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COUNT HERMANN KEYSERLING

IMMORTALITY

A CRITIQUE OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PROCESS OF NATURE AND THE WORLD OF MAN'S IDEAS

Translated by
JANE MARSHALL

Sentimus experimurque nos aeternos esse
SPINOZA

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

IN the year 1920, on the occasion of the new edition of my first work, published in 1906, Das Gefüge der Welt, *I wrote as follows:*

'*When at the age of five and twenty I published* Das Gefüge der Welt, *which I had begun to write at three and twenty, many learned people reproached me for putting into print trains of thought the first draft of which I could not myself possibly regard as ultimately valid. The same people will probably blame me to-day for issuing afresh a work of my youth (out of print for years), without previously subjecting it to revision in the light of my stage of knowledge to-day. My procedure both then and now is, as a matter of fact, the same in intent. Then I was not thoroughly convinced that my audacious sketch of the world succeeded in expressing "the truth"; to-day I see clearly how much in it is false or mere repetition. Yet I still consider that* Das Gefüge der Welt *deserves to outlast, in its original form, the period in which it corresponded to my own knowledge, and that of many others. I think so for the following general reasons. Only in so far as a work has, so to speak, its ideal position beyond both true and false, does it possess spiritual value. For this reason correction in detail, so far as it threatens to shatter the primary spiritual form, is based on evil. For this primary form is what is properly significant in all spiritual configuration. It comes into being with the spirit itself, is in essence independent of every external world, and employs the latter only as the given material, out of which by progressive assimilation it builds up its body, and in unceasing growth attains its perfection. If the primary form is of value, or has a life of its own, then it is spiritually irrelevant what stage of development the external form expresses, whether it should be compared to a rough sketch, or to a painting complete in every detail: the primary form as such still has its influence. It enters upon new incarnations, whether in the maturer works of the same author, or through the medium of later*

readers, and what is later never takes away the value of what is earlier, because what was spiritually significant was already present in germ in the earlier. Nay, more: it often manifests itself in its greatest purity in what is earliest, because in this the material least captures the attention. Thus the nearer Platonism approached to its potential perfection, the more Plato was admired; so too the periods of maturity have, par excellence, *a pronounced feeling for primitive art. But conversely; full comprehension of the Primitive presupposes, however paradoxical this may seem, a certain measure of perfection. As the striving of youth, in general, has its full meaning only when judged from the achievement of age, so youthful works can be understood completely only from the knowledge of the man who is fully mature, by the author himself as much as by the strange reader. From this follows what is eternally incomprehensible to the "merely-learned": every advance towards maturity shows up more clearly the justification for the existence of the immature. Indeed, from the standpoint of maturity, depths and beauties become visible in the latter, which in itself it does not contain, and which would be lost by "improvement". On this finally depends that common over-rating of their first book, which many authors find so uncongenial.*

'*In my own case I have often met with this.* Das Gefüge der Welt, *however little I may think of it personally, since my outlook is by nature directed forwards, is for many people my most important work. To them I am bound to transmit it unmutilated. The less I myself can succeed in feeling any personal relation to what is long since overpassed, the less, it seems to me, am I entitled to alter it. And this right is lacking in my case even more than for most of those who are in the same position: living at a tremendous rate, without any sense for antiquity, rejoicing exclusively in the future, in many respects already to-day my own remote descendant, I am in the position of a stranger to what I once was and did. I shall go on altering as long as I live, and over and over again appear to the devotees of some particular work as a renegade. But just for this reason I feel an unreserved reverence for every outlived state of mind: I regard my own past just as if it were removed from me by*

historical periods. I may *not alter anything in it, so far as the meaning of its expression appears in any way essentially conditioned by a past state. And since at all times my starting-point has always been one identical primary spiritual form, I feel I am justified in hoping that my particular life-tempo, which has already in less than four decades hurried me in feeling through centuries, will lend my life-work special power to accelerate development: by the swift mutation of the form many will recognize more easily than they otherwise would, what is essential and what is not.'*

I could find nothing better than what I have repeated here to put as Envoi to an English edition of my Unsterblichkeit, *which to my surprise is now called for, about thirty years after its first appearance. Whoever reads the prefaces to the second and third editions together with the Foreword to the first, has in sum everything, which from my knowledge to-day I can share with the reader, to help him towards a correct estimate of this work of my youth. It only remains for me now to tell English readers of* Unsterblichkeit *—who will in part be different from the readers of my other works— where I stand to-day in 1937. My chief work, which indeed sums up the whole of my creative achievement, is, and always will be, the* South American Meditations *(Jonathan Cape, London, 1932); continued and applied to the life of every individual, it appears in* Problems of Personal Life *(Jonathan Cape, 1934), and above all in the large German* Buch vom persönlichen Leben *(Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart, 1936). All of this latter which is not already contained in the first-named English book with the similar title will be published this autumn in French, under the title* De la Souffrance à la Plénitude *('From Suffering to Fulfilment'), by the Librairie Stock, Paris. This book will consist of the chapters Truthfulness, Solitude, Suffering, Freedom, and Fulfilment. The two complementary works,* Creative Understanding *and* Recovery of Truth *(Jonathan Cape, 1929), still contain, as they did before, the completest account of the teaching proper of the School of Wisdom. The book published by Selwyn and Blount this year,* The Art of Life, *still provides* the *key to my total life-work.*

In conclusion, I ask my English readers to take note that the

Foreword of this book belongs to the text proper, and should not be skipped upon any account; whereas the three different prefaces are meant to serve as commentaries.

HERMANN KEYSERLING

4 PRINZ CHRISTIANWEG, DARMSTADT.

June, 1937.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

THE spiral course of inner development, which in 1910 had led me so far from the frame of mind which gave birth to Immortality *that I could hardly bring to it any longer a sympathetic understanding, has to-day brought me quite close to it again. I see plainly what I was then aiming at, as well as what I attained; I see better than I did then, what I ought to have attained. Thus it has not been difficult for me, on the occasion of this new edition, to put myself back, in imagination, at the standpoint of 1907; so I have, with a clear conscience, been able to undertake, from this standpoint, to improve much and to remodel a little.* From this standpoint, *I beg it may be remembered. I have worked up into* Immortality *nothing, except what I might have, and ought to have done thirteen years ago.*

Then does the book, in spite of its remodelling, not express the stage of knowledge at which I stand to-day? This question involves a misapprehension. I could not have written it to-day, for the problems no longer present themselves to me in the same form. But from my standpoint then, it gives, so I still judge to-day, the appropriate answer, and this standpoint was justified not then alone, because it then corresponded to an actual state of mind: it will always remain so, because the way the problem of Immortality is stated in this book is one which is fruitful in itself. It is the necessary way of stating it, it seems to me, for every one who is penetrating from the outward to the inward, who beholds the metaphysically real, but has not yet inwardly apprehended it. Unless I had made a halt at this point of view, I myself should never have penetrated farther and deeper into the problem of Being; and whoever enters upon the path from outward to inward will be bound at some time to look at the problem of life in the way it is looked at here. Thus Immortality *may serve as a signpost. But signposts are, for the generality of people, more serviceable than the most brilliant signals from a far-off goal, which is still unknown to them, for most people are still on the road.*

Only the very few indeed can skip a stage in knowledge without suffering for it; if they do so, full comprehension is closed to them. To understand means to assimilate organically, and this is only effected when the necessary organs are present; but these consist of pre-formed instruments of knowledge, which grow out of what has been understood, and out of that alone. Therefore it proves indispensable in all cases to refer what is new to what is already known. From this arises the necessity for tradition, even in questions of knowledge. From this state of things it follows, first and foremost, that only that innovator promotes any real advance who is capable not merely of recognizing and uttering the higher truth, but also of commending it to the understanding of his contemporaries. Thanks to this circumstance, there is for every time and place one particular straight line, as it were, which leads direct to insight. And for the majority of those who were born in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century, this line takes its start from natural science.

I myself have been a scientist. From the outer reality I have gradually found my way to the inner; from Nature I have at length attained to the realization of the metaphysical self. Of this way Immortality *covers an important stretch: it shows to what extent the man of science is bound to recognize a supra-sensible reality. Thanks to this it may help the many who are obliged, in principle, to keep to the same direction as I have done, to organic comprehension in the same sense as it has helped me. The spiritual-real will become clear to them, under the limiting concept of the supra-personal, sooner than in any other form. They will thus, more easily than in any other way, attain to a transformation of their organs of comprehension, which will make them capable of assimilating it. Finally, thus, and thus alone, they will reach a conception of it in connexion with all the rest of existence, for at first there yawns for the understanding a gulf between possible outer and inner experience. Nothing seems more difficult to grasp than that in the psychic we are dealing with what is just as objective, and, so far as existence goes, just as independent of being known, as in the material, and that the spiritual, too, belongs to Nature, if the latter*

is understood in a wide enough sense.—About what supra-sensible reality is 'in itself', Immortality *of course tells us nothing, nor can it do so. It does not profess to be anything more than a critical phenomenology, expressly confined to the realm of possible scientific experience; it abstracts throughout from all pure metaphysical and incidental occult potentialities of knowledge. And if, in spite of this, it succeeds in establishing supra-sensible realities, and grasping the deepest meaning of the thought of Immortality, it may contribute more towards incorporating the supra-sensible as a fact into the normal life of knowledge and understanding, than an esoteric inquiry, which might indeed communicate more than is done here, but knows no way of making what it has beheld comprehensible in that sphere.*

Not until the Travel Diary *have I begun to treat directly of that supra-sensible of which* Immortality *establishes the existence and marks off the external limits. He who will learn more must go forward with me. I see my life work, indeed, just in this, in bringing about the full* understanding *of the reality which lies at the basis of appearance, and in widening and deepening this normal consciousness of ours to the point at which it becomes capable of directly apprehending real existence. It must no longer rest content with belief in what is transcendent; knowledge of this must not be the permanent prerogative of abnormal minds: as in practice it is our highest task, not to ascend into Heaven, but to realize the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth, so, as seekers after Truth, we may not rest until our consciousness has become capable of reflecting reality in all its fullness from the depths of its ground in Being.*

HERMANN KEYSERLING

FRIEDRICHSRUH.

Spring, 1920.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE frame of mind which gave rise to this book has, in spite of the short time which has since elapsed, become so foreign to me, that I can no longer take up a personal attitude to it. I am bound to regard it as the work of another man, and to treat it as such. Therefore, on the occasion of this new edition, the only point of view which guides me is that of filial respect. I have altered hardly anything, however much it seemed to need it. I have left standing many a sentence to which I could to-day no longer subscribe. The friends of this book (of whom there must be many, since a new edition already seems to be wanted) have a right to obtain it again unmutilated, and without any stranger having tampered with the spirit of it.

I have permitted myself only one alteration worth mentioning, and this only because it seemed to me necessary, from the standpoint of the original conception: I have struck out the last chapter. Half of this was indeed borrowed from trains of thought which belong to the conceptions of other works, and had only crept into Immortality *owing to a misunderstanding; it contained not so much the result of this inquiry, as the programme of later ones, which at that time I had not yet consciously mapped out. Thus the eighth chapter, in spite of many not unimportant details, which really contributed to the completion of the fundamental idea, gave the impression of blurring the total picture. Since, then, this book, regarded as an artistic composition, had from the very first come to an end with the seventh chapter, and the form is generally symbolic of the content, it should only have gained by being thus shortened.*

For the rest nothing in the way of thoughts is lost. Those which, without any inner justification, had found room in Immortality, *now stand in the place which rightly belongs to them, in the* Prolegomena zur Naturphilosophie.[1] *But so far as concerns the*

[1] *Written and published in 1910 (Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart); now out of print.*

fundamental problems of Philosophy of Religion, to which longer consideration had been devoted in the pages now omitted, I hope to come back to them later on with greater knowledge of the subject.

HERMANN KEYSERLING

RAYKÜLL IN ESTONIA.

September, 1910.

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FOREWORD

IF we try to realize exactly what constitutes the immortality of immortal minds, we arrive at very remarkable results, which quite contradict our first expectations. The assertion seems almost justified that the value of great men lies in the fact that they have lived, not in anything that they have done; for all positive achievements bear the stamp of transiency. And this is true not of great statesmen alone, it holds good no less of the heroes of thought; their deeds, too, are outdone and outgrown.

Let us consider Plato. No one will dispute his immortality. And yet the specifically Platonic truths—so far as truth denotes what is final and conclusive—have long since been buried in the grave. We must not be deceived by modern interpretations of Platonism. Philo even succeeded in establishing a kind of equation between the Mosaic religion and the philosophy of Alexandria: a fact may be interpreted in countless ways—but the interpretation does not alter the character of the fact itself. And the Platonic philosophy, as its author understood it, is quite irreconcilable with our outlook nowadays. Plato's assumptions have their roots in his own age, in the Greek language, and in Greek notions; and these we can hardly conceive any longer. Plato's 'idea' was for him certainly not the 'law' many philosophers take it to be to-day. The concept of that was still unborn, and not yet possible. Why, under these circumstances, is Plato immortal, a force still alive to-day?—Not because he was great in his own day; that does not matter to us now in the very least. Purely historical values exist only for book learning, not for life. For life, whatever is not still operative is dead. The past, as such, is something entirely indifferent, its value decreases in direct proportion to its remoteness. And if we are now compelled to own that the Platonic philosophy, as Plato understood it, has no longer any real direct value for life—in what then, once more, does its immortality consist?—It has to

do, not with Plato's conclusions, but with what he called to life: with the questions he raised, not with the answers he found for them. It lies in the lines of thought he pointed out, not in the bounds he set to them. Such lines are in their own nature unlimited, they open out upon the Infinite. But all limits are finite, and, in the last resort, hold good only for him who has set them. So the barriers at which Plato's thought had to stop—i.e. the results which he considered final—are overpassed to-day.

How could it be otherwise? Each man can accomplish only so much as the assumptions of his time admit of. We are conditioned on every side by the spirit of the age, and this changes from epoch to epoch. Kant could not have written his *Critiques* in the Athens of Pericles, and he would have looked at many things to-day quite otherwise than he did at the end of the eighteenth century. The Age conditions the results we arrive at, i.e. the limits to which we must resign ourselves. No genius avails against this external power. There is certainly some truth in the ordinary phrase, 'Great men are ahead of their time', but it is not altogether correct. Great men are ahead, not of their time, but of their contemporaries. They cannot really advance a step farther than the assumptions of the spirit of the Time allow; they can only realize what is pre-formed in these. The profoundest originality, as well as the peculiar value for eternity, of thinkers of genius therefore depends not on the ends they attained, but on the paths they trod, and the lines of thought they opened up.

Let us dwell for a moment on the idea of direction, as applied for instance in crystallography. Any limit may be set to a straight line, without altering anything in its nature. It makes no difference to the character of the crystal whether the lines of force which determine its shape are terminated by the limiting planes at small or great, finite or infinite distances. The directions remain the same however much the lines are cut short. In their own nature they are boundless, although the body itself is bounded; their direction is independent of the external world.

With the limits the case is just the reverse; they are conditioned entirely from without; they depend on the matter at the disposal of their growth, and the more or less empty space in which it can expand. Therefore the specific nature of the crystal cannot be directly deduced from them; its grade of symmetry is, in principle, independent of the limiting planes. We find the same state of things in the domain of spirit; the form of the thought, i.e. the way the problem is set, the point of view from which it starts, has no essential connexion with the matter it deals with, and the sphere which it controls. The material limits do not affect the direction proper of mind. Plato would have thought platonically in the time of Oedipus, but under those conditions the potential form of his thought would have attained very different expression from what it actually did in the era of the Decline of the Republic, just as the crystal, within the narrow confines of a seam in a mineral, grows quite otherwise than it would in a free saturated solution. In the same way if Plato had been born after Kant, he would not have come to a standstill at the conclusions with which Socrates' disciple had to content himself in epistemology. If we can imagine the same Plato active at the three very different periods mentioned, it is certain that he would have reached very different results in each; and yet one identical mode of thought would have lain at the base of the three philosophies hardly to be compared in outward expression. But it is this form alone on which Plato's immortality depends. All limits, all results, are temporal and may be done away by succeeding times. So it happened to the great Athenian, and so it will happen to every future thinker; it is perfectly impossible to draw definitive conclusions. But as the lines of force which define the 'being' of the crystal are unlimited, though they only attain limited expression, so a Plato's mode of thought is eternal, although the limits within which it is embodied, i.e. the results which it attained, are temporal and transient. The immortality of great thinkers has to do always with the mode of their thinking, not with their thoughts.

Whoever has become aware of this truth, will in the first place

be juster to the Past than is usual to-day. Modern scientists proclaim exultantly, 'Cuvier or Lavoisier is out of date': modern philosophers, 'Plato's philosophy is no longer tenable'! How can it be otherwise, once given that knowledge is progressive? Are we always to go on pluming ourselves on the fact that twice two makes four? Let us rather, in wonder and humility, rejoice in the endless vistas which Plato's genius has opened out. Beyond these none will ever pass, no man will ever exhaust them. But the most important result of the said knowledge will be, that the man upon whom it has really dawned will become much more modest in estimating the value of his own achievements in a great matter. He will no longer imagine he has rid the world of an eternal problem, or solved the riddle of the universe for ever. He will say to himself, 'If Plato and Kant and all the greatest thinkers were unable to fathom the ultimate problems, how should I be likely to succeed?' He will, from the very first, give up all pretensions to finality, and content himself with being the child of his own time. But in addition to this he will say to himself—and this is the positive moment—'Should it not be possible to create enduring values, just by giving up the idea of results which can never be upset? Posterity strips philosophies pitilessly and swiftly enough of their temporal vesture, and leaves them simply their stark value for eternity. What if the author of them forestalled the future in so doing?' This is not an impossible beginning. Certainly no thinker will himself venture to decide whether his point of view is worthy of eternity. This final verdict only posterity can pronounce. It assuredly is in his power, however, so to utter his thoughts that if they are of value they may live on unchanged.

