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THE TRANSACTIONS  
OF  
The Victoria Institute,  
OR  
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JOURNAL OF THE TRANSACTIONS  
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OR  
PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

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ORDINARY MEETING, FEBRUARY 1, 1869.

THE REV. WALTER MITCHELL, M.A., VICE-PRESIDENT, IN  
THE CHAIR.

THE Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed.

THE SECRETARY announced the election of the following :—

MEMBER :—J. Lindsay, Esq., Merchant, Whitefield, Belfast.

ASSOCIATE 2ND CLASS :—F. Brotherton, Esq., 4, Royal Exchange Avenue,  
and Tulse Hill, Surrey.

THE CHAIRMAN then called upon the Rev. Dr. Irons to read the paper that follows.

Dr. IRONS.—A word of apology is due for bringing before you a subject so abstruse, and so different from the ordinary subjects considered in this place ; but whoever knows anything of the state of things in London, and also in the country, among the more energetic of the slightly educated classes, will quite understand that the time has come when it is impossible to go on with a sort of assumed truce between Christianity and morals ; because, undoubtedly, at the present time there is a prevailing notion among the classes to which I have referred, that there is a difference between the morality of religion and that which belongs to human nature as such. And this is doing us far more harm than any of the attacks on the externals of Christianity. Our historical position, and the theory of religion at large, are indeed assailed, but the harm done by that assault is as nothing compared with that internal disbelief which I know to be prevalent as to the moral essence of our faith. (Hear, hear.) That must be my apology for bringing

before you a subject of very barren interest, it may appear ; yet surely it will be found a most fruitful inquiry, though a very difficult one. I must ask you, therefore, to bear in mind that the present is only preliminary to that more historical examination to which I hope to bring you in a succeeding paper, leading subsequently to the adoption of the doctrines of Christianity, and all the truths of revelation. With these remarks, and asking for your forbearance on this occasion, I will proceed to read what I have written :—

## ANALYSIS OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY. (*Part First.*)

By the REV. WILLIAM J. IRONS, D.D., *Prebendary of St. Paul's ; Vicar of Brompton, Middlesex ; Mem. Vict. Inst.*

### CONSPPECTUS.

#### I. INTRODUCTION (§ 1-7).

#### II. What *ought to be* is based on *what is*—(in the widest sense).

The idea of *Ought* recognizes a distinction of Persons and Things.

“Person” involves ACCOUNTABILITY,—as a *fact*.

*Difficulties* of the fact of Accountability : <sup>1</sup> Its actual beginnings.

<sup>2</sup> Varieties *ab initio*. <sup>3</sup> More advanced stages. <sup>4</sup> Import of Habit. <sup>5</sup> Qualified accountability. <sup>6</sup> Religious influences. <sup>7</sup> Result. (§ 8-12).

#### III. Accountability may always imply *approbation* or *disapprobation* ; and in approbation and disapprobation, *right* and *wrong* are implied.

RIGHT is the relation of approbation to some *Good* ;

both the “good *in itself*,” and “good *in the doer* of it.”

“Good in the doer,” or Agent, implies some *freedom*.

Freedom *cannot be unlimited*, in agency.

Limits may be *exterior* to the agent ; or *interior*.

These limits differentiate the agency.

An agent, limited by exterior compulsion, }  
and one who is not so limited, } not *alike* accountable.

(§ 13-19).

#### IV. What further do we mean by a CONSCIOUS AGENT, or Person ?

Approbation, and praise,—and the opposite,—imply CONTINGENCY.

A conscious Agent exists at a point *between the not being and the being of an act*.

The *anterior possibility* of an act's not being, or being, is Contingency ; and this is *assumed* in agency which is held accountable.

Denial of this *anterior possibility* changes the idea of accountability.

The whole issue here raised : whether the conscious agent *determines* of himself. (The denial of which makes the conscious agent to be *only passive*.)

All the facts affirm the reality of the *internal self-decision* : and that this *self-decision* is not from *internal necessity* (which would involve a contradiction).

*Contingency*, as involved in conscious agency, *an axiom* of social life.

The conscious agent, praised or blamed, in fact, so far as he is a *determiner of action*. (§ 20-26).

V. Not, however, for determining simply, or any how ; but in reference to *right*. The "accountability" is for the determination (which *ought* to be Right).

The *inner character* of an act, as right or good : in relation to the agent.

The conscious agent comprises a *duality*. (The Thinker and the Thought distinguished.)

The Thinker stands in relation to the *phenomenal* : but also to the "*true-always*."

This *latter relation* touches the *beginning* of "good," *per se*.

In reference to "the good," the *sameness* of conscious agency is a fact.

The conscious agent is *not the measure* of the absolute ; nor yet of the phenomenal : though he is in relation with both ; the former being prior to an external law. (§ 27-32).

VI. Extension of the analysis.—Responsibility, *in the social system*.

*Various kinds of responsibility* distinguished. (Examples.)

Distinction of the *purely Moral* responsibility.

*Mutual* relations of responsible agents.

The adjustment of *relations*, often *inscrutable*, between man and man.

Yet man exists in, and for *society*.

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The best government, *ideally*.

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VII. How some difficulties are met, in the pre-Christian philosophies ; by merging the right in the useful.

How met in modern civilization, and law ;

by imperfect approximations to a moral ideal ; (chiefly by utilization of the Religious convictions).

The fact recognized, that Religion is more than mere policy.

Whatever more it be, is *contributed by the Individual*.

The meaning of saying that a "*State has a conscience*."

The meaning of *Hobbesism* : and that it involves a contradiction.

*Erastian* modification of Hobbesism equally a contradiction.

(§ 41-46).

## VIII. Embarrassing position of conclusions at this point.

The need of a Supreme Governing Power if there be finite Responsible agency.

The only alternative, a denial of facts.

The Individual responsible agent has a sense of a Higher Rule.

Pantheism does not satisfy this.

The Character of the Supreme GOVERNOR must be known.

(§ 47-51).

## I.

1. **WE** are said to be in the midst of a great revolution of opinion. Old thoughts and traditions as to religion, philosophy, and social economy are submitted to new examinations. Watchwords which once rallied men to inherited creeds and systems have lost their power. Introduction. Prejudices, which (with the many) act as the practical substitutes for wisdom and virtue, are widely disturbed. The general standard of intelligence and education still is low, and the "fearful and unbelieving" are alarmed. But the alarm is useless; for facts must be met. The transition from the state of prejudice to that of principle is always trying, whether for the individual or the community; but it cannot be ultimately avoided, nor in our case even postponed. The challenge to free thought is so broadly scattered that it will certainly be accepted by multitudes who, qualified or not, will influence the future of Christendom. The guardians of the ethics and philosophy hitherto deemed sacred, if they have confidence in them as true, must show it now.

2. That mixed practical philosophy which meets us, in various forms on every hand, may in England be The Present Philosophy. described as an irregular compound of fact, experience, and influence; and it is becoming familiarly known, even here, as "Positivism." M. Comte and his followers regard Positivism as a discovery, but as far as the obvious principle is concerned, such a pretence is without foundation; because facts must always have been the basis of science. Aristotle was as truly an inductive philosopher as Bacon, and Bacon as much as Comte. The eliciting of principles and ascertainment of laws may be subsequent to induction, but cannot alter the subject-matter. If any of us complain of the Positivism of the present hour, it is not for its appeal to facts; it is because of its not examining the whole field.

3. In a work entitled "On Final Causes," published more than thirty years ago with some foresight of an approaching disruption of opinion, one postulate was thought sufficient, viz., "that the facts of Human Nature be taken as the grounds for a science of Human Nature." Challenged on its own alleged foundation, viz., Fact. We ask no more in the present inquiry. None can disallow this without saying that all experience is delusive, and that all consciousness is false. Logicians, mathematicians, and moralists can have no real dissension here. For every honest mind delights to deal with facts; nor is there a worse sign in any class, or any generation, than a disinclination to reality, and to that painstaking which it demands. If any are for reconstructing the social system of our times, we say in the name of common uprightness, let it not be on the basis of some poor compromise between facts and principles. The attempt would but show intellectual feebleness, and a moral scepticism vainly reactionary. Let us examine the facts of human existence and reflect on their meaning.

There are in some crises of nations attempts at reaction which simply indicate the worst signs of civilization in extremity. As an ancient example of this we might point to the reassertion of heathenism under the Emperor Julian; and as a modern instance to Pius IX.'s Evasion to be deprecated: revival of Ultramontaniam. Let us hope better for our country than any such collision with facts. The dream of a *status quo antè* would possibly betray a fatal symptom of the last throes of a worn-out social system.

4. Even Positivism has its hopeful aspect, if we may take it to imply that the world is not to go on merely scoffing at "dogma," or simply smiling at "metaphysics." Too long it has been content to accept certain results in ethics and polity while discrediting the theories implied. It is nobler, at least, to aspire to a philosophy of its own; and this may effectually bring us into close quarters in the battle for truth and right.

For to go on without a philosophy is to build without a foundation. And more than this: if it be done long and deliberately, it is practically to dispense And fatal, even if possible. with conscience—a danger by no means remote. To form an opinion, or to take a side, without feeling bound to the utmost of our power to form the right opinion and take the right side, (as if to know right and be right were unimportant or indifferent), must be demoralizing. Self-respect alone should oblige the hope, if not the conviction, that we have not committed ourselves deliberately or wantonly to

falsehood, however little we might be able to trace the process by which all our conclusions are arrived at. And yet this sense of responsibility, felt to be so vital to all virtue, is almost quiescent in a majority of men, in every class. Responsibility for right opinion on some subjects is, indeed, distinctly questioned by many persons, and openly denied by not a few. People, no doubt, were startled in the last generation by the avowal of a celebrated statesman, "that a man is no more responsible for his creed than for the colour of his skin." The public were not then prepared openly to adopt that view. But men have now come much nearer to it. Thus, in theory, the limits of what are thought "justifiable differences," have been indefinitely enlarged; and in practice the doctrine of "extenuating circumstances" has been pushed to a hazardous extent. The pursuit of truth itself is often deemed to be quixotic, and the practice of virtue to lie beyond rigorous demand. The position supposed in the Duke of Argyll's thoughtful and popular book, *The Reign of Law*,—viz., "that all human actions are calculable beforehand," may indicate a point now reached in England by the prevailing ethics; and it may well arouse our attention; though it would be wrong to conclude at once that the calculable may not be contingent, *à priori*, as the doctrine of chances may show.

5. The moral import of this doctrine seems to some of us to be self evident; but its ideal inconsistency with religion, and deontology in general, is sheltered by the familiar predestinarianism of our Puritan fellow countrymen, whose religious instincts happily have yet been strong enough to check, very greatly, certain logical results of their philosophy. But this cannot last. The pitiless self-assertion of logic must here, as elsewhere, be felt at last.

That this doctrine of the "Reign of Law" is by no means peculiar to a Scottish philosophy, will be felt indeed by all who mark the ethical assumptions of our best-known literature. The writings of Mr. Buckle, Mr. Lewes, Mr. Tyndall, Mr. Mill, and others, are pervaded by a kind of fatalistic tone, which society inclines to accept as "scientific;" though an open denial of responsibility is of course rarely ventured on. What is absolutely needed now is that men should be compelled to say carefully and distinctly that which they have been assuming vaguely, so that their principles may be known and judged.

