

Chamberlainism, and if, as some people profess to think probable, there should follow on the next general election a regrouping of parties, in which the Free Trade and more Progressive Unionists should decide to act with the Moderate Liberals, the *Spectator* would no doubt become once more a recognised exponent of broad Liberal views.

The foregoing survey shows, I think, that the unquestioned conversion of the majority of the country—as testified by the past score or so of by-elections—owes very little to the Liberal press. In number of newspapers and in circulation the Tory press has, as I have shown, an immense and unquestioned superiority, and yet the Conservatives are as surely slipping back as the Liberals are pressing forward. What use does the Liberal press throughout the country propose to make of the powerful weapon that is ready forged to its hand? Is there to be found the same want of cohesion, the same ridiculous bickering over non-essentials that has marked the conduct of Liberal newspapers and reviews for nearly a score of years past? If so, it is certain that the country's support of the party will not be of long duration, and the next state of Liberal journalism, and therefore of Liberalism, will be even worse than that which it has just managed to survive. If Liberal journalism is to flourish, if it is to serve as something more than a subsidised vehicle for the dissemination of particular and peculiar views, it must regain the confidence of those upon whom it must at all times be largely dependent for its prosperity. This it can only do by the cultivation of greater moderation of tone, which need entail no sacrifice of its principles, and by disabusing the commercial class of the erroneous idea—a very fixed one in the minds of many—that Liberalism means spoliation and disturbance of trade.

No doubt the amenities which are now so conspicuously wanting in a considerable section of the Liberal press will come more easily and more naturally when the positions of the two political forces are reversed. It may then be possible for one or two of its principal representatives, who have converted the practice of proscription into a fine art, to exercise a wider tolerance and to give themselves a much-needed respite from banning those with whom they do not at the moment happen to agree on all points of Liberal policy. That would go a long way towards reassuring the larger public, and so would tend to restore to the Liberal press the authority, stability, and prosperity it has so largely lost during the years it has been wandering in the wilderness.

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THE ETHICAL NEED OF THE PRESENT DAY

I

WHEN we cast a glance upon the immense progress realised by all the exact sciences in the course of the nineteenth century, and when we closely examine the character of the conquests achieved by each of them, and the promises they contain for the future, we cannot but feel deeply impressed by the idea that mankind is entering a new era of progress. It has, at any rate, before it all the elements for opening such a new era. In the course of the last hundred or hundred-and-twenty years, entirely new branches of knowledge, opening unexpected vistas upon the laws of development of human society, have grown up under the names of anthropology, prehistoric ethnology, the history of religions, the origin of institutions, and so on. Quite new conceptions about the whole life of the universe were developed by pursuing such lines of research as molecular physics, the chemical structure of matter, and the chemical composition of distant worlds. And the traditional views about the position of man in the universe, the origin of life, and the life of the mind were entirely upset by the rapid development of biology, the reappearance of the theory of evolution, and the growth of physiological psychology. Merely to say that the progress of science in each of its branches, excepting perhaps astronomy, has been greater during the last century than during any three or four centuries of the Middle Ages or of antiquity would not be enough. We have to return 2300 years back, to the glorious times of the philosophical revival in ancient Greece, in order to find another period of sudden awakening of the intellect and of sudden bursting forth of knowledge which would be similar to what we have witnessed lately. And yet, at that early period of human history, man did not enter into possession of all those wonders of industrial technique which have been arrayed lately in our service. A youthful, daring spirit of invention, stimulated by the discoveries of science, and taking its flight to new, hitherto inaccessible regions, has increased our powers of creating wealth, and reduced the effort required for rendering well-being accessible to all to such a degree that no

Utopian of antiquity, or of the Middle Ages, or even of the earlier portion of the nineteenth century, could have dreamt anything of the sort. For the first time in the history of civilisation, mankind has reached a point where the means of satisfying its needs are in excess of the needs themselves. To impose, therefore, as has hitherto been done, the curse of misery and degradation upon vast divisions of mankind, in order to secure well-being for the few, is needed no more: well-being *can* be secured for all, without overwork for any. We are thus placed in a position entirely to remodel the very bases and contents of our civilisation—provided the civilised nations find in their midst the constructive capacities and the powers of creation required for utilising the conquests of the human intellect in the interest of all.

Whether our present civilisation is vigorous and youthful enough to undertake such a great task, and to bring it to the desired end, we cannot say beforehand. But this is certain, that the latest revival of science has created the intellectual atmosphere required for calling such forces into existence. Reverting to the sound philosophy of Nature which remained in neglect from the times of ancient Greece, until Bacon began to wake it up from its long slumber, modern science has now worked out the elements of a philosophy of the universe, free of supernatural hypotheses and the metaphysical 'mythology of ideas,' and at the same time so grand, so poetical and inspiring, so full of energy, and so much breathing freedom, that it certainly *is* capable of calling into existence the necessary forces. Man need no more clothe his ideals of moral beauty, and of a better organised society, with the garb of superstition: he can free himself from those fears which had hitherto damped his soaring towards a higher life.

One of the greatest achievements of modern science was, of course, that it firmly established the idea of indestructibility of energy through all the ceaseless transformations which it undergoes in the universe. For the physicist and the mathematician this idea became a most fruitful source of discovery. It inspires, in fact, all modern research. But its philosophical import is equally great. It accustoms man to conceive the life of the universe as a never-ending series of transformations of energy, among which the birth of our planet, its evolution, and its final, unavoidable destruction and reabsorption in the great Cosmos are but an infinitesimally small episode—a mere moment in the life of the stellar worlds. The same with the researches concerning life. The recent studies in the wide borderland, where the simplest life-processes in the lowest fungi are hardly distinguishable—if distinguishable at all—from the chemical redistribution of atoms which is always going on in the more complex molecules of matter, have divested life of its mystical character. At the same time, our conception of life has been so widened that we grow accustomed now to conceive all the agglomerations of matter in the universe—solid, liquid, and gaseous—as living too, and going through those cycles of

