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JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute,
OR,
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

VOL. LXV.



LONDON:

Published by the Institute, 1, Central Buildings, Westminster, S.W.1.

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1933

769TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, APRIL 24TH, 1933.
AT 4.30 P.M.

DOUGLAS DEWAR, ESQ., B.A., F.Z.S., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed.
The CHAIRMAN then called on the Rev. H. C. Morton, B.A., Ph.D., to read his paper on "The Supposed Evolutionary Origin of the Moral Imperative."

*THE SUPPOSED EVOLUTIONARY ORIGIN OF THE
MORAL IMPERATIVE.*

By THE REV. HAROLD C. MORTON, B.A., Ph.D.

THERE is no boundary to the evolutionary claim. Voices have been raised in protest, but they have not prevailed.

A. R. Wallace, for one, declared the universal claim was neither sane nor honest. The Evolution he maintained, he said,

is the sane and honest Evolution which does not concern itself at all with beginnings, and merely follows a few links in a fairly obvious chain. As to the chain itself Evolution has nothing to say (*New Thoughts on Evolution*, pp. 13, 14).

But the general view was stated by Tyndall a good many years ago :

Strip it naked and you stand face to face with the notion that not alone the more ignoble forms of animalcular and animal life, not alone the nobler forms of the horse and the lion, not alone the wonderful and exquisite mechanism of the human body, but the human mind itself—emotion, intellect, and all their phenomena—were once latent in a fiery cloud (*Fragments of Science*, ii, p. 132) :

and now Professor Lloyd Morgan (*Spencer's Philosophy of Science*, p. 5) says that Evolution accounts for everything

right away from the primitive fire-mist to one of Bach's fugues or the critical doctrines of Mr. Ruskin.

The most daring of to-day's exponents, Professor S. Alexander, goes even further. Morgan stops short with humanity at its highest, but Professor Alexander extends the scope of Evolution to "finite deities," and still on to "infinite deity," although even in his dazzled dreams there is a little difficulty about "infinite deity." Even omnipotent Evolution halts for a moment, and in his *Space, Time, and Deity* (p. 365) he has to leave it thus--that "the infinite deity" is "the infinite world striving after deity."

It is worth noting the actual scope of the claim, dwelling upon it, and grasping its significance. One indisputable "urge" in human thinking has been the "urge" to get rid of God, the Almighty Creator; and if the Evolution which starts from fire-mist and produces from it Bach and Ruskin, with all their mental and moral powers, is in Wallace's words neither "sane nor honest," but merely a fantastic dream put into the form of a dogma, Professor Alexander's proposal that starting with Space-Time Evolution produces not only Bach and Ruskin, but the only conceivable "infinite deity" as well, is a dream not only not sane but impious.

Our subject is the Moral Imperative, and the claim that it has come into being through Evolution. Here Evolution meets one of its "acid tests." To fail here is to be discredited altogether. This tests Evolution in the realm of Life, and that is strictly its only sphere. To speak of Evolution at work in the fire-mist, or in any other phase of the lifeless world, is to misuse the term.* The word in modern sense is quite recent, its vogue given to it since Darwin's *Origin* and mainly by Huxley and Spencer, and its strictly correct meaning is "the transmutation of species." The evolutionist affirms that hundreds of thousands of years ago there existed animals, of humanoid or semi-humanoid type—Dr. Barnes calls them "a tangle of apes somewhere in the Tertiary"—which had reached their plane of life through long evolutionary processes, but were still merely animal and not to be called "moral beings." From this non-moral race Man is supposed to have come: and Man's moral nature is his distinctive human attribute.

Man is Man, not because he walks the world of the body, the

* As to alleged Evolution in the lifeless world, "the principle is quite inapplicable, and the claim remains a bare verbal formula, without meaning": Professor W. Macdougall, *Modern Materialism and Emergent Evolution*.

world where mechanistic cause and effect and physico-chemical forces abound, but because he knows himself to be a citizen of a higher realm, the realm of the Spirit, the realm of moral values—where Right has authority; where Obligation, not mechanical or chemical, but Moral, reigns; where he hears a Sovereign Voice, “Thou shalt,” and knows that the victory and glory of life lie in obedience to that voice. His mind is aware that Moral Law must be obeyed because it *is* Moral Law and for that reason alone. “When any other motive is brought to bear on the battle, when any other banner is brought forward than that of the Eternal Right, then the whole meaning and issue of the contest is altered.”* That Moral Imperative, that sense of obligation, that allegiance to Eternal Right, is the essential feature of human life.

It is universal in normal humanity. However much moral ideals and moral life vary (*e.g.*, some communities even praise theft, provided it is theft from enemies) the Moral Imperative is always there. I believe it can be maintained that the great moral laws—Truth, Justice, Honesty, Industry, Kindness, and so forth—are, and have been, universally known in normal human life; and that any ignorance is to be attributed to the debasement of human nature, false training, and the sway of evil ideals. Conscience, which perceives the Law, hears the voice, feels the obligation, *may* become “seared as with a hot iron.” Even if, with what is called the “New Intuitionism,” we had to admit that knowledge of detailed laws is not universal, we still should affirm the universal sense of Moral Obligation to follow after whatever is allowed to be “the Good.” In some form or other the moral fact is always there, and generally as we know it to-day. How has this come to pass? How has the non-moral “tangle of apes” been transmuted into moral Man? Evolution has to tell us; and, if she cannot, her cause can only be adjudged lost.

My task is to test the supposed naturalistic origin of the Moral Imperative at three distinct stages of evolutionary thinking. The first is not called by the evolutionary name, but is really evolutionary, *viz.*, the Utilitarian Philosophy; the second is generally called Evolutionary Hedonism, the Utilitarian Ethics as modified by Evolution; the third stage is to-day’s swelling dogma of Emergent Evolution.

* Frances Power Cobbe, *Theory of Intuitive Morals*, p. 151.

