constituent energies, the "law of the conservation of energy" could not be affirmed with truth. Scientists are well aware that the categories of energy are not yet necessarily exhausted. There is no consensus of opinion as to the inclusion of "life" among the energies. The serious mistake concerning this law is the assumption that it obviates the possibility of guidance and control, or directing agency, whereas it has nothing to say on that question. Constancy of energy is no guarantee of the impossibility of guidance. The law relates to amount of energy, and has nothing to do with psychological or other forms of control.

The proved existence of one thing does not disprove the existence or possible existence of other things. The law of the indestructibility of matter does not imply the non-existence of that which is not matter. The category of life is untouched by our conception of the place and function of matter. The nature of life remains unknown even though the indestructibility of matter be established. No relation between life and energy or between life and ether has been established. Too many people regard the potentialities of life which we experience only in their developed combinations as potentially present in the atoms of matter.

The proof of this has not yet been given and there is reason to doubt its ever being given.

These various laws are held to make for the continuity of Nature. But the integrity of the cosmic order does not consist in a self-inclosed movement, but in the subjection of all its forces and factors to the same general laws. It is in this sense only that we can speak of the continuity of nature. This continuity does not consist in any substantial thing called "nature," but solely in the likeness of the laws according to which nature is administered, and the purpose which is being realized through it. The order of law is plastic. Its continuity does not consist in a rigid identity of its factors, but in a subordination of all its factors to the same laws. We see an order of succession, but the inner connections we cannot observe. Only in a very general sense is there continuity, for the discontinuities of nature are everywhere apparent. More often the movements of a thing are the results of invisible dynamic changes than of previous movements. Thus the continuity disappears from the realm of the phenomenal where we should expect to find it, and must be found, if at all, in the realm of theory.

The position of dogmatic materialism that law shuts everything up to a rigid fixity which can be modified only by irruption and violence is thus seen to be fallacious. This rigid fixity under law is possible only for a fictitious system created by the imagination. In actual experience we discover an order of law, but we find that order, within certain limits, pliable to our wills and our purposes. Our control over nature rests upon an understanding of this order of law. It is by means of this order that we continue to accomplish many things which the system of law left to itself would never accomplish.

Variation through chance is the baldest of assumptions made by these materialists. It is made in the name of Darwin, but neither he nor his more careful students ever asserted that variation arose by chance alone. The source of variation he simply did not explain. He did detail how

variation once arising would tend to become permanent if favorable in the struggle, being aided to that end by heredity and survival. Chance may account for destructive accidents, but guidance and control are necessary to account for construction and development as comprehended in the universal order.

The claim is made that we are able to reduce emotion and will to atomic force and motion because we have learned to recognize the undoubted truth that atomic force and motion accompany them and constitute the machinery of their manifestation here and now. Mental and physical interlock and interact. We are not bodies merely nor are we spirits only, but we are both. Our bodies isolate us from one another, but our spirits unite us. The recognition of the interrelation and interaction of mind and matter is by no means an admission of the supremacy of matter, even though it recognizes that atomic forces and motions accompany the functioning of will and emotions. The atom remains as unknown as the will. Of its interior nature and its origin we know practically nothing. Though we could reduce everything in the universe to matter, ether, and energy, should we be able to tell in the last analysis what any one of these entities is? We may explain matter away until we have nothing but electrons or electro-activity left, but who can tell what electricity is? Huxley showed by comparisons that the ultimate nature of matter is as fully a mystery as that of mind, and that the terms in which we speak of the one are equally applicable to the other.

An absolutely rigid substance cannot explain the changing activity of the thing. For every change in the activity or manifestation we must affirm a corresponding change in the thing itself. Change among things depends upon change in things. Evolution is a description of a method rather than a doctrine of causality. Natural selection merely describes an order for which it does not account. It has nothing to say of the power which is thus discovered to be at work, nor why it works as it does, nor can the materialist offer any adequate explanation of these points.

The commonest event, the ripening of a peach or cherry, is as supernatural in its ultimate causation as any miracle could be. In both cases God would be equally implicated. Chemical forces explain grass and flowers and fruit no more adequately than they explain Gibbon's "Roman Empire" or Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." Science, whether chemistry or biology, explains nothing in a causal sense. Of ultimate causes it knows nothing, for these are inscrutable. Many people have mistaken scientific description and formulation for philosophic interpretation. Some have recognized that it is considered a sign of unbalanced judgment to conclude, on the strength of a few momentous discoveries, that the entire structure of religion is insubstantial. An eternal unbegun self is as conceivable and reasonable as an eternal unbegun not-self. Eternal consciousness is no more difficult to comprehend than eternal unconsciousness. Indeed, had eternal unconsciousness ever been absolute, how could we have come to consciousness at all?