evolution and decay which we formerly attributed to organic beings only. Then, reverting to ideas which were budding once in ancient Greece, modern science has retraced step by step that marvellous evolution which, after having started with the simplest forms, hardly deserving the name of organisms, has gradually produced the infinite variety of beings which now people and enliven our planet. And, by making us familiar with the thought that every organism is to an immense extent the produce of its own surroundings, biology has solved one of the greatest riddles of Nature—its harmony, the adaptations to an end which it offers us at every step. Even in the most puzzling of all manifestations of life, the domain of feeling and thought, in which human intelligence has to catch the very processes by means of which it succeeds in retaining and co-ordinating the impressions received from without—even in this domain, the darkest of all, science has already caught a glimpse of the mechanism of thought by following the lines of research indicated by physiology. And finally, in the vast field of human institutions, habits and laws, superstitions, beliefs and ideals, such a flood of light has been thrown by the anthropological schools of history, law, and economics that we can already maintain positively that 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' is not a mere Utopia. It is an ideal worth striving for, since it is proved that the prosperity and happiness of no nation or class could ever be based, even for the duration of a few generations, upon the degradation of other classes, nations, or races.

Modern science has thus achieved a double aim. On the one side it has given to man a great lesson of modesty. It has taught him to consider himself as but an infinitesimally small particle of that immense whole—the universe. It has driven him out of his narrow, egotistical seclusion, and has dissipated the self-conceit under which he considered himself the centre of the universe and the object of a special attention in it. It has taught him that without the whole the 'ego' is nothing: that our 'I' cannot even come to a self-definition without the 'Thou.'¹ But at the same time science has taught man how powerful mankind is in its progressive march; and it has given him the means to enlist in his service the unlimited energies of Nature.

So far, then, as science and philosophy go, they have given us both the material elements and the freedom of thought which are required for calling into life the reconstructive forces that may lead mankind to a new era of progress. There is, however, one branch of knowledge which lags behind. It is ethics. A system of ethics worthy of the present scientific revival, which would take advantage of all the recent acquisitions for revising the very foundations of morality on a wider philosophical basis, and produce a higher moral ideal, capable of giving to the civilised nations the inspiration required for the great

¹ Schopenhauer, *The Foundations of Morals*, section 22. All the paragraph is. of the greatest beauty. Also Feuerbach and others.

task that lies before them—such a system has not yet been produced. But it is called for on all sides, with an emphasis the sense of which cannot be misunderstood. A new, realistic moral science is the need of the day—a science as free of superstition, religious dogmatism, and metaphysical mythology as modern cosmogony and philosophy already are, and permeated at the same time with those higher feelings and brighter hopes which a thorough knowledge of man and his history can breathe into men's breasts.

That such a science is possible lies beyond any reasonable doubt. If the study of Nature has yielded the elements of a philosophy which embraces the life of the Cosmos, the evolution of the living beings, the laws of psychical activity, and the development of society, it must also be able to give us the rational origin and the sources of the moral feelings. And it must be able to indicate and to reinforce the agencies which contribute towards the gradual rising of these feelings to an always greater height and purity, without resorting for that purpose to blind faith or to religious coercion. If a closer acquaintance with Nature was able to infuse into the minds of the greatest naturalists and poets of the nineteenth century that lofty inspiration which they found in the contemplation of the universe—if a look into Nature's breast made Goethe live only the more intensely in the face of the raging storm, the calm mountains, the dark forest and its inhabitants—why should not a widened knowledge of man and his destinies be able to inspire the poet in the same way? And when the poet has found the proper expression for his sense of communion with the Cosmos and his unity with fellow-men, he becomes capable of inspiring thousands of men with the highest enthusiasm. He makes them feel better, and awakens the desire of being better still. He produces in them those very ecstasies which were formerly considered as belonging exclusively to the province of religion. What are, indeed, the Psalms, which are described as the highest expression of religious feeling, or the more poetical portions of the sacred books of the East, but attempts to express man's ecstasy at the contemplation of the universe—the first awakening of his sense of the poetry of Nature?

II

The need of realistic ethics was felt from the very dawn of the present scientific revival, when Bacon, at the same time as he laid the foundations of the present advancement of sciences, indicated also the main outlines of empirical ethics, perhaps with less thoroughness than this was done by his followers, but with a width of conception which was not much improved upon in later days. The best thinkers of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries continued on the same lines, endeavouring to work out systems of ethics, independent of the imperatives of religion. Hobbes, Locke, Shaftesbury and

Paley, Hutcheson, Hume, and Adam Smith boldly attacked the problem on all sides. They indicated the empirical sources of the moral sense, and in their determinations of the moral ends they mostly stood on the same empirical ground. They combined in varied ways the 'intellectualism' and utilitarianism of Locke with the 'moral sense' and sense of beauty of Hutcheson, the 'theory of association' of Hartley, and the ethics of feeling of Shaftesbury. Speaking of the ends of ethics, some of them already mentioned the 'harmony' between self-love and regard to fellow-men which took such a development in the nineteenth century, and considered it in connection with Hutcheson's 'emotion of approbation,' or the 'sympathy' of Hume and Adam Smith. And finally, if they found a difficulty in explaining the sense of duty on a rational basis, they resorted to the early influences of religion, or to some inborn sense, or to some variety of Hobbes' theory of law, considered as the educator of the otherwise unsociable primitive savage. The French Encyclopædists and materialists discussed the problem on the same lines, only insisting more on self-love, and trying to find the synthesis of the opposed tendencies of human nature in the educational influence of the social institutions, which must be such as to favour the development of the better sides of human nature. Rousseau, with his rational religion, stood as a link between the materialists and the intuitionists, and by boldly attacking the social problems of the day he won a wider hearing than any one of them. On the other side, even the utmost idealists, like Descartes and his pantheist follower Spinoza, even Leibnitz and the 'transcendentalist-idealist' Kant, did not trust entirely to the revealed origin of the moral ideas, and tried to give to ethics a broader foundation, even though they would not part entirely with an extra-human origin of the moral law.