The conclusions to which the facts drive us are that the evolutionary thinkers of the first two stages, though they faced the problem seriously, failed entirely, in the main because they never really grasped the meaning of the moral life which they were attempting to derive from non-moral sources. Their derivation of the Moral Imperative always resolved itself, after much elaborate argumentation, into the christening of natural impulses and laws with the name "moral." The latest evolutionists seem to realize more clearly what they have set out to derive; but the plain fact is that they content themselves with a statement, very elaborate and metaphysical in its language, that the moral appeared in human life in a way no man can understand, and this agnosticism they cloak with the title "Emergent Evolution."

The Utilitarian Moralists.

Space permits only the briefest statement of the attempt to explain the origin of our moral life advanced by the utilitarian moralists. Bentham, Hume, J. S. Mill are three famous names, and Alexander Bain, though less famous, probably did more than any of them to fill the world with utilitarian thinkers. Utilitarianism derived all morals from consideration of the utility of actions as conducing to pleasure and saving from pain. "Actions are right," said J. S. Mill, "in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (*Utilitarianism*, p. 9). Mill introduces into his theory a distinction between pleasures, as "higher" and "lower." "A being of higher faculties requires more to make him happy than one of an inferior type" (p. 12). If, as appears to be the case, this means *moral* inferiority, it illustrates what I must needs often refer to, viz., the conjuror's trick of producing the required article out of nowhere, at which all evolutionists are such adepts. The utilitarians regarded moral laws as "empirical generalizations as to the best means of producing the greatest sum-total of happiness." Hence it appears that they did not stop short with the individual: they considered the tribe, the nation, the society; and the Moral Imperative had somehow to be derived from the endeavour to secure for oneself, one's family, one's tribe, the greatest measure of happiness.

They based their argument upon the Laws of Association. Experience associates together certain courses of conduct as conducing to pleasure and happiness and advantage, and other

courses as conducing to the reverse. These strong associations are what we call the dictates of morality.

It is only in accordance with all the other facts of associated feelings that if a certain kind of conduct, say, theft or evil speaking, is constantly made the subject of punishment, censure, or disapprobation, an associative growth will be formed between the conduct and the infliction of pain, and the individual will recoil from it with all the repugnance acquired during this conjunction between it and painful feeling (Bain, *Mental and Moral Science*, p. 108).

Similarly, with the association established between such conduct as honesty and true speech, and the rewards and approbation meted out to such conduct. Thus "Conscience" arises, and the "Moral Laws," and the "Moral Sense"; and Bain especially urges that Conscience is "an imitation within ourselves of the government without," and that our sense of an inescapable obligation to right courses of conduct is to be traced to our sense of the Statute Book in the background.

Some of the utilitarians held that Man has "two natural sentiments," self-interest and regard for others. This latter made easier the illusion they fostered, viz., that prudential maxims for seeking the greatest happiness have been mistaken by Humanity for moral laws and Eternal Righteousness. Even a natural regard for others, if it really exists, is very different from a moral obligation to seek the happiness of others, and it is the moral obligation we are seeking.* "Moral Obligation" can hardly be the sense of the Statute Book in the background, when one of the commonest experiences of life is the individual's criticism, under the strong urge of moral obligation, of the Statute Book itself. The Moral Imperative can hardly be resolvable into rules for seeking pleasure, happiness, advantage, and avoiding their opposites, when the commonest form of life's moral battle is the choice between pleasure, happiness, and advantage, and the very different path of Duty. It is indeed

* All naturalistic ethlics are prone to treat the difference between *what is* and *what ought to be* as a negligible thing. For example, having stated that by nature we seek happiness, or that by nature we have a regard for others, the next step is quietly to assume that these natural facts are not only facts but duties—that a natural law is a moral law as well. The real question is not, Do we seek happiness, Do we regard others? but Ought we to seek happiness? Ought we to regard others?—and naturalistic moralists constantly treat these questions as one and the same. (See D. G. Ritchie, *Darwin and Hegel*, p. 68).

one of the commonplaces of the moral life that happiness comes to Man, the moral being, as a by-product, unsought, when he concerns himself with quite other thoughts and aims. If we have been led along the path the utilitarians marked out, into a so-called moral life which in reality is an organized search for happiness, we cannot avoid the conclusion that we have been deluded—and this is not to explain the origin of the Moral Imperative, but to explain the Moral Imperative away.

How Evolution Reinforced Utilitarianism.

The argument unquestionably went against Utilitarianism and in favour of Intuitionism, *i.e.*, that the Moral Imperative is perceived by the mind, given in Conscience, is not derived from individual experience, but is the deliverance of that Supreme Authority from Whom there is no appeal. The Agreeable is quite distinct from the Obligatory: there is a rule higher than the Agreeable, and it is this we mean when we speak of Morality.

Then Evolution provided the naturalistic philosopher with a fresh view-point and argument. It derived the inner moral laws not from the individual's experience, nor from his knowledge of external authority and Statute Law, but from the experience of the race—the whole long line of ancestry during the whole supposed million years since something "humanoid" was evolved from the animal world. The association in the brain, between such and such lines of conduct and pleasurable or painful consequences, stretches back into the almost illimitable past and has been handed down by inheritance, steadily deepening from millennium to millennium. It is much easier thus to believe that the relation between conduct and consequences of pleasure or pain is what we call the Moral Sense. It was claimed that Evolution had reconciled Utilitarianism and Intuitionism: inasmuch as in the long course of time an abstract idea of "obligation" had been deduced from many separate ideas of an "obligatory" justice, an "obligatory" honesty, an "obligatory" generosity, etc., and "an abstract idea thus formed often acquires an illusive independence" (Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, Sect. 46).