Because mind is discovered to be incorporate or incarnate in matter does not prevent mind from also transcending matter. In fact, it is through the region of ideas and the intervention of mind that we have become aware of the existence of matter. Whatever is in the part must be in the whole. There is evidence of mind even in the molecule. Back of the primordial fire-mist is a Sustaining and Comprehending Mind, of which the law and order observable in the realm of the material is an expression. The agreement of the universal reason in regard to the universe is evidence that it is an expression of a Mind which works on the line of our own. The common mind which is in us thus fronts an inclusive Mind outside us. Our common reason finds the universe to be rational, — that is, the expression of a Mind which works like our minds. Only because of this can we come to any agreement about the universe.

Each of us thus fronting this transcendent Mind is conscious of self and in this consciousness has an example of



unique being which is one-of-the-many, and therefore stands in relations. Underlying and including all the many selves, there is one absolute self which, by its oneness, constitutes their relatedness, so that these lesser selves are only relatively or partially distinct. "There is no longer any separation between Maker and his works either in the matter of time or space or causality or quality; he who legislates also executes; the natural and the supernatural are one; nor is there any difference between the fiat which institutes and the power which carries out the cosmical law." But immanence does not strictly mean internal, nor does transcendence necessarily mean external. Neither does immanence preclude the possibility of personality. In fact, consciousness assumes personality and transcendence. The God of Nature is not swallowed up in Nature though expressed or manifested therein, for Nature is but a partial expression of that which we have seen is also expressed in mind. Whatever attributes belong to man, even those of human personality, their existence in the universal order must be admitted; they belong to the All. Shall we possess intelligence, emotions, will, individuality, and personality, but the Cause or the world-order of which we are a part, not possess them? It is as impossible that Nature should swallow up the Supernatural as it is that time should swallow up eternity. They subsist and are intelligible only together, and nothing can be more mistaken than to treat them as mutually exclusive. The only question of debate between Science and Religion is the question of the way in which God operates in His universe. The idea that materialistic monism has given the idea of God the *coup de grâce* is evidence of hasty and loose thinking.

Long ago Victor Hugo observed, "It would be a strange kind of All that did not contain a personality." The difficulty with the conception of personality as used by the materialists is due to their inability to think in terms that transcend the limitations and forms and shapes of humanity. Personality is the highest category we have; and while the theist asserts that God is personality, he freely

admits the possibility that God is even more than personality as we know it. The evidence is all to the support of the contention that He can be no less than this which is the highest expression of the creative genius expressed through and immanent in the universal order. Personal life ever remains the ultimate conception of life so far as we have experienced it, and the personal interest is the ultimate interest.

We have already suggested that whether spirit and matter are totally different things or aspects of the same thing, we know them only in combination. Nor can either be completely known, since we cannot disentangle their respective contributions to the joint result which we call "experience." Matter and spirit represent very distinct phases of our experience, but are separable only in thought. Spirit is known in personality and self-consciousness, and is the power to make mental distinctions between self and other things and to regard these other things as objects. Matter is the sum total of all those elements possessing the attribute of materiality or the property of occupying space, and is made up of atoms whose ultimate constitution is out of reach of our senses. Matter as we know it, is therefore an effect, a manifestation of something other than meets either hand or eye. In man, spirit and matter are represented respectively by the psychical and the physical. Physical states are accompanied by various mental states, and, conversely, mental states are accompanied by various physical states. But this does not warrant us in proceeding to the romantic excesses so characteristic of materialism, which would reduce all psychical experience to a physical basis and origin. Assertion is not demonstration, and our ideas of truth ought always to be large enough to take into account possibilities far beyond anything of which we at present are sure.

The universe is in no way limited to our conceptions of it. It has a reality apart from them, for they are themselves a part of the universe and can only take a clear and consistent character in so far as they correspond to some-

thing true and real. Whatever we can clearly and consistently conceive, that is, *ipso facto*, in a sense already existent in the universe as a whole.

The cosmical order is not a rival of God, but is simply the continuous manifestation of divine activity. Real naturalism is merely a tracing of the order in which the divine causality proceeds: it is a description, not an explanation. The chief lesson Science has to teach us all is to look for the action of God, if at all, then always; not in the past alone but in the present as well.

If an event is part of a divine plan and represents a divine purpose, it is as truly purposeful when realized through natural processes as it would be if produced by fiat. The order of law is therefore no reason for a denial of purpose. A conscious Cause implies intention, and it is this purpose which we find expressed in the steady and permanent in nature to which we give the name "law." There is, therefore, no antithesis between "law" and "purpose"; for "law" is but an expression of purpose, an evidence of intention. The Supernatural is not only the ever-present ground and administrator of nature, but is in control of nature. The very essence of mind is design and purpose. Humanity possessing these attributes, how can men deny there is purpose in the universal order?