The same endeavour towards finding a realistic basis for ethics became even more pronounced in the nineteenth century, when quite a number of important ethical systems were worked out on the different bases of rational self-love, love of humanity (Auguste Comte, Littré, and a great number of minor followers), sympathy and intellectual identification of one's personality with mankind (Schopenhauer), utilitarianism (Bentham and Mill), and evolution (Darwin, Spencer, Guyau), to say nothing of the negative systems, originating in La Rochefoucauld and Mandeville and developed by Nietzsche and several others, who tried to establish a higher moral standard by their bold attacks against the current half-hearted moral conceptions, and by a vigorous assertion of the supreme rights of the individual.

Two of the nineteenth-century ethical systems—Comte's positivism and Bentham's utilitarianism—exercised, as is known, a deep influence upon the century's thought, and the former impressed with its own stamp all the scientific researches which make the glory of modern science. They also gave origin to a variety of sub-systems,

so that most modern writers of mark in psychology, evolution, or anthropology have enriched ethical literature with some more or less original researches, sometimes of a high standard, as is the case with Feuerbach, Bain, Leslie Stephen, Wundt, Sidgwick, and several others. Numbers of ethical societies were also started for a wider propaganda of empirical ethics. At the same time, an immense movement, chiefly economical in its origins, but eminently ethical in its substance, was born in the first half of the nineteenth century and spread very widely under the names of Fourierism, Saint-Simonism, and Owenism, and later on of international socialism and anarchism. This movement was an attempt on a great scale, supported by the working men of all nations, not only to revise the very foundations of the current ethical conceptions, but also to introduce into real life the conditions under which a new page in the ethical life of mankind could be opened.

It would seem, therefore, that since such a number of rationalist ethical systems have grown up in the course of the last two centuries, it is impossible to approach the subject once more without falling into a mere repetition or a mere recombination of fragments of already advocated schemes. However, the very fact that each of the main systems produced in the nineteenth century—the positivism of Comte, the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, and the altruist evolutionism of Darwin, Spencer, and Guyau—has added something important to the conceptions worked out by its predecessors proves that the matter is far yet from being exhausted. Even if we take the last three systems only, we cannot but see that Spencer failed to take advantage of some of the hints which the evolutionist philosopher finds in the short but very suggestive sketch of ethics given by Darwin in *The Origin of Man*; while Guyau introduced into morals such an important element as that of an overflow of energy in feeling, thought, or will, which had not been taken into account by his evolutionist predecessors. If every new system thus contributes some new and valuable element, this very fact proves that ethical science is not yet constituted. In fact, it never will be, because new factors and new tendencies will always have to be taken into account in proportion as mankind advances in its mental evolution.

That, at the same time, none of the ethical systems which were brought forward in the course of the nineteenth century has satisfied, be it only the educated fraction of the civilised nations, hardly need be insisted upon. To say nothing of the numerous philosophical works in which dissatisfaction with modern ethics has been expressed,² the best proof of it is the decided return to idealism which we see in all civilised nations, and especially in France. The absence of any poetical inspiration in the positivism of Littré and Herbert Spencer,

² Sufficient to name here the critical and historical works of Paulsen, Wundt, Leslie Stephen, Guyau, Lichtenberger, Fouillée, De Roberty, and so many others.

and their incapacity to cope with the great problems of our present civilisation; the striking narrowness of views concerning the social problem which characterises the chief philosopher of evolution, Spencer; nay, the repudiation by the latter-day French positivists of the humanitarian theories which distinguished the eighteenth-century Encyclopædists—all these have helped to create a strong reaction in favour of a sort of mystico-religious idealism. The ferocious interpretation of Darwinism, which was given to it by the most prominent representatives of the evolutionist school, without a word of protest coming from Darwin himself for the first twelve years after the appearance of his *Origin of Species*, gave still more force to the reaction against 'naturism'—we are told by Fouillée. And, as always happens with every reaction, the movement went far beyond its original purpose. Beginning as a protest against some mistakes of the naturalist philosophy, it soon became a campaign against positive knowledge altogether. The 'failure of science' was triumphantly announced. The fact that science is revising now the 'first approximations' concerning life, psychical activity, evolution, the structure of matter, and so on, which were arrived at in the years 1856-62, and which must be revised now in order to reach the next, deeper generalisations—successive approximations being the very essence of the history of sciences—this fact was taken advantage of for representing science as having failed in its attempted solutions of all the great problems. A crusade in favour of intuitionism and blind faith was started accordingly. Going back first to Kant, then to Schelling, and even to Lotze, numbers of writers have been preaching lately 'spiritualism,' 'indeterminism,' 'apriorism,' 'personal idealism,' and so on—proclaiming faith as the very source of all true knowledge. Religious faith itself was found insufficient. It is the mysticism of St. Bernard or of the neo-Platonians which is now in demand. 'Symbolism,' 'the subtle,' 'the incomprehensible' are sought for. Even the belief in the mediæval Satan was resuscitated.³

It hardly need be said that none of these currents of thought obtained a widespread hold upon the minds of our contemporaries; but we certainly see public opinion floating between the two extremes—between a desperate effort, on the one side, to force oneself to return to the obscure creeds of the Middle Ages, with their full accompaniment of superstition, idolatry, and even magic; and, on the opposite extreme, a glorification of 'a-moralism' and a revival of that worship of 'superior natures,' now invested with the names of 'supermen' or 'superior individualisations,' which Europe had lived through in the times of Byronism and early Romanticism.

It appears, therefore, more necessary than ever to see if the present

³ See A. Fouillée, *Le Mouvement idéaliste et la Réaction contre la Science positive*, 2nd edition; Paul Desjardins, *Le Devoir présent*, which has gone through five editions in a short time; and many others.

scepticism as to the claims of science in ethical questions is well founded, and whether science does not contain already the elements of a system of ethics which, if it were properly formulated, would respond to the needs of the present day.