It is popularly denied:—yet even Mr. Mill makes some protest:

6. For it is not in the higher literature alone that personal

conscientiousness is growing faint among us. Our growing habit of "thinking in masses," has drawn forth even from Mr. Mill a timely protest in behalf of some individuality. We may trace dimness of conscience in the growing lack of interest in all elevated and difficult thought, among effeminate multitudes in the upper ranks of life,—their indisposition to what is real, and their fear of all plain-speaking, even in social intercourse. There seems to be a prevailing self-distrust, combined with uneasy self-assertion; and the feeling which is being generated is one of common scepticism, (though it may attempt a refined appearance of humility): And scepticism in its ethical results effects a sort of suspension of responsibility. (—And is there not the same timidity, and destruction of *individual manhood*, spreading in our trading community?—)

7. Nor is the enfeebled sense of right and wrong, and of the obligations of the individual, less conspicuous in matters of Religion than in Ethics generally. The public treatment of ecclesiastical questions among us, and the rareness of all attempts to know the foundations even of our own convictions, are evidences of our moral condition as a people. For in so noticeable a phenomenon of our times as the change of hereditary Religions, by thousands of our people, for new forms of worship, the converts from faith to faith have but acted in crowds, and the change has signified, not unfrequently, a formal *surrender* of individual judgment; in which conscience itself is repudiated as "private."

It would seem unnecessary, then, at a moral crisis like the present, to excuse an earnest attempt to call men to examine their moral foundations: it is needless to say more in its general defence. It must, however, be added with special significance that all who hereafter profess themselves to be "Christians," will find it to be in truth a primary obligation to vindicate the laws of Duty, and the inseparable relations of Religion and Morality in the human economy; and to base their vindication on the most careful induction of the facts of our nature as men.

Found in all classes of men.

Need, therefore, of this examination of conscientiousness.

## II.

8. As soon as we pronounce this word Duty, meaning that which ought to be, we contemplate future action: yet the idea expressed by "ought" has inherent reference to *some antecedent*; in other words, what "ought to be" must be based on "what is." But, obviously, we cannot

Outline.

always reverse this statement, and assume that "what is" "ought to be"; for "ought" would then signify nothing. "What is" may be wrong. A pathologist who should mistake the facts of disease for normal conditions of nature would not err more widely than an optimist who deemed that "whatever is is right" in ethics. The more healthy and general the facts, the safer of course will be the inductions. The moralist, like other men, already finds himself in a great physical and social system of existence; and that which "ought to be,"—his moral fabric of thought, feeling, emotion, and action—cannot negative this. The ontological and the deontological must not contradict each other.

But the moment we say that anything in human life or conduct "ought to be," we assume a great deal. We at once recognize a real division of the world into Persons and Things; and in this take it for granted that the universe of Persons has to act on the universe of Things, and knows it. In this fact we find the rudiments of all moral philosophy. The action of persons, *ex mero motu*, is universally recognized in human life, and it is irrational therefore to deny it in philosophy, if facts are to guide us at all.

9. Close to this fact of Personality, or conscious agency, lies another, which none can overlook. It is, that all persons call one another to account, for some at least of their actions. No one doubts that in some cases he is *right* in so taking account of the actions around him. As truly as the distinction between persons and things is involved in the word "ought," however understood, so also the idea of Accountability is involved in the existence of "persons"; and some notion of right is implied in accountability. "Accountability," then, whatever be its verbal definition, is a fact to be examined. It is various both in degree and in kind, and out of these variations arise those difficulties which are so frequently the practical hindrances of duty. We should not attempt to deny those difficulties: if we do not meet them distinctly, we leave them for the speculator and Pyrrhonist.

10. The difficulties in the way of individual human accountability have no doubt a great cumulative effect when presented to us at all fully; but, after all, are effectually met by the *fact* that that they actually do not eliminate this "accountability" from any society of human beings, and never have eliminated it. The following may be taken perhaps as a general statement of the difficulties, and

What *ought* to be is based on *what is*—(taking Being in the widest sense).

The idea of "ought" assumes a distinction between persons and things as a *fact*.

The word "person" involves accountability as a *fact*.

Difficulties of the idea of accountability.

may serve as preliminary to our analysis, if it be not indeed indispensable to it.

Beginning in each case with the beginnings of our humanity, it is clearly impossible to believe in much responsibility in very young persons. Their exception, to some extent, is as much a fact, as the general rule of Responsibility for adults can be said to be also a fact on the other side. Then, as so large a proportion of mankind never live to maturity, a strict accountability would seem to be limited to a portion of the race; while obligations of duty should belong to all. (This is a philosophical as well as moral difficulty. See §§ 18, 164.)

Statements of them.

1. Actual beginnings of human accountability in each case.

11. But among adults the diversities of condition are so great, and the hardships of moral position so considerable, that the same law of accountability, even with them, could not always be applied. Education and training must at length have affected every one of them for good or evil. The child of the most prosperous and well-disposed citizen, and the child of the exile from society attaining maturity in an atmosphere of crime, may both no doubt be held accountable: but few, in fact, will judge them wholly by the same standard; especially as what are termed evil influences appear to be more powerful than the good.—If we pass from this period of early maturity to a later, the phenomena are yet more intricate. After certain habits are fixed, men's characters still go on in gradual formation. Suppose they began ill, and became at length irrevocably bad, it would be hard to say what their personal accountability might amount to; though they will yet have, *as a fact*, the disapprobation of their fellow men. Such reflection would seem to enlarge our sphere of inquiry and oblige the investigation of the nature of *Habit*, whether good or evil, and its relation to deontology, i.e. to the personal decision of what "ought" to be. (§ 89, 90.)

2. Its varieties from the first.

3. The more advanced stages of it—(or *Habit*).

4. Question as to the import of *Habit* in questions of accountability.

12. But can we leave out of consideration the adult multitudes who, in different ways, have but partial control over any of their present actions—to say nothing of inherited disqualification in some cases, for all strict accountability? The position of women, that is half the world, is said to embarrass every theory of accountability; and the ancients very summarily excluded them, and some modern legists are also much inclined to do so. Then, add other dependent persons, minors, slaves, the imbecile, the ignorant, the infirm, the aged, and the difficulties

5. Large numbers of cases of qualified accountability.

of any general theory of accountability may soon appear insuperable.

And beyond all this, the various Religions of the world introduce a wide range of considerations often coming into collision with each other, and not unfrequently with the ascertained deontology of our race. Some of these are so influential in personal action, that no philosophy of duty can finally omit their existence as *facts*.

But when all difficulties are stated, (and none are here intentionally passed over), the broad *fact* remains, on which alone philosophy can proceed: Man treats his fellow-man as Accountable for much; and the *fact* is all the stronger for its holding its ground, and outliving all the conceivable and actual difficulties which thus surround it.

### III.

13. It is with the full admission then of difficulties, both in theory and in experience, that we have to analyze this fact, that all men hold others in some degree accountable for their actions.

We must at once mark, in at least a preliminary way, what men really *mean* by "holding each other accountable." For first, it is no mere accident that they do so. To imagine a state of things in which the reverse could be true, would be to imagine something different from all human consciousness, relationship, and association. That mutual accountability, then, which belongs to our nature, implies approbation or disapprobation of each other, as felt and expressed under certain conditions. Nor would human beings bear to have it believed that their approbation was given except to what is *right*, and their disapprobation to what is *wrong*. Some primary ideas there-

fore of Rectitude and its opposite, or what is commonly called virtue and vice, right and wrong, however rudimental, would seem in the next place to be involved, *ab initio*, in the capacity of approval and disapproval implied in mutual accountability.

Every one may judge for himself, and from all he knows of human beings, whether these two conclusions are or are not based on the *facts* of our present life and nature.

14. But such results, it will be replied, are very vague. What,

after all, do we mean by "right"? Can we define "virtue"? What is that "goodness," a belief in which, and a demand for which, is found to be so natural?—We must not avoid this: it is justly pressed by every one who is honestly dealing with such questions; and is the next point to be considered. What we have said thus far only touches the primary and apparent facts.

There are some actions, then, (we need not specify them, or any of them, for no one will deny it), the perception of which, by other men besides the agents, is followed by quick approval. This approbation is sometimes an immediate sympathy with that which is done, as being felt to be noble, great, true, good (in whatever terms "the right" may be expressed). Suppose it has been a matter not at all concerning ourselves; or that we have had no time to refer to self; or that it was some historical or poetical heroism that had aroused our feeling, still the *fact* remains. Whether we can do anything towards fixing the definition of this fact, may be uncertain. That will depend on language, and many conditions of cultivated thought. But facts do not wait on definitions. In ontology the idea of Goodness is *de facto* fitness to the ends; but in deontology, we consider the doer as well as the thing done—fitness in acting as well as in the act.

15. It may be urged that this feeling of "approbation might be stirred for the thing done, as seen in useful results, and not as pertaining to the doer." This, of course, may be true; and it sometimes is so. But this is evidently not the whole case, even if it be the best part of it—which few would say. If an act of apparent justice were forced on the doer, we might be glad it was attained, but our approbation would not be the same as when we believed it to be *originated by the agent himself*. And on the other hand, we should have sympathy, rightly, with a man who denied his responsibility for anything which was *forced on him from without*.

16. If these be "facts of human nature," so certain that the opposites cannot be ordinarily supposed among human beings, it follows that an agent, or person, held by us to be rightly accountable has some kind and measure of "FREEDOM," or immunity at least from coercion. And thus the next point of examination we find to be,—What is that kind of "freedom" in an agent, which certain forms of approved action, or virtue, would seem, in *fact*, to demand?

But here arises the question "What is Right?" or "goodness"?

The relation of approbation to that which is "good;"

both to the "good" in itself,

and to "good" in the doer;

the doer having therefore some Freedom.

But unlimited Freedom is impossible.

Unlimited Freedom is impossible, being a contradiction. Every being, by the fact of his existing such as he is, is so far determined, that he is *not any other*. He is not, and cannot be, infinitely mutable, or infinitely free. His present existence, while it endures, implies a limit. What "he is," will limit what he "can do"; and as was said generally, so again in a special sense it may be repeated, the deontology depends on the ontology.

Limits of both an exterior and interior kind to be distinguished.

And not only is an agent defined, or limited, by his own essence and constitution, but every act, immediately it has become an act, is a determinate thing; and the doer may find himself further limited by what he has done. If ever the phrase

"free action" is used of an accomplished result, it can only mean that the agent was not externally forced to do it. And the interior necessity, which arises from the constitution and limits of any being, must not be assumed to be more than negative. It says, "hitherto mayest thou go, and no further." But exterior compulsion, or necessity, we all own, intercepts just accountability, and is inconsistent with that goodness which is the object of approbation, as "free." In saying this, we are but stating a fact.

These limits, interior and exterior, differentiate agency.

17. How far the agent may himself remain virtuous, while under compulsion which he deprecates, is a divergent inquiry, co-incident with, but not intercepting, the present argument.

It may be remarked, as we proceed, that this distinction, of what Aquinas calls "natural and absolute necessity," and "necessity of compulsion," "*quæ omnino repugnat voluntati*," is familiar to the mediæval schools.

(Mediæval view.)

(*Sum.*, lib. i. q. 82.)

If the known laws of the world, or any outer events, interfere with the agency of man, so that in any case it cannot be said, (as Aquinas puts it), "*homo seipsum movet ad agendum*," the accountability to which we hold him is limited, or may be even destroyed.

Minute questions must not intrude here.

18. We must not encumber our examination at this point with any minuter questions as to some abnormal, unjustified, and partial conditions of human nature, in reference to the approbation of good, or the shame at evil. As physical philosophy assumes the goodness of nature as a whole, notwithstanding all exceptional appearances, and aims to learn rather than criticise; so the philosophy of humanity must regard man as constituted capable of action and human goodness. We premised that the

facts of human nature itself, viewed in the largest way, should be the basis of our analysis. It is a fact, We mark the point now attained in our analysis. that man does not praise, and perceives that he ought not to blame, any one for an action which is *wholly the result* of external compulsion or necessity.