Let us mark off the boundaries of the problem by laying down one or two axioms. What the greatest minds have left us are the lines of thought they opened up, not the bounds they set to them. The one and only worth of a truth lies in its fertility: only what can go on working is of value, only that end is justified which conceals within it the germ of new beginnings. So

then, in spiritual creation as in personal life, only one thing matters—to be, as Meister Eckhart puts it, ever a man who makes a fresh beginning. The string I touch to life may vibrate for aeons, that which I keep dumb is dead already. The thinker then should awaken problems to eternal life, not try to rid the world of them. He should be a dispenser of life, not a destroyer of it; and the man who undertakes to give a final explanation of the world is plotting against the life of Mankind.

What then are we to do? Let us call to mind the few unconditionally immortal forms in the world of thought: there are not many of them—the Fragments of Heraclitus, a few words of Christ's, two or three Hindu sayings, some odd aphorisms of Goethe's, and little more. What is it that distinguishes these primary *Logia*? Nothing else but that an infinite content lies hidden in the finite form; that the latter points out lines of thought which are open, not that it sets an inward term to anything. They are, so to speak, pure stark points of view, unaffected and unconfined by barriers of matter. Therefore, they can live within any limits, can everywhere attain concrete shape. Every age will stand amazed at the profundity of the sage of Ephesus, and will interpret his dark sayings differently. But they will all be right in the end: the point of view, the spiritual form, has no essential connexion with the limits within which it is realized: therefore, thoughts which are nothing but points of view are not confined to any single interpretation. They lend themselves to all and outlive all comprehension; their essence is to be eternal. If it is possible to understand Plato's fundamental ideas in a modern way, and to interpret the teachings of Jesus Christ so that they do justice to our most recent outlook, the reason is the same in both cases. Where the ultimate deeps of thought are concerned it is probably impossible to be unequivocal. The concluding lines of *Faust*, the immeasurable significance of which every man divines, Goethe himself probably did not understand. They may have shaped themselves in his mind out of pure sound-associations; they came to him like music harmonious and mysterious. Face to face with the

ultimate deeps, music alone is capable of expression, thought gives way and speech is hushed:

And Feeling passes into Thought,
And Thought becomes a Feeling.[1]

The deepest truth is ever the one which is unuttered, and the greatest truths are those which stand on the dizzy verge of the inconceivable and yield to the soul foreshadowings of a stupendous enigma.

These considerations it is which I would fain have laid to heart by every thinker in whose mind the fundamental problems of existence rankle, and who longs to live by them and not die of them. These it is which have been my guides in dealing with the problem of Immortality. I have tried to discover as many commanding points of view, and to set as few barriers, as possible. Perhaps some of these lines of thought may lead out upon the Infinite: it is permitted to every man to hope. But assuredly I know that the bounds at which I have had perforce to stop will very soon be overpassed.

BERLIN,
Spring, 1907.

[1] Benno Geiger, *Loveless Songs*, Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

EVERY problem may be considered from many standpoints, no one of which possesses an unconditional superiority; 'in itself' I may put my question how I choose. But if my aim is to grasp and fathom one particular aspect of the problem I am investigating—if, therefore, the line of inquiry is once definitely settled, no matter how uncertain the rest may be left—then there is only one point of view which leads straight to the aspect of the problem to be considered. All others are by-ways. So, confronted with the Ego, I may try every conceivable way of putting the problem without being liable to conviction of error, so long as I do not define the Ego more precisely. But if I have once stated that by it I understand the knowing subject, then no other line of thought but the epistemological is capable of penetrating to the innermost content of the problem. This seems as clear as day, and yet how many are there to-day whose eyes are sharp enough to distinguish straight lines from crooked, or blind alleys from boundless horizons? Most people prefer to work with concepts surreptitiously acquired, instead of travelling the untrodden ways to genuine knowledge, and deem the riddle of the universe solved when it has merely escaped them. It might be roundly asserted that one of the most unmistakable marks of our time is the masterly skill with which it evades its problems: for this very reason the world has hardly ever seemed more intelligible than it does to-day. Our fortunate age possesses two methods of explanation, by which the most difficult problem seems comprehensible without further trouble: the explanation by heredity, atavism, and that by adaptation to end. If we ask an evolutionist—and what enlightened man is not one nowadays?—how Man comes to believe in continuance after death (a surmise which can neither be aroused nor confirmed by experience), he replies unhesitatingly: 'By inherited predisposition; this belief is a remainder from earlier stages of development.' Not much exception can be taken to this explanation.

Each of us knows how much his own thinking, feeling, and willing are conditioned by breed and upbringing, and how extraordinarily difficult it is to overcome early impressions, be they never so irrational. So the European, in the pride of his intellect, beguiles himself with this theory, which seems to him more plausible because it appears to be strictly scientific; he sings the praises of progress and imagines that the problem is solved. Yet there are people prying enough to inquire further: they want to know how our ancestors came to adopt such an irrational belief. These people are too shrewd to be fobbed off with the reply: 'Our forefathers were crassly stupid.' Moreover, they are educated, and demand to hear a biological ground, for they know that nothing happens without a ground, and that even Man's imagination is subject to the law of Nature. 'Tell us,' they say, pouncing suddenly on the omniscient man of science, 'tell us in plain words how this belief in Immortality, to which we moderns cling out of atavism—if we still do cling—could ever have arisen.' The victim does really know an answer: 'This belief was obviously adapted to an end, and conducive to the maintenance of life; therefore, it was preserved in the struggle for existence, and was reinforced by natural selection.' Again everything seems plain at once. It is indeed incontestable that the belief in Immortality must from time immemorial have furthered life, otherwise it would long since have died out. Moreover, it is certain that it is one of the most blessed and precious gifts which Nature has bestowed upon the human race—it consoles them and helps them over painful Past and Present, satisfies their sense of justice, and answers tormenting transcendent questions. It is the last resort of every anthropomorphic cosmology, which wants to know that the world is ordered according to Man's desires, and within the limits of the given only comes up against inadequacies. Indeed the belief in Immortality cares not only for the maintenance but also for the ennobling of the species, since it points beyond what lies nearest to a lofty ideal—and so is adaptation to end not only in the biological, but also in the ethical sense. Thus the explanation by

teleology really seems unshakable. And we are confirmed in this opinion when we remember the critical truth, that activity directed to an end belongs to the essence of life, and cannot therefore be further deduced, and also that the essential content of every religion, as far as it can be grasped by biology, consists in establishing a serviceable relation between the Absolute and the spirit of Man.[1]—In spite of all this, the last explanation is not much less shortsighted than the first, which was pleased to see in heredity the last resort. Because a thing is useful, it need not necessarily exist: not everything that is practical occurs to Man's mind. For this reason, it is quite impossible to account for the origin of belief in Immortality by the advantages of it. Also, there is the further consideration: even what is absurd may be useful: even the crudest nonsense may sometimes further life. He who stops at this point ends perforce in the theory of knowledge—originally sceptical and agnostic, but of late positive and dogmatic in its bearing—which sets up illusion and error as the chief means to life. Life maintains itself in virtue of the absurd. . . . To my mind to see the deepest content of the notion of Immortality, to which all the greatest men have paid allegiance in some form or other, and which has been the noblest motive of the noblest deeds—to see this in a serviceable if foolish error argues no extraordinary perspicacity. The belief in a personal continuance after death may quite well be grounded on error, the current presentment of it may easily be absurd; the belief itself must have a deeper meaning than the explanation by atavism plus adaptation-to-end is capable of fathoming.

Now let no one suspect that I desire to prove the immortality of the soul: I desire neither to found, nor to uphold, nor to overthrow any religion, but only to make knowledge richer and more accurate. But continuance after death is not a possible content of knowledge for exact science. I purpose, so far as lies in my power, to answer the following question: What is the meaning of the thought of Immortality? How is it possible?

[1] Cf. on Teleology as the essence of Life the Epilogue to my *Gefüge der Welt* ('The Structure of the World') (2nd ed., Darmstadt, 1920).

The question is put in the same way as the famous Kantian one: How is a cosmos possible? Kant did not inquire how, or why, or whence, Nature could have come into being, but in what it consists, what is the content of the concept of it; he tried to comprehend Nature from the conditions of possible experience of it. And in the same way we shall not ask how, or why, or whence, the thought of Immortality could have arisen; we ask what is its innermost content. It is a question of criticism in the Kantian sense, and therefore not of Psychology. There will indeed be no lack of psychological considerations, but the object of them will be simply to clear the way: the problem proper they cannot touch. How should they? Psychology—whether it merely treats of causal connexions (motives) or whether it is directed to final causes—of necessity confines itself to this side of our sphere of inquiry. It can only account *a posteriori* for beliefs actually extant, and as such, unquestioned; but our object is to grasp the belief critically. Of course we assume it as a fact. We do not question the reality of it, any more than Kant ever doubted the existence of the external world. We even assume that it is natural, or better still in conformity with Nature, for this all mythology clearly shows. Only we do not regard it as our business to give grounds for this belief abstracted from experience; our one and only concern is to comprehend it. What is its deepest, ultimate meaning? All subjective phenomena of consciousness correspond somehow to objective relations; Man as a natural being cannot, even when his striving is directed to the supernatural, escape from the sphere of Nature. Therefore, even his belief in the transcendent must have its grounds in his natural being. In this innermost content of the thought of Immortality, not in the ideas which form its phenomenal, temporary expression, do we behold the core of our problem.

The specific form of the problem entails, as a matter of course, that we cannot aim at judgements of value in the ethico-teleological sense. We are dealing with belief as a natural phenomenon, and no rational man will ask himself whether the

pole star is of greater value than Sirius or vice versa. They both exist: that is enough. And should it befall us to have to emphasize the absurdity of some belief as presented, the criticism will be of use to the understanding only, and will never aim at destroying a phenomenon. Indeed, I personally am rather doubtful altogether about the adequacy of the scale of values with which the European is accustomed to confront the rest of mankind. Is he really more than the Oriental, because the essence of his mind is unrest, because he has an insatiable impulse to circumnavigate the globe, and rush through the universe, because he is incapable of finding lasting satisfaction in traditional beliefs? The Oriental, at all events, is of a different opinion;[1] and History has already shown, more than once,

[1] I quote by way of illustration the delightful letter of a Turkish Cadi to an English traveller who had asked him for some statistical information (from Sir A. Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*):

'My illustrious Friend and Joy of my Liver!

'The thing you ask of me is both difficult and useless. Although I have passed all my days in this place, I have neither counted the houses, nor inquired into the number of the inhabitants; and as to what one person loads on his mules and the other stows away in the bottom of his ship, that is no business of mine. But, above all, as to the previous history of this city, God only knows the amount of dirt and confusion that the infidels may have eaten, before the coming of the sword of Islam. It were improfitable for us to inquire into it. O my soul! O my lamb! Seek not after the things that concern thee not. Thou camest unto us and we welcomed thee: go in peace.

'Of a truth thou hast spoken many words, and there is no harm done, for the speaker is one and the listener is another. After the fashion of thy people thou hast wandered from one place to another, until thou art happy and content in none. We (praise be to God) were born here and never desire to quit it. Is it possible then, that the idea of a general intercourse between mankind should make any impression on our understandings? God forbid!

'Listen, O my son! There is no wisdom equal unto the belief in God! He created the world, and shall we liken ourselves unto Him in seeking to penetrate into the mysteries of His creation? Shall we say: Behold, this star spinneth round that star, and this other star with a tail goeth and cometh in so many years? Let it go! He from whose hand it came will guide and direct it.

'But thou wilt say unto me, "Stand aside, O man, for I am more learned than thou art, and have seen more things." If thou thinkest that thou art in this respect better than I am, thou art welcome. I praise God that I seek not that which I require not. Thou art learned in the things I care not for; and as for that which thou hast seen, I spit upon it. Will much knowledge create thee a double belly, or wilt thou seek Paradise with thine eyes?

'O my friend! If thou wilt be happy, say there is no God but God! Do

what colossal energy lies dormant in those races, which, averse as a general rule to any exertion, from time to time wake up overnight, as it were, to unheard-of activity. Are we really more than the Chinese, because our restless progressive nature is an enigma to their, as it were, passive civilization? A very competent personality from the Middle Kingdom wrote not long ago, 'The White Man from excessive eagerness for the means of Life is forgetful of Life itself.'[1] There is much truth in this observation. At all events, it could only be to our advantage if we laid the writings of the Chinese sages more to heart. Their outlook on life is much less quietistic than we think; they teach withdrawal from all outward activity only so as not to hamper the growth of the world within. In the art of life proper the Chinese are incontestably ahead of us, however much their style may differ from ours. Also we must not forget that their civilization is not only among the oldest of all, but is literally the only one which, in the course of thousands of years, has proved lastingly fitted to its end and capable of living on. China is, so to speak, already on the far side of progress. . . . Is Europe's bustling ideal of Life, according to which every man must always 'be producing something', really higher, in an absolute sense, than that of the dreamy Hindu of Vedantic times, who, from excess of thought energy, contemned or neglected action? I think not. It is impossible to compare types so different, quantitatively with each other. The different civilizations have different forms of life; they are as distinct from each other as the rose and the chrysanthemum. Instead of brooding over the superiority of one to the other, we should rather delight in the manifold given us, and try to comprehend dispassionately the peculiar nature of their laws of life. It should make us doubt

no evil, and thus wilt thou fear neither man nor death; for surely thine hour will come! The meek in spirit (El Fakir)

Imaum Ali Zadi.'

[1] Cf. *Letters from a Chinese Official, being an Eastern view of Western Civilization* (New York, 1904). Also my essay, 'East and West in search of the common Truth', in *Philosophie als Kunst* (Darmstadt, 1920), originally published in English at Shanghai, 1912.

the adequacy of our scale of values for the foreigner, when we reflect that every people thinks itself the first, or—as mythology more grandiloquently expresses it—asserts that it alone is the offspring of the gods. Every Asiatic looks down upon the white man. Therefore let us be circumspect. It no longer does to set up the current European culture as the ideal. In ethico-social character we are behind the peoples of the East; on the speculative side the Hindus of old tower above us, on the artistic, the Greeks. And if we set aside advances in the knowledge and mastery of Nature, it is more than likely that modern civilization stands on a lower level than that of classical antiquity. The theory of the ascending scale in world history is by no means free from objections; at all events Kurt Breysig is right in saying that we can speak of progress only in an identical biological connexion, never in an absolute sense. Therefore we are not more advanced than any civilization before us, but our present stage corresponds to equivalent stages in other nations, say to the last decade before the Empire, in the history of Rome. *On fait ce que l'on peut*; we are working with that capital which racial character and temporal circumstances have lent us. Caesar would have envied us our technique, but hardly our statesmanship. The Chinese stands aghast at the moral inferiority of the white race which thrusts itself on him as the bearer of culture, and if an Alexandrine Neoplatonist suddenly appeared among us, he would hardly credit, for horror, what a rotten hotch-potch of superstition the industrious hands of pious but uncultivated theologians have made of the subtle web of the world of Greek thought. We Europeans of the twentieth century are certainly not in every respect the crowning point of Creation.—As for the problem of the 'primitive peoples', are there in reality any such? Perhaps, but perhaps not. The Australians, relatively to their racial character, show themselves not much less differentiated than we are. The Californian Indians proffer a myth of Creation very similar to the doctrine of the Logos, and therefore anything but primitive.[1] Such

[1] Cf. Max Müller, *Theosophy or Psychological Religion*, p. 383.

known facts give food for thought; nowhere is there a trace to be found of progress in a straight line. And if we think of the evolution of religion, as not infrequently portrayed—namely, that Man gradually rises from crude fetish-worship to higher ideas—is this interpretation of the facts really correct? It seems to me that in the last resort every belief in God—no matter how Man represents Godhead to himself—is fetishism; Man believes in and reverences what he has himself created. And to know this certainly does not mean any degradation of the sublime, much rather does it elevate the apparently inferior to full significance. Thanks to it, even the crudest fetish-worship keeps a profound metaphysical meaning: Man's own creation points beyond his Ego. The primitive belief has thus the same signification as the worship of the Highest: the apparently absolute advance proves to be, in essence, re-interpretation. This re-interpretation indeed, in its turn, again conditions an advance: the symbolism grows more universal, less confined to what is human. Once men believed in the influence of evil spirits where to-day we know of infection by bacilli. But taken strictly, both explanations mean the same. We know to-day much that our forefathers held to be unknowable, but in spite of that there still remains much that we cannot grasp without anthropomorphic hypotheses. We, too, end at last in the myth. And for my part I doubt whether the modern myths are in all respects more pleasing than those of our fanciful, childlike, daring ancestors.

We shall do well therefore, in our criticism of the notion of Immortality, to set aside every preconceived opinion as to what ranks high or low, what is valuable or valueless. Let us be objective as far as possible. He who wishes to consider belief as a phenomenon of Nature, to see the human from the cosmic point of view, must set aside all personal desires. It is to us indifferent in principle whether the soul is immortal or not: we simply want to grasp the critical meaning of this idea. I believe, however, that this apparently cold-blooded observation of what is for most men the innermost need of their hearts, will not give

offence to any person of discernment: he who, with regard to Life, takes up a position at the circumference, so that even in what is most human he first sees the cosmic, has comprehension for every truly living world-view, and reverence for every belief, every sincere conviction. He has this of necessity, because in all these human frailties he sees only so many manifestations of Nature, and the seeker after Truth loves Nature far too well to desire in any way to mutilate her.