III

The limited success of the various ethical systems which were born in the course of the last hundred years shows that man cannot be satisfied with a mere naturalistic *explanation of the origins* of the moral instinct. He means to have a *justification* of it. Simply to trace the origin of our moral feelings, as we trace the pedigree of some structural feature in a flower, and to say that such-and-such causes have contributed to the growth and refinement of the moral sense, is not enough. Man wants to have a criterion for judging the moral instinct itself. Whereto does it lead us? Is it towards a desirable end, or towards something which, as some critics say, would only result in the weakening of the race and its ultimate decay? If struggle for life and the extermination of the physically weakest is the law of Nature, and represents a condition of progress, is not then the cessation of the struggle, and the 'industrial state' which Comte and Spencer promise us, the very beginning of the decay of the human race—as Nietzsche has so forcibly concluded? And if such an end is undesirable, must we not proceed, indeed, to a re-valuation of all those moral 'values' which tend to reduce the struggle, or to render it less painful? The main problem of modern realistic ethics is thus, as has been remarked by Wundt in his *Ethics*,⁴ to determine, first of all, *the moral end* in view. But this end or ends, however ideal they may be, and however remote their full realisation, must belong to the world of realities. They must be born out of it, and remain accessible to our senses, because modern man will not be taken in by mere words or by a metaphysical substantiation of his own desires. The end of morals cannot be 'transcendental,' as the idealists desire it to be: it must be real.

When Darwin threw into circulation the idea of 'struggle for existence,' and represented this struggle as the mainspring of progressive evolution, he agitated once more the great old question as to the moral or immoral aspects of Nature. The origin of the conceptions of good and evil, which had exercised the best minds since the times of the Zend Avesta, was brought once more under discussion with a renewed vigour, and with a greater depth of conception than ever. Nature was represented by the Darwinists as an immense battlefield upon which one sees nothing but an incessant struggle for life and an

⁴ W. Wundt, *Ethics*, English translation in three volumes, by Professor Titchener, Prof. Julia Gulliver, and Prof. Margaret Washburn, New York and London (Swan Sonnenschein), 1897.

extermination of the weak ones by the strongest, the swiftest, and the cunningest: evil was the only lesson which man could get from Nature. These ideas, as is known, became very widely spread. But if they are true the evolutionist philosopher has to solve a deep contradiction, which he himself has introduced into his philosophy. He cannot deny that man is possessed of a higher conception of 'good,' and that a faith in the gradual triumph of the good principle is deeply seated in human nature, and he has to explain this conception and this faith. He cannot be lulled into indifference by the Epicurean hope, expressed by Tennyson—that '*somehow* good will be the final goal of ill.' Nor can he represent to himself Nature, 'red in tooth and claw,' at strife everywhere with the good principle—the very negation of it in every living being—and yet this good principle triumphant in the long run. He must explain this contradiction. But if he maintains that the only lesson which Nature gives to man is one of evil, then he necessarily has to admit the existence of some other, extra-natural, or supra-natural influence which inspires man with conceptions of 'supreme good,' and guides human development towards a higher goal. And in this way he nullifies his own attempt at explaining evolution by the action of natural forces only.

In reality, however, things do not stand so badly as that for the theory of evolution. The above interpretation of Nature is not supported by fact. It is incomplete, one-sided, and consequently wrong, and Darwin himself indicated the other aspect of Nature in a special chapter of *The Origin of Man*. There is, he pointed out, *in Nature itself*, another set of facts, parallel to those of mutual struggle, but having a quite different meaning: the facts of mutual support within the species, which are even more important than the former, on account of their significance for the welfare of the species and its maintenance. This extremely important idea, to which, however, most Darwinists paid but little attention, I attempted further to develop a few years ago, in a series of essays originally published in this Review, and in which I endeavoured to bring into evidence the immense importance of Mutual Aid for the preservation of both the animal species and the human race, and still more so for *progressive* evolution.⁵ Without trying to minimise the fact that an immense number of animals live either upon species belonging to some lower division of the animal kingdom, or upon some smaller species of the same class as themselves, I indicated that warfare in Nature is chiefly limited to struggle between *different species*; but that *within each species*, and within the groups of different species which we find living together, the practice of mutual aid is the rule, and therefore this last aspect of animal life plays a far greater part in the economy of Nature than warfare. It is more general, not only on account of

⁵ *Nineteenth Century*, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1894, and 1896; *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, London (Heinemann), 2nd edition, 1904.

the immense numbers of sociable species, such as the ruminants, many rodents, many birds, the ants, the bees, and so on, which do not prey at all upon other animals, and the overwhelming numbers of individuals which all sociable species contain, but also because nearly all carnivorous and rapacious species, and especially those of them which are not in decay owing to a rapid extermination by man or to some other cause, also practise it to some extent.

If mutual support is so general in Nature, it is because it offers such immense advantages to all those animals which practise it best that it entirely upsets the balance of benefits which otherwise might be derived from a superior development of beak and claw. It represents the best arm in the great struggle for life which continually has to be carried on in Nature against climate, inundations, storms, frost, and the like, and continually requires new adaptations to the ever-changing conditions of existence. Therefore, taken as a whole, Nature is by no means an illustration of the triumph of physical force, swiftness, cunningness, or any other feature useful in warfare. It teems, on the contrary, with species decidedly weak, badly protected, and all but warlike—such as the ant, the bee, the pigeon, the duck, the marmot, the gazelle, and so on—which, nevertheless, succeed best in the struggle for life, and, owing to their sociability and mutual protection, even displace much more powerfully-built competitors and enemies. And, finally, we can take it as proved that while struggle for life leads indifferently to both progressive and regressive evolution, the practice of mutual aid is the agency which always leads to *progressive development*. It is the main factor of progressive evolution.

Being thus necessary for the preservation, the welfare, and the progressive development of every species, the mutual aid instinct has become what Darwin described as 'a permanent instinct,' which is *always* at work in all sociable animals, and especially in man. Having its origin at the very beginnings of the evolution of the animal world, it is certainly an instinct as deeply seated in animals, low and high, as the instinct of maternal love; perhaps even deeper, because it is present in such animals as the molluscs, some insects, and most fishes, which hardly possess the maternal instinct at all. Darwin was therefore quite right in considering that the instinct of 'mutual sympathy' is more permanently at work in the sociable animals than even the purely egotistic instinct of direct self-preservation. He saw in it, as is known, the rudiments of the moral conscience.