19. Here, however, we stand but on the threshold of our subject, though so significant a result has been arrived at. "Goodness" both as to its personal appreciation by man, and its intellectual definition, is yet only imperfectly stated. But it is necessary that each step we take, if but slight, should be sure—each conclusion gained, *a fact*. Our natural capacity and readiness to approve or disapprove, to praise or blame, practically settles that virtue or personal goodness is in some degree possible; for we cannot think man's nature wholly false in witnessing to this.

We have distinguished our approbation of that which itself is good, from our approbation of it as in relation with the conscious agent, or doer. The distinction also is based evidently on *fact*. But to clear it yet more we must inquire somewhat further as to what we meant at the outset (§ 8) by a Conscious Agent, *i. e.* the being whom we distinguish as a "Person." We find that we must further examine, what is a conscious agent or "Person."

#### IV.

20. It sufficed to say, at first, that a conscious agent is recognized as a Person rather than a Thing. This meant that a Thing does not consciously originate that which is to be; and that a Person is believed by us so to determine a result, every time we reasonably blame or praise him. Thus, in the praise which we give to a person, there may be elements, (*e. g.* gratitude), which we could not possibly bestow on a thing, as such. But if our approbation implies, in any case, determining power in the conscious agent, it also implies that that agent might have refrained from putting forth that act of power. Now this antecedent possibility of acting, or refraining from acting, is what is usually and briefly expressed by the term "Contingency." Praise of conscious agency implies in fact "Contingency" or a possibility of doing, or refraining from doing.

21. It is evident that no description of the circumstances and conditions of a conscious agent can, as such, tell us what the conscious agent is in himself. He holds the position between the being and not being of a possible action. The world accepts it as *his* action if he determines it. A conscious agent is at the point between

an act's being  
and not being.

But of himself we here know no more: we only know that he determines the act, which we approve or not, for what it *is*; while we praise or blame *him* for consciously doing, or originating, or determining it.

The frequent mystification of this truth in necessitarian writers arises simply from the suicidal hypothesis which they assume, that the agent is a mere point, or passive abstraction, in other words, a nonentity acted on by some such abstractions as "motives," "inducements," and so on.

22. At the risk of a seeming, but not real, repetition of our argument, it is indispensable that we here concentrate attention on this idea of "contingency,"—that possibility of an action's being or not being,—upon which, as on a

Further ob-  
servation of  
"Contingency"  
in conscious  
agency.

middle point, the conscious agent has his stand in determining action, both the laudable and the blameable. If doubt had not been deliberately expressed by some, and indistinctly assumed by others, we might not thus need to pause to ask,—whether a contingency, (or the possibility of an action's either being or not being), is admissible in philosophy? We must not be diverted

Denial of  
anterior con-  
tingency chan-  
ges all the ideas  
of accountabi-  
lity.

now from this, by any indirect issues; for the entire idea of a morality is changed by any indecision here. Once establish in the mind an unequivocal belief in a true (not partial) contingency, and a way is made towards a solution of countless questions of sophistical reasoning: Thus, "Whether human action may be calculated beforehand?" "Whether a higher intelligence than ours may 'foresee' all human action and its issues?" &c. are questions evidently connected with the previous decision as to Contingency.

(Collateral  
inquiries to be  
postponed.)

23. That outward circumstances may with considerable precision be "calculated" and "foreseen," we can fully understand: our social life could not proceed on any other supposition. Our human calculations may go even farther, and deal with probabilities; and beyond this, superhuman intelligence may regard all possibilities of action. But the relation of either foresight or calculation to the un-

The whole  
issue.— Whe-  
ther the con-  
scious agent  
determines  
something  
himself?

determined must be for subsequent consideration. (§ 138.) The point to be settled about Contingency is, not whether everything, *but whether something in human action is really determined by the man, as, quoad hoc, the middle point between being and not being?* To deny this, is to make the conscious agent to be passive, or even nothing, and unconscious things to be acting on him.

24. To say thus that a conscious agent is not a real being,

and therefore of himself determines nothing, is to contradict the broad fact that we all treat one another as real beings. What seem to be men's actions depend on the existence of the men. It is on this and on no narrow or insulated details that we can found our philosophy; it must stand, if at all, on facts of such extent and scope as to belong to the human race. And this is broad enough. *All the phenomena of human praise and blame in all human intercourse support the assertion that the conscious agent is a real being who makes the internal decision which precedes certain actions.—And, that his ποίησις is analogous to creating—i. e., a going forth of action from the agent himself, without essential change in the agent,—is but another statement of the same truth.*

It may be further said in opposition to this, that there may be some law of the inner nature of the agent himself, not simply allowing, but wholly obliging or necessitating all his actions *ab initio*. And we reply, first, that such a supposition rests, as far as we know, on no facts; and secondly, if proved, it would hinder our justly blaming or praising, or holding any to be accountable. It would convert every Person into a Thing, which is a contradiction, reversing all the phenomena.

25. Concede to us the possibility of our ever abstaining from that which we are about to do, and you may rightly praise or blame us for doing it. Deny it, and you deny the facts of all human social existence. Say of a proposed act of a conscious agent, "It *may* be, or it *may never* be," and you are saying what the whole world accepts and acts upon, so fully that our treatment of each other depends on it as on an axiom.

But to say this is to admit "contingency," which is no more than an abstract term to express this general fact. Whatever of the "calculable" or the "fore-knowable" may be pleaded by any philosophy, or any system hereafter, it must never be of a kind (§ 5) which will clash with the possibility of some acts being entirely contingent *à priori*; for that rests on the facts of human nature throughout.

26. If, indeed, any one would still wish to persuade himself that the phenomena of sensation contain the sum of all reality in the universe, and that the conscious agent is himself only a kind of subtler mechanism, and determines nothing for himself, what can be said to him but that he simply speculates? Facts are all on our side; while they assure us also that a conscious agent is a being such as

All the facts affirm the reality of internal decision,

and not from the law of his nature "obliging;"

which involves a contradiction.

Contingency as involved in conscious agency an axiom of social life.

no experience has been able fully to analyze, though forced to admit.

Should any objection be taken to our use of the word "conscious" agent, we pretend to no technical meaning in it. We take the word as expressing the fact, and no more, that there are beings in the universe who not only know things, but know that they know; *i.e.*, they look at themselves as agents—while some agents do not so look at themselves.

A conscious agent is what is meant commonly by a Mind—(without questioning other kinds of intelligence). He is and knows that he is; acts, and knows it.—To be conscious of itself, the mind asks no other principle than itself—*i.e.* it knows that itself is a being (§ 23). To affirm any other being, we must, as Berkeley said, look to the phenomena. But τὸ φαίνόμενον presupposes a being, to whom φαίναται. Consciousness recognizes from the first anterior possibility of being.

## V.

27. We have arrived, then, at a more advanced conclusion as to the "conscious agent." His action is recognized by others

as praiseworthy or not, as good or evil, according as he has been its determiner, unrestrained by external compulsion of any kind, and not fixed to action by internal law or constitution. But this determining agent does not make *Right*; otherwise every act would

be right. We have still something to define if possible, as to "the good" itself—the deed *per se*, as distinct from the doer—either à *parte antè* or à *parte post*. To this, then, we briefly return. [See § 14, "There are some actions, &c."] For if any action be good or evil in bearing a certain inner character as it comes from the doer, it follows that we must pursue the action back to the agent, and there contemplate and distinguish *it*, as well as him.

If we think of the conscious agent, or "mind" (as we may now say), it is a simple fact that a thinker and his thought

are not the same—not identical: we recognize at once a duality at least, viz. "subject" and "object." (P. Lombard would add "relation.")

28. Looking then at this intelligence, mind, conscious being, or Agent, as ideally prior to and apart from all phenomena of external being, what shall we find? Evidently, *ex vi termini*, its object would then be the abstract, or the infinite; and

itself (as the subject) would have relation with that object : all the phenomenal being later (*i. e. in modo concipiendi*). It is true indeed that even some abstractions are measures of phenomenal and contingent being ; but all are not so. Collective and general terms, for instance, are abstractions partly derived from the phenomena of experience ; but some thoughts we certainly have more abstract than these. Thus, supposing our experience of various phenomena to suggest the general idea of a cause ; yet how came we by the more abstract thought, that there *should be* a cause ? This is an idea superior to the phenomena. For this the mind has recourse to itself, and its sense of the anterior. Experience alone does not teach us this ; rather experience is itself taught, influenced, and guided at last by this recognized truth. The mind reflecting on itself adjudicates, by its own essence, on the manifestations of external being. It does not know how the manifestations of unconscious beings reach the conscious being : it only knows the fact. It does not know how itself is capable of reflecting on external, and even inferior beings ; here, too, it only knows the fact. The agent stands in relation of some kind with the outer, or phenomenal world : he stands also in relation to an inner world, which (for want of a better term) we call the "abstract" and the "true-always." (§ 100.)

In this duality we must separate the thinker from his thought.

The thinker stands in relation to the phenomenal ; and also to the "true-always."

29. Whatever be the essence of the mind or conscious agent, it is that which can contemplate outer life and action, and attempt by some inner criterion the decision of the *possible* and *right*. It falls back on its own essential relation to the necessary, and the "always-true," however indistinct it be, (as is life itself), in every emergency which demands a decision. In the power then to make such decision from our own internal resources, and in this alone, can we uniformly trace the beginnings of that "good" which, in action, we afterwards call "moral ;" and which is distinct from the agent. (§ 76.)

The relation of the mind, essentially to the "true-always," is the beginning of the idea of "the good."

30. Further : There is a sameness of moral agency, if viewed largely, which is as unquestionable as the sameness of the phenomenal world. The great varieties of sensation and perception in the human race do not disturb our belief of the sameness of the outer experiences of men in all parts of the world, and in all ages ; neither can the variations and eccentricities of moral agency alter the general laws of the praiseworthy and the blameable in conduct, in relation to which each conscious agent has to make such frequent decisions of his own. It is this sameness

In reference to "the good" or right, the *Sameness* of conscious agency a fact.

of moral agency, as a whole, which protects our analysis from the objection that it finds every man a mere standard of right to himself. To say that man sees in himself the requirement of obedience to the "always true" is no doubt to represent the finite as in relation with the infinite, or at least with that to which the conscious moral agent defers without reserve, as to superior and essential right: but it is not identifying the agent with the *right*.

Man's nature tells him that there is and must be a rule of ideal right; it tells him too that this lies at the foundation of all fit praise or blame; and thus he is in fact prepared to make some estimate of action in others, and of the laws believed to be true in general experience.

The mind having relation to the absolute and the phenomenal.

31. While we thus are obliged to speak of the "true-always" as abstract, and even eternal and necessary, we are equally obliged to regard it as in relation with the very essence of conscious agency or mind. And we can thus conceive how the conscious agent may regard the absolute in the phenomenal, the abstract in the concrete, the infinite as partially reflected in the finite; the mind having essential inner relation to the absolute, and an active or potential relation to the exterior world of things.

We thus base all our conclusions concerning the good *per se* (as well as those which regard the good, in its proceeding from the conscious agent), on the closest examination we can give to the facts of our nature.

32. The facts, that we all rightly deal with men as determiners of some of their acts; that some freedom, and some contingency, are thus implied; and that the originator of action often is conscious that he ought to originate it in conformity with anterior truth to which his own essence stands related, are alike indisputable: as also is the *de facto* sameness of that truth among men.