Evolutionists also from the beginning emphasized the sympathetic or other-regarding sentiments, which some utilitarians stressed, as playing a leading part in the creation of the Moral

Imperative. Man is a gregarious animal, and the tribe's life and happiness includes and ensures his own. Thus Mr. Leslie Stephen (*Science of Ethics*, pp. 148, 168, etc.), in the growingly abstract language which Evolutionists use, says that "the moral law defines a property of the *social tissue*." It is the vitality of the social organism a man belongs to which all "right" action subserves. Such a contention greatly aids the "illusiveness" of the evolutionary idea of obligation. In the long history of the tribe the sense of approval has become associated with such courses of action as increase the vitality and happiness of the tribe. There seems to be nothing directly personal about the advantages which are to be sought; some inner thing commands us, and we see reasons to obey. Lost amid the darkness of the long past the mind does not perceive that this "obligation" is really only an ancestral counsel of prudence, a disguised maxim of self-interest. It has an "illusiveness" only because its foundation is hidden from us in the dark past. No one could make that mistake in his own isolated experience, but ancestral inheritances and nerve connections created by tens of thousands of generations make it a possible conception.

It must be remembered that evolutionary ethics are absolutely what is called "hedonistic." They take up the utilitarian teaching as to the ground on which action is called "right." It is always pleasure or happiness or the like, and the avoidance of their opposites. So much of a misleading character is said about evolutionary ethics that I must stress this point. Stephen, an evolutionist, refers to the utilitarians Bentham, Hume, Mill, and equally to the evolutionist Spencer as "my own school" (*Science of Ethics*, vii, 365, etc.). Spencer (*Data of Ethics*, sect. 15) says:

Whether perfection of nature is the assigned proper aim, or virtuousness of action, or rectitude of motive, we saw that definition of the perfection, the virtue, the rectitude, inevitably brings us down to happiness experienced in some form, at some time, by some person, as the fundamental idea. . . . So that no school can avoid taking for the ultimate moral aim a desirable state of feeling called by whatever name—gratification, enjoyment, happiness.

Or, again, Professor J. H. Muirhead (*Elements of Ethics*) says that it is not happiness, but the "vitality and efficiency," *i.e.* the "health," of the organism, the society to which we belong, which justifies moral laws. "This represents the real difference between the utilitarian and the evolutionary criterion" (p. 168).

Yet "the health of the society is only valuable as a condition of its happiness" (p. 150). The difference merely concerns the method of reaching happiness.

*The Failure of Evolutionary Ethics to Show the Origin of
Morals.*

So the test of evolutionary ethics remains the same as that of utilitarian ethics. Does it display a cause which can have produced the Moral Imperative? The answer must be an emphatic No. Evolution does not alter the essentials of the problem. It adds the element of almost limitless time. It claims that associations have been fixed in the brain by inheritance through long generations. The illusion of the independence of the Moral Imperative is made easier, but it is an illusion still. No cause has been shown which could by any possibility transform a counsel of prudence concerning the way to find pleasure and avoid pain into the sublime Imperative of the Spirit which bids us do the right for its own sake, in scorn of consequence of any sort.

Self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power!
Yet not *for* power : power of itself
Would come uncalled for : but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear :
And, because right is right, to do the right
Is wisdom, in the scorn of consequence !

There speaks Man the Moral Being, and evolutionary ethics have no explanation to offer. Huxley had to admit that it is "convenient" "to distinguish those parts of nature in which Man plays the part of immediate cause, as something apart" (Article on "The Struggle for Existence," *Nineteenth Century*, Feb., 1888), and that evolutionary processes seem to turn back upon themselves !

The Ceaseless Begging of the Question by Evolutionary Ethics.

No explanation—but a policy, in view of their failure to explain, which most evolutionists follow, until it becomes almost laughable to observe the dexterousness of their moves ! Their common course is to affirm the presence of some sentiment or law in human nature, which human nature they have derived to their own satisfaction from animal nature. Then they slip

in dexterously, by sleight of words, a statement of the *moral* quality of the law or sentiment. No explanation is offered as to how the *moral* quality came into existence: in truth the conjuror never explains his magic; and the moral element only got in by conjuror's sleight of hand. Then they sail on happily, through many sunny and self-satisfied pages, and conclude in a rotund and confident voice that the problem is solved.

With deep feeling of diffidence that a very humble person should criticize authorities so eminent, I feel obliged to take a few illustrations. There is Mr. Leslie Stephen, an evolutionary hedonist of the same school as Spencer. He has, therefore, to make it clear how the majestic Imperative, Thou Shalt, has emerged from experiences of pleasure and pain. His *Science of Ethics* has plentiful passages like these:

My conduct must always be conditioned by my feelings—by my aversion to painful and attraction to pleasurable states (p. 247). When we introduce the sympathetic feelings, it still remains as true as before that the agent is governed by his own feelings (p. 256).

Since a man is virtuous whose type conduces to a healthy body politic, Mr. Stephen says we have therefore to consider what advantages are implied in that type! It is clear that he has not really entered into the moral realm of thought at all: yet the great words of moral life, such as Conscience and Moral Law, are none the less slipped in, while the hedonist is showing by elaborate analysis that sympathy and patriotism are resolvable into desire for pleasure and aversion from pain!

The same criticism lies against Professor Muirhead's popular work, *Elements of Ethics*. In the midst of considerations of the method of reaching happiness, suddenly Muirhead brings us face to face with sovereign Moral Obligation (p. 150); but where has it come from? And, again, in the midst of a world seeking to increase pleasures and decrease pains, we are suddenly told that there are "true" pleasures and "false" pleasures! (p. 155). Perfectly true, no doubt; but where has the distinction come from? Certainly not from that non-moral world whose evolutionary developments the professor is tracing. His moral distinctions and his moral imperatives have no more to do with his argument than the rabbit has to do with the conjuror's hat.

Or, again, some four or five years ago Professor J. B. S. Haldane gave an address to the Rationalist Society, which is published with the title *Science and Ethics*. The chairman spoke

of "the music of Evolution," and of Professor Haldane "rejecting theology," though he respected it as "an historic expression of human nature." The address was frankly atheistic, the existence of the soul is denied, the existence of God also; if there were a Deity, it would be nothing external to man or existing without man's co-operation. The professor declares :

Ever since the utilitarian movement ethics have become more and more a matter of the calculation of consequences. . . . We are all agreed that actions must be judged by their probable consequences (*i.e.* of happiness or the reverse) and not by any code which does not envisage those consequences (p. 30).