But this is not all. In the same instinct we have the origin of those feelings of benevolence and of that partial identification of the individual with the group which become the starting-point of all the higher ethical feelings. It is upon this foundation that the higher sense of justice, or equity, is developed. When we see that scores of thousands of different aquatic birds come together for nesting on the

ledges of the 'birds' mountains,' without fighting for the best positions on these ledges; that several flocks of pelicans will keep by the side of each other in their separate fishing grounds; and that hundreds of species of birds and mammals come in some way to a certain arrangement concerning their feeding areas, their nesting places, their night quarters, and their hunting grounds, and respect these arrangements, instead of continually fighting for upsetting them; or when we see that a young bird which has stolen some straw from another bird's nest is attacked by all the birds of the same colony, we catch on the spot the very origin and the growth of the sense of equity and justice in the animal societies. And finally, in proportion as we advance in every class of animals towards the higher representatives of that class (the ants, the wasps, and the bees amongst the insects, the cranes and the parrots amongst the birds, the higher ruminants, the apes and man amongst the mammals), we find that the identification of the individual with the interests of his group, and eventually sacrifice for it, grow in proportion—thus revealing to us the origin of the higher ethical feelings. It thus appears that not only Nature does *not* give us a lesson of a-moralism, which need be corrected by some extra-natural influence, but we are bound to recognise that the very ideas of bad and good, and man's abstractions concerning 'the supreme good' and 'the lowest evil,' have been borrowed from Nature. They are reflections in the mind of man of what he saw in Nature, and these impressions were developed during his life in society into conceptions of right and wrong. However, they are not merely subjective appreciations. They contain the fundamental principles of equity and mutual sympathy, which apply to all sentient beings, just as mechanical truths derived from observation on the surface of the earth apply to matter everywhere in the stellar spaces.

It is self-evident that a similar conception must also apply to the evolution of the human character and human institutions. True that up to the present time the history of mankind, notwithstanding the extreme wealth of materials accumulated lately, has not been told as the development of some fundamental ethical tendency. But it is already possible now to conceive it as the evolution of an ethical factor which consists, as I have tried to prove, in the ever-present tendency of men to organise the relations within the tribe, the village community, the commonwealth, on the bases of mutual aid; these forms of social organisation becoming in turn the bases of further progress. We certainly must abandon the idea of representing human history as an uninterrupted chain of development from the pre-historic Stone Age to the present time. Just as in the evolution of the animal series we consider the insects, the birds, the fishes, the mammals, as separate lines of development, so also in human history we must admit that evolution was started several times anew—in India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome,

and finally in Western Europe, beginning each time with the primitive tribe and the village community. But if we consider each of these lines separately, we certainly find in each of them, and especially in the development of Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire, a continual widening of the conception of mutual support and mutual protection, from the clan to the tribe, the nation, and finally to the international union of nations. And, on the other side, notwithstanding the temporary regressive movements which occasionally take place, even in the most civilised nations, there is—at least among the representatives of advanced thought in the civilised world and in the progressive popular movements—the tendency of always widening the current conception of human solidarity and justice, and of constantly refining the character of our mutual relations, as well as the ideal of what is desirable in this respect. The very fact that the backward movements which take place from time to time are considered by the enlightened portion of the population as mere temporary illnesses of the social organism, the return of which must be prevented in the future, proves that the average ethical standard is now higher than it was in the past. And in proportion as the means of satisfying the needs of all the members of the civilised communities are improved, and room is prepared for a still higher conception of justice for all, the ethical standard is bound to become more and more refined. In scientific ethics man is thus in a position not only to reaffirm his faith in moral progress, which he obstinately retains, notwithstanding all pessimistic lessons to the contrary, he sees that this belief, although it had only originated in one of those artistic intuitions which always precede science, was quite correct, and is confirmed now by positive knowledge.

IV

If the empirical philosophers have hitherto failed to state this steady progress which, speaking metaphorically, we can describe as the leading principle of evolution, the fault lies to a great extent with our predecessors, the speculative philosophers. They have so much denied the empirical origin of man's moral feelings; they have gone into such subtle reasonings in order to assign a supernatural origin to the moral sense; and they have so much spoken about 'the destination of man,' the 'why of his existence,' and 'the aim of Nature,' that a reaction against the mythological and metaphysical conceptions which had risen round this question was unavoidable. Moreover, the modern evolutionists, having established the wide part which certainly pertains in the animal world to a keen struggle between different species, could not accept that such a brutal process, which entails so much suffering upon sentient beings, should be the unravelling of a superior plan; and they consequently denied that any ethical principle

could be discovered in it. Only now that the evolution of species, races of men, human institutions, and ethical ideas has been proved to be the result of natural forces, has it become possible to study all the factors which were at work, including the ethical factor of mutual support and growing sympathy, without the risk of falling back into a supra-natural philosophy. But, this being so, we reach a point of considerable philosophical importance.

We are enabled to conclude that the lesson which man derives both from the study of Nature and his own history is the permanent presence of a double tendency—towards a greater development, on the one side, of sociability, and, on the other side, of a consequent increase of the intensity of life, which results in an increase of happiness for the individuals, and in progress—physical, intellectual, and moral. This double tendency is a distinctive characteristic of life altogether. It is always present, and belongs to life, as one of its attributes, whatever aspects life may take on our planet or elsewhere. And this is not a metaphysical assertion, or a mere supposition. It is an empirically discovered law of Nature. It thus appears that science, far from destroying the foundations of ethics—as it is so often accused of doing—gives, on the contrary, a *concrete content* to the nebulous metaphysical presumptions which were current in transcendental ethics. As it goes deeper into the life of Nature, it gives to evolutionist ethics a philosophical certitude, where the transcendental thinker had only a vague intuition to rely upon.