If it be said that the eternal and necessary truths which are spoken of imply Eternal Mind as their perfect abode—granting that the Alexandrians were right in thus developing the Platonic ideas,—this hinders not our conclusion that all real minds or conscious beings, however limited, stand in relation to the ideal, the necessary and always-true.

and prior to external law. Since then our analysis discloses the fact that ideas of the good and right belong to the first elements of our being, we can recognize a foundation for the moral and social accountability of man prior to all positive and external law. If, in what has been or will be

examined, we seem to repeat with emphasis, this word "fact," let it be borne in mind that we have to evince throughout that our conclusions rest on this broad scientific basis, and no other; not on opinion, not on theory, not on exceptions, but on such *realities* as we may appeal to, in the nature of man as man, in the broadest way and with no reserve that any one can think partial; unless he be a mere caviller, with whom, of course, we have nothing to do here.

The scientific basis of "fact" thus far insisted on.

## VI.

33. We will carry our induction of facts somewhat further. Our conclusions as to the conscious moral agent and his relation to Right, will have additional clearness if we revert to the primary conception of ACCOUNTABILITY, which even in its simplest form has done so much for us; and endeavour to ascertain it more exactly and fully.

Extension of the analysis.

We cannot observe closely the details of human experience without perceiving that the idea of accountability or "responsibility" as it is more frequently called, is highly complicated in its uses. The difference of the two terms seems to be that the latter expresses the more abstract idea. "Accountability" describes the bare fact of our relation to certain persons, in certain circumstances; "Responsibility," the prior truth, that such a relation is recognized as normal, and includes in it, as we have said, some idea of right. In whatever variety of forms we meet with the fact of human accountability, this idea of "right" is latent: but it is modified greatly by the subject-matter.

Use of the terms Responsible and Accountable.

34. We have thus far spoken of the conscious agent as an individual; but all conscious agents, as far as we know, have some dependence on others, and form parts of social systems very widely different. The obligations of the social system in which any of us live are signified to us individually in many ways,—by tradition and custom, by contract and common faith, but most of all by *law*; and thereupon we judge, and we act. Let us now speak of this last, viz. *Law*, as frequently comprehending the rest.

Responsibility in the social system.

35. There is here found a very broad distinction, which no observer can deny. There are some laws of society which we are responsible for obeying, in many ways; and yet we wish they were abolished, and inwardly disapprove of them; and there are other laws which we have a conviction *ought* to be what they are. A good man, as

Various kinds of Responsibility.

lity distinguished. both Aristotle and St. Paul remind us, discerns among laws, which are the good and which bad. Whether, however, the law be good or bad, the Responsibility for obeying it is such that the law-breaker must abide the consequences of his resistance. This is Political Responsibility, or Social, or Domestic. Of course all societies of men ought to conform their laws to the highest ideas of the good and the right; and in that case the political or social responsibility would assist the purely deontological or moral. But the ideas would still be distinct—of responsibility to obey Law, and responsibility to do Right as such. Good men

Examples of this. have thought it right at times to break a bad law; but they incur all the responsibility of so doing. We can conceive of a man coming under the extremest penalties of laws, either evil or not understood, and yet having our sympathy or compassion, as the case might be. The martyr of liberty may perish beneath some tyrant's law, and win all our approval. The philanthropist may unsuccessfully withstand some wrong custom of society; but will eventually obtain the applause of the human conscience. The votary of science, involved at times in accidental suffering, finds the goodwill of his fellow-men may attend him in his disaster. But let us only be told of one who has been overtaken by law in the midst of some deed of cruelty or injustice, and we do not feel that this *ought not to be*, but, just the reverse, our conscience records its approval.

To incur the consequences of our actions and feel that it *ought to be so*—to be subject to a high law, and *feel it to be right*, this is Moral Responsibility.

36. But the great deontological problems as to individual duty become, as we now advance, more complex. A multitude of responsible agents living together on this earth, in widely differing conditions, with extremely varying powers, all of them still bearing a nature which has a certain conscious relation to the perfect, the absolute, the always-true;—how can they work together? The Responsibility of each is in fact held to be individual; yet it is included in that responsibility, that men are *influenced by each other*. They are intended for this: their whole nature bears the marks of it. It is a *fact*.

37. Nor is this influence regulated in one fixed way; for then it would be mechanical, or material, and not responsible, in any moral sense. Each agent will in some degree influence some others, and the influence may be either good or evil. Suppose it to be evil, then the influencer may be highly culpable, and

yet the man who *is* influenced retains responsibility, notwithstanding the injury often received. Not unfrequently, however, the conflicting responsible agents would be in such confused relations to each other and to mutual results, that the apportionment of praise and blame, individual approval or disapproval, would lie beyond the just discernment of their fellow-men. It is useless to complain that there should ever be this mutual influence; for that would be to complain that we are what we are. Human nature exists in and for society; this is undeniable. Yet each individual is held by all others to some internal responsibility. He is praised, he is blamed, for himself. This too is undeniable. The two facts are before us. Every responsible agent is essentially a being of some self-government; and where many such beings co-exist they ought not to injure the self-governance of each other, much less to destroy it. A multitude of self-governing beings would be a confusion, and not a world, or moral κόσμος, unless under some external regulation; and External Regulation, or Government of Society, has in fact always been found among responsible agents.

The adjustment of relation is often inscrutable between man and man.

Yet man exists in and for society.

38. Even if all men were capable of perfect self-control, yet they would also be capable of failure; and thus there would always be a need of external government. The functions of such government might conceivably be limited to a settlement of individual rights, or a guarding against aberrations; but they could never be dispensed with altogether. In an ideal state of perfection, the best external government of a responsible agent would be that which gave the fullest scope to individual action, taking one case with another throughout the community. And, on the other hand, the worst government for a community of personally responsible beings would be that which put the greatest amount of unnecessary restraint on the individual, or interfered coercively with him either in his acting or willing. A tyrannical government might so far interfere with some actions of men, that they could not be justly called to account for them at all. Again, it might even undertake, what indeed it could never discharge, the responsibility of certain members of the community; (though even then it must leave a large number of actions for which each agent would still have entire responsibility.) It would seem that the measure in which the external government, or State, is able wisely and safely to leave our conduct to our own control is a measure of the character of a government as wise or unwise, just or unjust.

Relations of the external to the internal government of responsible agents.

What the best government ideally.

for the government is made for man, and not man for the government.

39. Admitting this, it follows that a bad administration of society under imperfect laws would increase the difficulties of much responsible agency; nor is it likely that any human government could secure the just responsibility of every individual in that degree which the instinct of praise and blame demands for all. A human government suitable to all the inequalities of capacity, power, and advantage in every case, however desirable, is impossible.

It is beside our purpose here to determine which is even the best of human governments. The decision would involve all the details of an inquiry as to which form of government gives the freest scope to the individual responsible agent, with the least social inconvenience. What might be best in the abstract might not be so in certain circumstances. Nor are even our theories of government as yet at all satisfactory. Thus, if a monarchy has the merit of simplicity in its action, it is the most remote from a recognition of our individual responsibility; and, on the other hand, if democracy aims at expressing the average internal agency of the responsible individual, it (on theory) suppresses much of the action of each—subordinating the part to the whole, and greatly interfering with personal action.—The personal responsibility too of those who, under any Government, or in any Society, have to act in masses, under social, military, or corporate orders, has to be provided for, because conscience, in fact, bears large witness to it; yet it evidently demands a higher regulation than is externally found for it in human society.

40. At this point, all those “varieties of responsibility,” and the difficulties which we admitted at the outset (§ 10, &c.), come back upon us. The attempts of society to adjust them, however unsatisfactorily, are admissions that they *ought to be adjusted*, and even recognize the need of

more perfect external government of responsible agents than humanity can be conceived to reach. Human government settles the legal relations which it will permit among all members of the community; and should aim to do so on some basis of *common reason*; but the least reflection will convince us how imperfectly as yet this has been attained. But beyond this, we see not that it can do full justice to the higher law of responsibility inwardly acknowledged by us. If we are to trust the facts of our nature, it is certain that responsibility means some freedom in the con-

The best government *de facto* not the same always, or everywhere.

The best human government cannot correct the inequalities of responsibility.

scious moral agent ; we are aware that this is sorely interfered with in countless cases ; and that human external government cannot remedy a great part of this interference and wrong ; and that we still feel that the responsibility exists, even when we are unable to explain it ; and we find ourselves in the position of some scientific explorer, who comes on a fact which he wonders at, and yet must own.

## VII.

41. It may be useful to mark how the Difficulties to which we now refer have been met by those who in various ways have had to deal with what are the facts of the world's life.

The ancient philosophers (with certain remarkable exceptions) found themselves obliged, by the necessities of the case, to turn as much as they could from the idea of Individual Responsibility, and attribute to the State even the highest governing functions for all. In logical consistency this treatment of politics implied *utility* as the only remaining ideal ground of *right*. It would not be enough for

it to admit that the truest utility ultimately coincides with right ; for this would not be denied ; but it requires it to be said, that the "useful" and the "right" are not expressions of two ideas, but are essentially one and the same, in conception as well as fact. Yet it is most noticeable, how the only exact thinkers of the old world contradict their politics in all their ethical inquiries, and as if unintentionally admit the individual conscious agent as the responsible doer of right and wrong. Aristotle precedes his treatise on Politics by his Ethics, in which he constructs a moral system on facts of human nature examined in detail. In the closing chapter he is

How the difficulties of responsibility are met in the pre-Christian philosophers.

obliged to admit that he finds the "good" ultimately in the good man himself ; καὶ ἔστιν ἐκάστου μέτρον ἢ ἀρετὴν, καὶ ὁ ἀγαθός, ἢ τοιοῦτος, κ.τ.λ. (*Eth. ad Nic.*, x. 5) ; and this is scarcely in harmony with his view that the "State is prior to the household, and the household prior to the individual, as the whole is prior to the part." (*Pol.*, i. 2.) At least, the Personal Responsibility, if admitted at all in the sense demanded by the facts of life, would be lost in responsibility to the State : which is merging the right in the useful.

By merging the right in the useful.

42. But the same difficulties of course have to be dealt with by governments of modern times, to whom the Christian ethics and individual responsibility are familiar. Any of the "mixed questions," as they are some-

How met in modern civilisation and law.

times called (*i.e.* those which are partly of individual, but also of general interest), will illustrate this at once. As to Marriage and Education, to go no further, the State has to consult its own requirements, and also to satisfy the Personal convictions of individuals. This is attempted in many ways. It is comparatively easy when the members of the State are all of one Religion; as that may furnish a common basis of law and practice that may be insisted on for all. Where the religions are many, as in our own country, there is danger of a State being jostled into hopeless confusions full of peril to civilization itself.

By imperfect approximations to a moral ideal, at best.

Whatever be the political settlement arrived at, it will be but an approximation to what the responsible agent would require, at least in a large number of cases.

43. The familiar form assumed by this subject at present in all Christendom, is that of an inquiry into the relations of the Church to the State; the Church being a Society of conscious agents in which the individual consciousness of right, and sense of responsibility, finds voluntary expression. In Mr. Gladstone's recent and most remarkable exposition of his own thoughts as a statesman, and of the political position, the question is thus delineated with his striking skill and accuracy: "Are we to say, with Lord Macaulay, or with Paley, 'government is police?'" On which Mr. Gladstone thus comments:—

"It seems to me that in every function of life, and in every combination with his fellow-creatures, for whatever purpose, the duties of man are limited only by his powers. It is easy to separate, in the case of a gas company or a chess club, the primary end for which it exists, from everything extraneous to that end. It is not so easy in the case of the State or the family. If the primary end of the State is to protect life and property, so the primary end of the family is to propagate the race. But around these ends there cluster in both cases a group of moral purposes, variable indeed with varying circumstances, but yet inhering in the relation, and not external or merely incidental to it. The action of man in the State is moral, as truly as it is in the individual sphere; although it be limited by the fact that as he is combined with others whose views and wills may differ from his own, the sphere of the common operations must be limited, first to the things in which all are agreed; secondly to the things in which, though they may not be agreed, yet *equity points out*, and the public sense acknowledges, that the whole should be bound by the sense of the majority."

