

IV

THE MORAL PATHWAY TO REALITY

IF the argument of the last chapter has been sound, it is clear that in its very nature science can never give us a final account or explanation even of the world of Nature. Still less can it explain human history because of its greater freedom. There is no real science of history in the strict sense of the term. That science deals with realities, and that it deals with them with extraordinary efficiency, and that, therefore, we must take full account of what it tells us of Reality in any further synthesis, is of course beyond question, but that the Humanist endeavour to make it the final arbiter must in the very nature of the case lead to a mutilated and distorted picture of the marvellous and abundant world, seems to me plain. The way is therefore open to us for exploring other pathways to Reality in the endeavour to solve the fundamental riddle of the world.

To that riddle Humanism, as we have seen, gives us no answer. It disposes of it by denying our right to ask and our power to answer the question: Why does the world exist? What is its meaning? All the other questions, What? How? When? Where? are lawful and to be encouraged. But the most fundamental of them all, "Wherefore?" is an unlawful question. There is no road that way. We have seen the reason given for this veto.

Science is the sole pathway to Reality, and science excludes all things that cannot be measured, and therefore all values and purposes when we seek to use them as keys to the mystery. To do so is to be guilty of anthropomorphism. As if science itself were not riddled with anthropomorphism! Whence do we get our conceptions of substance, of causality, of law, but from our own human nature, substance from our consciousness of self, causality from our will, law from our experience of society? And is it not the conception of substance that is behind the questions, "What?" and "Where?" the conception of causality that is behind the question, "How did this event come to pass?" the conception of law and recurrent uniformity that is behind the question, "When may I expect the sun to rise, to be eclipsed, to set?" Whence does the fundamental prejudice of science in favour of the order of Nature come, save from a judgment of value and a deep prevision that Nature is not really alien to man, but that if he could understand her she would be found to be on his side? And how astonishingly fruitful the asking of these anthropomorphic questions has proved! Suppose man had not interrogated Nature with his "What?" "Where?" "How?" and "When?" where would he have been to-day? Why should he not ask the deepest question of all? Why should he not dare to say "Why?" Nothing but a mere dogma stands in the way, the dogma that science is the only pathway to Reality. We have, I believe, seen good cause to believe that this dogma is groundless, and stand face to face once more with the perennial riddle of the world.

I propose now to show that not only is science unable, by reason of its self-imposed limitations, to explain the world of Nature and of human life, but that when, in spite of this, we try to do it we mutilate and distort the facts. Just as plain facts can verify any theory, so no theory can stand if the facts are plainly against it. Our argument is that the scientific approach can explain neither the manifest beauty of the universe nor the story of man's religion nor his fundamental moral convictions, and that the endeavour to force these into harmony with it leads to their utter distortion. I believe that each of these is a pathway to Reality as well as science, and that the exploring of each of them will help us towards the solution of the fundamental problem of the meaning of the world. I do not in these lectures propose to explore them all with any thoroughness, but to take as typical the last of these, as I think it is that pathway that to-day makes the broadest appeal to the largest number of serious men and women. It is not easy to-day, when everything is questioned, and the tendency is to make everything relative, to get a moral formula which everybody of intelligence and goodwill will recognise to be universally true. But I imagine that few will question the principle that every human being ought always to do the best that he knows. There are two elements in this statement. The first is that every one of us carries about with him what a distinguished Victorian writer called "a scale of values in the soul." We have something in us, some inner standard according to which we grade alternative courses of action as higher or lower, as the case may be. This scale

is not confined to moralities. What is it that makes a painter move continually to and fro, back and forth, before his painting, tentatively putting in and rubbing out his colours? There is something within him approving or condemning his execution till at last it says to him, "That will do." What is it that makes the poet try phrase and rhythm till at last the inexorable monitor is appeased? What is it that makes the scientific discoverer restlessly try and test hypothesis after hypothesis and experiment after experiment until something within him says decisively, "That is the truth"? Clearly within the mind and soul of man there is always some scale and standard. Even so, when we are face to face with some plain moral alternative of honour or meanness, of fairness or oppression, of selfishness or love, there is something within us which says, "This is good," or "This is bad," or "This is the better way." It may be hard to discern it, difficult "in the circumstances" to know what is best. Or, again, the issue may be quite clear. But here is the peculiarity of the moral consciousness of man. The moment we do detect the Good as between two alternative courses of action, something else becomes manifest in it, something shining and formidable. It becomes not simply higher and finer, it becomes "imperative." I know that I ought to do it. The Good in this sense is not simply something wiser, preferable, more beautiful, more desirable. It has a thread of steel in it, a quality of adamant. It is the only course open to me that is "right," and every other course is "wrong." Two great systems of Ethics have been built up on these conceptions

of the Good and of moral Obligation. But they are surely both always present, though it may be in varying degrees, in every life that can be called moral at all.