CHAPTER I
OF IMMORTALITY IN GENERAL

I

IT is not infrequently an advantage to give paradoxical expression to even a strictly scientific truth. Statements which are too unobjectionable, definitions which are too exact, are apt to produce the effect of barren tautology. Because they utter only what is contained in their bare wording, they seldom arouse fresh trains of thought, and leave the impression of finality in the same way as a drawer does, in which the rich flora of Nature are dried into a lifeless herbarium. On the other hand the stimulating character of the paradox entails that the critical truth sets up emotional vibrations, which materially enhance its effectiveness. Now by far the greater number of men and peoples do not see in Death an absolute end. I should like, provisionally, to state this fact as follows: It seems to be one of the elementary ideas of Mankind that the dead are not dead.

Summarized thus, this venerable belief strikes us as somewhat naïve, and even as verging on the ludicrous. And indeed, the children of latter days, in the arrogance of their intellect, have seldom, when confronted with the idea of Immortality, managed to refrain from ridicule. This was so in imperial Rome no less than in modern France. Pliny wrote long ago:[1]

'Everything, after its last day, returns to what it was before its first; and after death, bodies as well as souls have no more sensibility of any kind than they had before birth. Only Man's vanity makes him project himself into the future, and falsely pictures the period of death as one of life, now assuming the immortality of the soul, now metempsychosis, now a life in the underworld. . . . As if the life of Man were in any way different from that of the other animals, or as if there were not in the world many more enduring things to which no one has yet ascribed a like immortality. . . . Finally, where is the abode, and what is the number of the souls which have departed in the course of so many centuries? All these ideas are the offspring

[1] *Hist. Nat.* vii. 56.

of childish self-deception, and of mortality hankering after eternal continuance.... In Heaven's name then, is not the belief that man lives again after death one of the craziest of delusions?'

A modern materialist could hardly express himself more forcibly. Thousands of years ago the pure intellect stood in just the same helpless amazement before the wondrous visions of Belief as it does to-day. Man, however, is not pure intellect; he is so only when he is on the down-grade. The process of intellectualizing is everywhere a process of disintegration. In the rationalist the deepest and most living springs of the spirit have run dry. He no longer knows aught of creative belief, of sovereign imagination, of instinct, so illogical and yet so sure. He no longer comprehends that man can become lord of Nature, simply by means of the myth, and clings slavishly to the testimony of his senses. And the senses of course know nothing of Immortality. So then, in spite of what theologians frequently assert for practical ends—it is properly only immature races, civilizations still in the making, undifferentiated and unreflective stocks, who believe firmly and consistently in continuance after death. This is partly because they cannot distinguish between reality and imagination, between truth and desire—that is from incapacity—and partly because they still possess energy enough to project their own world into one foreign to them. Belief in Immortality, wherever it prevails, in itself merely argues ingenuousness; critical self-reflection may indeed lead to the same results, but has seldom done so. Actually, we do meet with eschatologies lacking in any positive character, but very rarely among so-called primitive peoples, and on the other hand very frequently among mature and highly cultivated races, e.g. the Jews, the Buddhist Indians, the Chinese, and the Greeks. Indeed we find the theory, by which soul and body would be absolutely inseparable, represented in the life of knowledge exclusively by the two opposite extremes, Mysticism on the one hand,[1] and critical Science on the other.

[1] So far as I know only one mystic, William Blake, has given direct utterance to this doctrine. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* he

Nothing in fact could be more remote from Man in his simplicity than Monism of any kind. His world-view bears perforce the stamp of Dualism. Whether he actually distinguishes between body and soul seems doubtful; it is difficult to find equivalents for his unreflective feeling among modern ideas. He probably distinguishes—since I, at any rate, must express myself in conformity with our modern way of thinking—first of all between matter and force, and force is for him everywhere the expression of life. Whatever acts must have soul. Every force implies a will, and every will is free choice, and so the animistic world comes into being. Primitive man cannot judge otherwise, unless he deliberately falsifies his inmost experience; he is compelled to distinguish between matter and energy. Their potential identity—that monstrous artificial product of modern physics—would be quite beyond his grasp. And since the facts of life and death show him plainly enough that matter and force are separable—for in the dead he rightly sees only matter bereft of force—the first achievement of his growing capacity for abstraction is to draw an absolute line between matter and energy, alias body and soul. That is the primitive mind's theory of knowledge. The belief in, or the assumption of, the non-identity of Matter and Life-Force is the critical starting-point of every further mental process. But it is likewise the *raison nécessaire et suffisante* of every conceivable eschatology; for, once admitted that body and soul are not identical, and that they are separable, it is then only a question of interpretation, of formulation, and of reasoning *a posteriori*, what form and what solution the problem of Immortality takes; the statement of the problem, as such, is given. Whether 'any soul can dwell in any body'—the thesis of the Platonic Academy—or whether the body is held to be the necessary and appropriate vesture of the soul: whether they dwell at peace in or beside one another, or whether their

says: 'Man has no body distinct from his soul. For that so-called body is a portion of soul discerned by the five senses, the chief inlets of soul in this age.' Still the essential unity of body and soul is a necessary and fundamental dogma of every mystical philosophy.

relation is one of such tragic tension that the body has to be regarded as the fetter, the sin, or the shame of the soul: every conceivable theory of soul is rendered possible by, and founded on, the ultimate assumption that there are, operative in Man, two heterogeneous principles—call them what you will. The basis of every belief in Immortality is the disparateness of Matter and Energy.

2

NOTHING, however, would be a greater mistake than to see, in this universal separation between the principle of Life and the matter of it, a witness of the human race to the immortality of the soul. The position is not so simple. Above all we should be chary how we proceed to interpret non-European ideas in European fashion.

Let us consider first the simplest case. One people does not draw from given premisses the inferences which, to our minds, undeniably follow from them. The decision is withheld. If then we afterwards draw the conclusion, which the original race 'had forgotten' to draw, we are often committing a ruinous mistake. It may be of the very nature of a people that, under given circumstances, it does not put certain questions, or, if they are put, does not answer them. It is so with the civilizations of the Far East. Ultimate problems trouble them little. They are tormented by no eternal Why? or Wherefore? Their whole philosophy is rooted in Ethics, in the practical; for them speculation is incidental. We Europeans seldom understand this attitude aright, because our own turn of mind is diametrically opposed to it. We can hardly grasp how far immediate practice can be the beginning and end of a philosophy, since, to our way of thinking, all practice is only the outcome, the application of theoretical speculation, and the latter must, under all circumstances, be carried to its conclusion.[1] The Aryan forgets to act sooner than to complete his philosophy; for the

[1] I am indebted for correct insight into this situation to personal communications from Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain of Tokyo.

Chinese empirical action is the first thing and the last. Accordingly an intellectual omission which strikes us as unbearable seems to him quite natural; he is altogether devoid of our metaphysical craving. To his disciples' entreaty that he would preach some definite doctrine concerning the state after death, Confucius replied: 'If I confirm the supposition that the spirits of our ancestors still take a personal interest in the world, the actions and efforts of a conscientious posterity might be diverted from their earthly tasks. If I deny it, their dutiful attachment might cease abruptly. If I were to say that the dead are conscious, pious descendants might squander their substance in funeral rites; if I were to contradict it, unfeeling children might leave their parents unburied. So then without knowing, act always as if beings above this earth were witnesses of what you do.' The Chinese sees nothing strange in practising the most avowed ancestor-worship, without knowing whether his ancestors still live or not. Have we any right then in his case—as we undoubtedly should have in the case of Aryan stocks—to deduce from ancestor-worship belief in Immortality? No! A people whose view of the world is based on the empirical datum of action as the highest synthesis, instead of an idea, are so utterly unlike ourselves, that we have certainly no right to generalize and draw inferences, as if they were Europeans. Non-metaphysical nations do exist—I purposely say non- instead of anti-metaphysical—and for these there can be no problem of Immortality in our sense of the word.

We find, however, a similar self-restraint before ultimate problems also in places where the metaphysical impulse is most alive, as in Buddhist India. Buddha taught nothing about the state of the soul after death, and to questions about it was wont to give replies very like those of Confucius,[1] though springing from deeper reasons. The position, however, is essentially different in the two cases. The agnosticism of the Chinese sage arose from congenital crass empiricism; that of the Sakya Muni from, if I may say so, the jaded indifference of

[1] For more on this point see H. Oldenberg, *Buddha*.

a Metaphysic weary of life. When one has reflected as long and as deeply as the old Brahmins, one has some day had enough of it. So there arose a certain sceptical resignation, a no-more-volition—the last word of all over-ripe cultures. But even here in their final decision the Hindus proved their extraordinary philosophic ability. Instead of foundering on the shoals of a theoretical scepticism, their thought poured itself into a moral one. All knowledge is vain, not because it is uncertain, but because it brings pain. The doctrine of the Vedas, that man is set free by knowledge, is transformed into the moral doctrine—Happy is he who has renounced all volition. In this way the mind of the sceptical thinker, without forswearing itself, came safe to land, on a hitherto untrodden shore, and turning away from all desire to know, sought thenceforward to escape from suffering by a tranquil and yet active forbearance. Buddhism presents perhaps the most instructive paradox in world history. The metaphysical race *par excellence* ends, simply because it is consistent, in an anti-metaphysical philosophy. Because it transformed the Vedas' profound doctrine of Being into one of Becoming, all transcendent causality ended in an empirical one. The '*tat twam asi*' (this art thou) was understood literally, interpreted in terms of Time, transcendent Being dissolved into Appearance—and Nirvana. Buddhism denies the soul, for the same reason that Ernst Mach denies the Ego; it is analytic Psychology exalted into Religion.[1] . . . Therefore Buddhism too, the final expression of the most tremendous effort of pure speculative thought which mankind has ever accomplished, confines itself to the sphere of practice, to care for one's own welfare, to doing away with pain. To the question whether the soul is immortal it must by its very nature decline to give an answer, and if we endeavour to hazard one afterwards from its premiss, one thing alone is certain—that we are misunderstanding the Hindu.

[1] On Buddhism cf. my *Travel Diary of a Philosopher*; see Index of that work. N.B. The dots (. . .) are always Count Keyserling's; there is no omission. (Translator.)

We find, however, a similar state of things even among peoples who are inwardly much more nearly akin to ourselves; for instance among the Greeks of the post-Homeric age. It is true that their most vivid religious activity consisted in their cult of souls, and yet no clear idea about the nature of the existence of the departed could be deduced from it—or ever was deduced in Hellenic times. Everything in it referred simply to the relation of the dead to the living. Families cared for the souls of their dead by means of sacrifices and religious ceremonies; but since this method was mainly protective, they purposely kept their thoughts away from any inquiry into the character and condition of the departed, except in so far as it affected their contact with the living.[1]

Thus many nations, and those not the least important, have deemed it unnecessary to evolve any definite eschatology. With some this was because they were devoid of any speculative craving; their whole life was rooted in the present world, they never experienced the compelling force of the dread question of the Hereafter. This was the feeling of the Greeks at certain periods, and also of the practical Romans. Inquiry into the condition of the dead may well have struck the latter as idle, loyally though they reverenced them. And in the case of the Chinese their indifference to everything non-empirical verges, to our ideas, upon the grotesque. We feel ourselves worlds removed from this state of mind, we do not understand such self-restriction. And yet the countless number of men of our own stock, who not only never think independently, but never even believe independently—merely repeat parrot-fashion what others believe—ought to show us the way to such understanding. Our metaphysical need, too, is, socially speaking, probably more a catchword than a living force. With most of us also practical interests predominate; for very few is the question of Immortality a personal concern—save perhaps in those last hours, when earthly interests are so strangely losing their value. The European is, of all men, the one who has

[1] E. Rohde, *Psyche*, i. 278.

death most vividly before his eyes, but even of him the assertion that he believes in, or postulates, continuance after death is true only with the qualification—provided he ever puts the question to himself. And it is put much less frequently than is commonly supposed.

Neglect to do so is, in these latter cases, a mark of stupidity, shallowness, want of self-feeling. But can the same be said of the Buddhists? I think not; the same refusal may proceed from most disdainful profundity. It has struck many people how little heed great men pay to the problem of death; they have not infrequently turned from it with positive distaste. Epicurus' teaching was: 'Accustom yourself to the thought that death does not matter; for all good and all evil consists in feeling, and what is death but divorce from all feeling?' Montaigne: 'Death is no concern of yours either dead or alive: alive, because you still *are*; dead, because you *are* no longer.' Spinoza: 'The wise man should think of anything rather than of death; his proper study is not how he should die, but how he should live.' Even the teaching of Christ culminates much less in *Memento mori* than later dogmatism would have us believe. The saying—'Let the dead bury their dead', especially, reminds us of the way Goethe ends some of his letters in his latter years, when he turns from the thought of departed friends with a brave—'And so onwards, even over graves'; or of the behaviour of Kant, who took the warmest and most active interest in his friends, down to the hour of their death, but then had the self-command to shake off all melancholy, and turn back to the tasks of life.

This attitude is not a mark of cowardice or want of feeling; it bears witness to a practical wisdom of the highest grade, which has conquered care for what is merely individual. It springs from the same self-restraint which the theoretical thinker has to manifest before the ultimate grounds of Being, the self-restraint of a reverent discretion. Our age is only too inclined to see in all resignation nothing but impotence, it has little sense of the moral force which lies in self-control. It does

not grasp that conscious, deliberate coming to a stop in the presence of the Inscrutable argues greatness, and springs from a positive, creative principle. It deludes itself that it is a sign of mental power when a man is determined to grasp the incomprehensible, instead of recognizing that this attitude betrays, above all, want of culture. Nothing is more remote from our Age than the insight that the highest philosophy consists, much less in leaving nothing unexplained, than in standing in awe before the mysterious. Goethe's saying: 'Man's highest happiness as a thinker is to have fathomed what can be fathomed, and to bow in reverence before the unfathomable', is ill adapted to our time, which has become almost incapable of comprehending it. For the same reason it misses the profound significance of the self-restraint of the Hindu and the Greek, when face to face with ultimate problems. Our Age is pre-eminently curious; it lacks the lofty self-control of mightier epochs. The never-ending misunderstanding and disparagement of Kant, the only one among recent philosophers who was not curious, who knew the dignity of self-restraint and not only comprehended the pathos of remoteness, but possessed it, ought to be proof enough how little reason modern thinkers have to pride themselves on their metaphysical cravings.

3

MANKIND then cannot bear witness to the immortality of the soul, for the simple reason that an important part of them never put the question to themselves at all. A further reason why it will not do to speak of the universality of belief in Immortality lies in the fact that Mankind has no universal concept of 'soul'. I do not hesitate to assert that all the well-intentioned books whose object is to prove the ubiquity of belief in Immortality—as we understand the word—on the basis of other nations' eschatological ideas, are all wrong from the very beginning, because those ideas are incapable of translation into our mode of thought. It is high time we grasped

the fact that words have a meaning only when a definite content corresponds to them. Most men indeed make use of expressions to which they personally attach no content—this, we may remark in passing, is the other side of the often stressed fact that great writers always impart to words a significance of their own—but these expressions always have a content for society. In the twentieth century, in literary circles in Germany, the word 'genius', for instance, denotes a perfectly definite mental organization. Therefore it *has* a meaning, even though it is applied at times by some one who can think nothing very definite by means of it; it has a meaning for the society of that time. But the same expression in the days of Goethe's youth denoted a man of great but uncouth power, and in antiquity a guardian spirit and nothing else. What then is the meaning 'in general' of genius? Nothing at all! Either it means something defined by its time, or nothing. The word sophist originally denoted a philosophical title of honour; indeed, the Creator of the world was in those days occasionally, quite without irony, styled a sophist.[1] In the same way by a sceptic was at first meant merely a more profound thinker, who did not take everything on trust and in faith. Now, how is a reader who only knows the modern signification of these words to follow correctly the thought of far-off times? And it is not even a question of far-off times: even the language of the eighteenth century is, to my mind, already apt to be misunderstood by most people. The timbre of thought then differed from that of to-day; the man who wants to perceive it clearly must have a good ear. Of what Diderot understood by *raison*, and d'Holbach by *nature*, the French of our day have for the most part hardly an inkling, much less a clear conception.

Therefore, on the score of time alone, any translation is properly speaking impossible. If I understand an expression of the Age of Enlightenment—I have in mind especially the German word *Humanität*—in its modern sense, I am really translating it, and translating it wrong. 'Words are like curren-

[1] Cf. Max Müller, *The Science of Thought* (London, 1887), p. 612.

cies; they have a value of their own before becoming the measure of all kinds of values,' says Rivarol quite justly. Still more impossible—if the comparative may be forgiven—is the translation of a mode of thought, wholly alien by blood and surroundings, into our own. Here, misunderstanding can hardly be avoided. When we are dealing with symbols for concrete objects (such as tree, dog, and so on) the different languages may be reduced to some sort of congruence, though even in these the disparity may be very great, as is shown by comparison of the Japanese and Aryan terminologies.[1] In the case of concepts and ideas, that is of symbols of relation, congruence of any kind is lacking. Each people apprehends the relation between the same objects from a different racial angle, and sees it in a particular perspective. Thus the symbol of relation *Liebe* has (speaking graphically) quite different co-ordinates from *amour* or 'love', to say nothing of its Asiatic or African synonyms. And constructions which differ in their perspectives can never be reduced to congruence; they can only be translated into one another, and then just what is the essence of them is lost. A really faithful translation is an impossibility. And now let us think of epochs of civilization separated from each other by thousands of years! Our whole theology, indeed our entire philosophy, is, so to speak, derived from Greek misunderstood. The nebulous thought of the Syrians, the barbarous one of the Germans, took over the subtle ideologies of Hellenistic Alexandria. What was the result? A dogmatic of such a reckless kind, a metaphysic so uncouth, that a cannibal 'primitive people' could hardly have concocted a worse. When people are working with concepts they do not understand, they become irresponsible. Nations are like children; it is true they pick up the words, but they give them a meaning of their own: therefore in the history of civilization it is hardly appropriate to talk of *thought*-tradition.

[1] Cf. esp. Percival Lowell, *The Soul of the Far East*, pp. 78 ff., and of course also Professor B. H. Chamberlain's fundamental work, *The Japanese Language*.