The fact recognized that government is more than mere police.

44. Every one will recognize in this, a just recoil from the

short-hand politics which resolved simply that "government is police." But it seems to bring out the fact, that whatever *more* than police, government may be, it is so because the responsible agents of the community require it to be so. Each individual has to watch this action of the State, and constantly aim that it may correspond at last with his own internal conviction of the "right," the "just," the "always-true." To say that "the State has a conscience," as some have expressed it, is to put in an abstract way the truth that it is bound to conform, in its corporate acts, to the highest ideal of the responsible agents who form the community. (The case of the Family is somewhat different, being a *μὴν* *αρχαία*. See Aristot. *Æcon.* I. i.)

But when beyond this we advance to ask—*what* those questions are which the responsible agents of a community are to defer to their rulers in the State? the subject becomes so involved, that there seems little hope of more than tentative solutions, which, after all, will leave in thousands of individuals a sense of unredressed wrong, at variance with any high conception of a perfect Government of Moral Agents according to the excellence of their nature. And this must be inadmissible; for nature, as such, must be regarded as "good"; it aims at its proper good, and ought not to be ultimately thwarted in that aim, since that would be evil.

45. Some philosophers, no doubt, like Hobbes of Malmesbury, will still regard the laws of the State as furnishing the only criterion, if not the only foundation, of all duty. It would be difficult to persuade any but philosophers of this. Mankind at large always have believed, for example, that duties arise out of the natural relations of human life, quite independently of the support and sanction of state-law. Beyond which, the law of the State is "for the lawless and disobedient." It can have little to do with regulating virtue, except negatively, and therefore could not be its standard. A theory which regards law as the ground or standard of right is equivalent to a theory that all law is good. A bad law is a contradictory phrase in that case. But this is evidently absurd. Every attempt to improve the laws of any community is a recognition of a standard known to the individual mind external to the state-action as such. Indeed, it is quite conceivable, morally, that correct conduct, which should be "conformity to law," and nothing more, would not be virtue at all.

46. When it is urged against Hobbesism, or as it is called

But what-  
ever more it  
be, is contrib-  
uted by the  
individual.

Meaning of  
saying a State  
has a con-  
science.

The meaning  
of Hobbesism;  
and that it in-  
volves a con-  
tradiction.

Erastian modification of Hobbesism equally a contradiction.

from another point of view Erastianism, that it would be a practical denial of truth and goodness, by its seeming admission that in different states "the right" and "the true" or "good" would be different, because laws are different; the reply has been that this would be only a temporary inconvenience, since Christianity, (which Erastianism vaguely assumes,) would tend to perfectibility, and so in due time it would be found that the varieties in law would become less and less, and the best interests of humanity and the best laws of States become everywhere coincident. But then, to admit this, is equally to *acknowledge an ideal of good law*, to which, all the while, the individual responsible agent was urging the State.

### VIII.

47. The position now arrived at must be confessed at this point again to be sufficiently intricate. All the facts assure us

The embarrassed position of our conclusions at this point.

of the mutual responsibilities of personal agents, living in community as their very nature requires. All the facts assert some kind of supremacy in each personal agent as absolutely essential to such self-government, as any fair responsibility assumes, and even demands. All the facts discover to us the incongruity and inequitableness of such personal self-governing beings existing in community without any moral balance held among them. And what are the necessary conditions for the holding of any such moral balance? Evidently such as no human law attains, or can be conceived to attain.

It cannot be conceived, because our personal determining in all matters of detail, and our inward relation as individuals to the "true-always," can with no exactness be ascertained by any other individuals, as far as we know, much less by the State, with that constancy which constant responsible action would require. Some government being needed among moral agents, it must not be government under any mere law that might be established, it must be government administered as to responsible beings—*i.e.* government suited to *their nature*; since every being must be governed according to its nature.

The need of a supreme governing power, if there be finite responsible agency.

48. The Governing power which has to adjust the law and practice of Duty in a community of responsible beings, each claiming by nature some self-government in detail, so far as he is responsible,

must needs have minute knowledge of the *inner life* of each constituent member of the whole community. For if not, injustice and wrong may be done,—in other words, violence to the inner nature of the responsible agent; or else the inner relation of the responsible agent to the “true-always” must be set aside, and all deontology denied. That such a Supreme governing and unerring power is absolutely a necessity of finite responsible agency, and required by all the facts, is a position from which no ingenuity can escape; and which no sophistry or reluctance of faith can persuade the world to forego. Deny all accountability—all praise and blame—all personal agency as to various details—and all sameness of relation of the conscious individual to the “true-always”; or else acknowledge that a community of such responsible agents must be always ordered and maintained in action by a governing Power, whose nature is in harmony with necessary or absolute goodness, which is “true-always,” and administers these laws equitably in all cases of The only alternative a denial of facts. real responsibility. There is no alternative, we repeat, but this: disclaim all honour and all shame; *resist all the facts* of human nature’s accountable existence here; or acknowledge a Supreme Power, which knows the whole responsible community, and governs it.

49. This is far more than a logical inference from the facts of human nature—(though no reasonable being can deny any exact logical inference); it is a Fact recognized by each finite moral agent on countless occasions. Take, for example, the dread of retribution for wrong that has been done; it is quite distinct from, though often coincident with, dread of the detection and punishment of human law; for men will often give themselves up to legal punishment in the hope of satisfying the Nemesis, as the heathen said, which haunts the wrong-doer. This is no superstition merely, (though as a fact it would not, even then, be without meaning); it cannot be got rid of by alleging its partial character in different individuals; for we all have too much sympathy with it to suppose that it is not part of our nature. “Whom vengeance suffereth not to live,” is a well-known line marking a real trait in man—his sense that he is under a higher Rule. The question that must here be met is one of the most fundamental—the most vital—that can be entertained. Many who may have followed us thus far, will attempt to pause here, and assert for the Supreme Governing Power an Impersonal Existence only, as what is called a self-acting Law of the universe.

50. The primary difficulty in the way of so Pantheistic a view

Whether  
Pantheism sa-  
tisfies this  
sense.

is that it is, as far as appears, not *moral* at all. It implies that all our Deontology is presided over by a mechanical and unconscious influence,—which is a contradiction; for if, in the last resort, the praiseworthy or the blameable in human responsible action is judged in detail by unintelligent power, acting without knowledge of us, and our praise or blame, its whole character is changed. Nor is the responsible agent satisfied by this in any way. It answers none of his needs. It denies his deep instinct of superiority as an Agent, and not a mere Thing; and the conviction that as an agent he will be dealt with by an Agent Superior to him. (It contradicts too the fact to be further dwelt on, that he *does not regard himself as the highest* conscious agent in the universe; but conceives always at least of One above him, however indistinct the conception.)

Thus at length, in going down into the facts of our being, we find ourselves inevitably confronted by the solemn presence of “Him with Whom we have to do.” We have no option but to fix our gaze now on the character of the Supreme Moral Governor of the world. And “if there is to be any virtue or any praise,” we must not shrink from this.

51. There is a collateral conclusion which here already forces itself on our attention, in reference to that increasing unconsciousness of thought and action which we spoke of (§ 6) as one occasion of our entering on this analysis,—and it is a conclusion which will grow on us now at every step in our argu-

A practical  
conclusion thus  
far.

ment,—that if we be thus by our very nature accountable beings, it will be impossible without severe injury to thwart this nature. As in the case of all other violation or disregard of the foundation-laws of being, there is a certain retribution in the nature of things, so specially in this case. The range, too, of responsibility in beings like ourselves can only be limited by our powers. There is no department of intelligence or action from which we shall find that conscience can be excluded, or rather in which it is not by nature supreme. This will appear more fully hereafter, when we come to see, how we are not merely under the exacting watchfulness of our fellow-men in our accountability to them—and not merely under our own self-judgment as self-governed beings—but under a Government which is in perfect relation with us, and with the “always-true.”

The CHAIRMAN.—I am sure that I need not call upon those who are present, and who have already manifested their approbation, to express more

formally their thanks to Dr. Irons for his exceedingly valuable paper. (Hear, hear.) It is a paper that I am sure cannot be properly discussed by those who have simply heard it for the first time. The true value of this paper will be found when it is taken home and calmly read and considered. The subject of which it treats is one of the greatest importance in its bearing upon philosophy, and upon all English and even all European thought. And I am sure that those who know what course that thought has taken will appreciate the good service Dr. Irons is doing in bringing the question fully before this Society. The paper just read is, I conceive, one which could only properly be brought before a Society like this; and if this Institute had not been established, a paper like the present could not have been read in any other Society in London. (Hear, hear.) It is now my duty to call upon any gentleman who may have any remarks to make, either in accordance or disagreement with the paper, to do so, for here we invite the fullest and widest discussion of every subject, and with the most perfect freedom.

Rev. Dr. Rigg.—I will venture, Mr. Chairman, to open the discussion by a few remarks. We must all of us have felt the truth of your remarks as to the exceeding ability and great value of this paper. In fact there are some parts of it which rise far beyond the mere level of ethical discussion, for they rise to the height of ethical apophthegms, and have an eloquence of an exceedingly impressive order. We must have felt some of the later passages to be especially of this description. There was also one passage in the earlier part of the essay which struck me exceedingly. I am not, however, going to occupy the time of the meeting in dilating upon all the excellencies of the paper, because, if I did so, I might take up the whole evening; but this one particular passage greatly struck me:—

“For to go on without a philosophy is to build without a foundation. And more than this: if it be done long and deliberately, it is practically to dispense with conscience—a danger by no means remote. To form an opinion, or to take a side, without feeling bound to the utmost of our power to form the right opinion and to take the right side, (as if to know right and to be right were unimportant or indifferent), must be demoralizing.”

I think that strikes a chord which needs to be sounded with very great distinctness at the present time. I think, also, that the remarks which Dr. Irons has made in regard to mere “thinking in masses,” and the necessity of conscious individuality in principles and convictions, are exceedingly important. We must all agree that, even as regards the foundation of our religious observances and worship, there is very great danger lest we should be content to have no basis whatever on which to rest our faith. At the same time, Sir, I venture to think that Dr. Irons, when he comes into contact with metaphysical problems, is not so happy as when he is dealing with problems of moral philosophy. Dr. Irons will excuse the freedom of any remarks I have to make on that point. In fact, he has himself set us an example of a very happy freedom in the remarks which he has offered himself upon other papers which have come before us from time to time. I

say, then, that I think that when Dr. Irons leaves the ground of morals to come to metaphysical philosophy, he is not so happy as in the other parts of his paper. I will ask those who have the paper in their hands to refer to the following passage :—

“A conscious agent is what is meant commonly by a mind, without questioning other kinds of intelligence. He is, and knows that he is ; acts, and knows it. To affirm itself, the mind needs no other principle than itself.”

What does that mean ? I thought that it had now come generally to be admitted that the mind does not act itself except in coming into contact with something that is not itself. I thought that it had now come to be generally admitted that the mind only knows itself as subject—as the “ego,” by coming into contact with that which is the object. I suppose that is now generally admitted ; and therefore I don't precisely understand in what sense Dr. Irons says that “to affirm itself the mind needs no other principle than itself,” and “to affirm any other being we must, as Berkeley said, look to the phenomena.” I apprehend that the mind, first of all, is conscious of the phenomena, and must be conscious of the phenomena, in reality, that it may be conscious of itself. The question of the origination of “I myself” is one of the most delicate and difficult problems belonging to metaphysical inquiry ; but, if I do not misapprehend what seems to be the meaning of this passage, it implies that in reality the mind, in its dark and solitary abode, before it has come into contact with any external phenomena whatever, is conscious of itself, and knows itself before it has any knowledge whatever of anything else—

Dr. IRONS.—That is not what I intended the passage to imply, certainly.