I do not think that anyone will question that in substance this is an accurate account of how men universally feel and judge in all matters of moral conduct. They may differ indefinitely as to the particular things or courses of action that they think good, just as in scientific judgments they differ often indefinitely as to the theories they think to be true. But what they believe to be best they know they ought to do.

Without the sense of the Good and the Right there can be no morality. Now how does Naturalism, the theory that science is the sole pathway to Reality, explain this moral consciousness of mankind? It is, as we have seen, shut up to the conclusion that the sole ultimate realities are measurable and quantitative realities, for the universe itself is in the last resort composed of gyrating electrons and atoms according to the older Naturalism, or of Space-Time, with a *nisus* in it, whatever that *nisus* (or striving) may mean. According to this latter view the ultimate truth about human beings is that they are space-time patterns differing only in conformation, location, duration, degree of *nisus*, and so on. Now how are you to fit the Good and the Right into this scheme? The plain truth is that they cannot be fitted at all. They are of quite a different order. Science has to do solely with facts and events, not with moral values and validities. Its entire concern, therefore, is with that which is, which was and

which will be, but not with that which ought to be. Indeed by no ingenuity whatsoever can you derive that which ought to be out of that which simply is. It is on a different plane of Reality. Here is the earthquake rent which passes across the whole naturalistic construction of the world. Now if men differ from animals and things in the last resort only by possessing or being a different kind of space-time pattern, can you attach any peculiar sacredness to them? Here, let us say, is an ox and here is a man. Probe and explore the true nature of each to the uttermost. In the end the ultimate difference is simply one of conformation of space-time. If it is right to exploit the one why should it be wrong to exploit the other? In the end the difference can only be that men have so persuaded themselves. There is no real inherent difference in worth. All such judgments of good and bad, right and wrong are purely subjective, created by man and projected upon objects in themselves neutral.

This is what the naturalistic evolutionary theory of morality in the last resort comes to. How on that theory did the sense of the supreme value of human beings and the unconditional imperatives of morality grow up?

Society, it is said, was at the first a chaos of competing groups, struggling for bare existence and a place in the sun. That group had the best chance which was most compact and worked best together. Hence arose customs and laws and, in the end, morality. The standard of what was good had its roots in utility to the tribe in its desperate struggle for existence. The sense of

moral obligation was also instilled into individual men by the pressure of tribal opinion. They were made to feel that they were under obligation to their fellows to be loyal to those common standards of the Good which they had created. The sense of the Good and the Right, therefore, are every whit as much products of and weapons in the struggle for existence as tooth and nail, club and knife, trench-mortar and bomb. Man for his own ends has created all values and all validities, and space-time Nature has created him. Such in substance seems to be the naturalistic evolutionary theory of the origin of morality. Now, to ignore for a little the question of whether this can be considered an adequate theory from the point of view of history and psychology, I would point out that for a deeper reason it does not get to the heart of the matter at all. It does not really explain the Good and the Right. It explains them away. It is the endeavour to explain historically and psychologically how men came to imagine that goodness ought to be revered, that human beings are sacred, and that we ought to be sincere and brave. It explains these values and validities as being what I believe we can only call racial illusions. There is a world of difference surely between man's creating moral values and validities and his recognising them. We come here to a definite parting of the ways, a critical decision which every one must make for himself, and which, if he can think coherently, must for him determine his whole view of Nature and of history. The primary question for him is not how he has come to believe that there is a real difference between Good and Evil, between a life

which is honest and pure and brave and a life which is shifty and sensual and mean. He has to ask himself, Is it really true that I ought to be just, sincere and humane? or are all these standards racial illusions whose ultimate source is social utility in the struggle for existence, and social pressure, and whose whole end is to secure biological success in the great arena? In other words, do we create or do we recognise these standards? If we create them, then I see no alternative but to regard them as in a real sense illusions, which man for practical purposes has agreed to regard as realities. We older people sometimes find pleasure in watching children playing at beings kings and courtiers. They get infinite enjoyment out of the game, for they have wonderful imaginative power. A tattered and faded old coat becomes a mantle of imperial purple, a staff becomes a sceptre, and a wreath of twisted rushes a tiara of diamonds. Older people watch them with a smile, but to the children it is all real. As yet they have the power to create these values and to live in a more or less coherent world of their own imaginings. We know that by and by they will lose that power. Meantime we are well pleased to see them create and project standards that are purely of their own making on things which in themselves have no value at all. Something like this must always be the view which coherent and thoroughgoing Naturalism takes of the whole world of moral values and validities of Good and Evil and Right and Wrong. This is the inevitable consequence of every account of the universe which says that science is the sole pathway to Reality. We break clear out of it whenever

we definitely say that, intrinsically, honesty is better than meanness, sincerity than falsehood, pity, mercy and love than cruelty, and that at all costs, we are unconditionally bound to follow them.