So it fared with the Greek word 'Logos'. 'The logos', writes Harnack,[1] 'gradually revealed itself as the most convenient of variables, which admitted of being determined forthwith by every fresh magnitude which was taken up into the theological corpus.' The theologians certainly set to work recklessly: out of the profound, but absolutely untranslatable, Logos-idea of Greek culture sprang the crude materialistic doctrine of the Divine Sonship of Christ! The Johannine 'the Word was made flesh' was taken literally, and since, with the best will in the world, nothing much could be made of the idea, people believed blindly, and their thinking-power—none too good already—was completely ruined in their endeavours to find a basis for their faith by means of arguments addressed to the understanding. Myths of profound significance, originally intended as pure symbols, are apt to crystallize gradually (thanks to the misunderstanding of later times) into the most rigid intellectual dogmas.[2]

Every language at a definite time couples a definite meaning with a definite word; this law has the validity of an axiom. From this, it further follows irrefutably that there can be no 'universal' concepts, since they would have a different content at different times and among different peoples.[3] Let us keep firm hold of this truth; it is basic; for not till now are we in a position to approach our problem critically.

4

LET us first consider the idea of God. Since Godhead symbolizes the most direct and intimate relation of Man to the universe, of the Ego to the whole of Reality, it would be natural,

[1] *Dogmengeschichte*, 3rd ed., i. 654.

[2] The clearest historico-critical exposition of the Logos-doctrine, so far as I know while writing this, is to be found in Max Müller's *Theosophy or Psychological Religion* (The Gifford Lectures, delivered before the University of Glasgow in 1892, Lecture XII). Still I do not wish to impute responsibility for my interpretation of this situation either to Müller or Harnack or any one else.

[3] On the exclusive nature of every language cf. my essay on 'The Limited Number of Significant Forms of Culture', in *The Art of Life* (Selwyn & Blount, 1937).

here at any rate, to expect a thoroughgoing identity. And yet it is not so. The idea of God is by no means universal, in the sense that the same idea has found different expressions among different peoples: the truth is that the same striving to set oneself in direct relation to the universe has under differing circumstances led to completely different symbols of relation, which cannot, as symbols, be compared with each other. Jahveh is incommensurable with the gods of Greece, so too Egyptian, Japanese, and Hindu divinities, philosophers' and theologians' ideas of Godhead, the earth and household gods, kobolds and the wandering spirits of the air, are incommensurable with each other. We may indeed designate them *en masse* as gods, only we must never forget that the apparently single concept enfolds a thoroughly heterogeneous content, and that if—as nearly always happens unwittingly—we attach to the word 'God' our current sense, in most cases we are committing a gross falsification. For us, God is an infinite being: for people who cannot count up to three, such an idea is beyond their grasp. For us, Godhead denotes something metaphysical; for the majority of peoples it does not; for them it is simply Nature raised to a higher power, a superlative, often even only a comparative. Indeed, it is not out of the question that among certain crassly unmetaphysical races, who only recognize the dead as a kind of divinities, it is rather Man who stands for the comparative of God—so wavering and changeable are the ideas involved. The later chief deities, of the nations religiously most important, such as the Assyrians and the Hebrews, seem originally to have been national heroes, men pure and simple, in no way possessed of transcendent qualities.[1] Jahveh was, in his youth, a daring knight errant, comparable to Siegfried rather than Wotan. Speaking historically, nothing seems less a necessary element of the divine essence than immortality. An Egyptian god of antiquity was a being wholly like Man—finite, mortal, physically imperfect, susceptible of virtues,

[1] Cf. Kurt Breysig, *Die Entstehung des Gottesgedankens und der Heilbringer* (Berlin, 1905).

passions, and vices. The Asas of Nordic mythology were no more eternal than the Hindu Devas, who 'came into being on the hither side of Creation'; and even Zeus was not a god in our sense of the word; he was for the Greeks by no means the Supreme Being. The German equivalent of the Japanese Kami is 'authorities', or 'emperors', rather than gods,[1] and the *Dii manes* of the ancient Romans were not, properly speaking, divine beings. The deities of the antique religion of the household or city state (πόλις) are characteristic of the extraordinary diversity of possible ideas of God. A deity who, far from being omnipresent, is unalterably attached to the soil, is to our minds lacking in divinity.

To interpret this diversity, in accordance with the Western idea of evolution, as possible or necessary stages on the same path to the Highest, will not do. Things are not arranged as many students of comparative religion would fain have us believe, who secretly cling to their faith in the uninterrupted progress of Mankind. Religion is not a process at all, but an immediate form of life. A people's gods show unmistakably the limitations of their minds. The deepest meaning of every religion is indeed the same; it unites Man directly to the Whole. But how wide this Absolute is for Man, at what point of the connecting line his relation to it attains symbolic form—all this depends upon his mental and spiritual horizon. Our Godhead, our ultimate symbol of relation, stands midway between the soul and the totality of the universe. Races intellectually poverty-stricken understand by 'universe' only their immediate environment; nothing but this counts for them. For this reason the ellipse of their religion curves back again all too quickly, and their symbols hardly go beyond their experience of the human. Good or evil beings, friends or foes—their gods can be nothing more transcendent than these. The personal god of Woman, too, who is so accessible to prayers and persuasions, of whose essence a tender partiality forms part, who

[1] Cf. Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan, An Attempt at Interpretation* (London, 1905), p. 54.

knows little about laws, and much about exceptions, has little in common with his masculine counterpart, as a Kant for instance might have depicted him. Under such circumstances have we any right to talk of the universality of the idea of God? Hardly. To grasp this idea is forbidden to many men's natures. The curve of the ideal ellipse, which as religion unites Mankind's inmost being with the universe, varies in amplitude from nation to nation, and from man to man. At its highest point the religious relation condenses into symbolic form. But to reduce these diverse symbols, on such different planes, to congruence is impossible, on the score of perspective alone. Only where a people capable of development passes through different stages—that is to say in an identical biological system —are comparisons possible. And in the history of our own civilization we are presented with a singular spectacle; the anthropomorphic man-god of the earliest stages inevitably detaches himself from humanity, and ascends a throne on abstract heights remote from men. But only to come back again, as God-man more alive than ever for ardent souls.

A people has the gods of which it is in need; they too, like its political institutions, embody the moral experience of the race. In vigorous epochs they are intensifications of the actual —sublime exemplars; in times of decadence they are the fulfilment of what comes short. The fundamental ideas of Christianity cropped up at intervals from earliest times, yet this religion could not conquer whole empires till such time as it could offer to the failing soul of the people the comfort and salvation for which it was longing. Each people, however, has its special peculiarities, its special needs. These may diverge from ours so far that our capacity for understanding them breaks down. Thus, in spite of the most strenuous endeavours, I have never hitherto succeeded in forming any clear conception of the religious mentality of the Chinese; what is completely alien to oneself one cannot even invent; the faculty of imagination, too, is memory. Therefore, let us resign ourselves to the disparity of the ideas of different races, and beware that we do

not let ourselves be cozened by the identity of terms into forgetting the incompatibility of the ideas.

5

LET us turn back to the problem of soul. I said a little while ago that we could not assert the universality of belief in Immortality, because 'soul' was not a universal concept. Now we understand what was meant by this. The same relation between principle of life and matter of life may be symbolized in such different ways that any comparison seems out of the question. Let us first consider the Greeks. 'The Psyche according to Homer', writes Erwin Rohde,[1] 'is nothing in any way resembling what we are accustomed to call spirit in contrast to the body. All functions of man's "spirit" in the widest sense—for which the poet does not lack a varied nomenclature—have their being in activity, and indeed are possible only so long as the man is still alive. When death takes place, the complete man is no longer a whole; the body, that is the corpse, now becomes "insensible earth", decays, the Psyche remains untouched. But she is not now the refuge of the "spirit" and its faculties, any more than the dead body is. She is insensible, bereft of the spirit and its organs; all powers of will, feeling, and thought have vanished with the dissolution of the man into his component parts. Far from being able to attribute to the Psyche the properties of spirit, we might much rather speak of a contrast between man's spirit and his Psyche. The man is living, conscious of himself, and mentally active only so long as the Psyche sojourns in him, but it is not she who, by imparting her own powers, lends him life, consciousness, will, and capacity for knowledge. So long as the living body remains united to its Psyche, all forces of life and activity are within its competence and are functions of it. The body can neither perceive, feel, nor will without the presence of the Psyche, but it does not exercise these or any of its other functions through or

[1] *Psyche*, i. 4.

by means of her. Nowhere does Homer ascribe to the Psyche any such activity in the man when alive, generally it is not mentioned till its divorce from him is imminent or has taken place: it outlasts him and all his vital powers, as the phantom of himself.'

Such an idea on the part of the very people from whom, in their later stages of development, we have borrowed our fundamental psychological ideas, shows what different things may be denoted by what Christian terminology simply calls 'soul'. We find this belief in a fainter double instead of the 'soul' as the vehicle of the thought of Immortality widespread among the so-called 'primitive peoples' of the entire world. It is just the same among the civilized nations of antiquity; the 'genius' of the Romans, the Fravaschi of the Persians, the Ka of the Egyptians signify nothing but such an *alter ego*, a phantom (εἴδωλον) which is a repetition of the visible Ego. But what becomes of our 'universally valid' European concepts, when we learn further that the belief in several souls in man is extremely widespread?[1] The Egyptians furnish the most striking example of this. Let us hear Maspero:[2] 'Among the Egyptians the man was not constituted in the same way as he is with us: whereas we are twofold, body and soul, he was sixfold and perhaps more. . . . He had a body like ours, then a Ka. This Ka, which I should call his double, was a second exemplar of the body, in a matter less dense than corporeal matter, a projection of the individual coloured but ethereal, reproducing him feature for feature. . . . After the double came the soul (Baï), which served as envelope for a particle of the divine fire or divine intelligence. These four parts were, or might be, immortal in different degrees, and lived, or might live, in different worlds, united or separately.' It does not here matter how far these ideas correspond to reality. Those to which modern psychical research leads are, as is well known, nearer to the Egyptian than

[1] Cf. I. G. Müller, *Amerikanische Urreligion*, pp. 66, 207 ff.; Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, i. 392 ff.

[2] *Histoire des âmes dans l'Égypte Ancienne*, conférence faite à la Sorbonne, 8. ii. 1879.

to the traditional Christian; what matters is, that the ideas on which one or the other culture lays stress in connexion with the thought of Immortality are fundamentally different. A soul 'in general' there is not—there are only ideas of it qualified in this way or that. So then we may well raise the question whether peoples remote from European culture possess, or ever have possessed, the Christian concept of soul at all. The answer is not easy. Even in the case of the Greeks of the classical period psychological congruence is more than doubtful. Their thinking was so amazingly plastic, and at the same time so acute in its dialectic, that I take leave to doubt whether it could ever have been on good terms with such a vague, half-childish, half-monstrous, here-and-hereafter, mongrel creation as that represented by the traditional 'soul' of the Christian Church. Nor can this doubt be removed by arguments from history: for, in the first place, Hellenic ideas have come down to the Christian world in a gloomy Judaeo-Syrio-Egyptian garb, and, secondly, Greek thought had already proved to be essentially untranslatable, though it was continually being translated. A people among whom Heraclitus' doctrine of the instability of the soul-complex was from time to time positively popular, could not possibly have much comprehension for the transcendent empiricism and the naïve materialism of the ordinary Christian belief. It is true that many an isolated thinker of the Christian era was consistent and plastic enough in his thought. We must not, however, forget that the content for society of the concept of soul which the philosopher has to assume in his readers, is not even to-day essentially divergent from that which dominated the Middle Ages.

To conclude, if we compare Christian psychology with Hindu—where is the slightest trace of agreement to be found? The metaphysical endowment of that wonderful people was so great that even its religion might be more abstract than any philosophy intelligible among ourselves hitherto. The teaching of the Vedas stripped the Ego of every attribute, even of consciousness; neither thought, nor feeling, nor will, neither

action nor suffering appertain to the Self—immortal indeed it certainly is—how could anything be destroyed that, understood as substance, does not exist at all? Yet, on the other hand, it seemed to the Brahmins contrary to sense (and rightly so on the given hypothesis) expressly to teach the immortality of the soul. The soul of the individual, according to Hindu ideas, is not itself anything individual. . . . Buddhism, however, did not shrink from the paradox of denying the soul altogether (since it recognized only Becoming, not Being of any kind) and yet of teaching the doctrine of perpetual rebirth or return. . . . Under such circumstances what becomes of the concept of soul? The human race then cannot bear witness to the immortality of the soul, if only because 'soul' is a concept which possesses an intelligible content only for our civilization. Every thinking people has indeed distinguished between life and matter, yet the same premiss has led to such different ideas—according to the interpretation put upon the facts, the impetus of imagination, the ethical character of the race, and the orientation of its interests—that any comparison of them encounters the greatest difficulties. It is with the soul as with the Godhead. Man starts from the same point, and everywhere has the same aim; yet the forms in which the same striving finally manifests itself are manifold and incommensurable beyond all conception—as manifold as Nature herself.

6

So much for the soul. Now what about Immortality? Have we really any right to admit such universal validity of this concept as is usually done? This generalizing and transferring of our own mode of thought also proves untenable on closer inspection. Let us think only of the Egyptians, the people who of all others have occupied themselves most profoundly with the Hereafter. They knew nothing of Immortality in the strict sense of the word. 'I could not say,' writes Maspero, 'that the Egyptian soul was immortal. Its existence was identified with

the course of the sun, and followed its phases: it was born to life as the sun is to the day, passed like the sun through the darkness of night to be born again to the morning of a new day. Life on earth was, properly speaking, only one of the days of the soul, one of the Becomings—that is the Egyptian expression —which it underwent unceasingly. The soul died from one life into the next, and each of these lives had an infinite duration ahead of it, as it had an infinite duration behind it.' Souls appear mortal in the same sense to all peoples who believe in Metempsychosis. The soul in its migrations dies from one life into another, and awakens each time in a new form with new properties. Continuity of consciousness—the main postulate of Christian psychology—or even of character is not assumed by any of these religions. An unconscious, impersonal immortality seems, however, to Christian European eyes much the same as mortality.

The idea of *becoming* immortal, after a finite life on earth, argues moreover immaturity of thought: for man can only *be* immortal. The category of eternity excludes all participation in Time. Therefore temporal events, like death, cannot cast doubt upon being eternal. On this point Christian dogmatic has not always seen clearly. It tells all the more in favour of the profundity of the Greek mind that it could only imagine 'becoming-immortal' (the destiny of a few select heroes) in such wise that death was excluded altogether. Immortality, according to Greek convictions, was confined to divine beings, therefore the man so favoured was *ipso facto* deified. Man's natural being was not held to be divine, and the immortality of the soul as such, in virtue of its own nature and quality, was therefore never an item of popular Hellenic belief.[1] The Athenians may well have shaken their heads at first, when Plato propounded his idealistic eschatology. . . . Indeed, the idea of a natural immortality of the soul, as distinct from an awakening through the grace of God, formed no part even of the essence of the earliest Christianity. If the right stress is

[1] Cf. Rohde, *Psyche*, ii. 378.

laid on the opposition between Nature and Grace, the Greek conviction that, in reality, Immortality appertains to God alone, seems that of St. Paul at any rate.[1]

How, indeed, can belief in natural, and as it were inevitable, Immortality be reconciled with the fact of the essentially temporal and perishable nature of all created beings? It cannot be done at all without metaphysical assumptions, except in so far as thought is forsworn, and free play given to imaginative passion for the miraculous. The eternal nature of God, and the transitory one of Man, are in themselves diametrically opposed, and the gulf between them can only be bridged by dint of supernatural intervention. In one case alone can the individual soul be immortal by nature—if it is itself of divine essence, of divine origin. This has been the teaching of Mysticism, in all ages, and in all lands. Full comprehension of it, however, presupposes such depth and power of thought that we cannot be surprised if only very few civilizations and people have attained to it. The keenest intellect, if it lacks the mystic's power of intuition, is unable to grasp a divine immanence in a temporal, mortal being. For this reason it was just the most lucid-minded peoples, so far as they, like the Greeks, were non-mystical, to whom the thought of personal immortality remained most foreign; therefore belief in Immortality, in our sense of the word, is anything but a common possession of mankind. There is, it is true, hardly any people who would see in death an absolute end. But it is a long way from this negative insight to the positive belief in personal continuance in the Christian sense. It was by no means always traversed, and led but rarely to the goal which seems to us natural.[2]

[1] Cf. Georg Runze, *Die Psychologie des Unsterblichkeitsglaubens und der Unsterblichkeitsleugnung* (Berlin, 1894), p. 166; Aug. Sabatier, *Mémoire sur la notion hébraïque de l'esprit*, p. 33, and elsewhere.

[2] Thus the future life in which primitive peoples for the most part believe is rather a 'continued existence than immortality', as Tylor expresses it. Cf. *Primitive Culture*, ii, chap. xii.

7

I CALLED the mystical view of the world the only one which could afford a rational foundation for the thought of Immortality. But is it not just the one which leads farthest away from belief in personal continuance? It is no question here of difference in concrete formulation. The distinction between being and appearance is common to all mysticism, and for all, too, individuality is appearance. The single soul is a ray of the divine sun, an atom of divinity, which is everywhere one and indivisible. He who withdraws from appearance into his inmost being becomes God or one with God; Ego and God, Brâhman and Âtman are fused. Therefore all men, indeed all things of this world, are in essence one: '*tat twam asi*', 'that art thou', the Hindu sage teaches his disciples of every object in Nature. But if all things are of one essence—what significance then have the limits of individuality? Why lay stress on the personal continuance of it? Christian mystics have indeed endeavoured to depict it: since God was for them a person, the souls which had entered into God must likewise live on as persons. But this idea was bound to remain obscure and indistinct, for between the finite person and the infinite personality of God no mediation is possible, and the consciousness of Man, that creature of Time, can scarcely continue to exist within the boundless consciousness of Godhead. All mystics therefore, whether they will or no, end at last in an impersonal eschatology. The Persian Sufis, as well as the Gnostics, teach that the soul, which like a ray of light has emanated from God, will again be absorbed by God. For the Brahmin the self, set free from all earthly attributes, enters into the peace of eternal unconsciousness, and the terrible consistency of Buddhism even goes so far as to identify the soul of the universe with nothingness. Individuality is, for all Mysticism, appearance, limitation, error, or suffering.