Dr. RIGG.—If that is not the meaning of the passage I will turn to the next page, where I find the following :—

“Looking, then, at intelligence, mind, or conscious being as prior to and apart from all phenomena of external being, what do we find ? Evidently, *ex vi termini*, its object then must be the abstract, or it may be the infinite ; and itself (or the subject) has natural relation with the object. All that is phenomenal is later.”

Again (I only speak by way of inquiry) it is necessary that we should know more clearly what the meaning of these words may be. I think the natural, if not the true sense (and Dr. Irons will inform us what is the sense in which they have been used), seems to be that the object of the mind is the abstract or the infinite, and that all that is phenomenal is subsequent ; whereas, as it appears to me, we must have the phenomena before we get the abstraction. Abstraction is the process of generalization from the phenomena ; so that the mind must be brought into relation with phenomena before mental abstraction is possible. Then I go to the next passage :—

“It is true, indeed, that some abstractions are measures of phenomenal and contingent being ; but all are not so. Collective and general terms, for instance, are abstractions, partly derived from the phenomena of experience ; but some thoughts we certainly have beyond these.”

I do not know whether Dr. Irons means "before these;" but, as far as I can judge from the preceding context, as well as that which follows, his meaning seems to be that we must have some thoughts prior to the experience of phenomena. The illustration proceeds:—

"Supposing our experience of various phenomena to suggest the general idea of a cause, yet how came we by the previous thought that there should be a cause?"

But if the phenomena suggested the general idea of a cause, how could the thought of a cause be previous to the phenomena? "If the phenomena suggest the general idea of a cause," I presume that this is in accordance with what is generally accepted in the analysis of our own experience. There is a mind. That mind, until it has the stimulus of some outward phenomena—until, in some way or other, the sensibilities with which we are endowed are brought into play,—I presume is generally understood to remain in a condition of blankness. I suppose that it has powers, and that these powers are not thoughts nor ideas, and moreover that they are latent. I suppose that it is not until after the phenomena of the outward world—in fact, objective things—have been brought into contact with the mind, that anything like consciousness in the mind itself, as distinct and apart from outward things, can possibly arise. I suppose that our mere perception is in some sense and some degree analogous to the perception of the inferior creatures. There must be, before there is the consciousness which belongs to the human being, a sense of "I myself." I suppose, further, that there must not only be a sense of "ego," but some act of volition before an idea of causation can arise; and it is from the fact of our exerting will consciously, with a definite purpose and a sense of "I myself," feeling that we have a power to cause something, that a general idea of causation arises. And this being taken in connection with what is seen and felt outwardly, produces the general idea of causation existing in the mind. That is the state of the case so far as I can judge; and the sentences which I have read either do not clearly express Dr. Irons's meaning, or do not accord with the general understanding—or, I think, with general experience—in regard to these points. Then, says Dr. Irons, "that there should be a cause is an idea superior to the phenomena"; but the question is, is it prior to the phenomena? That is the real question. I suggest that it is not, so far as the individual subject and agent is concerned. He goes on to say:—

"This is an idea superior to the phenomena. For this, the mind has no resource but itself."

But if the mind had not been brought into contact with the outward world, I suppose that that idea would not have arisen in it at all. Again, "Experience does not teach us this." I presume that experience does not teach it alone, not without the intuitive power or principle,—whether that is implied all through or not. (Hear, hear.) But can we say that the intuitive power and principle gives us the idea by itself, that the mind is not to take

anything to guide it, that it is to look at itself and judge for itself, and that, apart from all things outward, it can get the idea of causation? I think not.

“The mind reflects on itself, and adjudicates on the manifestations of external being; it adjudicates by its own essence.”

I entirely agree in that——

Dr. IRONS.—That is all I want to imply.

Dr. RIGG.—Dr. Irons says that that is all he means. Then I entirely agree with him; but I thought that the language which I have read did not seem to be consistent exactly with the principle expressed in that sentence. There is another sentence to which I wish to call attention. Dr. Irons says that “Aristotle was as truly an inductive philosopher as Bacon, and Bacon as much as Comte.” In the sense which I suppose this sentence is intended to bear, I do not precisely accord with it. I don’t suppose that Comte was an inductive philosopher, though no doubt he has written much about the inductive method. I do not think that Bacon was an inductive philosopher, although he was the father of inductive philosophy. Aristotle certainly did not teach how, on any definite method of induction, to attain truth by examining the nature and history of facts, but I suppose that there was a germ of the Baconian inductive philosophy in Aristotle that might be fairly developed into something Baconian. I suppose that Bacon really taught inductive philosophy, but his works give us specimens of the inversion of inductive philosophy, especially when he directs his attention to speculations in regard to nature, or to questions of physical or metaphysical properties. I suppose that Comte, though unquestionably an exponent of inductive philosophy, and though upon his own view of it, he professed to teach a philosophy of his own consistent with induction, yet would hardly be admitted by many, and by none, except the most enthusiastic of his own followers, to be a very choice or illustrious instance of an inductive philosopher. I think that his philosophy is one which does not base itself upon facts. I should be very sorry to admit that his was inductive philosophy; and I think that Dr. Irons has gone some way in the paper to show us that Comte’s philosophy can hardly be said to be a true induction from facts. I think, therefore, that we should be a little careful as to how readily we give the title of inductive philosopher to such a man as Comte. Considering the exceeding accuracy with which Dr. Irons generally speaks on these matters, and knowing his discrimination, I think that on that point he has given the adversary inadvertently a little advantage which it was altogether needless to give. I merely wish, in conclusion, to say that the appeal made at the end of the very able paper in regard to the necessity of a supreme principle and governing power, strikes me as just opening a vein of thought which it is of the utmost importance for us at the present time to keep in view. Surely we must abide by the principle that “there is no alternative but this: we must disclaim all honour and all shame; resist all the facts of human nature’s accountable existence here; or acknowledge a Supreme power which knows the whole responsible community and

governs it." I could have wished that Dr. Irons, when in this vein of thought, had gone a little further, and not contented himself with that strong, true, and well-put sentence with respect to the Pantheistic view of an impersonal existence as the supreme governing power,—as implying that all our deontology is presided over by a mechanical and unconscious influence, that in fact there is left us no such thing as a moral system at all. I could have wished that he should have shown us that people who do not believe in a personal God should at once call themselves Atheists; and that Positivists should not call themselves Pantheists at all. It appears to me that the use of that word Pantheism is calculated to mislead us. Indeed we have no Pantheism, except Atheism, which borrows the phraseology of Pantheism in order that it may hide its own nakedness. Let Atheists set to work to write logically; and consistently banish out of their phraseology everything which implies a governing mind, or providential ruler. Let them banish all that means that there is in truth, external to us, a moral or intellectual plan in the universe. Of course the plan must either be in us individually, or else it must be in the Maker; it cannot be nowhere; and if there is no maker or ruler outside of us, then is there no plan in the cosmos, in the universe, except what has been put into it by us,—what has been imagined and invented by us or for us. Therefore let all language which seems to imply a plan, a unity of purpose,—all, in fact, which the very principles of Atheism deny; let all this be done away with, and let Atheism stand forth in honest nakedness, in utter denial that there is any real system outside of us, or any true comprehensive unity. Let Atheists write all their books, teach all their ethics, do all their business, with this plain meaning, placing their principles before the world in the midst of the human world of affections, hopes, motives, and impulses; then I think they would so strike upon the consciences of all, that the result would be that there would be very much less Atheism in the world than at present exists. (Applause.)

Mr. REDDIE.—I think it will perhaps be desirable, after the concluding remarks of Dr. Rigg, that I should remind you that Dr. Irons's paper is not yet complete. What we have heard is only one part of the subject; and probably some of the last remarks might not have been made, if we had had the whole matter before us. But there is one thing I should like to say with regard to some observations of Dr. Rigg. He seems to find fault with Dr. Irons for not calling his adversaries names which they do not like. I know that this is very tender ground among our opponents, whether they call themselves Positivists or Atheists or Pantheists. Mr. Holyoake as well as some other professed Atheists were invited to be here this evening; and he has stated in a letter that he is sorry, as he was obliged to be in Glasgow, that he could not be present. His letter is couched in language very complimentary to Dr. Irons, from whom the invitation had been received. We are most anxious to have such subjects thoroughly discussed; but I think there are few Atheists or Pantheists who would venture to discuss this paper off-hand, though in all probability we may look for some answer to it in a written form. Any Atheist who came forward to reply to such a logical array

of arguments as those which have been advanced, would be a bold man—much bolder than I find Atheists generally are. Several of the points which have been referred to and commented upon by Dr. Rigg are points which I had marked myself as requiring some notice ; and the first was that with regard to Comte being alluded to as an inductive philosopher. I do not, however, suppose that Dr. Irons considers Comte to be truly an inductive philosopher ; but I understood him rather to mean that Comte puts himself forward as an inductive philosopher and calls himself one. Comte, no doubt, considers himself *par excellence* an inductive philosopher ; but Dr. Irons expressly states that he does not regard him so, because in the concluding sentence of the paragraph (partly quoted by Dr. Rigg) he says,—“ If any of us complain of the Positivism of the present hour, it is not for its appeal to facts ; it is *because of its not examining the whole field.*” That means, it disregards some facts. At the same time we would gain nothing by coming forward and casting in their teeth that they are not inductive philosophers because they disregard facts. I think that the way in which Dr. Irons has treated the opposite side, namely with every courtesy and kindness, is one that deserves commendation. Calling of names is not to be admired as a rule ; and I am only sorry that in the controversial papers which we sometimes necessarily have here, it has not been always possible to avoid doing so. But we have had the gauntlet thrown down to us rather roughly, and I do not see why we should be more tender in this respect than the opposite side ; for we are bound to express our thoughts, and are free to speak as plainly as they do. In regard to another point which Dr. Rigg has criticised,—we know that we ourselves exist by being conscious of it ; but we are equally conscious of the *non ego*, or of what we see around us. The *ego* and *non ego* are co-relatives. The one, you will find if you think deeply, implies the existence of the other. There are two points besides, which I wish to notice. Dr. Irons says, that we approve of an act or not from what it is. The argument drawn from this, I think, might even be strengthened ; because it is not merely the act itself which leads us to approve of it ; but, when we can discover it, the intention of the act. That makes the argument all the stronger in favour of what Dr. Irons has advanced. For there is another important passage in which he says (at the commencement of the fifth section, § 27)—

“ We have arrived, then, at a more advanced conclusion as to the conscious agent whose action is recognized by others as praiseworthy or not, as good or evil, according as he has been its determiner, unrestrained by external compulsion of any kind and not fixed to action by internal law or constitution.”

The consideration of that is of very great consequence. It helps us to understand better one of the most consoling and most important principles of Christian ethics, respecting our incapacity for judging others. Because, if you consider what Dr. Irons states here, you will see that we never can know all as regards others, which we can know as regards ourselves. We never can know all the influences which bear upon them, arising from their habits,

their natural disposition, or their motives, and consequently we never can truly judge our neighbours—we can only truly judge ourselves. This consideration enables us to see that when we have a thorough knowledge of all those facts which nature itself teaches us, we can better understand the absolute wisdom, and the wonderful knowledge of human nature and its requirements, which we find exhibited in revealed truth. There we are exhorted to examine and judge ourselves, but not to judge or condemn others; because we cannot possibly do so completely. There is One only that can truly reach the hearts of all, and judge all men:—"There is One that seeketh and judgeth." (Applause.)