Let us take these two fundamental elements of morality, then, the Good and Duty, or our moral obligation to do the best that we know, and try out in fuller detail the naturalistic explanation of them. Let us begin with the Good. According to the naturalistic view in its full and, I believe, only consistent form, the first and only fundamental thing that we can say about any human being is that he is a material organism. From this all else that is psychical and moral is derived and dependent. To this derived realm all emotional and moral values belong. They are created, as Mr Huxley says, by man but he projects them, ascribes them to the other space-time patterns round him, both things and human beings. There must be something in these other structures that awakens in him emotions of approval or condemnation, admiration or disgust, but these differences cannot in the last resort be other than spatial and temporal distinctions, something measurable, in fact, for otherwise they would fall outside the range of science and science alone can describe Reality. In this sense, then, all the great values are created by the human race, and by a kind of useful illusion projected on human beings. Now let us test this theory on the greatest figure in human history—Christ upon the Cross of Calvary. Christ on His Cross is not in Himself supremely noble. He is regarded by us as such because the human race in the struggle for existence has

developed certain moral standards which it is racially expedient for them to follow and admire, and racially expedient also for them to project upon a space-time pattern of a certain type. Could sophistication go further? The theory plainly leads to a mutilation and distortion of Reality and confutes itself by so preposterous a conclusion. Imagine the whole of humanity, past, present and to come, gathered round that Sufferer in countless myriads all united in proclaiming Him a moral outcast, yelling at and cursing Him as a moral leper and an enemy of the human race. Would that make one iota of difference to the moral greatness of the Sufferer? We know that it would not. It would tell us much about the heart of humanity but nothing whatever about Him. Yet if mankind creates all moral values, how is that possible? In such a case the judgment of the human race must be final. The naturalistic theory of morality cannot therefore face this *experimentum crucis*. The human race cannot judge Christ. He judges the human race from the judgment seat of His Cross. He is the supremely noble One in Himself, and we either acknowledge Him for what He is, or pass Him by—blind! It is impossible here without overloading our argument to go into the whole question of whether all values are objective or only some. For the purposes of that argument here and now it is enough to concentrate on moral goodness, and I submit that here we have something as objectively present as sun or moon or star, something which we do not create but recognise. We create our own recognition of it, that is all, but it is "out there" quite

independently of our own judgments, whether we recognise it or not. Reality has been well defined as "that of which we must take account," and certainly any account of the universe which does not take account of this profound difference between Good and Evil ignores Reality, and in its very nature must give a distorted view of the world. As has been said above, we have to take a stand here and to make a decision. We have taken Jesus Christ on His Cross as the crucial instance, but however unique He may be in other respects (and to this we shall come later), in these great spiritual qualities He is the perfect one among many, "the first-born among many brethren." What is true of moral greatness in His case is true of all His real followers, and of all those human personalities in so far as they embody sincerity, justice, purity and love.

We have here, then, in this actual world, as well as the bare measurable facts of which science takes cognisance, that which is of absolute worth. It is worth man's while to attain some human measure of it which will justify his existence and which it is worth God's while to create. It is a simple fact that there have appeared, and are still appearing in the "cosmic weather" of Nature and in the flux of human history, men and women of such moral dignity, beauty and goodness that we cannot help feeling that they are excellent in themselves, and not simply because men imagine that they are so. As Professor Laird has said, we have to use old-fashioned words here and say that they are excellent from God's point of view. They inevitably suggest an Absolute Judgment, in

other words, God. Further, as they come into being and achieve their goodness in the heart of and by means of the course of Nature in human history, they inevitably lead us on to think of the world of Nature as instinct with a purpose which has these values as its supreme end. They bring meaning into what we might otherwise feel to be an aimless world. This has been well expressed by one of our modern novelists :¹

“ His knowledge of Sinclair and that bunch of men of his old ship gave to an aimless and sprawling world the assurance of anonymous courage and faith waiting in the sordid muddle for a signal, ready when it came. There were men like that. You could never tell where they were. They were only the crowd. There was nothing to distinguish them. They had no names. They were nobodies. But when they were wanted, there they were ; and when they had finished their task they disappeared, leaving no sign but in the heart. Without the certainty of that artless and profitless fidelity of simple souls, the great ocean would be as silly as the welter of doom undesigned, and the shining importance of the august affairs of the flourishing cities worth no more homage than the brickbats of Babylon. These people gave to God any countenance by which He could be known.”