There is still less foundation in another continually repeated reproach—namely, that the study of Nature can only lead us to recognise some cold mathematical *truth*, but that such truths have little effect upon our actions. The study of Nature, we are told, can at the best inspire us with the love of truth; but the inspiration for higher emotions, such as that of 'infinite goodness,' must be sought for in some other source, which can only be religion. So we are told, at least; but, to begin with, love of truth is already one half—the better half—of all ethical teaching. As to the conception of good and the admiration for it, the 'truth' which we have just mentioned is certainly an inspiring truth, of which Goethe, with the insight of his pantheistic genius, had already guessed the philosophical value,⁶ and which certainly will some day find its expression in the poetry of Nature and give it an additional humanitarian touch. Moreover, the deeper we go into the study of the primitive man, the more we realise that it was from the life of animals with whom he stood in close contact, even more than from his own congeners, that he learned the first lessons of valour, self-sacrifice for the welfare of the group, unlimited parental love, and the advantages of sociability altogether. The conceptions of 'virtue' and 'wickedness' are zoological, not merely human conceptions. As to the powers which ideas and intellectually

⁶ Eckermann, *Gespräche*, 1848, vol. iii, 219, 221.

conceived ideals exercise upon the current moral conceptions, and how these conceptions influence in their turn the intellectual aspect of an epoch, this subject hardly need be insisted upon. The intellectual evolution of a given society may take at times, under the influence of all sorts of circumstances, a totally wrong turn, or it may take, on the contrary, a high flight. But in both cases the leading ideas of the time will never fail deeply to influence the ethical life. The same applies to a great extent to the individual. Most certainly, *ideas are forces*, as Fouillée puts it; and they are *ethical forces*, if the ideas are correct and wide enough to represent the real life of Nature—not one of its sides only. The first step, therefore, towards the elaboration of a morality which should exercise a lasting influence is to base it upon an ascertained truth; and this is so much so, that one of the main causes opposed now to the appearance of a complete ethical system, corresponding to the present needs, is the fact that the science of society is still in its infancy. Having just completed its storing of materials, sociology is only beginning to investigate them with the view to ascertaining the probable lines of a future development.

The chief demand which is addressed now to ethics is to do its best to find in philosophy, and thus to help mankind to find in its institutions, a synthesis—not a compromise—between the two sets of feelings which exist in man: those which induce him to subdue other men, in order to utilise them for his individual ends, and those which induce human beings to unite and to combine for attaining common ends by common effort: the first answering to that fundamental need of human nature—struggle, and the second representing another equally fundamental tendency—the desire of union and sympathy. Such a synthesis is of absolute necessity, because the civilised man of to-day, having no settled conviction on this point, is paralysed in his powers of action. He cannot admit that a struggle to the knife for supremacy, carried on between individuals and nations, should be the last word of science; he does not believe, at the same time, in the solution of brotherhood and resigned self-abnegation which Christianity has offered us for so many centuries, but upon which it has failed to establish a commonwealth; and he has no faith either in the solution offered by the communists. To settle, then, these doubts, and to aid mankind in finding the synthesis between the two leading tendencies of human nature, is the chief duty of ethics. For this purpose we have earnestly to study what were the means resorted to by men at different periods of their evolution, in order so to direct the individual forces as to get from them the greatest benefit for the welfare of all, without paralysing them. And we have to define the tendencies in this direction which exist at the present moment—the rough sketches, the timid attempts which are being made, or even the potentialities concealed in modern society, which may be utilised for finding that synthesis. And then, as no new move in civilisation

has ever been made without a certain enthusiasm being evoked in order to overcome the first difficulties of inertia and opposition, it is the duty of the new ethics to infuse in men those ideals which would move them, provoke their enthusiasm, and give them the necessary forces for accomplishing that synthesis in real life.

This brings us to the chief reproach which has always been made for the last two hundred years to all empirical systems of ethics. Their conclusions, we are told, will never have the necessary authority for influencing the actions of men, because they cannot be invested with the sense of *duty*, of *obligation*. It must be understood, of course, that empirical morality has never claimed to possess the imperative character which belongs to prescriptions that are placed under the sanction of religious awe, and of which we have the prototype in the Mosaic Decalogue. True, that Kant thought of his 'categorical imperative' ('so act that the maxim of thy will might serve at the same time as a principle of universal legislation') that it required no sanction whatever for being universally recognised as obligatory; it was, he maintained, a necessary form of reasoning, a 'category' of our intellect, and it was deduced from no utilitarian considerations. However, modern criticism, beginning with Schopenhauer, has shown that this was an illusion. Kant has certainly failed to prove why it should be a duty to follow his injunction. And, strange to say, the only reason why his 'imperative' might recommend itself to general acceptance is still its eudæmonistic character, its social *utility*, although some of the best pages which Kant wrote were precisely those in which he strongly objected to any considerations of utility being taken as the foundation of morality. After all, he produced a beautiful panegyric of the sense of duty, but he failed to give to this sense any other foundation than the inner conscience of man and his desire of retaining a unity between his intellectual conceptions and his actions.

Empirical morality does not claim anything more. It does not pretend in the least to find a substitute for the religious imperative expressed in the words 'I am the Lord.' But it must also be said in justification that the painful discrepancy which exists between the ethical prescriptions of the Christian religion and the life of societies professing to belong to it—a contradiction which surely shows no signs of abatement—and, on the other side, the criticism that has been made so successfully since the times of the Reform, concerning the efficiency of morality based upon fear, have deprived the above reproach of its value. However, even empirical morality is not entirely devoid of a sense of conditional obligation. The different feelings and actions which are usually described since the times of Auguste Comte as 'altruistic' can easily be classed under two different headings. There are actions which may be considered as absolutely necessary, once we choose to live in society, and to which, therefore, the name of 'altruistic' ought never to be applied: they bear the character of

reciprocity, and they are as much in the interest of the individual as any act of self-preservation. And there are, on the other hand, those actions which bear no character of reciprocity, and which, although they are the real mainsprings of moral progress, can certainly have no character of obligation attached to them. A great deal of confusion arises from not having sufficiently kept in view this fundamental distinction; but this confusion can easily be got rid of.