To what then does Mysticism's thought of Immortality refer? It refers directly to the Essence of the Universe, to the prim-

ordial ground of things, the principle of all life. It soars boldly above everything human, and comes to rest on cosmic heights. Not all mysticism was as impalpable and incomprehensible as that of the hyper-abstract Hindu: Plato's Ideas, the archetypes of things, are plastic forms; Schopenhauer's Will is no abstract principle; and if Biometaphysics ascribes immortality to the entelechy alone, and chooses to see in individuals only momentary stages in the ceaseless temporal progress of form, this mystical doctrine is almost clear and comprehensible. But this too is mysticism: it is so in content, even if not in temper. In principle it asserts the same as the most turgid Oriental Theosophy, viz. that the Eternal lies on the far side of appearance, and that everything personal belongs to the world of phenomena.

So then the thought of Immortality in its extremest and most fully developed form seems to annihilate itself. The yearning of the person for eternal being may have called it to life. Now to the enthusiastic vision it seems almost within reach. But the longed-for Eternity has ceased to know aught of personality and its yearnings.

8

DESCRIPTIVE ESCHATOLOGY. There is, we may say, no conceivable idea about the Hereafter to which Mankind has not owned allegiance at some time or place. From complete renunciation of any attempt at determination to utmost precision of detail; from the old Roman doctrine, according to which there was no Beyond at all, and the dead lived on in this world in some enigmatic fashion, to the transcendental materialism of the Mohammedan paradise and the ideal Non-being of Nirvana: within the limits set by the finitude of man's mind as such, every stage seems traversed from zero to periphery. Here, if anywhere, imagination has run riot.

For this reason it is hardly worth while to trace in detail the ideas involved:[1] to enumerate the contents of an encyclopedia

[1] Every text-book of History of Religion contains the relevant data—for

is uninteresting, because we know beforehand that it contains everything. On the other hand, for the same reason, critical consideration of the imagination's eschatological creations seems all the more interesting. For here we find that the higher a people ranks intellectually, and the richer its imaginative power is, the more indefinite its eschatological ideas become. How indeed is it possible to form any distinct idea of what has never been experienced? Or, if traditional belief already includes such an idea, how is it to be made clear and intelligible? The Christian conception of soul, for instance—incorporeal, stripped of every conceivable attribute, spirit and nothing else: no power of imagination can picture a spirit without a body. The hypothesis of the Resurrection of the body makes things worse rather than better. Voltaire indeed asserts, 'Resurrection is a perfectly natural idea: it is no more astonishing to be born twice than once.' Nevertheless, the dogma of the Resurrection is completely unintelligible. Nothing therefore is left to the thoughtful educated man who still clings to the old Faith, but to refrain from any definite presentation of it.

On the other hand nothing comes easier to the crudely simple-minded than to picture the incomprehensible. The boor would laugh if one tried to make clear to him the inconceivability of soul; he sees it plainly before him. Indeed, I believe that undifferentiated races and people, however dim and confused their mental life may actually be, always possess perfectly definite images for their subjective experience, and are the only people capable of them. To preserve what is indistinct presupposes a certain grade of culture. Think, for instance, of the painstaking accuracy, the scientific thoroughness, with which our primitive painters executed their illustrations of hell: nothing was left in doubt. The Greeks of the Homeric Age, on the other hand —probably more from instinct than any clear consciousness—

instance that of P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye (3rd ed., Tübingen, 1905). Of the older works I should like to recommend especially Edmund Spiess's *Entwicklungsgeschichte der Vorstellungen vom Zustande nach dem Tode* (Jena, 1877). Louis Bourdeau's *Le Problème de la Mort, ses solutions imaginaires et la science positive* (5th ed., Paris, 1904) is also worth reading.

drew a veil in front of the Hereafter, behind which mythology was free to assume all the more highly coloured and ever-changing forms. They possessed imagination enough to confine themselves to suggestions, feeling for style enough to know where faint shades were in place and where firm outlines, reserve and self-control enough to come to a stop in awe before the inscrutable. The philosophizing Greek world never taught anything precise about the Hereafter, even when it most definitely insisted on the immortality of the soul. All symbols were taken just as symbols, not as illustrations. And the Hindu people, with their profundity, turned away from all concrete presentation: 'No measure can measure him who is departed hence. There is no word to speak of him. Since all forms of existence are done away, all paths of speech are done away likewise.'[1]

Poverty of imagination produces the same result as defective differentiation; this explains why even highly developed peoples often possess excruciatingly clear mental images of the unknowable. The ancient Egyptians did. They had such accurate knowledge about the dead that owing to it they overlooked the living. In the same way the unexampled success of the religion of Islam, which otherwise introduced little that was novel, is explained by its attractively detailed doctrine of the Hereafter: the Arabs were, if not to the same degree as the Egyptians, imaginatively an exceedingly poverty-stricken race. It is time that the fact was grasped that it is no index of richness of imagination if the pictures of fantasy take on too definite a shape: what crystallizes immediately shows, *ipso facto*, its want of plasticity. But when we are talking of spirit, 'plastic' is synonymous with rich; hence it follows that wealth of imagination will never lead to petrified, unchangeable forms. And so far as recklessness or turbulence of fancy is concerned it is always a sign of imaginative poverty. Whoever, by preference, combines the completely heterogeneous—men's bodies with birds' heads and so on—shows that he is insensitive to the nuance, 'the one thing to

[1] Buddhistic saying given by Oldenberg, cf. *Buddha*, p. 323.

which there is no bridge'; a richer mind combines in accordance with law, like Nature.

But the problem is enormously complicated by the transformations and re-interpretations which religious myths undergo in the course of their history. Ideas which in their latest shape we should be inclined to treat as barbaric, were often originally profound and tender, and coarsened only by the persistent misunderstanding of generations. Such is the metamorphosis of the Logos-idea already touched on: from a profound thought sprang a clumsy dogma, simply because the Greek word was untranslatable, because people could no longer think the thought handed down, and so the word stiffened into a fetish.

The phenomenon is common everywhere and can be traced in the course of every developing religion—I will therefore examine this remarkable state of things somewhat more closely.

In its earlier stages language is not only concrete, but essentially myth-forming. It can express a 'thought' in no way but by metaphor and image, and every metaphor, regarded in itself, stands for a myth. At this stage every statement is a figure of speech, every judgement a metaphor. The myth is not only the earliest explanation, it is the earliest linguistic expression of Nature, the absolutely last resort, the ultimate symbol possible. In this stage of development whoever gave utterance to a mythical symbol said thereby all that he possibly could say: since he did not think in concepts, any further comment was beyond him.

The first step then is the myth; to be understood literally as a symbol pure and simple. In time, thought becomes more abstract; more and more symbols of relations are added to symbols of objects; the capacity to grasp relations as relations, apart from the objects related, increases. Now the myth is no longer ultimate: behind the image looms the concept. The two are frequently incommensurable, and may fall into bitter enmity.

The discrepancy between image and concept is set right

quickly enough in natural conditions, which are subject to the correction of practice; on the other hand, with advancing development the discrepancy between the impulse to know, which grows more and more critical, and the religious myth becomes ever sharper. For the latter lives on unchanged as an article of Faith, while thought emancipates itself more and more, and so in time the original harmony turns into an opposition. Generally it ends in the shipwreck of Faith. But at first the myth is held to be absolute indubitable truth, to which knowledge must accommodate itself as best it can. What was originally only form and expression becomes substance and dogma. And since in dogma truth is taken as given, and therefore need not first be sought, whereas thought can no longer see in myth the final court of appeal, the earliest scientific criticism expresses itself in commentary.

At this point there are two possible methods of interpretation, which have always been practised side by side, and have not infrequently coalesced: the historical and the allegorical. Either the myth is taken literally, and interpreted as an event in Time, or it is understood as an allegory, a pictorial representation of abstract thoughts. I need not dwell particularly on the first, since it is already familiar to every educated man through the Greeks: many of the wonderful myths, whose profundity shows their spiritual provenance, were ultimately taken, as every one knows, for early history of the Hellenic race. But we must devote more exhaustive attention to the allegorical interpretation, because this latter—since man has by nature an impulse to bring the irrational which he believes into harmony somehow with his thought and knowledge—has been extraordinarily frequent, and has moreover always proved a most disastrous influence with the masses.

In times when allegory is rampant all comprehension of the symbol is entirely lost. Allegorical interpretation depreciates the myth, and professes to go beyond what, from its very nature, can only be ultimate. The result is that in later, *soi-disant* enlightened epochs, from a profound symbolism there

often springs the crassest superstition. Thanks to its confused thinking, which could no longer do justice to any image, out of the sublime mystical teaching of Christ and the profound ideas of the later Greek world ecclesiastical exegesis succeeded in concocting a theology calculated to make one's hair stand on end. Everything mythical was distorted either into allegory or history, every uncomprehended utterance hardened into barbarous dogma. The keenest intellects of such periods vied with each other in the barren work of falsification, and exhausted themselves in rendering what was sublime stale and corrupt. What, for instance, can be conceived less attractive than the life work of Philo of Alexandria, which consisted in translating into the Mosaic religion (whose truth Philo never doubted) late Greek philosophy, of whose subtle train of thought he was a consummate master? Or what can be more depressing than to see such a noble intellect as Marsilius Ficinus devoting years to deducing from Plato's *Symposium* the doctrine of the Trinity? By the method of allegory you can get just any result. Indeed the Allegorists have frequently been insolent enough to give their own confused conceptions as the 'esoteric' content underlying the 'exoteric' myth; so devoid were they of all sense of decency. They did not even understand that the aforesaid distinction has no meaning except in the case of symbolic presentations, and that the proper significance of the latter lies on quite a different plane from anything which can be interpolated into them by the intellect. Behind the symbolic expression lies living spiritual reality. Allegorists on the contrary are trying to discover behind it the abstract concept. What is most sublime undergoes horrible distortion as mirrored in the commentary. We see then how dangerous, and often how unjust, it is to appraise old myths according to their most recent expression. Not till late, after the confused, allegorizing transition stage, does thought grow pure and lucid. Credulous commentary becomes real, genuine criticism. Then the sense for the symbolic awakens anew, and myth as the language of spirit-experience comes once again into its sovereign rights.

9

WE have already several times alluded in passing to a peculiar circumstance, the alogical element in all Belief. I cannot as yet go into the critical aspect of the problem, but the fact must be touched on now because otherwise a full understanding of ideas of the Hereafter is unattainable.

It seems to the thoughtful man that most eschatologies can neither be imagined nor conceived; either they transcend all possible intuition, or they contradict the laws of thought, or they contradict themselves. The last case is the most frequent; thus the Egyptian Hereafter was simply made up of contradictions. This did not, however, disturb the faithful in the least. It merely sometimes upsets Egyptologists, who, in their well-meant endeavours to provide a substratum of meaning for every myth, are driven to do violence to historic truth. And the fact that the irrationality of certain Christian dogmas disquieted the Fathers of the Church has, in the end, been only to the detriment of Christendom. Why try to demonstrate the inconceivable? It is indeed impossible; in the end one is shipwrecked on Tertullian's *Credo quia absurdum.* It should never be forgotten that every myth, as symbol, originally stood for an ultimate explanation, on which no further commentary could be given. All mythologies, except in so far as they refer to historical events, are remains of concrete stages of thought; an age of abstraction never devises an intuitive religion, it rather thinks out a philosophy. To speak of contradictions in religious ideas is, therefore, just as unmeaning as to reproach a painting with not being a concept.

There still remains the problem why men have, as a rule, produced alogical myths, when—theoretically—they might just as well have been logical. The answer is a matter of calculating probabilities, except in one very essential case—that in which the myth owes its origin to the posing of a question of cause, and is given as a causal explanation. Psychologically this is not difficult to understand.

We believe, ever since Kant's day, that all search for the cause in its essence postulates the *regressus ad infinitum*. Epistemologically this is correct, psychologically on the contrary it is false; indeed it is characteristic of the thinking of most peoples and most individuals, that the problem of cause does not involve the said regress. Like the woman, the child, and the sick among us to-day, the simple-minded, myth-forming man when disturbed by a Wherefore? merely demands an explanation in general. This must be, as far as possible, obvious, concrete, unambiguous, and impossible to misinterpret; then it is believed without more ado. It no more occurs to primitive man to inquire further, than it does to the masses who credulously await the groundless asseverations of the leader they admire. As these masses regard every attempt at giving reasons as weakening the truth-value of his assertions, so primitive man is much more inclined to be doubtful of what is demonstrated than of a peremptorily proclaimed article of faith, bluntly advanced with the necessary personal prestige. Nothing is more characteristic of Mankind's lack of need for a cause than their cosmogonies. To the question, 'Who created the world?' the Australian replies 'A parrot'. And not only 'uncultured peoples' are equally modest in their pretensions to explanation. Thales taught that everything had its origin from water, and Xenophanes that everything proceeded from earth. According to the Japanese sage, the Sun and Moon (both divine beings) were manufactured in Japan and afterwards exported to Heaven. Is not the same true, in the last resort, of every myth of Creation, including the Mosaic? He who says that a God has created the world shows more insight than the worshipper of the parrot, but he, too, arbitrarily cuts short the regressive causal nexus, moreover he bases the known upon the unknown, and finally deduces all being from a primordial being, the transcendent nature of which is ill adapted to make its problematical existence evident. Whether it is bird, water, πρώτη ὕλη, or God, everywhere Nature is explained by a myth, which is no more intelligible than the phenomenon to be explained, and is more-

over dubious as a fact. Even modern Physics, in reality, proceeds no differently. Yet this circumstance appears to very few as a drawback. Platner remarked long ago that Man has, as a rule, no difficulty in understanding what is unnatural or supernatural, and that inconceivability proper is to be found only in the natural; the former is his own invention, while the norms of the course of Nature are not directly given to him. For this reason the irrational nature of his premisses so seldom strikes him. But how could an ultimate explanation of the world ever be intellectually satisfactory? A final cause can be discovered only by the man who renounces the *regressus ad infinitum*; and this is a non-rational proceeding. In the end Belief takes the place of Reason, and lends to the absurd more truth-value than the best proof can give to the rational. How little are Oriental believers disquieted by the fact of Evil in the world—which incidentally is supposed to have been created by a benevolent God especially for men—though philosophers have wrestled with it in vain down to the present day! Even the Jews of the Old Testament (whose God was certainly not a morally irreproachable person) knew nothing of this dilemma. Jahveh has the power, he may do what he will; his will is, of course, arbitrary; and because he has the power he is, *ipso facto*, right, his behaviour is good. To reason further would be impious. This is the opinion of most Asiatics when their recognized despot deals out merciless judgement. It is the normal opinion of primitive man. Might and Right were originally interchangeable concepts *de jure*, as they still are *de facto*.

10

BELIEF is in its very nature alogical: nothing could illustrate this truth more forcibly than the idea of a selective Immortality. It would naturally be thought that either the soul is immortal or it is not; that in this respect there could be no individual differences: and yet, ethnologically speaking, belief in a universal continuance after death represents the exception. In nearly all countries where the thought of Immortality has

taken root in the consciousness of the people, and theoretical considerations do not transform the natural belief, the dominant conception is that uttered by the leader of the chorus in Goethe's *Helena*:

> *Who has not earned a name, nor wills the noble,*
> *Belongs but to the elements.*

Only the pre-eminent man is immortal; the ordinary one is so, at best, in proportion as he approximates to this latter.

> *Not merit 'tis alone, Loyalty too, preserves to us Person.*

Thus thought the Greeks, the Egyptians, the ancient Peruvians; so think many Indians, Polynesians, and most warlike races; the underlying idea, at any rate, glimmers through all eschatologies. Even the fanatical Christian, whose religion is the most open-hearted of all, except Buddhism, in his heart of hearts only attributes Immortality to his fellow believers. A dead silence, we may say, is preserved about the state of non-Christians after their decease.