If they are excellent from God's point of view, they can hardly be regarded as otherwise than one of the motives and ends of His will. Thus the moment we admit into our view of the world process the appearing of moral values, which are there whether we recognise them or not, we are

¹ H. M. Tomlinson, *Gallions Reach*, pp. 170, 171.

admitting a most potent transforming leaven into any merely scientific view of the world, which must spread through the whole system of causes and effects or of natural uniformities with which science is alone concerned, until the whole be leavened. What was before a system of causes and effects now becomes a system of means and ends. The whole material part of the world must somehow have the reason of its existence, or at least part of that reason, in the creation and development of the noblest type of human personalities, which to the Christian means men and women of the type and spirit of the Crucified, in other words, the coming of the Kingdom of God.

If, then, in our reverence for justice, sincerity and humanity we have a true pathway to Reality, a glimpse into the ultimate nature of things, it seems clear that we must transform our earlier scientific view of a world of causes and effects into that of a Kingdom of Ends. We must, in a word, have some conception of cosmic purpose, for "absolute worth" is when taken alone a mere abstraction. Worth has only meaning when we think of a will, a purpose which is seeking it. If we do not do that we are thrown back into the morass of believing that all morality is relative and that we create all our values, and that is a quite untenable position. No man can live continuously in that sceptical zone. So long as he is a mere spectator of time and existence, so long as he sits in his study worshipping idols of the study, he may think himself into it, and to use Hegel's phrase may see the world "grey in grey," but the moment he rouses himself and goes out into the

living world in which decisions between Good and Evil have to be made, the moral life awakens in him again. He holds on to his resolute quest for scientific truth, and his championship of it when he has found it, because he feels that he unconditionally ought to do so; he lives his life among his fellows disinterestedly and manfully because he knows that truth and sincerity and courage are good in themselves, and no mere illusions, and he very vigorously condemns all meanness and injustice because they are in themselves wrong and despicable courses of action, and the world seems no longer "grey in grey" draped in hues of twilight, but vivid with action and passion, aspiration and victory and defeat, a world in fact worth living in because it is a world of moral reality, and not a world of racial illusion.

We have come so far, then, in our examination of the Good as affording us a pathway to Reality and in the transformation of the purely scientific view which that implies. We have to consider now that other universal element in the moral consciousness of mankind of which we have spoken, a conviction of moral obligation which always accompanies the perception of the Good. To every fully developed moral personality the Good presents itself not simply as what is desirable, not even only as what is fine and high, but as imperative. Morality has to do not only with the Hellenic "good" but with the Hebraic "ought." We do not only feel that sincerity is better than shiftiness and is in itself noble, we are persuaded that we ought not to tell lies. Nor is this imperative confined as some think to negative prohibition. Every morally

sane person knows that he ought to be just and brave and humane. We have here a simple idea which we cannot analyse into anything more elementary. We can only give illustrative synonyms for duty, such as "oughtness," "moral obligation," the "moral imperative," and so on. If we are young and dislike Victorian grandiloquence we say, "It is up to us to do something or other," or less adequately we can say of any action that is under the ban, that "it is not done," but every adequate dealing with moral experience must take account of this peculiar imperative element in the moral standards of all normal people. Now, as we have seen, the naturalistic evolutionary scheme has its own historical explanation of how this conviction of moral obligation became rooted in civilised humanity. In the desperate struggle for existence, primitive societies brought every conceivable pressure to bear upon their individual members to obey the tribal codes and follow their customs. These codes were enforced by sanctions of approval and reward, or ostracism and penalty. So arose man's sense of obligation and duty. Again we have not time or space here to inquire in detail whether or not this is good psychology and history. I would suggest that it is not, for it takes no account of the obvious roots of unconditional obligation in religion with its sense of the holy and the sacred. But taking it as it stands, we have again, just as we saw was the case in dealing with the evolutionary explanation of the Good, a historical and psychological explanation of how men came to imagine that they were under moral obligation. It gives us not the slightest help when we ask whether it