How it is possible to conceive the universe to be self-sufficient, in view of the admitted limitations of science, is beyond understanding. Metaphysics shows that the fundamental reality cannot be an extended stuff, but must be an agent to which the notion of divisibility has no application. The theist holds, then, that the ultimate reason why anything is or changes or happens, is to be found not in any mechanical necessity, nor in any impersonal agency of whatever kind, but in the will and the purpose of a God who is conscious personality, — in whom all things live, and move, and have their being. The God of a great deal of philosophy has largely been of the same sort as the gods of the Epicureans, — a kind of absolute metaphysical being with no real active interest in the universe or man.

Theology has not yet made earnest with the full meaning of personality in its conception of God. We are making progress in that direction, however, and many mysteries will be cleared in that light.

For some, God is still necessary to account for a few things which Science has not yet fully explained. He is a convenience but not a permanent reality. To these He is a hypothetical cause necessitated by the exigencies of their situation. But as being anything that calls out reverence or loyalty He might just as well not be present to their thought. For these He is simply the "Great Necessity"; and of course there can be no conception of service nor idea of worship, and no enthusiasm of fellowship.

This hypothetical cause, God, is set over in contrast to the real cause, matter; and as matter is daily found to explain more and more, there is obviously less and less need of God. So we are confidently told that the day will come when we shall smile at the memory of the callow days when we "really believed in God." So necessity and non-intelligence are united, in an apparently increasingly effective causation. And what limits, it is asked, can you place to the possibilities of this combination to account for things?

Our answer is a question: What, after all has been done and said, do we really and actually know of ultimate causes? We know only such as are learned by inference! Matter is not seen to cause anything. Cosmic phenomena are caused, we are sure, but the cause is hidden from the experience of men. Law and order among the phenomena of the universe implies a Cause which consciously rules and orders; implies a Cause which is self-conscious, reasons, and has knowledge of its actions. What, after a little patient second thought, becomes clear up to the point of reasonable certainty is, that everywhere the seen is the offspring of the Unseen; that the visible and tangible are, so to speak, a deposit of the Invisible and Intangible; that matter is the handmaiden of Mind; that the one primordial and universal and sufficient reality is personal Spirit, be-

yond the limitations of our human conception of personality, and transcendent of the material and spiritual universe of our experience. It is not poetry, nor sentiment, nor the religious instinct only, which declares the material world to be the vesture of an Eternal Mind. The inexorable necessities of logic leave no other conclusion. The concession to metaphysics which inevitably ends in a theology is unavoidable when one grapples with the question of ultimate causes.

Scientific materialism has striven to depersonalize humanity itself, has persistently belittled and depreciated personality and individuality, seeking thus, in the interest of its primary contention, to dethrone the individual and to put the whole emphasis upon the race, in the hope of being able to sustain its denial that the ultimate Source can possibly be personal. But if evolution has any meaning at all, it means intended progressive fulfillment of purpose, construes the universal order as a realm of ends, and indicates a purposeful Worker operating through a perfecting universe, — a universe which, under His hand, is becoming the ever truer and more adequate expression of His mind to other minds. The laws of nature and the will of God are but aspects of one all-comprehensive purpose, but the laws of nature cannot be regarded as in any sense exhausting the will of God.

Bare belief in a Divine omnipotence administering a universal law is not religion, and affords no sufficient ground for morality. This belief in an Almighty becomes religion only when we pass to the realization that what we feel is the pressure of His laws; what we know is the order of His reality; what we choose is from some portion of His possibilities. Ethics must either perfect themselves in religion or disintegrate into pure Hedonism.

Science, as Wundt declares, "can only indicate the path which leads to territories beyond her own, ruled by other laws than those to which her realm is subject." Those other realms belong to philosophy, and the truth most visible to the best minds is "the ubiquitous presence and

supremacy of personality." Personality — the personality of God and Father — is the one element that gives significance to life and makes the universe intelligible. The latest science, joining hands with philosophy against materialism, finds the universe, instead of being a realm of mere unconscious mechanical operations, to be a "realm of unending and infinitely varied originations. Into the equation is continually going the influential qualities of newly formed individualities."

If the idealist is right, and the evidence seems to be with him, then the contentions of the materialists that nerve and protoplasm and energy and emotion and will are all products of atomic and chemical forces and motions, are without foundation in fact and must give place to the solid conclusions of theism.