This idea, philosophically most weird, is easy to understand psychologically; man's ideas are regulated not according to what is, but to what he notices, what strikes his power of imagination. And the average man notices astonishingly little.[1] To think of a lofty mind, a leader of men, as annihilated seems impossible;

[1] The following observation may be appropriate here: the most profound ideas, uttered by an unknown author, slip past the public in most cases without leaving any trace, it takes no notice of them. On the other hand the pedestal on which Fame sets a man attracts the attention of the masses to the utterances of the author, so that everything important is listened to and the unimportant is usually over-estimated. A saying of Goethe's is eagerly listened to, even when it states a banality; significant utterances of an unknown author are unappreciated even when they are noticed. To this circumstance is due the really paradoxical possibility that an author may have published ever so many works, and yet may be only 'discovered' decades later, or even after his death.—Moreover, intellects which are really important but of too practical a bent have not infrequently drawn great advantage from this fact: what was significant in the unknown author did not escape their notice; they borrowed it forthwith, often disdaining even to transform the style of it. Since the masses ascribe greatness only to the famous, they feel secure from all detection; but the poor unknown is butchered by the plagiarism.

but just now he was all-powerful, how should he suddenly exist no longer? Hence the Kyffhäuser saga, the too confident expectation of the second coming of the Messiah, the countless pseudo-Demetriuses, and so on. On the other hand, nothing seems more likely than the total annihilation of a being who was hardly noticed in his lifetime.[1] Also, very few nations have ascribed Immortality to Woman—she hardly counts for them as a human being. At a pinch, as man's companion and servant, she might reckon on continuance, but no people unless they thought scientifically would consider Immortality probable for old maids. Even the Christian Church wavered for a long time as to whether an imperishable soul was to be ascribed to Woman or not; not till the Council of Mâcon, 585, was this question decided in the affirmative. Thus the limits of postulated Immortality are creations of convention, dependent on the width of the mental horizon, on irrational grounds of belief. The average Christian does not attribute an immortal soul to animals, because Christianity has widened the gulf between man and beast to an unheard-of extent. No less a man than Descartes considered all organisms, except the species *homo*, mere automata. The so-called 'savage' peoples on the other hand—among whom in this respect were the highly civilized Egyptians and the wise Hindus—recognized no difference, in principle, between

[1] I cannot at this point refrain from quoting an extremely delightful satire, on universal immortality, from the pen of Paul Mongrés, one of the most witty and graceful stylists of our day, who unfortunately has never been appreciated as he deserves. 'Such a manikin, too dried up for the fire of Hell, too pitiful for the pity of God, too short-lived for Eternity—how the thought of all the dead rising again must turn the head of such a poor specimen and make him swell with pride! What! he will say, I exist again? They have not forgotten to wake me up? They still want something from me? I am needed in the great fifth act of the world-comedy? They are going to make me eternal, and not leave me out? I am indispensable for the final ends of existence? Who would ever have thought I should have been of so much consequence? They did not make such a fuss of me on Earth! There I had to pay to get into the newspapers, and here I am with my life history and the semblance of achievement of my silly doings, booked, registered, catalogued all for nothing! No emperor or king now can be of more importance than I am, Mr. What's-your-name and Whoever-you-are: verily the reign of Justice has begun at last!' (*Sant' Ilario* (Leipzig, 1897), p. 305.)

man and beast.[1] They are on the contrary inclined to think the beast superior to the man—hence the frequent identification of the Godhead with a particular kind of animal, the ambition to be able to trace one's ancestry to animals, and so on—because it is beyond their understanding. The absence of speech they, in contrast to ourselves, probably interpret as an advantage, a mask of disquieting cunning: to that chatterbox, the negro, the animal seems enviably discreet.

The idea of a selective Immortality seems therefore obvious. Probably indeed the instinct of many faithful Christians is on its side, absurd as it may appear to scientific thought: for belief in retribution properly implies the thought of different grades of Immortality. Of course the same instinct may be displayed in many different forms: most races believe in the imperishableness of the great man; for others, only the believer lives on, while the sceptic perishes and leaves no trace. Goethe was convinced that every entelechy was indestructible, but postulated entelechies of different rank. 'We are not all immortal in the same degree, and to manifest oneself in the future as a great entelechy one has to be one.' The distinction between the blockhead and the genius, he held, endured to all eternity. In this connexion we occasionally come across most extraordinary ideas: the Egyptians, that grotesque, subtly barbaric people, like most aristocratically-minded nations, attributed Immortality only to the upper classes; but why?—because they are *better educated*! Every dead man indeed journeys to the garden of Jaloû; most of them, however, perish by the way, owing to the countless dangers which beset the soul on all sides, and which are only to be exorcized by certain formulae. Against each enemy—and their number is legion—only one charm has any effect. How could a poor wretch find time and opportunity to absorb all the knowledge he would need after death? For the aristocrat it is easy. And even the utmost measures which a dutiful posterity could take to avert his doom—such as giving the dead man a comprehensive library for his journey, from

[1] Cf. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, i. 423.

which he might extract the rules for his procedure—were unfortunately by no means infallible.[1]

For the soul which outlives the body is mortal in its turn: this idea of a second death shows more plainly than anything else how little part conceptual thought takes in myth-formation. Individual Immortality, as already noted, depends for the most part on how far the individual attracted notice in his lifetime. This dependence on the attention of others has posthumous force: immediately after death no man is wholly dead—this is proved by the frequent apparitions of the dead in dreams. Even modern inhabitants of the Far East, who are otherwise disposed to be sceptical about the Immortality of the individual, do not believe that the death of the soul coincides in time with that of the body; the spirit of the departed at first lives on. But when the memory of him begins to fade—why should not total annihilation set in? Father and grandfather certainly live on—they are still vivid in the memory of the generation thriving at present; with the great-grandfather, whom hardly any one living any longer knows, the thing already becomes doubtful. The Chinese attribute Immortality only to the imperial dynasty *en bloc*. Faith projects this world as it were into the Hereafter; what we have forgotten no longer exists *for us*: so the dead fade out, together with their fame. According to the ideas of Mediterranean antiquity, ancestors to whom no dutiful descendant sacrificed any longer died. Among the Greeks, whose noble minds were more intent on μνήμη ἀθάνατος (undying fame) than on material continuance, this peculiar theory of selective Immortality and the second death gained its most beautiful and touching expression. Fame *was* Immortality. The nameless man perished forthwith —the hero never; for as long as the Greek nation lived it never forgot its heroes. But the continuance of those in whom the nation took no interest depended on their descendants. So long as they were revered, ancestors lived on: when no one sacrificed any longer, they vanished as if they had never been. Is not this the grandest idea of Immortality which Mankind has ever

[1] Cf. Maspero, *Bibliothèque Égyptologique* (Paris, 1893), i. 347.

conceived? The dead depend on the living; with the last childless branch the whole family dies out: in the day of the twilight of humanity comes the end of Adam's breed. The world exists for man only in so far as he knows it: even the critical philosophy can reveal no more than the Hellenic myth.

II

To the credit of Humanity be it said: not every people has concluded a commercial treaty with the Hereafter. The amalgamation of the idea of Immortality with that of retribution is not universal. It is indeed to be met with from time to time in every religion: the priests took care of that, since the tremendous efficacy of hell, as a means of governing the masses on earth after their own liking, did not escape their eye as politicians. Even the Hindus at times—in their earliest stages, and again in the period of their decadence—believed in a hell, an idea which by no means fitted in with the rest of their mythology. Also, quite apart from the priests, it was easy for this association to creep in wherever the idea of Immortality encountered the feeling of injustice endured: the sense of moral symmetry leads easily enough to such a combination of ideas. Yet belief in Immortality has, in itself, no organic connexion with the thought of retribution: the latter is, as a rule, a late addition to a myth of the Hereafter which was complete long before.[1] Only of the Jews, those past masters of resentment, can it be asserted, perhaps, that their idea of Immortality had its origin in the desire for retribution.[2] In Christianity the connexion was at first a loose one; justice fell into the background in comparison with grace. If things seem otherwise to-day, if the majority of Christians are quite incapable of separating the ideas of the Hereafter and of retribution from each other, that is the result of Judaeo-medieval obscurantism continuing to act.

At first none of the eschatologies, whose historical development

[1] Cf. Max Müller, *Theosophy, &c.*, p. 165.
[2] Cf. Runze, *Psychology of the Belief in Immortality, &c.*, p. 137.

we are able to follow, seems to have known anything of expiation. The Hebrew Sheol was neutral, as was likewise the Greek Hades. Not until late did the former split into Heaven and Hell, and the latter into Tartarus and Elysium. According to Far Eastern ideas the souls of the departed live on untroubled, exactly as they were in their lifetime, as good or evil spirits according to their character on Earth. Everywhere belief in Immortality originated independently of morals. It seldom indeed remained independent, and only in the opposed, extreme cases, the races who were crassly non-metaphysical and those who were metaphysically supremely gifted, such as the Chinese and the Hindus.

We, unfortunately, are inclined to look upon the moralization of the Hereafter as an advance. Politically speaking, it certainly is one, but politics are the very opposite of metaphysics.[1] However salutary it may be for a man to believe in eternal justice, that does not alter the fact that the expiation of temporal transgressions by eternal punishment contradicts the most elementary sense of justice; such a belief is a mark of ethical barbarism. That a religion like Christianity, founded on love, should ever have adopted it shows plainly how little inference can be drawn from belief to the believers: just as the whole history of the Church is the very antipodes of the teaching of the Nazarene.

Belief in retribution, however, does not merely show a low ethical position, still more does it argue barbarism of thought. It is sad but true that the European mind, in this respect, ranks far below those on which it is wont to look down, and which it presumes to convert and civilize.

Two really profound doctrines have originated in the Christian world: salvation by faith, and salvation by grace. But it is the exception when either has been understood. Although dogma has incorporated both into itself, and every Christian

[1] Cf. my explanation of the earth-bound and base quality of politics in the chapters 'Gana' of *South American Meditations* and 'Property' of *Problems of Personal Life* (Jonathan Cape).

has, so to speak, sworn allegiance to them, yet the Church, like the individual, behaves as if the dogma meant salvation by works. Our fate in the future depends on what we do on Earth.

Europeans have never properly grasped the fact that this theory is anything but profound; at best, the noblest among them have had some inkling of it. The Hindu, on the other hand, has known for thousands of years that salvation by works is impossible, simply for the critical reason that all action is empirical, and can therefore entail only empirical consequences: empirical events with transcendent consequences are absolutely unthinkable. Every action takes place in the realm of phenomena, therefore only among phenomena in this world can it be expiated or atoned for. This expiation takes place in Samsâra, the transmigration of souls.

That Metempsychosis relates to the Beyond is indeed quite an error: it signifies a state of things, supersensible indeed, but yet, on the supposition of a moral order of the world, perfectly natural—as natural as the permanence of the species through the change of individuals who alone are empirically given. And the supposition of a moral world-order is for the Hindu just as self-evident as the mechanical character of all physical events is for us. Even the combination of atoms into chemical elements, bodies, and so on, the Mahâyâna philosophy interprets as a moral process—every present quality is, so to speak, the 'just' consequence of the preceding. Each substance has a Karma, and if a solar system falls to pieces, this event is regarded not so much as the result of natural forces acting in and upon it, as an expiation for its moral tendencies. On such a supposition, strange as it may appear to us, the moral causal nexus expressed in Metempsychosis appears no more supernatural than any other process of Nature occupying prolonged spells of time.

That the myth of the transmigration of souls is no other-world belief is clear if we consider that it is ill adapted to satisfy the craving for Immortality, and cannot possibly have arisen from this desire, since the Hindu can certainly not be charged with lack of metaphysical acumen. On this point Otto

Weininger has seen very clearly; he writes:[1] 'It is anything but a satisfaction of the belief in Immortality to assume the eternal recurrence of the same, as Pythagorean and Hindu teaching knows it, and as Nietzsche has once more proclaimed it. On the contrary, it is terrifying; for it is nothing more or less than the man's double, not indeed co-existing in time but in succession. The will to the maintenance of oneself as value, the will to the Absolute, is indeed the source of the longing for Immortality.' Samsâra then stands not for any life in the Beyond, but for a form of natural continuance, however strange the 'natural' may sound in European ears. And, characteristically enough, the Hindu Beyond really lies beyond the orbit of morals. So long as a trace of its deeds was left, the soul went on wandering here below; on the day when all Karma was worked out she was released and entered into the Brâhman.

Now we see plainly how high the thought of transmigration of souls towers above all belief in transcendent retribution: it satisfies the need for moral causality thoroughly, and yet does not run counter to the critical truth that the transgression committed in appearance can only be expiated in appearance. What is empirical can never become transcendent. The immortal soul is not affected by what happens in the realm of Becoming.

Of course, the doctrine of the transmigration of souls is only one of the many possible forms of a supposed moral order which must be worked out in this world. Confucius, who also recognized no retribution but in this world, thought of it in traducian fashion, i.e. as manifesting itself in posterity: if a good and wise man did not come to honour in his lifetime, still the reward was certain for his descendants: virtue and vice are assuredly expiated, if not in the individual then in the course of generations. Similar ideas must have prevailed also among the Hebrews of the Mosaic time—Jahveh promised punishment of the transgressor to the third and fourth generation, and reward for the good to a thousand generations of his descendants. To the modern European this form of the world order seems

[1] *Über die letzten Dinge*, p. 98.

unsatisfactory, because his individualism is so great that he no longer feels his solidarity with his race, and can hardly grasp the idea of the extension of guilt or desert to posterity; only in material questions does he unconditionally recognize heredity. The unindividualized dweller in the Far East feels otherwise. He feels his solidarity with his race so strongly that his racial feeling outweighs his self-consciousness. For this reason, reward or punishment for the deeds of his ancestors seems to him thoroughly justified. In this the traducian doctrine, whatever may be thought of it otherwise, is more profound than the one which invented the Last Judgement; according to it, all retribution is confined to this world, and Immortality is left unaffected.

If then we look back, it is properly only coarsened or brutal races—and Christians—who believe in eternal punishment. In this respect our ideas are of the most uncivilized type, which seems the more lamentable as they are certainly worlds removed from those of the sublime founder of Christendom, who proclaimed the theory of grace in contrast to deserts. The false idea of a transcendent retribution has become so ingrained in our flesh and blood that we can no longer understand the only really profound metaphysical idea which still lives on in the Church's shallow other-world morality—I mean the idea of original sin. Original sin is now a mere content of belief, unintelligible to the majority, a weird meaningless formula. The Articles of Schmalkald expressly teach: 'Original sin is a corruption of nature so black and deep that it can in no wise be understood by man's reason, but must be acknowledged and believed as revealed in Scripture.' And yet all minds with divining power, even when they do not comprehend, cling by a sure instinct to this idea: original sin indeed represents the most profound, if not the only profound, metaphysical thought of the Old Testament. It indicates, even if in an obscure form, the truth that all retribution is confined to the sphere of Earth, and that man has, therefore, morally as well as physically, to bear the burden of transgressions of which he personally is guiltless.

12

I SHOULD like to go back once more to the myth of the transmigration of souls. That it seems strange to many, shows, not that it is paradoxical, but only how firmly fixed they are in their wonted train of ideas; more emancipated minds have always taken up an essentially different attitude. I am not thinking of Neo-Buddhists and Theosophists, but of intellects clear as crystal, whom not even the most ingenuous Christian would expect to be capable of such predilections; for instance, the eighteenth-century German physicist and writer of epigrams Georg Christoph, Lichtenberg, and David Hume. Lichtenberg once confessed: 'I cannot get rid of the idea that I had died before I was born'; and Hume writes: 'Metempsychosis is the only system of this kind that philosophy can hearken to.' In reality, this myth is the most rational of all, because it alone knows an answer to the question: whence comes the soul which is destined to eternal continuance in the future? It was this consideration which led the Egyptians probably, and Plato certainly, to belief in the transmigration of souls. The advantage of ridding Eternity of its one-sided and one-directional character more than outweighs criticism's objections about the limited number of possible souls which this belief must assume, and so on. For this reason so many philosophers have adhered to the myth of Metempsychosis. But to the unsophisticated man, who attaches no great weight to rational grounds of belief and simply wants to have his sense of justice satisfied, it must appear still more plausible: for on this supposition existence seems justified in every case. Every apparently unmerited misfortune of the present life is taken as retribution for wrong done in a previous existence, and on the other hand counts to the credit of the next incarnation. The one reproach which may perhaps be brought against this theory is its over-intellectual character. It is the product of reflection, of the abstract craving for explanation, of a first critical philosophy—not of direct inward intuition as spontaneous belief demands. It is not self-evident,

it convinces by reasons. This is why it has never gained many friends among the intuitive, non-rational Europeans. For the Hindus, on the other hand, who have dialectic so strong in their blood that even the ordinary man could follow with full comprehension the teachings of the Buddha, which strike us rather as lectures in logic, at which the normal student infallibly goes to sleep—for them such a theory was exactly right.

Metempsychosis indeed, as biological theory, is much more profound than is commonly assumed. Its premiss of the moral character of all natural events is a stumbling-block to us—but are not our own premisses often questionable enough? Apart from this, the advantages of the theory are obvious. First, it satisfies the postulate of unconditional causality better than any other, for the natural causal nexus of all events extends, according to it, into the domain of morals, and takes in the idea of justice, for which in our natural accounts of the world there is no room. In the form in which the theosophy of modern India presents Metempsychosis (as progress in perfection from incarnation to incarnation), the normal course of Nature even implies the purely human idea of progress towards the ideal. Moreover, Metempsychosis establishes everywhere that continuity which knowledge shows to belong to the essence of life, which thought postulates but which it is difficult to reconcile with the actual discontinuity within the organic world. Again, no one will dispute that the thought of propagation is more rational than the idea of the resurrection of the body: it is a good and even an anti-metaphysical interpretation of Death, if continuance of the individual life-principle and a moral order of the world are presupposed. Finally, Metempsychosis possesses one unqualified critical advantage over all conceivable eschatologies: continuance is for it a *becoming*. And since the essence of life is progressive motion, it is obvious that a theory of becoming does justice to this essence better than a theory of eternal, immutable being. Being, of this nature, can only appertain to the super-individual, transcendent, absolutely metaphysical principle of life—call it Atman, Type, Idea, or Supreme Law. And here is

the point from which we can apprehend how far it is possible for a theory which had its origin in religion to be capable of satisfying man's need of what is above the earthly, without introducing supernatural postulates into the world-event.

In Metempsychosis a power reaches expression which operates beyond the person, and is the inward condition of an endless series of existences. The presence of such powers is scientifically indisputable: the permanence of the generic type in the flux of individuals represents one such. We Europeans are unable to visualize clearly enduring principles of this kind, because we see in the individual the beginning and the end, and are only too inclined to recognize in everything supra-individual an 'abstraction' of man's, instead of a reality superhuman because it is cosmic. The Kantian philosophy, especially that of his disciples who are more devoted than discerning, is by no means guiltless of this misapprehension. The view of Asiatics is not confused by over-valuation of the individual; they see nothing absolute in the person; their standpoint is nearer to reality. So it was reserved for the metaphysical people of the East, the Hindus, to devise an eschatology which, in spite of all its defects, seems in accordance with Nature.