is really *true* that we ought to be sincere and just and brave. In fact it explains the imperative away by making it simply another useful racial illusion. For when on the lines of the evolutionary Naturalism I probe into the deep historic roots of my sense of duty, I find that just as goodness was of value simply as a means for my tribe getting more out of the pool of Nature than its rivals, so that sense of unconditional obligation is really my dread of the penalties which the fierce will of my social group imposes upon offenders, together with an intense desire for their approval. That the evolutionary view of morality contains truth which must be taken up into any final account of morality I do not question. But if this narrowly naturalistic form be accepted, it is necessary to say plainly that it reduces all man's sense of the sacredness of duty to mere racial expediency. It is certain that when I bow my head in presence of the ideal and say "that is what I ought to be," my mind is moving in quite a different world from that of personal or social utility. I am not in the least degree thinking of the practical gain which my nation is going to get out of such conduct, but of something more fundamental. I am really thinking of what is unconditionally demanded of me by Reality. But obviously on the naturalistic evolutionary view all this is over-belief and illusion. We have, therefore, once more, turning away for the time from all these naturalistic explanations of man's sense of duty which depreciate and denature it, to ask ourselves the direct question, "Is it 'God's truth' that I ought to be sincere, just, pure and humane, and to do the best that I know?" Is there really anyone

not sophisticated or confused by a theory who doubts it? This theory, too, is a mere idol of the study. The moment we go out into the battle of life, all such sophistications fall away, and by their moral judgments on themselves, and still more upon others, men never show any doubt on the matter. They unhesitatingly approve or condemn their own actions and the actions of all other people with whom they have to do, not only as desirable or detestable, but as right or wrong. And they do this not only in Christendom but they have done so and they do so in all ages and in all lands.

Here again we have to make a personal decision. Is it true or is it false that I ought to do the best I know? It is a plain issue but on it hangs much beside. If it is true, it gives a clear open pathway to reality. Like the other element in the moral consciousness, the perception of the supreme worth of goodness and the sacredness of personality, it tells me something momentous not only about myself but about the nature of the universe of which I form a part. Kant was the first great modern thinker to discern this clearly, and though his formulation may have been inadequate, there is permanent truth behind it. First of all, it is clear that if I ought to do or be anything, I can do or be that thing. Either I can do it now or there is power somewhere in the world available for me which will enable me to do it, and I can find that power and ought to seek it. Moral obligation, in a word, implies freedom. It is absurd to suppose that anyone can be morally condemned for that which he is fatalistically necessitated to do. And to take a step farther, the universe of which I am a part

must be so constituted as to admit of that freedom. Here again we must pass beyond the limits of the purely scientific and mathematical view of the world. If we take our stand on the reality of moral obligation we say definitely that the barely scientific view of man cannot be complete, that here we have something again that passes through the meshes of the great net. Just as we have seen individuality elude the meshes, so now does moral obligation. But though they elude science they are there in the cosmos all the same, demanding to be taken account of in the final summing-up. They make it clear that the real universe must be richer and freer than any conceivable mathematical account of it. It need not for all that be disorderly, but its final order may be of a different kind from that which we can formulate in mathematical terms.

We must, I believe, go farther still if we follow this pathway to Reality consistently through. We have seen that we cannot derive the finally imperative "ought" from a world of mere neutral facts or things, but can we reach any positive conclusion as to That which finally is from what we know we ought to be? Can we discover anything here in this fundamental conviction that we ought to be just, pure and brave, that throws real light not only on our personal freedom but on the fundamental riddle of the world? I believe that we can. Free personalities as we are, we are unquestionably parts of a whole. We are rooted in the universe, and our thoughts and actions ramify out indefinitely into that world. Now supposing it were true that the Sovereign Power of the universe were a

malignant spirit, a "President of the Immortals" who is having His sport with the human race, such as Thomas Hardy's sombre imagination conceived Him to be, who, with a view to our moral evil and woe, was inspiring us with illusory ideas of right and wrong, honour, chastity and kindness, would it be possible to maintain our faith in the value of the good and the validity of the moral imperative? Surely the whole moral life would collapse. It could not live within so ghastly a cosmogony. Nor, I believe, can it be maintained in a morally neutral cosmogony. When we read the succession of fierce attacks upon Nature which I have cited in an earlier chapter, or read Hardy's lugubrious complainings in his letters and poems over the enormities wrought by the unconscious Power which begets helpless mortals, who are able from a higher moral standpoint to judge it as on a lower moral plane than themselves, it is clear that to suppose a morally neutral Almighty is only a shade better than to suppose a malevolent sovereign. When we examine these impeachments we find that the writers, one and all, believe that they possess a moral standard which is higher than that of Nature and is more than evolutionary illusion. They are, indeed, in their own way following the same line as Pascal in that famous passage in which he says that in comparison with the vast bulk and power of Nature man is only as a reed, but, he adds, retrieving the balance, "man is a thinking reed."