Now on this basis you can get rules for seeking happiness, and counsels of prudence; you can get a multitude of relationships between living beings, and impulses or actions which continue or destroy those relationships; but you cannot get anything moral. Yet we find Professor Haldane calmly using the language of morals, *e.g.* "We lay claim to guidance by no holy spirit save our own consciences": "the rights of animals"; "Shall I buy glass or pottery for my flowers? Pottery workers have a higher mortality"; so I "ought to buy glass": one may "see men and animals as a great brotherhood of common ancestry, and thus feel an enlargement of obligations."

Obligations! Rights! Ought! Conscience! Where have all these come from? He might speak of preferences, desires, impulses, and perhaps even of reflection and choice; but where has the Moral Imperative come from? Even he admits in this little volume that

Science from its nature can only say what is, was, or will be, and not what ought to be. It cannot of course give an answer to the question, Why should I be good? There is, in the long run, no answer to that question. . . . (p. 32).

We may be thankful for the frank admission. Like an honest man he agrees that Evolution cannot explain morals. But why then does he slip in all these moral terms and produce the illusion that he is dealing with Ethics?

Or just once more, here is a delightfully frank book by Professor G. Harris, entitled *Moral Evolution*. He is a thoroughgoing evolutionist. Vegetable and animal life, he says, have furnished the clue to the origin of Man, by evolution from them. by "organic derivation," not by "abrupt creation" (p. 2),

Then we come to the section on "The Origin of Obligation," and that is just what we want to hear about. But Professor Harris simply tells us that

the reflecting animal perceived that the social is more important, or is better, than the selfish feeling. He saw that he should not have injured or neglected another to satisfy a transient desire (p. 99).

What the evolutionist needs to show us, however, is how these perceptions came to these animals. All he says is that the animal had these moral faculties, and "the theory stands or falls on comparison of feelings, and estimate of their relative worth"; but he does not say where this moral thing called "worth" came from. What he does see clearly, however, is that when "a simian ancestor recognized the intrinsic superiority of sympathetic over self-regarding feelings" he thereby became essentially a Man: for "it is Man's estimate of their relative worth, value, rightfulness, or wrongfulness" that "differentiates him from animals." This was a "radical transformation" of "the simian ancestor"; and then comes this truly delightful confession from a writer who sets out to trace Man up from the vegetable:—

I suppose everyone would have to confess utter ignorance of the process of such a development, and *utter inability even to imagine it* (p. 101).

The italics are mine; the words are the expression of the self-evident truth about all manner of evolutionary ethics. The failure of orthodox Evolution is abyssmal and complete.

The New Phase: "Emergent Evolution" Attempts the Problem.

Professor Harris wrote in 1898, somewhere about the same time at which Professor C. Lloyd Morgan claims that he first adumbrated Emergent Evolution. It is significant that Professor Harris, after confessing his utter inability even to imagine how the non-moral simian became a moral Man, proceeds at once to state the thesis of what is now called Emergent Evolution. He says: "The materials of the human constitution existed in lower orders (of animal life). But in Man the materials are differently compounded. As the combination of the same chemical elements at different potencies gives essentially different products, so the combination of the same materials gave different creatures. At least, it may have been so. . . . The new combination, effected perhaps instantly, as an electric spark may

change the relation of chemical elements, produced Man" (p. 102). This is precisely, I think, what Professor Morgan means by new "qualities and properties" emerging from "new states of relatedness" between "events."

Much more ought to be said about Emergent Evolution than is possible in my brief space. That it arose, as Professor Harris seems to reveal, because of the entire failure of the orthodox Evolution to show *Cause* for the origin of life from the lifeless, mind from the non-mental, morals from the non-moral, it is hardly possible to doubt. We have asked for Causes sufficient to produce the results of life, mind, and moral obligation; and candid evolutionists, some of whom I have quoted, admit that no Cause has been found.

So it is proposed to get rid of the troublesome concepts which cannot be satisfied. Mind, for instance, is reflective and purposive and cannot be derived from the non-mental. Nor can purposive quality be derived from the only kind of "consciousness" which mechanistic evolution can recognize. Spinoza's idea, that the physical always has a psychic side, and that something mental is involved in the very constitution of matter, has generally been the resort of the baffled evolutionist. When living matter reaches a due stage of complexity sentience begins, he says, and later still consciousness. But this consciousness is not our reflective purposive mind: it is mere awareness: it is aware of, but does not influence, events. Bateson's acid jest at the biologists who pushed all their difficulties "back into some misty antiquity into which we shall not be asked to penetrate," might be repeated here so far as the origin of mentality is concerned. But it helps the evolutionist to get rid of such concepts as "purpose" and "cause." Professor H. C. Warren ("A Study of Purpose," in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 1916) interprets the sense of purpose as being the mind's awareness of the beginning of muscular action, which itself is a reaction to an internal or external stimulus. Awareness that muscular action is coming is what we call "purpose"! To the average man that will seem sheer nonsense; but that is only because he is led astray by endless empty declarations of the spiritual tendencies of modern philosophy. To-day's philosophy is ominously materialistic.

Cause for either mind or morals is not found: therefore Cause is explained away. Professor Morgan (Spencer's *Philosophy of Science*, pp. 17 and 18) recalls W. K. Clifford's attempt to show "in what sort of a way an exact knowledge of the facts would

supersede an enquiry after the causes of them," and how he urged that the dogma of Continuity involves such an interdependence of the facts of the universe as forbids us to speak of one fact or set of facts as the cause of another fact or set of facts. Professor Morgan agrees with Clifford. He will not have any "power that works changes," neither Bergson's *Élan Vital*, nor Spencer's "very vigorous agency, the Unknowable." He likes Mill's idea that "cause" is "the sum total of the conditions, positive and negative, taken together," and dropping the idea of Cause, he says, "For science, the constitution of nature is the ultimate *Ground* of all that happens" (p. 24).

What Emergent Evolution Means.