The person is appearance, the essence is supra-personal. Now since the wish for continuance can only refer to the person, while eternal being lies beyond all temporal duration, the thought of Immortality divides into two categories: continuous becoming and eternal being. The latter is not affected by empirical causality, whether mechanical or moral: timeless itself, it rules the changing course of phenomena. The former (since all becoming belongs to appearance) of necessity remains attached to the phenomenal but nevertheless reaches beyond the person: an endless process cannot exhaust itself in the finite duration of this latter. On this point the teaching of reason agrees with that of the instinct of Immortality. But how, without supernatural postulates, is the change of individuals to be reconciled with the continuance of the soul? Only in two ways does this seem possible: by means of the idea that children

carry on the life of their parents, or through the myth of the transmigration of souls. India has decided in favour of the second view. She desired to preserve the person, however unimportant she might otherwise think it, because she knew that every event of life is bound up with individuals, and that a moral order of the world without personal responsibility is deprived of its indispensable substrate. But the attempt failed: indeed, it could not but fail. The soul is the vehicle of a different character, a different consciousness, in each incarnation; the continuance exists objectively not subjectively: the Immortality thus attained is an impersonal one. Thus the idea of continuance here on earth—the other extreme of all possible eschatologies, whose first word is the mystical doctrine of the identity of the Ego with God and so the exact opposite of the aforesaid continuance—leads to the denial of personal Immortality.

13

WHAT then constitutes the belief in Immortality 'in general', of which the heading of this chapter promised to treat? If we run over in our minds the results so far attained, an answer to the question does not seem easy to find. Everywhere different ideas prevail, and the majority do not admit of comparison with each other; the sum total of them is as many-hued as Nature. The fundamental ideas may be few, but then they unite and separate, they divide and run into each other in such manifold ways, the combinations and sub-divisions of them are so numerous, that in the end it seems as futile to insist on the fundamental ideas as to try to determine the multiplicity of chemical elements from the fact that they are explicable as combinations of homogeneous electrons. It is playing with words if we designate the deities of alien races as gods; it is begging the question if we identify the Egyptian soul with the Christian. The witness of the human race to the immortality of the soul—I purposely repeat over and over again this expression sanctioned by theology—is anything but unequivocal;

quite apart from the fact that personal continuance does not seem necessary or desirable to all races, that many people see in personal existence nothing but suffering, and prefer the peace of nothingness to eternal life. Certainly we may read a 'unity' into this 'multiplicity' and this unity may even correspond to the state of the facts: the species *homo* undoubtedly denotes one possible ultimate synthesis, man is finite in every sense and the restricted nature of every type of life shows itself perhaps most plainly in the human mind. Just as matter can only crystallize into six form-systems, so only a limited number of world-views is possible for the intellect—and the number of them is smaller than we are apt to think. But if we are once aware of this fact—does it not seem absurd to demonstrate over again this unity in principle?—I mean to try to prove that man is in fact man?—Most so-called proofs *e consensu gentium* are pitiful tautologies. The essential in the living phenomenon is not the abstract type, but the concrete form. Therefore the actual diversity, and not the underlying unity, is the properly significant moment. He who gives an opposite interpretation to the facts can easily manage to overlook differences of kind in the physical sphere, and to hold all philosophies identical in the spiritual—since, as a matter of fact, idealism does border on materialism, and rationalism on superstition. Extremes meet. But he who judges thus distorts the truth. In the realm of life phenomenal diversity corresponds to each ideal unity: so even within the same species no two individuals are exactly alike. Indeed, the only man who can really grasp identity of type is he who beholds it in the actual diversity. It was for this reason that I laid such stress on the exclusiveness and disparity of different peoples' myths of the Hereafter. To recognize in what the homogeneous consists, it must first be clearly settled where it is *not* to be found. And Mankind's concrete beliefs are not homogeneous. There is among them every conceivable variety, so far as this is possible allowing for the inventive poverty of the human mind, which every time it soars into the realm of fantasy is brought up short by its own limitations. If, as a

matter of fact, it comes to the same thing whether our motto is *Memento mori* or *Memento vivere*;[1] if it is in reality only a different interpretation of an identical relation, whether like the Christian I live for the future, or like the Japanese believer in Shinto for the past, if the distinction between the Chinaman's class-feeling and the European's is not a difference in kind, although in China the descendant ennobles the ancestor and in the West the progenitor his offspring:—even so, the diversity of the concrete ideas is not done away by the identity in principle. Each race (I exaggerate for the sake of clearness) understands by Immortality something different, thinks something different by its fundamental concepts and symbols, and devises different explanations for the impulses of its soul. Out of this multiplicity only one fact emerges unmistakably: how very few safe inferences can be drawn from Man's ideas on being. That discrepancy between the two, which in the case of the external world, considered historically, everywhere appears as the primary phenomenon, shows itself as the rule in that of the inner world. After all some one idea must correspond to reality better than the rest, unless they all of them rest on error and falsehood: therefore their multiplicity proves irrefutably that consciousness follows wrong roads by preference. Now we have absolutely no scientific criterion for deciding which idea approximates most closely to reality; above all, from the standpoint we have selected, there is no possibility of distinguishing between ideas which are derived from, or correspond to, experience, and the creations of fantasy. Our aim indeed was not either to prove or to disprove the immortality of the soul, but to fathom the meaning of the thought of Immortality, and our incursion into the world of Myth has taught us one thing only, that this meaning, *so far as there is one*, is at all events not to be deduced from the ideas as such.

Is this much or little? It is an extremely important result. *For from it there follows directly the possibility of a Critique of*

[1] Cf. my article 'Memento vivere', in *Die Neue Rundschau*, Berlin, September 1906, p. 1151.

Immortality. It is indeed perfectly irrational to assume that the current ideas of the Hereafter should have no deeper foundation than man's faculty of imagination. They are far too generally prevalent for that. Rather they must have a ground *beyond* and *outside* the actual empirical motive forces, that is to say, in the innermost living nature of man. There is no people which would see in the visible facts of Man's Lifetime all there is to be said about him. Every race, capable of reflection, starts as a matter of course from the position that the life-principle operative in Man does not exhaust itself in its limited spatio-temporal manifestation. The whole human race is at one in the assumption—unavowed though it may be—that the circle is somehow not closed with this existence. Every sentient man who is sincere feels himself a member of a higher synthesis, let him think of this latter how he will. To this obscure, ultimate feeling all eschatologies point back as the ground of their being. It is this consciousness which alone renders possible at all the statement of the problem which gives rise to myths of the Hereafter and is their support. To this extent there is, in spite of all the disparity and incompatibility of the different ideas of Immortality, a belief in Immortality 'in general'. Just for this reason a critique of it is possible. Critique, in the Kantian sense, tries to comprehend experience from the conditions of its possibility. It is applicable wherever the contents of consciousness are seen to be conditioned not only from without, but also from within, by the Subject. The case of belief in Immortality indubitably comes under this head. The latter has therefore a genuine meaning, and this meaning can be comprehended critically, from the nature of man, independently of any illusions held by consciousness.

CHAPTER II

THE THOUGHT OF DEATH

I

IF we form part of a super-temporal, or extra-temporal, world, we must do so independently of what happens in time: philosophically this statement is self-evident, and needs no further proof. But only in rare cases is Man's thinking wont to be guided by epistemological considerations. So we find the problem of being-eternal everywhere entangled with another, which, in essence, has nothing in common with it: the problem of Death.[1] Death is an empirical fact, a temporal event: as such it cannot stand in any more direct relation to being-eternal than birth, or metabolism, or growing old. If we are absolutely imperishable, Death can have no hold over us. But to attain to this insight, critical reflection is needed. Indeed, only the minority are ever conscious of the one fact that Death is a natural phenomenon: to the man who is no philosopher it seems rather something unnatural and arbitrary, something which might just as well not be, and, in any case, had better not be.

This is due first of all to the fact that the concept of necessity in its critical signification is hardly intelligible at all to primitive thought. Wherever a phenomenon bears for us the character of necessity according to law, it appears to primitive Man to be arbitrary. The concept of what is natural is one he possesses only in the very slightest degree: he knows only the self-evident, i.e. that about which he does not reflect at all, and next after that the miraculous. Not only the savage thinks thus but every unsophisticated man and still more woman. The savage, faced with phenomena beyond his understanding, at once by preference adduces miracle as the ground of them: for in this he possesses an exact, intelligible, exhaustive, and definitive explanation, which cannot be disproved by any means; whereas interpretations according to Nature for him always remain dubious.

[1] The reader will find the final statement I can give of the truth that Death is a purely earthly phenomenon in the chapter 'Death' of my *South American Meditations*.

Now such an interpretation of the phenomenon of Death is impossible, so long as dying has to be 'explained' on rational grounds, not 'comprehended' from what is given. If I am thinking about Death *a priori*, purely logically, without any reference to experience, I cannot see that it should be necessary; it would decidedly be 'more rational' if there were no Death. Therefore it needs the most fantastic myths to get rid of what is contrary to reason: Man, it is stated, must originally have been immortal, and Death is the wages of sin; God inflicted it upon Man as a punishment. As the Psalmist sublimely expresses it: 'For we consume away in Thy displeasure, and are afraid at Thy wrathful indignation' (Ps. xc. 7). Indeed, mythology has occasionally ventured so far as to proclaim a salvation from Death which had been achieved by the deed of an individual hero. What is natural must, since no rational ground suffices, at any rate be morally justified. And moral grounds, even for the worst fate, are comparatively easy to find, since Man's conscience is, generally speaking, a guilty one.

Philosophic thought proceeds more cautiously. It knows from bitter experience that Nature cannot be 'explained' on rational grounds, but only 'comprehended' from the conditions of it as possible experience. The question why the world is thus and not otherwise is unanswerable. The critical philosopher is essentially modest. He does not seek to justify any individual phenomenon, but accepts them all unreservedly. He makes himself familiar with the facts, and then seeks for the meaning of what happens having regard to the laws which govern it. More he cannot do. And he who approaches the problem of Death from this standpoint, far from marvelling at Death, or resenting its existence, will rather be disposed to recoin a well-known epigram of Voltaire's to meet this case: 'If Death did not exist, it would have had to be invented.' How indeed could a world-order be conceivable without Death, once granted that fresh individuals are perpetually coming into being? In a finite world, without the corrective of Death, Adam and Eve would have had to remain childless. So it was easy enough for Biology

to show that Death was an ally of Life, instead of its most inveterate enemy. But it is not at all necessary to be expert in Biology to gain an insight into the expediency of Death—all that is needed is to open one's eyes, and reflect on oneself and one's own experience: children and parents misunderstand each other and usually end by becoming antagonistic:[1] artists of long standing find they are out of touch with the rising ones, and vice versa: manners and ways of looking at things grow obsolete with such rapidity that most people can scarcely picture the time of their grandparents' youth without amusement. We cannot put ourselves back into the mental attitude of past centuries, while conversely no intellectual leader of the age of the Enlightenment could endure the life of our own epoch. The majority of old men are discontented, feel themselves strange in a new time, while merciless youth, whether it owns it or not, waits, with growing impatience, for the old to make way for it, feels itself in the deepest sense justified in taking their place, and instinctively resents it as an injustice if they delay too long. The mere consideration of these facts, accessible to everybody, shows how rigidly Life is bound up with Time; and Time means temporal limitations. But let us reflect on ourselves, on our fundamental conception of Life: does Death really seem for this so unnatural? Certainly, no one goes to meet the critical moment with rejoicing: many a man would gladly know that his presumptive span of Life was considerably lengthened. Yet every man, who is not purposely deceiving himself, does wish for an end, 'speaking generally'. Looked at in the abstract, or measured by astronomical standards, seventy years is not much; and yet how long a single one of them can seem! I myself—who at the moment of writing have barely passed the first quarter of a century—already have the feeling of having existed an endless length of time; and often shudder at the possibility that my life may last forty years longer. At all events, if Death overtook me now, it would never occur to me that I was having to depart too

[1] For further explanation compare the chapter 'The Conflict of Generations' in my *Art of Life* (Selwyn & Blount).

soon. And yet I am as fond of Life as any one. Finitude is in our blood and is the premiss of the longing for Immortality. Our feeling of Time has its origin not in Mathematics but in Life, and adjusts itself to the special character of the vital process, not to objective norms. To him who lives at full speed, forty years may seem an eternity; he whose blood runs slow finds eighty hardly enough for him. But for every man whose life is not cut short by outward circumstances independent of his own Life-rhythm, the hour strikes at last when he longs for the end. His elasticity is exhausted: he can no longer adapt himself to new situations; in the eternal-human he sees nothing but repetitions, a barren tautology—then Death comes as a saviour. Even the most perfect drama must have an end. And so we all instinctively wish for Death, though consciousness may pronounce otherwise. The Earth would be uninhabitable if there were no dying. As things are, Death is one of the main conditions of Life as Man cares for it.

But this insight, from which it logically follows that the meaning of Life cannot be exhausted in the sole concrete datum, in the person, presupposes a power of abstraction and a freedom from prejudice, which primitive thought does not possess. And the self-restraint (σωφροσύνη) required to transform the question: How does experience arise? into the more modest one: What does it contain? has everywhere been the maturest product of a mature culture. Germanic Europe did not attain to it till Kant. Only from this second standpoint is Science possible. The earliest statement of the problem, since it aims at the unfathomable, can lead only to the creation of myths.

2

BUT there are many other considerations calculated to make Death seem unnatural. Some of them are of a critical nature: it is indeed difficult to see how anything which ever has been can suddenly cease to be, or how Life, the essence of which is motion, can all at once stand still. These objections

are cogent: we shall have to go into them more thoroughly later on. But first of all I should like to touch upon a few psychological facts, and above all on the following: that Man in general is inclined to consider only what he wishes for as natural. If what is desired happens, unsophisticated Man finds this quite in order. On the other hand, what is unpleasing always gives the impression of being puzzling, and is by preference summarily explained as the malicious interference of evil spirits or wizards. Few nations or individuals are altogether free from this belief; but it appears in its most drastic form among the people of Kamchatka, who, if I am correctly informed, unhesitatingly account for every misfortune by—the folly of their gods. Now Death is certainly a misfortune, and there actually are races which—with an exaggerated consciousness of the inadequacy of all mere experience—bewail every death (officially at any rate) as something unexpected.

We, indeed, for the most part believe that the naïve formula of causation, according to which a thing must be, simply because it is hoped for, or, conversely, cannot possibly happen because it is contrary to every desire, is peculiar to woman, or at most to men in love, that high school of superstition and miraculous intervention. As a matter of fact, this way of thinking is extraordinarily widespread. 'The mind's great disorder is to believe things because one wants them to be so', sighs Bossuet; and this 'disorder' is very nearly the rule. Indeed, it arises easily enough from the wrong interpretation and application of an actual fact: all certainty, in the last resort, rests on belief;[1] therefore, what is not believed, for reasons of feeling, easily passes for unreal or impossible. Moreover, the very belief in a thing is already a guarantee of its coming to pass; therefore, of course, only what is welcome is believed for this reason: so then what is not wanted cannot—the distortion is easy to understand logically—in reality be true. Finally, among primitive peoples every event is, by a too short-sighted analogy, interpreted as the result of arbitrary action. That I want something, and something

[1] Cf. the following chapter.

I like, seems only too easy to understand: I need not trouble my head about that. That other people wish for the same thing as I do, or that they sometimes oppose me, is also quite conceivable. But that any one should consistently and perpetually want what is diametrically opposed to all my wishes: this cannot be right.

These psychological considerations may strike many as unnecessary hair-splitting: they are, however, of great importance. For it is generally only owing to such distortions that facts, in themselves wholly indifferent or perfectly intelligible, become for Man a problem and an enigma. If wishing is the criterion of truth, we can easily get to the point of adducing a fascinating myth to explain why twice two does not make five. Of this kind, indeed, is the psychology of most explanations of Death. The man who thinks little, or not at all, but lives and acts for the moment, who has not yet wandered far from Nature, and knows nothing of metaphysical cravings, ought—so it seems in theory—to see in Death a matter of course, or at any rate nothing more improbable than Life, which never becomes a problem to him. Lastly he lives by the death of others, be they men or beasts. As a matter of fact, this is nowhere the case. The habit of stating problems upside down has not infrequently led Mankind so far astray as to make them see in Death the antithesis of Life. This was the idea of Christendom for centuries. The relation between Life and Death took on the aspect of an antinomy, and thus Death became a metaphysical problem. Death, however, is not susceptible of a transcendent explanation: whoever attempts one is forsaking all fact and reason, and soaring unsteadily into the intermediate realm of crazy phantasms. Dying stands for a physiological process like eating and drinking, and is no more susceptible of transcendent explanation than the chemistry of aldehyde. Death is not the antithesis but the auxiliary of Life, like all teleological organic adjustments—even if the comprehension of this teleology presupposes a standpoint which surveys the whole system of Life, and, like Nature, sees in the individual nothing more than a stage in the progress of Form. But Man, vain and presumptuous as he is, has always

desired to see in the person what is ultimate; the meaning of the world must lie in his own short-lived, personal existence. And since this is only too quickly cut down by the scythe of Death, the absolute significance of individuality can only, in the face of facts, be asserted by supposing that Death, too, has an absolute significance. Instead of one simple fact we have now two transcendent problems: the infinite value of the human soul, and Death as a metaphysical entity. All natural comprehension henceforth becomes impossible, the real cosmic significance of dying can no longer be grasped; the perspective is irretrievably distorted. The problem of Immortality likewise appears warped and inverted: the solution of it is independent of any meaning of Death. If we persist in fettering the idea of Immortality to any conceivable interpretation of Death, a serviceable theology results without any difficulty. But in so doing we are misunderstanding the obscure foreshadowings of our soul, which, regardless of arguments and counter-arguments, points unceasingly to what is beyond us.