Altogether it is quite evident that the functions of ethics are different from those of law. Moral science does not even settle the question whether legislation is necessary or not. It stands above that. It soars on a higher level. We know, indeed, ethical writers—and these were not the least influential in the early beginnings of the Reform movement—who denied the necessity of any legislation and appealed directly to human conscience. The function of ethics is not even so much to insist upon the defects of man, and to reproach him with his ‘sins,’ as to act in the *positive* direction, by appealing to man’s best instincts. It determines, of course, or rather it sums up, the few fundamental principles without which neither animals nor men could live in societies; but then it appeals to something superior to that: to love, courage, fraternity, self-respect, concordance with one’s ideal. It tells to man, that if he desires to have a life in which all his forces, physical, intellectual, and emotional, should find a full exercise, he must once and for ever abandon the idea that such a life is attainable on the path of disregard for others. It is only through establishing a certain harmony between the individual and all others that an approach to such complete life will be possible; and it adds: ‘Look at Nature itself! Study the past of mankind! They will prove to you that so it is in reality.’ And when the individual, for this or that reason, hesitates in some special case as to the best course to follow, ethics comes to his aid and indicates how he would like himself to act, if he placed himself in the place of those whom he is going to harm.⁷ But even then true ethics does not trace a stiff line of conduct, because it is the individual himself who must weigh the relative value of the different motives affecting him. There is no use to recommend risk to one who can stand no reverse, or to speak of an old man’s prudence to the young man full of energy. He would give the reply—the profoundly true and beautiful reply which Egmont gives to old Count Oliva’s advice in Goethe’s drama—and he would be quite right: ‘As if spurred by unseen spirits, the sunhorses of time run with the light cart of our fate; and there remains to us only boldly to hold the reins and lead the wheels away—here, from a stone on our left, there from upsetting the cart on our right. Whereto does it run? Who knows? Can we only remember wherefrom we came?’ ‘The

⁷ ‘It will not tell him, “This you must do,” but inquire with him, “What is it that you will, in reality and definitively—not only in a momentary mood?”’ (F. Paulsen, *System der Ethik*, 2 vols., Berlin 1896, vol. I. p. 20.)

flower *must* bloom,’ as Guyau says,⁸ even though its blooming meant death.

And yet the main purpose of ethics is not to advise men separately. It is rather to set before them, as a whole, a higher purpose, an ideal which, better than any advice, would make them act instinctively in the proper direction. Just as the aim of intellectual education is to accustom us to perform an enormous number of mental operations almost unconsciously, so is the aim of ethics to create such an atmosphere in society as would produce in the great number, entirely by impulse, those actions which best lead to the welfare of all and the fullest happiness of every separate being. This is the final aim of morality; but to reach it we must free our morality of the self-contradictions which it contains. A morality of charity, compassion, and pity necessarily breeds a deadly contradiction. It starts with the assertion of full equity and justice, or of full brotherhood. But then it adds that we need not worry our minds with either. The one is unattainable. As to the brotherhood of men, which is the fundamental principle of all religions, it must not be taken too closely *à la lettre*: that was a mere *façon de parler* of enthusiastic preachers. ‘Inequality is the rule of Nature,’ we are told by religious people, and with regard to this special lesson Nature, not religion, is the proper teacher. But when the inequalities in the modes of living of men become too striking, and the sum total of produced wealth is so divided as to result in the most abject misery for a very great number, then compassion for the poor, and sharing with them what can be shared without parting with one’s privileged position, becomes a holy duty. Such a morality may certainly be prevalent in a society for a time, or even for a long time, if it has the sanction of religion interpreted by the reigning Church. But the moment that man begins to consider the prescriptions of religion with a critical eye, and requires a reasoned conviction instead of mere obedience and fear, an inner contradiction of this sort cannot be retained any longer. It must be abandoned—the sooner the better. Inner contradiction is the death-sentence of all ethics.

V

A most important condition which modern morality is bound to satisfy is that it must not aim at fettering the powers of action of the individual, be it for so high a purpose as the welfare of the commonwealth or even the species. Wundt, in his excellent review of the ethical systems, makes the remark that from the eighteenth-century period of enlightenment they became, nearly all of them, individualistic. This is, however, true but to some extent, because the rights of the individual were asserted with great energy in one domain only—in

⁸ M. Guyau, *A Sketch of Morality independent of Obligation or Sanction*, trans. by Gertrude Kapteyn, London (Watts), 1898.

economics. And even here individual freedom remained, both in theory and in practice, more illusory than real. As to the other domains—political, intellectual, artistic—it may be said that in proportion as economical individualism was asserted with more emphasis, the subjection of the individual—to the war machinery of the State, the system of education, the intellectual atmosphere required for the support of the existing institutions, and so on—was steadily growing. Even most of the advanced reformers of the present day, in their forecasts of the future, reason under the presumption of a still greater absorption of the individual by the society to which he will belong. This tendency necessarily provoked a revolt, to which Godwin at the beginning of the century, and Spencer towards its end, already gave expression, and which brought Nietzsche to conclude that all morality must be thrown overboard if it can find no better foundation than the sacrifice of the individual in the interests of the race. This revolt is perhaps the most characteristic feature of our epoch, the more so as its mainspring is not so much in an egoistic striving after economical independence (as was the case with the eighteenth-century individualists, with the exception of Godwin) as in a passionate desire of intellectual freedom for working out a new, better form of society, in which the welfare of all would become a groundwork for the fullest development of the personality.⁹

The want of development of the personality and the lack of individual creative power and initiative are certainly one of the chief drawbacks of the present period. Economical individualism has not kept its promise: it did *not* result in any striking development of individuality. As of yore, sociological creation is extremely slow, and imitation remains the chief means for spreading progressive innovations in mankind. Modern nations repeat the history of the barbarian tribes and the mediæval cities when they reproduced one after the other, in a thousand copies, the same political, religious, and economical movements. Whole nations have appropriated to themselves lately, with an astounding rapidity, the results of the West European industrial and military civilisation; and in these unrevised new editions of old types we see best how superficial that civilisation is, how much of it is mere imitation. It is only natural, therefore, to ask ourselves whether the current moral teachings are not instrumental in maintaining that imitative submission. Did they not too much want to make of man the 'ideational automaton' of Herbart, who is plunged into contemplation, and fears above all the storms of passion? Is it not time to vindicate the rights of the real man, full

⁹ Wundt expresses himself in these words: 'For, unless all signs fail, a revolution of opinion is at present going on, in which the extreme individualism of the enlightenment is giving place to a revival of the universalism of antiquity, supplemented by a better notion of the liberty of human personality—an improvement that we owe to individualism.' (*Ethics*, iii. p. 34 of English translation; p. 459 of German original.)