Having got rid of Cause, the way was clear for Emergent Evolution. Emergent Evolution regards it as unscientific to attempt to explain anything. It assumes a certain constitution of nature, such that when certain given elements enter into new "relatedness" new "constitutive properties" arise. Why they emerge is not the question: all that matters is that they do emerge. Professor Morgan sees no objection to having God in the Eternal Background. The other most eminent exponent, Professor S. Alexander, denies the "infinite deity," and is not quite sure that "finite deities" have yet emerged.

But there is no real difference between the two, and Professor Morgan gives great space to a most appreciative estimate of his ally, insisting for his own part that we must not drag in **any** activity of God, or anything supernatural whatsoever, to explain how new things emerge. Thus

If Vitalism connote anything of the nature of *Eentelechy* or *Élan Vital* (*i.e.* World-Soul, or Life-Force)—any insertion into physico-chemical evolution of an alien influence which must be invoked to explain the phenomena of life—then so far from this being implied, it is explicitly rejected under the concept of Emergent Evolution (*Emergent Evolution*, p. 12).

God, cause, purpose, and all such concepts, are ruled entirely out.

G. H. Lewes first suggested the word emergent, and J. S. Mill the idea when he spoke of "mental chemistry." In chemistry there is a difference between mechanical mixtures and chemical compounds. Two parts of Hydrogen and one part of Oxygen united by an electric spark, make water; and water is not like

either of its constituents. This is their classical illustration. The Emergent Evolutionists use terrible language, and only illustrations could make their meaning clear. Professor Alexander, in vol. ii, p. 46, of his *Space, Time, and Deity*, has a paragraph beginning, "Let me take a few examples." He gives only two :—

First : Material things have certain motions of their own which carry the quality of materials. In the presence of light they are endowed with the secondary quality of colour.

Second : Physical and chemical processes of a certain complexity have the quality of life. The new quality, Life, emerges with this constellation of such processes . . . and has been generated out of them.

That is all ! The first is metaphysics ; the second, pseudo-physics. A striking failure to produce illustrations !

Professor Morgan gives one of the famous illustrations of an emergent, viz., three notes combine to form a chord, and quotes Browning's " Abt Vogler " :

And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,

That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.

So it is said a melody is quite a different thing from the succession of notes or chords from which it " emerges " ; or a sentence is quite a different thing from the succession of words from whose new relationship the thought " emerges."

Do Any of the Illustrations Reveal Emergence ?

Professor W. Macdougall has subjected Emergent Evolution to a drastic and deadly examination, in his *Modern Materialism and Emergent Evolution*. He denies all emergence in the inorganic realm. As to Hydrogen and Oxygen becoming water, we should be wise to let the chemist continue his work, before we draw conclusions. He is continually examining chemical compounds ; and it is probable the result will be " to render it possible to account for all the properties of inorganic substances, to explain mechanistically all physical events, and in principle to predict them " (p. 125).

The real crux, however, is whether there are emergents in the mental realm ; in particular, is the moral an emergent from the

mental? Very strangely Professor Macdougall admits that there are emergents in the mental realm; but the only illustrations forthcoming are musical notes and the "emergent melody," and words and the "emergent sentence"—and neither of these satisfies the idea of an emergent. Words are not mere sounds which in some quite unexplained way arrange themselves into sentences. The mind of the speaker has the thought in it beforehand, and the sentences are created to express his thought. An Emergent, says Professor Wheeler, in his *Emergent Evolution and the Development of Societies*, "does not signify the manifestation or unveiling of something hidden, but already existing"—but that is exactly what the sentence does do: thus it is not an instance of emergence. Neither is the musical illustration. Notes do not mysteriously arrange themselves into melodies. Schubert, for instance, selected the proper notes to bring out on to the air that melody which was already existing in his mind. The chord in "Abt Vogler" was just the combination of three sounds, producing a fourth sound—a mechanical resultant vibration. The fact that Browning was uplifted in heart by its beauty and called it "a star" does not make the chord an emergent novelty—it was still a sound.

The reality of emergents is most doubtful, but the procedure of emergent evolutionists is very clear. Let anyone forge his way through *Emergent Evolution* or *Space, Time, and Deity*. In most abstract and often metaphysical language an elaborate analysis is given, especially of mind; and, without any vestige of proof, it is affirmed that all things emerged in the order given in the analysis. Professor Alexander starts with Space-Time; from that emerges Matter, more and more complex; from that Life, in higher and higher forms; from that Mind, in ever higher forms; and thence ideals of Truth, Beauty, and the Right; then from these the latest product of Evolution, deity. After Mind "deity is the next higher empirical quality* to any that we know. . . . It was legitimate for us to imagine finite beings called angels . . . for the angelic quality is the next higher empirical quality of deity. . . . On each level (of existence) a

* How even this godless philosophy is being taken up by ardent evolutionary religious writers may be illustrated by the statement: "Man has won his humanity, and the word 'animal' no longer includes all that he is. Jesus won through to divinity": Rev. L. D. Weatherhead, M.A., *Jesus and Ourselves*, p. 285.

new quality looms ahead, awfully, which plays to it the part of deity." As to "infinite deity," that is the infinite world striving after deity (pp. 346 ff).

On what ground should we accept all this? Professor Alexander tells us:—

The existence of emergent qualities thus described is something to be accepted with the "natural piety" of the investigator. It admits no explanation (vol. ii, pp. 46 and 47).

Professor Morgan quotes approvingly that it is all to be accepted with "natural piety": and a phrase of Professor Alexander's (vol. ii, p. 352) is worthy of great emphasis. It is: "*Speculation enables us to say.*" As Carlyle used to declare, "That is significant of much."

Thus Emergent Evolution offers no *explanation* of the Moral Imperative, nor of any other "emergent qualities." It simply asks us to accept, without explanation, without any "power that works changes," the assumption that these qualities did emerge, and in an order which fits in with evolutionary speculation. All this we are to accept with "natural piety"! Surely it is not for us to accept with natural piety, but to reject with supernatural energy, a philosophy which gets rid of both God and Cause in order to effect its purpose. Emergent Evolution is an admission of the failure to show cause for the origin of the Moral Imperative; and still the great Imperative of our Moral Life sounds forth, unexplained and unexplainable save on this one foundation: "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness."