The immediate question before us is a very simple one. Is it possible to hold such a view of ultimate Reality and at the same time to believe that we are unconditionally bound to follow the

highest that we know? That is to say, can we be bound to live on a morally higher plane than ultimate Reality? Surely the moment that we thus formulate the matter we observe that we have said something inherently absurd.¹

The position is not really permanently tenable at all. We must, if we are to maintain the validity of the moral imperative, believe that in the last resort the universe is not the moral chaos which is implied in the impeachments of which I have spoken.

But, it may be said, we have no real proof that the world is such a moral order, only a postulate or human demand that it shall be so. In a word, we have here simply a supreme instance of that "wishful thinking" of which the Humanist writers make so much. No, it is a great deal more than that. But, first of all, even supposing that it were so, we would not in making such a postulate do anything more than all science is continually doing, and without which science could not indeed exist. As we have seen, science postulates order and sets out to prove it. Of that fundamental postulate Naturalism can give no rational justification whatsoever. Yet, if men cease to make it, all science, as we have seen, would stop dead. Why it should be reasonable to postulate physical order, and unreasonable to postulate moral order in the universe, has yet to be shown. Yet the impeachers of Nature

¹ Bertrand Russell apparently thought that such a position was tenable when he wrote *A Free Man's Worship*, for he urges men to be true to their own higher nature in spite of the sovereign tyrant. But though he retained the essay and reprinted it, he did so with a foreword which explained that he no longer held that faith in man's ideal standard which enabled him to impeach the unjust Zeus.

of whom I have spoken accept the one without question and repudiate the other. For this I can find no reason whatever, save in the first place the unproved dogma that science alone can give a final account of Reality, and secondly, the amount of evil in the world. With the latter we shall be concerned later.

But I submit that in our conviction that the ultimate Reality of the universe is moral in its nature, is something very much more than a postulate. There is something in the demand which plain duty makes upon us that is pregnant with a deeper meaning. Why do we call it an imperative at all? Other courses of action we describe by lighter language. They are wise and prudent, desirable, "fair and fit," but this has a different quality, and demands therefore a different name. It is formidably uncompromising. Great masters of literature in all ages and lands have explored the situation which arises when all man's earthly interests draw him in one direction and another voice calls him to turn his back on all these and go out into the rising storm and the midnight. The illustration that comes first into my mind is that passage in Victor Hugo's magnificent melodrama of *Les Misérables* where Jean Valjean, the escaped galley slave, who has become a prosperous manufacturer and a benefactor of the poor, finds himself compelled to choose between giving himself up to justice and allowing an innocent man to suffer in his stead. I know no passage in modern literature where that "tempest in the brain," that conflict within the soul between not simply the lowest personal motives but between

high and unselfish motives (for the happiness of many poor and helpless people depends on his escape from justice) and Jean Valjean's own sense of right and wrong is more powerfully depicted. They who do not recognise their own personal struggles displayed here on a colossal scale must be blind indeed. At last the imperative prevails and we see Valjean hurrying through the night to fulfil its demands, overcoming, with desperate resourcefulness, a series of accidents which might have stopped him, until he arrives in the courtroom only just in time. All his personal desires, all his unselfish love for the poor who depend upon him and who will be ruined by his downfall, are as nothing at last before that supreme command. In presence of that Authority they are as dust and a shadow. It is not the authority of common law that constrains him, for he has no hesitation thereafter in escaping from justice, it is something above his fear of returning to the galleys and beyond his love even for his adopted child, a naked command from the Supreme which must be obeyed. Now none of us, I take it, are escaped convicts, but none the less we all know the difference in quality and tone between that voice and all other voices in the soul, and the real problem before us now is the question, Whose is that voice? Is it from Reality telling us the truth—God's truth—or is it racial illusion surviving long past its day, to add often to the increase of human misery? If it is not from Reality there can be no sure support for our persistent belief in unconditional right and wrong. There is no rock beneath our feet, only unfathomable morass. Whence on the naturalistic theory,