Rev. C. A. Row.—I feel it due to Dr. Irons to express my cordial approbation of his paper. Out of every twenty sentences I acquiesce most fully in at least nineteen, and this is a fact more remarkable because I never met Dr. Irons except in this room; and although our modes of thinking are somewhat different, we have arrived at the same fundamental conclusions on all important points. And this leads to a hope that if we only pursue the right course of taking the facts alone, getting rid of mere abstract and *à priori* theories, and arguing entirely from the facts, we shall find that many who think that they are wholly at issue with each other, are pursuing a path which in the end will enable them to arrive at the same conclusions. Dr. Rigg, who belongs to an entirely different school of thought, seems also to have arrived at the same conclusions; and quite agrees with Dr. Irons in the great importance of having this subject well ventilated. No one can be acquainted, however slightly, with current literature, but must know how excessively it is leavened with Positivism. It is impossible to read extensively and not to feel that the principle of the accountability of man has been dimmed, in later days, by philosophical speculations, and though this paper of Dr. Irons may seem, at first sight, a dry one (for it is impossible to do it justice without having had it previously in your hands), I have no hesitation in speaking of it as one of the very best defences of the doctrine of human accountability which I have ever heard. Dr. Irons has taken the best possible ground in the mode of procedure which he has adopted because he has based his procedure upon facts, and facts alone—deducing from those facts a theory only which will be covered by the facts and nothing more; and I quite agree that if we can only get rid of the miserable habit of resting upon baseless *à priori* theories, and make our deductions from facts alone, we shall come far nearer to a substantial agreement in respect to all questions affecting morals, religion, and philosophy, than we are at present at all aware of. Dr. Irons has put before us the important position that the facts of human nature can be taken as the ground of a science of human nature. That is a principle he distinctly lays down, and I have great difficulty in criticising his paper from the very fact that we have only a portion of the argument before us. If we had the whole, or even the greater portion of the subject before us, I might find something to criticise on the principle that it is much easier to pull down than to build up. I am impeded also by the consideration that if I really

wished to do justice to the paper, I should quote it from beginning to end in the strongest terms of approbation. It seems to me that the whole of the original groundwork of the essay rests on one fact which constitutes the basis of human accountability, and that that resolves itself into the general principle that every being is accountable and responsible who can speak of himself as "I." That seems to be the basis of human accountability, and it involves the very principles of all voluntary action ; for the meaning of being able to assert of ourselves "I," is that we apprehend a notion of personality. I suppose that there is no lower order of creation the members of which can think of themselves as "I," and I agree in the dicta of Mr. Morris in his Cambridge lectures as to the great importance of having a clear conception of this subject. There is also a set of lectures written by Professor Ferrier, which generally agree with Professor Morris on that point ; but when I came to another point I was profoundly astonished to find that Ferrier could assert that the power of thinking myself "I" creates "I." That I read with unmitigated astonishment. It almost knocked me down, so astonished was I to find that a man like Ferrier could make so tremendous a jump to a conclusion. There are many things which, did time admit, I should like to draw attention to, and especially to many passages of the highest importance in the paper with respect to moral philosophy, but as I cannot do so at present I will simply glance at one or two points. Dr. Rigg, I think, made some observations on the subject of causation ; and I wish to state the impression formed on my own mind on reading Dr. Irons's paper upon that subject. I thought that Dr. Irons meant to assert that all proper notions of causality were derived not from phenomena but from "self," and originate in a feeling of "self" as an agent. That is what I understood him to mean. I am aware that there is some little obscurity in the statement, and it is not to be wondered at, because to compress such a mass of matter as is involved into a paper like this, is a desperately hard undertaking ; for it is far easier to write a voluminous book than it is to compress and concentrate its matter into a small space. The public, too, is a little unreasonable ; for, guided by the size of the book, they will pay more for a vast mass of matter, so diluted that the point is almost lost, than they will for a smaller work which contains the whole of it much better expressed. That is my impression of what Dr. Irons meant to say. I think that that is a most important point to establish in these days, for I fancy that I have sometimes heard something to the contrary even in this room. My idea of what is our notion of causality is that it is derived from the conception of "self" as an independent moral cause, and one passage I can refer to in which Dr. Irons has made that pretty plain where he speaks of man being the creator of his moral action. That passage is worthy of great commendation. (Hear, hear.) It fully explains that Dr. Irons meant that man stands in the relation of a creator to his moral action, and it very much illustrates what is meant in the Old Testament, where it is said that man was made in the image of God (applause) ; that, as the Almighty in his infiniteness is free and independent without limit, so finite man is, in his own finite sphere, a free and independent agent. The fact of the voluntariness of

human action is at the foundation of all possible conceptions of human morality. It is perfectly evident that if I am not a voluntary agent I am not responsible. Hence, persuade me that I am not a voluntary agent, and I cease to blame myself from that hour. Let us illustrate this a little, for it is most important that we should have a clear conception of it. Suppose I kick a stone on the ground and it hurts my foot ; I am perfectly aware that I have no occasion to blame the stone, and that not being a free agent it has no responsibility resting upon it. But now let us see how the notion of a sense of responsibility arises in our mind. Suppose a person near whom I am standing takes hold of the fist of another and thrusts it into my face, I am not angry with the man whose fist has been thrust into my face, but I am with the person who thrust it : therefore it is necessary that there should exist the idea of a voluntary agency, because we cannot excite the feeling of anger in ourselves ; it must be excited through a voluntary or what we deem to be a voluntary agency. But this admits of one more illustration. Suppose the man whose fist is knocked into another man's face turns round, and by a smile or in any other way expresses a conscious approval of the act, then a share of the blame becomes attached to him, and there is a responsibility attaching to both parties. This shows that we may attach blame or praise to an action which, though at first strictly involuntary, yet, by a subsequent act of the agent, is made his own. And this is the great principle upon which all morality must rest. Of course every custom and every system which denies the voluntary character of human actions is laying the axe to the foundation of all principles of morality in man ; and I need not tell you what a very large number of systems are involved in that category. All those to which Dr. Irons has referred very distinctly lay the axe to the foundations of the voluntary character of human actions in some form or other, and in this way destroy all sense of human responsibility ; for I defy a man to feel any responsibility for any act which he has done, if he has not the sense that he might have avoided it ; the foundation of all responsibility being that you may do an act or avoid it. I now wish to draw your attention to one or two other passages in the paper. There is a small paragraph which I marked before I came here, feeling some doubt as to the accuracy of its assertion ; but when Dr. Irons read it he put a certain emphasis upon the words, which made me at once comprehend their meaning, and I fully agree with Dr. Irons. The passage is this :—

“The responsibility of each is, in fact, held to be individual ; yet it is part of that responsibility that men influence each other.”

I perfectly agree with that, as Dr. Irons read it, but I had mistaken the meaning of it ; and I think that if he could possibly mend that sentence, it would be desirable ; for I came here with a decidedly false impression as to its meaning. I think that Dr. Irons has hardly done justice to his subject in his remarks upon internal compulsion. I quite agree that it arises from the limit of the paper that he has not brought before us fully this subject of internal compulsion. We do acts, resulting from force of habit, which qualify

the sense of human responsibility. Looking at the question practically, it assumes this form. You and I are made to a considerable extent what we are, by the force of habit. This force of habit, when once formed in us, does, to a certain extent, modify our responsibility, but does not destroy it. And what I admire in Dr. Irons's paper is that, while he persists in keeping before us the facts, he points out that, treating the question in whatever way you will, there is still some responsibility attaching to the conscious agent. I particularly draw attention to this admirable feature in the paper—that, while he plainly persists in bringing before us the whole facts, he shows that, however they may modify our view, there still remains some responsibility. It does not follow because I have not got universal freedom, that I have not got some freedom. It does not follow because I have not universal responsibility that I have not some responsibility ; and that is quite enough for the purpose for which it is intended. There is another passage to which I would direct attention, and that is with reference to the position of the State. Dr. Irons rather implies than says that the State has a conscience. I quite agree with his reasoning, but I wish to draw attention to his statement that the State is bound to act according to the conscience of the various individuals who form it——

Dr. IRONS.—I do not say that certainly.

Mr. Row.—It is pretty much the same thing to say that the very notion of a conscience in the State or corporation, implies the action of the individual conscience in its members. But I am afraid that is not always so, and as this discussion is rather a dry one, perhaps the Chairman will allow me to relieve it by narrating an instance of the kind of conscience which is sometimes to be found in a corporation. When I was at Oxford, the Municipal Corporation Bill had just been passed. The Corporation of Abingdon were very much noted for good living, and they had a splendid cellar of choice wines which they did not like to leave to their successors. What did they do ? They passed a resolution, that instead of meeting once a fortnight, as was their custom, they would meet three times a week, and drink up the choice wines, in order that they might not fall into the hands of the enemy. (Laughter.) That is an illustration of what may be called the conscience of a corporation. In one word, it seems to me that when we get into a party, we get the lowest perception of conscience. I even feel that this is the case with what are called "Corporations sole." Our friend Dr. Irons is a "Corporation sole," and I confess that I would rather deal with him as Dr. Irons individually than as Dr. Irons, Vicar of Brompton. A corporation of any kind, somehow or other, affects a man's conscientiousness ; but when you come to a corporation aggregate it is a most terrible matter ; and the worst form of a corporation aggregate is that of a religious party, for it seems to destroy all conscience in the men individually, for there are hundreds of men professing and calling themselves Christians who in a corporate capacity will not scruple to do what they certainly would not do as ordinary Christians, and therefore it is that I have a great objection to a state corporation being described as having a conscience——

Dr. IRONS.—I beg to say that the Vicar of Brompton has never joined any party yet,—be it religious or otherwise. (Hear.)

Mr. ROW.—I never said that you had. I merely mentioned as an illustration of what I meant when I said that I should prefer dealing with Dr. Irons as an individual, to dealing with him in his corporate capacity, in perpetual succession, as the corporation sole of the vicarage of Brompton. (Laughter.) I will conclude by making an observation or two with reference to Dr. Irons's statement in respect to the ancient philosophers. I agree with him in what he says with respect to the difficulty which the ancient philosophers were under when dealing with morals, from having no other standard of duty than that which was due to the State, and which necessarily led them to view morals under a political aspect; but another reason which induced them to view them under a political aspect Dr. Irons has not alluded to, and that is that they felt that they had no sufficient moral force to bring to bear upon human nature in order to induce it to do what was right, and they thought that the only moral force was that which was created by the State; and there is no speculator or ancient moralist with whose writings I am acquainted who has not proposed to create an ideal state. Aristotle, Plato, and other philosophers, every one of them, found it necessary to adopt the principle of an ideal state, in which they hope to form a society of men who by being brought up under suitable laws, would have some chance of becoming virtuous. Now this is a very important point, because it bears witness to one great fact in Christianity. Christianity alone has fulfilled the philosophic aspirations. When Christianity came into the world, the whole was complete. Then were fulfilled all the speculations of Aristotle, Plato, and other philosophers, we may truly say, by the creation of the Christian Church. But Dr. Irons, I cannot help thinking, has made rather too strong a reference to the fact that wrongdoers have a strong feeling of self-consciousness. I am prepared to admit that in many cases conscience does condemn wrongdoers, and that they have given themselves up to justice under its influence, but at the same time there is such a persistence of wrongdoing that it destroys in some men all perception of right and wrong. I have been recently reading the history of Philip the Second of Spain, and if we reflect upon all his violence, his murders, his persecutions, his known predilection for lying and assassination, and that there was no kind of crime which he scrupled at perpetrating, it is a fearful thing to think that that man by a continued persistence in crime had so destroyed his consciousness of right and wrong, that when on his death-bed he thought that he had done everything which was acceptable to God. That is a strong fact, showing how persistence in wrong-doing blunts the conscience, and that men sunk in crime are not always subject to feelings of remorse. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. DAVID GREIG.—I perfectly agree with the paper which has been read. It seems to me that it is an especially able and excellent paper, and one which is very useful and very needful in these times. What strikes me as one of its chief excellencies is the symmetry with which Dr. Irons has arranged the different points of his argument. They are so beautifully con-