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Douglas Dewar) said: You will all, I feel sure, agree with me that Dr. Morton has given us a masterly paper on a very difficult subject—a subject on which have been written a great many books, most of them couched in the most obscure phraseology, which makes them difficult to read. I must confess that I have not the patience to read much on the subject, because my experience is that obscure language usually denotes muddle-headedness on the part of the writer. I did, however, attempt, some years ago, to read Professor Lloyd Morgan's *Emergent Evolution* because I had previously liked his book on Animal Behaviour.

I did not get very far with the book. I found its phraseology so involved and ambiguous that I concluded that the labour involved in forging through it might be more profitably employed in other directions. I was therefore somewhat gratified when, a few months later, I came across the following criticism of Lloyd Morgan's book in Oman's *The Natural and the Supernatural*, p. 160: "His theory seems to leave mind only a specially complex arrangement, whose knowledge cannot be really knowing and which cannot affect its environment by any power of its own; it, nevertheless, does all that we know it does. His argument turns into an excess of technical terminology, which at least is not fitted to increase faith in the simplicity of his meaning. All that one can gather is a general impression, and it is of a man being drawn into the hopeless task of trying to show that a thing can be and not be at the same time."

Those who delight to give rein to their imagination, especially those who suffer from Theophobia, have from time immemorial toyed with the idea of Evolution. The theories of these persons never obtained general acceptance because they do not fit in with the fact that you cannot get out of anything more than has been put into it; as Dr. Morton well says, theories of Evolution resemble the conjurer's trick of producing the required article out of nothing. It was only when Darwin came along and suggested what at first sight appeared a plausible *modus operandi* that the theory became fashionable. To the credit of Darwin, let it be said that he did at least produce something tangible, as opposed to vague flights of the imagination. The theory of Natural Selection is one that can be tested scientifically. At first sight Natural Selection looked as though it might really be able to explain Evolution, granted that there is no limit to which variations can be piled up in any direction. Closer scrutiny of the position, however, showed that Natural Selection is really a stumbling-block in the way of accepting Evolution.

One of the many difficulties encountered by Evolutionists is that with which Dr. Morton has so ably dealt, viz., the origin of the Moral Imperative. Practical men, as opposed to mere theorists, attempt to discover in the lower animals the rudiments of this, and to show how this characteristic has developed to its present condition in Man. Such assert that any character tending to the preservation, vitality or happiness of a tribe or herd will tend to be preserved and passed on to subsequent generations, and gradually become amplified

until we arrive at the Moral Imperative. Dr. Morton has shown that this line of argument has met with little success. Sir Arthur Thomson tacitly admits this in his article entitled "Evolutionary Ethics" in the latest edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He seems to think that Man arose as a mutation. He writes "Regarding man as a new synthesis, making all things new, we willingly admit that he did not carry on and raise to a higher power the kin-sympathy, let us say, of the wolf; for Evolution does not proceed in this simple fashion. But our point is that there must have been definite pre-human strands which were transformed into a new synthesis of man." He does not say what these particular pre-human strands were or whether they arose by a mutation or by emergence, if there be any difference between the two concepts. Mere verbiage such as this leads nowhere and tells us nothing. Let us get down to facts. The members of a tribe of humans or pre-humans who made themselves objectionable may well have been knocked on the head by their fellows and so got rid of before they produced offspring inheriting the undesirable trait. On the other hand, altruistic individuals, although doubtless appreciated by the other members of the tribe, would be the first to die owing to their denying themselves food in times of scarcity or their defending females and young in case of an attack by foes; hence natural selection would soon wipe out this budding altruism.

It is because Darwinian Evolution is incapable of explaining what Evolution has to explain that the theory of Emergent Evolution has been developed. The fact that this theory has obtained a considerable amount of support is proof of the weakness of the Evolution hypothesis. Emergence is nothing but a big mutation. To say that any character rose by emergence explains nothing. To accept the principle is tantamount to throwing up the sponge, to saying: "We have no idea what natural causes can have produced many characters animals exhibit, so let us save our faces by asserting that they emerged." When Professor Lloyd Morgan will produce from inorganic matter a cell which grows, divides, and develops into a fish, crab, mollusc or any other kind of organism and produces offspring having the same characters as itself, I shall begin to think that there is something in this idea of emergence. All this talk of emergence is to put the cart before the horse. Let us first make sure that man did evolve from a one-celled organism; when this

has been proved, it will be time enough to seek for causes. Haeckel thought he had solved the riddle of the universe. To-day, every honest man of science has to admit that, apart from a belief in God, the riddle is unsolved.

Professor Caullery wrote, in 1931: "There is no doubt that to-day I feel farther from being able to represent how Evolution has been effected than I did 40 years ago when I was apprenticed to zoology." It does not seem to have occurred to Caullery that the reason of this failure may be that he is trying to cook his hare before he has caught it, to account for an event which has not happened.

At the conclusion, the Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to Dr. Morton, which was accorded with acclamation.

MR. SIDNEY COLLETT said: I cannot understand how any intelligent person, who has any faith in the Bible, can entertain the foolish and unscriptural theory of Evolution, seeing that it is condemned by the Bible, and by leading Evolutionists themselves.

As to the Bible, we are distinctly told in Genesis ii, 7 that as regards his body "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." Now, seeing that the Creator Himself has declared that Man was formed from the dust of the ground, Man cannot possibly have been evolved from some lower animal. Then, as to his spirit, we read in Genesis i, 27, that "God created man in His own image." Seeing that the word "created" means, according to the Dictionaries, "to produce from nothing" "to bring into being," "to cause to exist," that Divinely-inspired statement for ever excludes the possibility of Man evolving from a lower animal.