did our perception of right and wrong originate? In the instinctive will to live of a primitive society fighting for hunting-grounds and dominance and coercing the selfishness of its warriors and their squaws into a compact fighting and breeding unit. What has kept it in being and developed it through the ages but the same mortal struggle for life, with social solidarity as a necessary condition of survival? But if this explains all my sense of the good and of the right, surely all the keener and bolder minds will ask the question, Why should I submit to what after all is mere custom and tradition transmitted from past generations, which originated under totally different social conditions? Why, since society is nowadays in constant evolution, should I regard any of its claims upon me as absolute? They may have been valid a hundred years ago, but why should they be valid and imperative for me to-day? Everything becomes relative and, to use Professor Hocking's vigorous phrase, "All morality slithers down, as the foundations give way, like a house founded upon the sands."

But in that case it is not only morality that goes, it is knowledge as well. If all morality is only what it is racially expedient that I should do, then all truth is only what it is racially expedient that I should believe. You and I to-day are not really engaged in a serious inquiry into the meaning of human life, but about what it is racially expedient that we should believe in order that our nation should triumph in the struggle for existence. In other words, we get into that weary old suicidal scepticism about all knowledge of which, in my judgment, Pragmatism is only a modern variety.

Now all this preposterous sophistication shows to my mind that there is something radically wrong with the foundation of the Humanist position that science and science alone is the pathway to Reality, and that we must make the best of it. It seems to me quite clear that in a world so construed there is no room for any valid imperative of duty at all, refine and disguise the matter from ourselves as we may. The naturalistic theory of morality necessarily implies that both our scale of values in the soul and our sense of duty come solely from our mother, Nature, and as Nature, all are agreed, is unmoral, Reality must therefore be unmoral too.

What, then, lies behind the moral imperative? What gives it its quality and authority? Whose is the voice that commands? Is it the voice of the group or society to which I belong, as naturalistic ethics maintains? About this one thing must be said. It is quite clear that if society is that which imposes ultimate moral authority, then that society can itself be under no authority. It can do neither right nor wrong to other nations. It is free to do anything to other societies—morality, so to speak, only runs within the group or nation. This is the inevitable consequence of making morality simply a means to the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence. The nation as such is outside the sphere of morality altogether, and therefore the intrusion of moral considerations into international policy must be purely mischievous. To most men and women of intelligence and goodwill such conclusions are obviously preposterous. How destructive they must needs be of all trust

between the peoples of the earth or of all hope of international peace, save by one country acquiring so great a military preponderance as to make its sway world-wide and age-lasting, is plain.

But if it is not the nation in which we live which imposes the obligation, however vast and ancient that society may be, can it be humanity? Clearly we get quite away here beyond the merely naturalistic evolutionary theory into something which transcends the struggle for existence between competing groups. But the trouble is that we simply get into the air! Humanity as a whole does not as yet exist. Much, if not most of it, is yet in the future. "Humanity," like all common terms, is a mental abstraction. No such being exists, there is only a vast aggregate of individual men and women. Each unit of that whole knows himself or herself under obligation to something or Some One intensely real, some great source or power, which is certainly not a mental abstraction. But if that be true of the individual, must it not be true of the aggregate of individuals? There is more truth in the conception of humanity being the supreme end of morality than the state or community, but it cannot be the source of this obligation, for it is all under obligation. Can the source, then, be found in Nature out of which historically humanity has come? But surely, as we have seen, unconscious and neutral Nature is on a lower moral plane than man, who is free, and whose ideals carry him above and beyond mere Nature, so that he can impeach Nature and conceive the audacious maxim "Let justice be done though the heavens should fall!" But if neither the

nation nor humanity nor Nature can be the voice that utters the imperative, Whose can it be ?

If it is finally true that I ought to be just and sincere and humane, to be and to do the best that I know, it is clear that that voice comes from Ultimate Reality. Reality must be disclosing its nature in revealing to me that obligation. Unconditional obligation can only be imposed by Absolute Reality.

If in the last resort we ask, Why ought we to do right ? we can only say, Because Reality demands it of us. If we are asked, Why must we obey this voice of Reality ? we can only say, Because we ought to do so. Truth and duty are not identical, but they are inseparable. You cannot explore either without coming face to face and trafficking with the other. Explore what is involved in the moral imperatives and surely one must feel that Reality is speaking here. If illusion is speaking, then all validity must go—the imperative is found out. Explore what Reality is, and as you discover it you feel that you must take account of it. Its very nature is that it demands to be taken account of and makes not only intellectual but practical claim upon us, speaking in the former case as truth and in the latter as duty.¹

We find, then, that whether we take the line of the Good, or of the moral Imperative, the result is the same. Following the former, we reach the idea of a supreme Purpose creatively at work in the universe, bringing into being and training a family of spiritual beings : following the latter, we find also a conscious purposive Reality, warning us

¹ See Appendix I.

decisively off certain ways of living, and inspiring us to follow others in harmony with His own. Both alike and together reveal the universe as a purposive system, creative of spiritual beings akin in nature to their Creator and Father. If we are, indeed, to conserve our full moral consciousness and the validity of its judgments, there is no real alternative. We must transform that whole view of the world on which, as we have seen, Humanism proceeds.