nected together, and the whole theory which he has prepared so exactly covers the facts, that I do not know that there is any particular subject on which I have to remark. There is one point on which Dr. Irons has been criticised, and I must say that up to very recently I agreed with the criticism, but I have been led somewhat to alter my view. The sentence specially criticised was, that "To affirm itself the mind needs no other principle than itself." It was objected to that, that the mind cannot affirm itself without it comes into contact with some object of the external world. Now that is, no doubt, the great principle of modern metaphysical speculation. Descartes, who introduced modern philosophy, based it on consciousness; then Locke made a step downwards, as I should say, and taught that all knowledge arose from sensation. Kant took this position. He said Locke is wrong in saying all knowledge is from the senses. It is true that the senses, he said, give the occasion for our knowledge, but part comes from the mind itself. That position of Kant was ignored by Sir W. Hamilton, and I believe that is the position now generally adopted, although I have recently had reason to doubt its correctness; and I think that modern philosophy has done wrong in departing from the middle-age position which Dr. Irons has brought to bear in his paper to-night. There are a great many facts which have led me recently to doubt the correctness of our modern position; for I cannot explain the fact of consciousness, of what I would call empirical consciousness, without supposing a higher consciousness. (Hear, hear.) Knowledge itself is something different from sensation, and sensation as we know belongs to empirical consciousness. There are a great many facts in our everyday life which seem to point the same way. What I mean by empirical consciousness is the consciousness we have while we are awake. But what becomes of the mind when we sleep? And there are not only the phenomena of sleep, but a great many curious phenomena connected with dreaming, madness, and somnambulism. There are a great many curious phenomena which are not fully explained which seem to point to the same thing; and not only that, but it is an undoubted fact that there is what we call latent knowledge. We find very common instances of it in the association of ideas. There are laws by which ideas succeed each other in the mind. Now it sometimes happens that two of these ideas, which appear wholly disconnected, succeed each other immediately. What is the link between them? You must go to some other consciousness for it. I may say that my view is not at all matured on the subject. At first the position which Sir Wm. Hamilton held seemed to me to be reasonable, but recently I have come to doubt it. Then how come we by the previous thought that there should be a cause? Some who have criticised that seem to be under the impression that our notion of causality is derived from our consciousness of our own actions, but I very much doubt whether that covers the notion of causality. I think there is something more——

Mr. Row.—I said that the consciousness of "I, myself" was the cause of action.

Mr. GREIG.—I question very much whether that would explain it.

When we speak of the principles of causality, we do not mean that every event has a cause, but that every event *must have* a cause. Where do you get the "must"? (Applause.) It seems to me to be implied in this question. Suppose the experience of various phenomena suggested the general idea of a cause, how come we by the previous thought that there should be a cause? It was said that the word prior is understood, but there are two meanings in which you may take the word "prior"; prior in time or prior in logic. You suppose that there is a notion of causality before a previous thought. Here, "that there should be a cause," means not previous in time but in logic, and that would bring out the point I was speaking of, namely, How do you get this notion of causality? You cannot draw it out by empirical consciousness. It would seem to point to the higher consciousness of which I was speaking; but, as I have said, my views are not yet matured upon that point. (Applause.)

Dr. EDWARD HAUGHTON.—May I ask if it is the intention of Dr. Irons in his second paper to take any notice of the philosophy of Dr. Hartley, who held similar views on necessity to those Dr. Irons has referred to in the first part? Dr. Hartley was a voluminous and an able writer, although he is now somewhat out of date, particularly in physiology, yet being a contemporary of Locke, and holding, to a certain extent, a similarity of views, he received more or less support from Locke. It would, therefore, be very desirable if some notice could be taken of his system of philosophy, more especially as he was not a Pantheist but a religious and pious man.

Mr. REDDIE.—I think we should allow Dr. Irons to pursue his own course; but perhaps Dr. Haughton would himself favour us with a paper upon the philosophy to which he has referred.

Dr. HAUGHTON.—I only asked for information. I am not aware whether he is referred to or not, but I trust he will not be overlooked or thought unworthy of notice, though I am far from holding his opinions.

The CHAIRMAN.—The usual custom is for the Chairman to express his own views on the paper, and as it were in some degree to sum up the arguments before the writer replies, in order that he may have a full opportunity of replying to everything that has been said. I cannot venture to criticise in any way a paper in which I so thoroughly agree; at the same time I think that we are very much indebted to Dr. Rigg for so powerfully putting forward his reasons for considering that Dr. Irons is out of date in his metaphysics. A great deal, however, may be said in his favour, and I cannot help feeling that one great merit among others of this paper is the mode in which Dr. Irons has treated the subject. There is a very vague idea—I call it a vague one, but it is an idea very prevalent, owing to the superficial thoughts of people in every branch of philosophy,—that there is a much more certain degree of evidence to be acquired in what is called physical philosophy (I mean phenomena and the causes of the phenomena of the material world)—that there is much surer and more certain demonstration to be obtained on such subjects, than upon such a question as Dr. Irons has brought before us, that of moral responsibility. I cannot but feel that Dr.

Irons has treated this subject precisely in the same way as that by means of which great discoveries have been made of the laws and phenomena of the material world. He has treated the subject in such a way as to show us that there is precisely the same amount of evidence—I do not know that he does not go still further and demonstrate that there is much higher evidence—for the belief in human responsibility that there is for our belief in any of the laws which regulate physical matter. A great deal of the vague thought to which I have alluded arises from men only making themselves acquainted with natural philosophy through the authority of others, instead of investigating things for themselves. They take it for granted that a man has obtained a degree of evidence which is not to be found in any science whatever ; but the same uncertainties, the same doubts, the same difficulties which Dr. Irons has just set before us, in respect to moral philosophy, exist also in respect to what is termed natural philosophy. There is the same difficulty in defining, and the same difficulty in getting a clear idea ; in fact, there is as much difficulty in defining what is matter, or what is force, as there is in defining what is virtue, what is good, or what is evil. But the reason why we have made advances in natural philosophy is because we have taken up the subjects, and realized them so as to get, as it were, the main facts they present, leaving out of consideration anomalous facts, and being satisfied with what I may call an imperfect metaphysical acquaintance with the subject ; and, in order to make a similar advance in moral philosophy, you must pursue the same way at first, for the purpose of getting a standing ground for human thought and human argument. I therefore think we are very much indebted to Dr. Irons for the philosophical manner in which he has dealt with the subject. The true method of induction is to take nothing for granted from mere authority, but to reason accurately and simply on phenomena, as the nature of those phenomena are discovered by us. There is one thing which, I think, threw considerable light on the subject, and which Mr. Greig brought forward in defence of Dr. Irons's view. I cannot but conceive that there is such a thing as moral instinct, as well as that vast and wonderful power termed instinct, accorded to the lower animals of creation. I believe that we possess far more natural instinct than is generally admitted, but I do not believe that this instinct is concerned simply with man's physical powers. Who can understand the wonderful mathematical instinct which enables the bee to make its cell in so marvellous a manner ? Who can understand one-thousandth part of the wonderful instinct accorded to the brute creation ? We find, practically, man showing that he possesses some of these instincts, though to a certain extent overborne and depressed, but occasionally heightened by the exercise of his natural reason. I cannot conceive but that man, also, in a state of perfectibility, was endowed with moral instincts. (Hear, hear.) All these subjects, when gone into, bring forward one great and valuable fact, which is the fact of what I call the natural history of man's moral nature, which cannot be denied. If you enter into this subject philosophically, you build up an ideal moral perfection. You have first to build up a mind of moral character such as

would exist in a normal condition. But when you go out among your fellow men, or look into your own moral nature, you find that you have to deal with a diseased moral state, which state of disease exists more or less in every individual. If a physiologist were engaged in constructing the physiology of a man, such as he would be in a state of nature, he would take only those organs which he found to be in a perfect state of health; and from those organs which are in a perfect state of health he will tell us what is the normal condition of the various organizations of the human body, and inform us what is their normal use. But it is this knowledge of the normal condition of the human body which enables him to detect what is abnormal; and so, the reasons and conclusions at which Dr. Irons has arrived here, having reference to the normal state of moral consciousness, the normal state of man's responsibility, and the feeling that he is under,—that knowledge of man's normal consciousness and normal condition with respect to his moral responsibility, together with the knowledge of what he is,—leads him at once to discover the great prevalence of an abnormal condition of mankind; showing that we are not in that moral condition of perfection now in which we were created, and therefore that man must be admitted to be a moral agent in a fallen state, and that it requires something to raise him up from it. (Applause.)

Dr. IRONS.—It is very gratifying to me to find so large an assembly gathered together to listen to anything so difficult, and perhaps so obscure, as the subject which I have submitted to you; and therefore I will best show you my respect by not detaining you too long in my closing remarks, I am very much obliged to those gentlemen who have criticised my paper. I only wish that those who differ more widely from its conclusion, had also expressed their opinions. Great pains were taken to inform those who take a hostile view of our position, that they would be welcome to be present to-night, not only as listeners but speakers. But if they have presented themselves, at all events they have not enlightened us! I must thank Dr. Rigg for calling my attention to a passage which, perhaps, might be improved verbally, but which has been sufficiently vindicated by Mr. Greig. I do not think that Dr. Rigg could have weighed the previous passage; if he had, he would have seen what I said with respect to the real nature of an agent, and would hardly have made the criticism which he did. I say that those who deny their moral agency take it for granted that the agent is nothing. To deny the position which I have laid down—whether something in human action is really determined upon by a man—they must say, "I act on him,"—that is, on nothing, which, of course, is an absurdity. All that I assume here is, that this conscious being is a being, and is not merely beholden to the phenomena for his existence. The mistake Dr. Rigg fell into was corrected by Mr. Greig, who pointed out that although historically man may not be anterior to his own action, yet we must logically regard him as prior to phenomena. With reference to what Dr. Haughton has suggested, I would point out to him the utter impossibility, within the limits of such a discussion as this, to take anything like even a general view of the opinions of the

metaphysical writers of the last century or the century before. All that I can do is to give an outline of the subject itself, without referring to the names of authors. In the present paper I was absolutely obliged to do so. I have not encumbered my paper with technicalities referring to the opinions of authors whose names are now scarcely mentioned except the first two or three. I have confined myself to pure abstract reasoning, or at least I intended to do so as far as the subject admits of it ; and I have merely glanced at the general views of the writers of the realistic school of philosophy, and the realistic theory, using those terms merely in an historical sense because we have nothing to do with these views here, dealing only as I have done with facts. Dr. Rigg said one thing, which, if it had been said when I was much younger, I might have smarted under, for he seemed to think that I had forgotten my metaphysics. One thing I can say, namely, that I have never changed my metaphysics. I have seen in this room to-night an old friend with whom I talked metaphysics at college, and I think that he would testify that I am very much the same as I was. With respect to those who have been invited here this evening, I most earnestly repeat the invitation when the second part of the subject is treated ; and I only hope that in the meantime they will read carefully for themselves what I have written. I shall do my best to prepare by the 1st of March the second paper, which will be somewhat more historical, and perhaps not so dry as the present ; and those two papers will lead me up to the more purely religious portion of the subject. (Applause.)

The meeting was then adjourned.