But, as I said; Evolutionists themselves confess the failure of their theory! Sir Oliver Lodge stated some years ago in the *Daily Chronicle*, that "all the many attempts in the direction of spontaneous generation hitherto have conspicuously failed," while the late Sir George Darwin stated, at a meeting of the British Association, that "the mystery of life remained as impenetrable as ever." And Professor Tyndall said: "Those who hold the Doctrine of Evolution are by no means ignorant of the uncertainty of their data." And this statement is abundantly confirmed, by the testimony of Professor J. A. Thomson and Professor Patrick Geddes in "*Ideals of Science and Faith*," where they maket his pitiable confession, in

answer to the question "*How Man came*": "We do not know whence he emerged—nor do we know how man arose . . . for it must be admitted that the factors of the evolution of man, partake largely of the nature of may-be's, which have no permanent position in science!" Moreover, in an article in *The Times Literary Supplement* the following statement appeared: "Never was seen such a *mêlée*. The humour of it is that they all claim to represent science. . . . Yet it would puzzle them to point to a theological battlefield exhibiting more uncertainty, obscurity, dissention, assumption and fallacy, than their own. For the plain truth is, that, though some agree in this and that, there is not a single point on which all agree. Battling for Evolution, they have torn it to pieces; nothing is left, nothing at all, save a few fragments strewn about the arena!"

Mr. GEORGE BREWER said: Dr. Morton has, I think, shown us that the doctrine of the Evolutionary origin of the Moral Imperative has not only no foundation in fact, but is contrary to history and experience. Like similar teaching in connection with the organic and inorganic realms of nature, it is based on assumption, buttressed by speculation, and built up from figments of human imagination.

According to Professor Alexander, man, evolved from protoplasm through a series of lower animals, will eventually emerge into Deity; so that, in place of the simple revelation given to us in His Word "that God made man in His own image," we are asked to accept with "*natural piety*" the impious proposition that man is making God. That principle of Moral Consciousness implanted in Man by God Himself, which even the corruption consequent upon the Fall has failed to obliterate, and which we call Conscience, is in evidence throughout the ages, and is certified by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to Romans (ch. ii, 14, 15): "For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

We see the work of conscience in the case of our first parents after disobedience, hiding from God among the trees of the garden; of Cain in seeking to evade his guilt of murder; of Lot who vexed his righteous soul from day to day with the sins of Sodom; of Joseph's

brethren in Egypt in respect of the potential murder of their brother ; in Simon Peter after denial of his Lord ; in the fatal remorse of Judas, and in the case of Saul of Tarsus kicking against the pricks of conscience after the death of Stephen. The great crises of life arise when this Moral Imperative, called Conscience, issues one command, and self-interest, passion, or some outside authority issues another, and the individual has to decide which command is to be obeyed. What Conscience commands may be apparently against our material interests, contrary to our inclination, opposed by the advice of friends and popular judgment, and may even be contrary to the decrees of the ruling power ; yet it refuses to withdraw, or modify its claim.

The Utilitarian and Emergent theories, put forward to support the cause of Evolution, fail entirely to account for Conscience, for history records that men have, at the dictates of this moral force, chosen to act contrary to self-interest and inclination, and even to suffer torture and death rather than violate the judgment of Conscience. Further, when the human will is called upon to decide upon one of two courses in which a moral principle is involved, the individual becomes conscious, whether he professes to believe it or not, of his obligation to a Supreme Being, to whom he will be answerable, having power to approve a right decision and to inflict punishment for a wrong one.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Lieut.-Colonel DAVIES, F.G.S., wrote : Dr. Morton's paper is most timely. The aspect of it to which I would draw attention—the doctrine of “emergent” deity—is, perhaps, a side issue of his main theme, the doctrine of “emergent” morals ; but the two are inseparable. Grant Evolution in the Darwinian sense, and not only must morals be supposed to “emerge” without the need of Divine causation, but man's present status must itself be regarded as a mere term in a still progressing series. If Darwinian Evolution be a fact, it must inevitable produce yet other things by “emergence” ; and since many of these new properties will presumably be higher than anything Man now possesses, just as many of Man's properties are higher than those of his Darwinian “ancestors”—ape, monkey, tarsius, marsupial, monotreme, reptile, amphibian, fish, etc., back to primordial fire-mist—what are we to call the

next higher stages, *above* Man, but God? So we must, if we are consistent Darwinians, look for God—perhaps with a little “g” to begin with—presently to “emerge” from modern Man.

This is significant, for Scripture definitely says that a superman, claiming to be God, will appear in the last days before our Lord returns to earth. Some people may think it strange that I, as a practical geologist, refer to such prophecies as claiming serious attention; but the fact is that work on fossil forms keeps the research student in contact with modern evolutionary doctrines regarding the same—and hence with anticipations of the future which are sometimes based upon those doctrines—and so (if he is also a Bible student) he is apt to notice the way in which modern thought tends to align itself with Bible prophecies 2,000 years old. When we are gravely told, by modern scientific writers, that a human being, as superior to ourselves as we are to Neanderthal man, may already have been born among us, it seems clear that the way is at least being prepared for the reception of such a being. And in days when the Bible is being ever more and more abandoned on all hands, and its laws set at naught, it seems equally clear that this superman need not be conceived of as a coming Puritan.

That no such superman has yet arrived is clear. Even a Mussolini does not fill the required “bill,” either in Biblical expectations or in current secular ones. But the fact that secular science and philosophy are now tending to unite in teaching mankind at large to expect the arrival of a new and far more gifted type of human being, at a time when revolt against everything Biblical has become a commonplace, seems to endorse us in expecting a relatively near fulfilment of Biblical prophecies in this same respect. It does rather look as though mankind were being prepared to welcome the appearance of that long-foretold “Man of Sin,” who is not only to “show himself forth, that he is God,” but is also to substantiate his claims with “all power and signs and lying wonders, and all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.”

The Scripture, I believe, cannot be broken; and it is generally the mocker at Scripture who does most to fulfil it. There is an element of humour about things when we find the most rabid opponents of belief in Bible Inspiration leading the way, to-day, in encouraging us to expect the most literal fulfilment of Bible predictions.