Now is such a transformation possible without destroying the scientific view? Humanism believes that it is not, and holding to the scientific view as the only one that is possible for educated modern men, is prepared to reduce and denature the worlds of morality, art and religion. We have seen good reason to hold that this is simply due to an exaggeration of the scope of science, which in its very nature can only give us a partial account of the world. But, none the less, the scientific account is true so far as it goes, and what we have to consider now is whether the interpretation of the world as one great purposive system which follows on, as we have seen, inevitably from our admitting the absolute value of spiritual beings and the validity of the moral imperative, is capable of taking up the whole scientific view into itself. That it can do so without difficulty I shall now try to show. I can do this best by way of illustration. Imagine some highly intelligent being, some Cro-Magnon primitive, let us say, transported down the ages into our own time into a civilisation of which he knows nothing, and set down in the middle of a modern factory. When he has recovered from

the first shock of dismay and bewilderment we can imagine him asking first the child's question, "What makes it go?" He begins with one of the spinning-jennies, and after much puzzling traces the motive power to the belting, and further back still to the local power-house. Thence again he pursues it away up to the generating station in the Highlands, and travels through the mountains by tunnel and open channel away up to the lonely mountain tarn, which a great dam has turned into a reservoir. He can go no farther. Nature, he sees, is doing the rest, filling the springs among the heather, and draining them down in tumbling cataracts into the lake. But the end of his quest through effects to causes releases his mind for a new and even more exciting inquiry—What, he asks himself, is it all for? Why have men been undertaking all this enormous labour? Surely for something more than to set these strange machines moving. So he begins again. First, why have they built the great dam and driven these amazing burrows through miles of granite? Clearly to get the waterfall. And why that long line of pylons? To transmit the power to the local station. And why the local power-houses? To drive the belting. And why the belting? To drive the jennies from which he started. But why the jennies? All the way he has, it will be seen, been transforming causes and effects into means and ends without the slightest difficulty. But the new line of inquiry propels him on. Spinning-jennies and yarn are obviously an insufficient motive. So he goes on to the looms and then to the finished web, and thence to the makers and vendors of human

clothing and draperies and curtains and carpets, and thence on to the human beings who purchase and use the textiles, and to all the health, comfort and grace and general enrichment and refinement of life made possible to men, of which he in his cave had never dreamed. Here we have the narrow investigation from effects to causes immensely enriched by its inclusion in the larger and more interesting inquiry into the system of means and ends.

But be it noted that it was essential for the purpose of discovery that the first search for causes should be isolated and abstracted from the other into means and ends. It would only have cumbered him in his earlier scrutiny of jennies and on his way up to the tarn if he had allowed his mind to mix up, along with his investigations into the mechanism, such considerations as the comfort and decency and beauty of clothing, and its place in human life. All that, while true and important, was irrelevant to the particular inquiry, and so being by supposition a highly intelligent primitive, he made abstraction from it all of the particular sphere of inquiry which he had in hand. But being a Cro-Magnon, and not a Neanderthal man, he only made temporary abstraction from it, and when he had got his science far enough, he went on to philosophy and religion and began asking and answering the more fundamental question: Why? But when that later question was answered, however imperfectly, I do not think that he would find any real difficulty in fusing all the results of his inquiries into one homogeneous whole.

Even so, to pass from our parable, the human

intelligence can pass from the positive and scientific to the teleological view without contradiction, transforming its earlier world of causes and effects, or of what seem causes and effects, into a realm of means and ends.

It would seem, then, that the use of the moral experience of man as a true pathway to Reality does not, in principle, lead to any real conflict with the use of the scientific pathway. I am not at this stage of the argument dealing with minor tensions between the two methods of interpreting the world, but simply with the broad issue between those who look upon the world as a vast system of Space-Time and Energy, operating according to uniform law, and those who look upon it teleologically as a creative process realising spiritual ends of absolute and enduring value, a system, therefore, full of purpose and meaning.