of vigour, who is capable of really loving what is worth being loved and hating what deserves hatred, apart from the personalities in which the lovable or the spiteful has been incarnated—the man who is always ready to enter the arena and to fight for an ideal which ennobles his love and justifies his antipathies? From the times of the philosophers of antiquity there was a tendency to represent 'virtue' as a sort of 'wisdom' which induces the wise man to 'cultivate the beauty of his soul,' rather than to join 'the unwise' in their struggles against the evils of the day. Later on that virtue became 'non-resistance to evil,' and for many centuries in succession individual, personal salvation, coupled with resignation and a passive attitude towards evil, was the essence of Christian ethics; the result being the culture of a monastic indifference to social good and evil, and the elaboration of an intricate argumentation in favour of 'virtuous individualism.' There is no doubt, however, that a reaction begins now, and the question is asked whether a passive attitude in the presence of evil does not merely mean moral cowardice? whether, as was taught by the Zend Avesta, an active struggle against Ahriman is not the first condition of virtue?¹⁰ We need moral progress, but without moral courage no moral progress is possible.

Such are some of the main currents of thought concerning the ethical need of the day which can be discerned amid the present confusion. All of them converge towards one leading idea. What is wanted now is a new comprehension of morality: in its fundamental principle, which must be broad enough to infuse new life in our civilisation, and in its methods, which must be freed from both the transcendental survivals and the narrow conceptions of philistine utilitarianism. The elements for such a comprehension are already at hand. The importance of mutual aid in the evolution of the animal world and human history may be taken, I believe, as a positively established scientific truth, free of any hypothetical admission. We may also take next, as granted, that in proportion as mutual aid becomes more habitual in a human community, and so to say instinctive, this very fact leads to a parallel development of the sense of justice, with its necessary accompaniment of equity and equalitarian self-restraint. The idea that the personal rights of every individual are as unassailable as the same rights of every other individual grows in proportion as class distinctions fade away; and it becomes established as a matter of fact when the institutions of a given community have been altered permanently in this sense. A certain degree of identification of the individual with the interests of the group to which it belongs has necessarily existed since the very beginning of sociable life, and it is apparent even among the lowest animals. But in proportion as relations of equalitarian justice are solidly established

¹⁰ C. P. Thiele, *Geschichte der Religion im Alterthum*, German translation by G. Gehrich. Gotha, 1903, vol. ii. pp. 163 sq.

in the human community, the ground is prepared for the further and the more general development of those more refined relations, under which man so well understands and feels the feelings of other men affected by his actions that he refrains from offending them, even though he may have to forsake on that account the satisfaction of some of his own desires, and when he so fully identifies his feelings with those of the others that he is ready to sacrifice his forces for their benefit without expecting anything in return. These are the feelings and the habits which alone deserve the name of Morality, properly speaking, although most ethical writers confound them, under the name of altruism, with the mere sense of justice.

Mutual Aid—Justice—Morality are thus the consecutive steps of an ascending series, revealed to us by the study of the animal world and man. It is not something imposed from the outside; it is an organic necessity which carries in itself its own justification, confirmed and illustrated by the whole of the evolution of the animal kingdom, beginning with its earliest colony-stages, and gradually rising to our civilised human communities. Speaking an imaged language, it is a general law of organic evolution, and this is why the senses of Mutual Aid, Justice, and Morality are rooted in man's mind with all the force of an inborn instinct—the first being evidently the strongest, and the third, which is the latest, being the least imperative of the three. Like the need of food, shelter, or sleep, these instincts are self-preservation instincts. Of course, they may sometimes be weakened under the influence of certain circumstances, and we know numbers of such instances, when a relaxation of these instincts takes place, for one reason or another, in some animal group, or in a human community; but then the group necessarily begins to fail in the struggle for life; it marches towards its decay. And if it perseveres in the wrong direction, if it does not revert to those necessary conditions of survival and of progressive development, which are Mutual Aid, Justice, and Morality—then the group, the race, or the species dies out and disappears. It did not fulfil the necessary condition of evolution—and it must go.

This is the solid foundation which science gives us for the elaboration of a new system of ethics and its justification; and, therefore, instead of proclaiming 'the bankruptcy of science,' what we have now to do is to examine how scientific ethics can be built up out of the elements which modern research, stimulated by the idea of evolution, has accumulated for that purpose.

P. KROPOTKIN.

THE HARVEST OF THE HEDGEROWS

A LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES

Every lover of the open air, who follows Nature through sunshine and rain, has found some spot which is dearer to him and carries a deeper meaning than any other place on earth. From the earliest green of the swelling bud to the last parched winter leaf, that clings to sheltered oak or beech until the memory of a year ago is swept away by the gales of March, the colours seem brighter there than elsewhere, and the little confidences with which Nature rewards his constancy become more tender and intimate.

It may be an open moorland, robed in summer in its mantle of imperial purple and gay only in the unprofitable riches of golden-spangled furze; or a treeless down, sprinkled with delicate blue harebells, that darkens under no sorrow heavier than the passing shadow of a wind-driven cloud; or even a melancholy fen, where the grey heron stands motionless for hours by the brink of a muddy ditch, and cold blue sedges lean trembling before the storm. But whether it be mountain, woodland, or broad plain, if he have not caught the spirit of his bit of countryside he has missed one of the finer joys of life. Though he may have travelled the whole world over, and viewed the wonders of another hemisphere, he is like one who, after a thousand gay romances, has found no abiding love, or amidst a teeming humanity has made no enduring friendship.

The spot I love the most is within easy walking distance from my home, and thither my errandless footsteps always wander by some indescribable attraction.

A narrow byway cuts through a sandy hollow, and then warily descends aslant the steep hillside. Again it rises over a gentle knap, a sort of outwork of the range, and from this lower summit a broad valley lies full in view.

The land below is rich in green pastures, sparingly intermixed with square arable fields, in which, after a yellow stubble, the furrows turn up a light brown behind the plough. Everywhere there is a soil so deep that no outcropping rock can shame us with the nakedness of its poverty by wearing holes in its imperishable garment of verdure decked with flowers. The fields are small; therefore it is a country