Mr. SYDNEY T. KLEIN wrote: We have to thank the writer for a clear exposure of the erroneous belief that the Moral Imperative of Man had its origin and subsequent development in the action of blind physical forces during the past ages of life's enfoldment on this earth. It is true that, in the middle of last century, the great advance in knowledge of the physical sciences tended towards a materialistic explanation of the Universe, but we have risen above this temporary phase, and a very large majority of earnest thinkers are now looking for a truer explanation of the origin of our surroundings.

The name "Evolution" is used in many ways by different investigators, and is applicable to Nature's process of development in plant and animal life, but Darwin has been saddled by his followers with statements foreign to the theory expounded by him. He confined himself to the physical aspect of life, and specially acknowledged the immeasurable gap between the unmoral consciousness of the lower animals and the Moral Consciousness of the human being. We are living in a world of "becoming"; all life is evolving, and its visible forms are built up from the same protoplasmic cell, which is the basis of life in all living bodies of both animals (including Man) and plants, and they all start their life journey from a minute cell, the lowest form of life on our earth and quite invisible to the human eye. . . . The problem of how sin could possibly appear in a world created by a Perfect Infinite Being, loses its paradoxical aspect when we realize that the Creator being infinite cannot be dominated, as we are, by the limitation of Time duration. The whole Creation must, therefore, be contained in *Now* of Reality. It is only our being forced to analyse it for our comprehension under finite powers of conception, that gives us the sensation of a long line of successive events, extending upwards from unconscious matter, through the awakening in plants, to physical consciousness in animals, the self-consciousness of Man, and ending in spiritual realization. These progressive stages, we, under Time limitation, call Evolution, and it is clear that in what we call the stage of purely animal nature there could be no evil or wrongdoing; it was the age of innocency, there being then no consciousness of right or wrong, good or evil.

It was through the gradual development of Spiritual Consciousness—helped so wonderfully by the advent of Christ, and in a

lesser degree by the coming into the world of every good man, which raised and is raising, the level of Moral Rectitude—that acts took on the aspect of sin, which was not there before. The evolution of the Good in us did not create sin, but gave it the appearance of reality to our narrow outlook when, as at present, the human race is still in its infancy and we are nearer to the imperfect animal nature than we are to the perfect spiritual.

We have still within us, by heredity, the lower propensities which we have to fight and control. These constitute the tricks and temptations of this life, which are given for our learning, by experience, to free ourselves from the imperfect and advance towards Perfection. . . .

Lieut.-Colonel F. MOLONY said : The lecture has done much to justify our claim to be the Philosophic Society of Great Britain. I should like to ask the lecturer a question regarding a Latin quotation, *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum*, which I hear should be translated, “ Let justice be done though the skies fall.” I want to ask whether that is a quotation from a Christian or from a heathen author.* If from a Christian author, I suppose we ought hardly to use it in this connection, lest an atheistic evolutionist might reply “ You claim that justice is one of the attributes of the God you believe in. So it is not surprising if you think yourselves bound to give justice in the scorn of consequences, for you trust in your God to overrule the result for good.” If, on the other hand, the quotation is from a heathen writer, it admirably illustrates our lecturer’s main argument, that the Moral Imperative is implanted

* The saying, *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum*, appears to be an abbreviated paraphrase of several passages in Cicero’s *De Officiis* ; such as “ Justice which is always expedient,” Book III, para. 96.

“ The question raised in these cases is not whether moral rectitude is to be sacrificed to some considerable advantage (for that would of course be wrong). And so expediency gained the day because of its moral rightness ; for without moral rectitude there could have been no possible expediency.” Book III, para. 40.

Cælum ruat is from “ P. Terentius’s *Heauton Timorumenos*,” Act 3, line 719. Hence it seems that we may regard the saying as of heathen origin.

by God, and not built up on utilitarian experiences : especially if the proverb admits of being translated " Do justice though it may cause the skies to fall." For the author evidently held that to obey the Moral Imperative is better than to safeguard mankind from the most awful consequences conceivable. This doctrine cannot be derived from any utilitarian source.

As to Emergent Evolution, I confess that I cannot comprehend how that idea can be twisted into an argument for disbelief in God.

LECTURER'S REPLY.

I find myself without need of any reply to our Chairman, to Colonel L. M. Davies, to Mr. Sidney Collett, or to Mr. George Brewer, except to thank them for their valuable contribution to a great subject. To Mr. Sidney T. Klein and to Colonel Molony a word of rejoinder must, however, be made.

Mr. Klein refers to the ambiguity of the word " evolution." We cannot be too precise in our use of words. We must define, and keep to our definition. Evolutionists greatly offend against this essential rule by their loose use of the word. Evolution is a word which belongs to the organic realm, and, as Professor Macdougall says, outside the realm of life the claim that evolution is at work is " a bare verbal formula, without meaning." Evolution is the Transmutation of " Species," just that and nothing else.

Mr. Klein speaks as an evolutionist, and Evolution holds that the various forms of life develop out of preceding forms, higher from lower. Yet he is prepared to surrender the reality of *Time* which he holds to be an illusion (I hope I do not mistake him) due to analysis of Creation by our finite powers giving to us the impression of successive events—whereas he says " the whole Creation must be contained in the *Now* of Reality." If this is true, then there is no such thing as Evolution : there is an illusive sense of *succession*, but there is *no derivation from preceding forms*. Hence I submit that Mr. Klein should not use the word " Evolution," or think along that line, or say " All life is evolving." Even in thought processes, order of the processes is a very different thing from the derivation of one thought out of another.

I accept, for human thinking, the ultimate reality of *Space* and

Time. If they are *not* ultimates to *God*, that is nothing to us. To us they are ultimates : and a philosophy based upon any other assumption is not a philosophy of our human life, but of some vastly different and quite imaginary world.

May I make a brief comment on Colonel Molony's final remark :— Emergent Evolution undertakes to show Nature sufficient, without God's intervention, to account for all that is. *How* she does it they do not pretend to show, but they do claim to show that she is sufficient. Emergent Evolution is more thorough-going than other Evolution. All Evolutions—the whole main line—bars out God. Emergent Evolution bars out also such concepts as Cause and Purpose. Let us not deprave our minds by any complicity with it.