3

LET no one think that I am blind to the unique pathos of dying; I understand only too well those dark hours when Death is for us the most vivid content of Life. The troubled thought of the Middle Ages was spell-bound by it; a mysterious word of sinister sound drowned all the exultant cry of Nature. Man's eyes, full of foreboding and fear, stared into Nothingness, till, blinded, he could hardly any longer behold the world for the mist . . . . The vision of those times is among the most overwhelming I have ever known. It is sprung from the innermost deeps of the soul, from those nameless depths which gave birth to Beethoven's *Funeral March*.—Nevertheless what 'is' only empirically may stand for what is transcendent; facts have no jurisdiction over their own meaning as symbols. Between symbol and reality there are no relations susceptible of scientific demonstration; the connexion between them derives entirely

from the mind. A fish was, for the first Christians, the symbol of the Saviour. And the tremendous significance which attaches to Death, for the life of thought, rests on the fact that Death is for us—consciously or unconsciously—the symbol of Life.

In an essay full of genius (*Death in Epos and Drama*), Count Edward Keyserling has shown that the dramatic significance of Death is not to be sought in the fact that it sets a term to Life—in this sense it may appear only a 'great triviality'—but in the fact that it helps it to attain its highest and intensest expression. The whole of Life is, as it were, concentrated in its last moment. The final chord sums up the symphony. Like all aesthetic truths, this one is capable of being transferred direct to Life. The meaning of dying in drama is the same as the meaning of Death in real existence.

In the moment of greatest danger to Life we are all at once conscious of our entire past: one second mirrors, with no gaps, the content of unnumbered years: face to face with Nothingness, all that ever has been is born again. But the meaning of this marvellous experience lies in the fact that it is Not-being which first brings Being into full consciousness.

The unlimited everywhere escapes consciousness, external limits are indispensable for an impression; thus pictures must be framed to gain their full value. And the only frame for the fleeting picture of Life is Death. For Life is becoming, action, motion: it cannot be grasped nor held fast.[1] So long as it advances, its picture never becomes wholly distinct. Our conclusions of to-day may be upset by what happens to-morrow, and the Future is uncertain. Only the completed Life is properly to be comprehended; but when Life is completed it is also over. So the limits of Life, through which it first becomes real to us, coincide with the limits of its duration.

This limitation is more than a framework; from the point of view of history it is the form proper. The expression which defines the thought at the same time awakes it to Being; the

[1] See my complete picture of the process of Life and Death in the trilogy 'Life and Death' contained in my *Recovery of Truth* (Jonathan Cape).

form which sets bounds to the poetic mood also elevates it to reality. Only in its limits is Life to be grasped. Therefore we do not know it till it is set in the frame of Death.

This is the reason why poets of all ages have seen in Death more than a trivial experience: for them it has signified Life, as the form stands for the whole content. This is also the reason why the problem of dying seems to us so profound, why we divine the metaphysical meaning of existence only at the end of it, because for us the form of Death alone lays bare the living content. He who is overwhelmed by the pathos of dying is in reality overcome by the pathos of Life. Whoever speaks of the meaning of Death is thinking of the meaning of Life. If Life did not manifest itself as limited by Death, it would never have become a problem for any man.

4

We are confronted everywhere with an astonishing state of things: the dead possess more reality for men than the living. This does not, indeed, find expression everywhere in a definite creed, but it holds good everywhere with equal force, among us moderns just as much as among the primitive dwellers in Greece, or the pious natives of the Far East. Worship of the dead is a universal human characteristic.

I am not going to give here any analysis of the facts of religious history. All that is essential for our purpose is the fundamental trait running through it all, that everywhere greater importance, in most respects, is attached to the dead than to the living. Thus the imagination of the Egyptians exhausted itself in worship of, and care for, the departed: so, too, the whole religion, as well as the entire polity of the earliest Greeks and Romans, was based on ancestor-worship; in the same way a Chinaman or a Japanese always feels himself surrounded by his forefathers, and the saints are no less present to the faithful Roman Catholic. The relation between the living and the dead is, indeed, variously construed by different nations. Among the

Egyptians the condition of the departed depends entirely on the living: the dead have practically no power over these latter, and it speaks well for the consideration and the ethical standard of that people that its life was devoted to the dead without any ground of direct utility. By the Greeks, too, the souls of the departed were not held to be dangerous; they could, at most, be inconvenient by their persistent hovering around; worship of them was directly profitable only to the soul itself. For the Chinese and Japanese the case is reversed: the future welfare of the generation flourishing at present depends on their ancestors' being contented: therefore, to worship and satisfy them is of direct practical value. This conception finds its culmination, on the one hand, among savage races, for whom all the dead turn into evil spirits, whom it is extremely difficult, and therefore proportionately more important, to propitiate, and, on the other hand, among Catholics, who venerate the departed because their good offices as mediators with the Lord of Heaven are of service to the dwellers on Earth. But fundamentally, the situation is everywhere the same. For most positive religions the dead are of greater importance and significance than the living.

To understand the inmost content of this state of things, it is well to realize that in principle it has held good, in the same sense, at the most enlightened epochs and among the most emancipated intellects. The European of the twentieth century does not consciously practise ancestor-worship as a religion: this is the only difference. For us, too, the dead have more reality than the living.

Think of the exceedingly frequent case, which each of us has at some time experienced and observed, when a man who in his life-time was hardly known, or hardly any longer known, at the moment of his decease attained enormous, and often lasting, influence. What? That famous man still alive . . . rather a pity. . . . So Otto Weininger's tragic end was the greatest piece of luck for his fame. Plato's peculiar influence did not begin till long after he had ceased to live, and in the case of Christ this state of things reached a point where posterity has seen the

culmination of his life-work in the moment of his death. For nearly every influential man—and more so in proportion as he was a pioneer—it has been cruelly difficult to accomplish his purpose in his lifetime. Conversely, it may be asserted that the recognition of great men, after death, is absolutely inevitable. Sooner or later it is bound to come. In the mere fact of being dead there is such virtue, that every man is overrated when dead, in the same ratio as he was maligned and undervalued when living. To-day all sorts of *dii minorum gentium* (little peoples' gods), whom it has often required much labour to disinter, pass for supermen, and the truly great for demigods at the very least. What difference is there between this and the worship proper of the dead?

To grasp the psychology of this state of things, it must be remembered that a man is always appreciated sooner in a place where he is not, and that it is more advantageous for any genius, however great he may be, not to be known personally, or at any rate, not known too well. He may show himself on the tribune, but never in his dressing-gown. And if Mohammed, like many another prophet of the East, in spite of the most intimate daily intercourse, was still reverenced as a divinity by his entourage, this is not so much a refutation of our thesis as a proof of the unparalleled strength of Eastern faith. In the West such a thing would be impossible. So Ibsen's fame in his own country grew up during his years of absence: so Tolstoy's halo is essentially interwoven with the hermitage of Yasnaya Polyana: so, too, the Pope's authority in sceptical Europe rests chiefly on his imprisonment in the Vatican.[1] Many an important man has known how to make a very skilful use of the fact that he was personally unknown. The meaning of this situation lies in the fact that imagination enhances every conceivable reality. Therefore this latter is of necessity an obstacle in her way. The man whom I see, I can no longer picture as I choose: I am bound to stick to facts. And since hope or admiration can rear the mightiest edifice out of the scantiest materials, nothing can be less congenial to them than the narrow confines of reality, always compara-

[1] Written in 1906.

tively modest even at their utmost. Imagination wants the superman—and the living man is always a mere man. But what is there to prevent her from depicting the dead as she chooses? Depreciatory judgements on the part of contemporaries can easily be shown to be misapprehensions; inadequate facts can, without any difficulty, be construed in conformity with the ideal. Even the absent one, though more considerate than the man on the spot with his brutal reality, is still a hindrance: he might reappear in the end, or raise objections from a distance to the imaginative remodelling of his being. This is why professors are so disinclined to lecture on a living thinker. There might be some mishap. How Mankind sighs with relief when a famous man is at last safely dead! Now the road is open. Imagination can range freely, and criticism can interpret without any inhibition. From every chair the man, who in his lifetime was passed over in dead silence, is now proclaimed; even the one who was never recognized, except with manifold 'ifs' and 'buts', is now admitted to unconditional honour. *De mortuis nil nisi bene.* Now the fame of the happy dead grows by leaps and bounds. Year after year imagination and criticism contribute new material to the edifice of his personality, and each successive generation keeps a new and enhanced representation of him. His temporal existence now forms only a part of the figure of the man of former days; by far the greater mass is created by the imaginative faculty of posterity. Now he has turned into a mythical figure; the genuine mortal man has become an immortal god or demigod. Is a living being conceivable who would correspond to our picture of Goethe to-day? Hardly. His entelechy has gone on working after his death; he has far outgrown himself. The eternal Goethe is not the same as the temporal one; the worship of posterity has exalted him into a divinity.

What distinguishes our hero-worship from the ancestor-worship of antiquity, or of foreign countries? Our behaviour does not differ much from theirs. Certainly we express our veneration otherwise, we connect it with other ideas and conceptions. But this is all a mere matter of formulating and

interpreting, which does not alter the identical state of facts, and indeed is hardly able to disguise it.

The reasons for the posthumous overvaluation of great men account also for the oft-repeated experience, that gifted youths who have died early are generally extravagantly overestimated by their relations and friends: they were indeed mere potentialities, and potentialities by their very nature are free from limitations. Even the greatest achievement makes less impression than the promise of it, because it always exhibits limitations. Thus, all conceivable reflections lead to the same goal: that to make an impression on the world it is a conspicuous advantage to be no longer alive.

What now is the deepest reason for this primacy of the dead over the living? Nothing but the sovereign power of imagination over reality, of memory over experience. Between imagination and memory there is no sharp line of division, since all invention consists in fresh combinations of experiences, and all remembrance in productive transformation of what has been undergone. There is no such thing as purely reproductive recollection. If there were, the dead would be bound to live on unchanged, at any rate in the memory of their contemporaries; instead of which they are changed from the very moment of their departing. The most insignificant manikin as well as the greatest hero, when he is not forgotten, lives on only as a myth. And the recollection of Mankind is no more trustworthy than that of the individual. A really accurate transcription of history, objective in the strictest sense of the word, is an impossibility. No historian can test exhaustively the accounts given by his authorities. The majority of them are bastards of fact and fiction. All history is perforce Mythology, because all remembrance is romance.

And yet we say that only the Past is wholly ours. That is true. But what does it mean, except that only the experience that has become for us stamped by imagination on memory is really our own, that for us the myth is more real than Nature? The myth is mine; for it is my own work, the most intimate

emanation of my Subject, my creative energy. For this reason, it must for me be the embodiment of greater life-value than the real object, the limits of which are not fixed by me, which just because it does not depend on me hampers me more than it helps. What does the world matter to me if it is not my world? What do I care about a Goethe who may have existed 'in and for' himself? I reverence *my* Goethe—and it is a proof of the profundity of language that it has taken up this shade of meaning ('he knows *his* Shakespeare') into its everyday currency. If now we condense this state of things into its shortest imaginable expression, we may say that all mental experience consists in overcoming the object, in transforming the actual facts into imaginative values. And if our procedure is the same with regard to human beings, what does it mean but that we take from them their own peculiar individuality, i.e. we slay them? Not until we have slain a man's existence proper does he waken for us to genuine being. And from this it follows *ipso facto* that the dead are bound to have primacy over the living. For if I must slay the man in order that he may live for me, this means (looked at from the other side) that for me it is the dead who are the living. Imagination rules supreme over reality, objective Nature remains foreign to Man: he must create it like a poet in order to possess it. But at the moment when it is born into the realm of imagination, reality has perished. The profound saying of Heraclitus:

ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶντες

Immortals are mortal, their life is mortals' death,
Mortals are immortal, their death is immortals' life—

is true of all life; each organism endures at the expense of the rest. So Man lives in the body at the expense of his fellow men, of plants, and of animals; so he feels his own existence only in relation to others—whether he loves them or slays them, foils them or masters them; so too, in the last resort, his spirit lives at the expense of reality.

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM OF BELIEF

I

THERE has been no lack of attempts to explain belief in Immortality psychologically. Georg Runze, for instance, thinks he can derive it exhaustively from four roots: Fear of Death, with its converse, Love of Life; Dream-life; the intellectual riddle of Death and the unknown future; and finally the demand for retribution (springing from self-feeling and making itself known as conscience), with its correlate the striving after moral perfection. Others, more summarily, trace this belief back to the ethnological factotum, 'Animism'. Others again are of the opinion that ancestor-worship alone is 'primordial', and therefore the all-sufficient explanation. If I were conversant with the whole literature of the subject, probably many more attempts at explanation might be enumerated; the question of cause has here, as everywhere, set in motion an army of differently oriented minds. But in spite of this, no one has ever succeeded in comprehending belief in Immortality exhaustively on the basis of Psychology. Indeed, it seems to me, that even if all motives of Belief—and that would mean a countless multitude—could be collected together, the main point would still be an enigma, after as before: that is to say, Belief itself.

Here indeed, as so often happens, the psychic position is the exact opposite of what man is inclined to conceive it. To take a few introductory examples: That woman does not love this man because he is good, but she thinks him good because she loves him. I do not expect that event because it is possible, but I am convinced it will occur because I desire it. That statement is not my conviction because it is true, but it is true because I wish it should be. In most cases we do not believe on grounds of reason, but we seek for grounds because we believe. And what is the case 'as a rule' in incidental connexions of ideas, holds good unconditionally in essential ones. A living essential belief cannot be derived from motives at all: rather, it is itself the

presupposition of all conceivable motives. And no psychology is adequate to account for ultimate premisses.

Now does belief in Immortality really belong to these ultimate, underivative motives of Mankind? I think so, certainly. Before we proceed, however, to decide this question, we must clear our minds about what constitutes the essence of Belief as distinct from Knowledge. If so many penetrating intellects have gone astray in the interpretation and criticism of ideas of belief, this is generally due simply to their not having made plain to themselves the real significance of the function of Belief. We must be on our guard against this error. A Critique of Belief in general must precede any Critique of Belief in Immortality, so far as Belief springs from, or is connected with, a desire to know. For to believe may, moreover, be and signify something quite other than to know;[1] this 'other' we must completely exclude from what follows. We have to do here only with the meaning of Belief as a limit or a specific form of knowledge.

2

THE phenomenology of Belief is, thanks to the researches of distinguished psychologists, no longer an unknown country. William James, Walter Bagehot, Camille Bos—I content myself with mentioning these names, to which many others might be added—have been keen observers and have known how to work up critically what they have observed. Thus we possess a psychology of Belief which, though certainly not complete, is enough to ensure us a survey in broad outline of the manifold forms in which the function of Belief manifests itself, together with the laws of their association. But what I have never yet met with anywhere is a Critique of Belief proper, understanding the word Critique in the Kantian sense. The innermost content of the problem does not seem to have dawned on any of the

[1] Cf. on this point my *Travel Diary* (see Index under 'Belief'), the chapter 'Sorrow' of *South American Meditations*, and the chapter 'Solitude' of *Buch vom persönlichen Leben* (or also of *De la Souffrance à la Plénitude*).

great philosophers, neither Kant, nor Fichte, nor Hegel. And the mystics, theologians, and other thinkers, to whom the deepest life and movement of the soul have been the object of intuition, have often enough correctly apprehended the essence of Belief, but it was alien to the nature of their knowledge, which was intuitive rather than discursive, to work up their intuitions and experiences into a system. The only exceptions in this respect, so far as I know, are Schleiermacher, Ulrici, and Karl Schwarz; the latter's *Wesen der Religion* (Halle, 1847), especially, is a critical achievement in the strictest sense of the expression. Only the centre of gravity of Schwarz' interests lay so entirely in the purely religious domain that the whole content of the problem of Belief, which reaches far beyond the domain of religion, could not dawn upon him.

There are two misapprehensions which very few have hitherto escaped: the one consists in regarding Belief as simply not-knowing, or not-yet-knowing. This is the typical misapprehension of the departmental thinker. The man whose whole endeavour is directed to conceptual knowledge, to finding critical grounds for it, is only too apt to understand all Belief in the sense of opinion, and consequently either to dismiss it as not belonging to his sphere of inquiry, or to pronounce it as a mere preliminary step to knowing. The former attitude was that of Kant—i.e. it was not a positive attitude at all. Kant, from his very nature, could not attain to any right relation to Belief; therefore he contented himself with a provisional distinction between Knowledge and Belief, and shelved the problem proper, to apply himself to more congenial tasks. The second attitude was that of Hegel; for him Belief was the preliminary stage of knowledge in the process of Mind. But in reality the position is quite the reverse: Belief is the supreme expression of knowing, the function of Belief is the central form of the life of Man's spirit, and is not capable of 'mediation' at all, as Karl Schwarz has rightly discerned. Beyond it there is no appeal. Sören Kierkegaard, who might be supposed to know, writes: 'Belief is the highest passion in man. There are

probably, in each generation, many who never attain to it at all, no man, at any rate, ever attains beyond it.'[1]

The second misapprehension consists in identifying Belief with its expression or content. Only the psychologists, among whom I count David Hume, have, so far as I know, avoided this error: all the rest have fallen a prey to it. Schwarz, indeed, wages war against confusing the function of religion with the expression of it, yet he, too, understands by Belief something not purely formal. He is indeed aware that so far as the religious problem is concerned the point is *that* we believe, not *what* we believe. Yet he, like all the rest, understands by Belief only religious Belief. And in this qualification there is already contained a limitation, important and deep-reaching enough to vitiate the whole problem.

From the very fact that Belief is from the beginning defined as religious, it already possesses a content. I may abstract ever so carefully from the ideas connected with Belief, and from the religious myth-formation, as religious it is already qualified; nay more, it is defined in one particular sense. For the word 'Religion' signifies a unique relation of Man to the Supreme Being, not to be compared with any other, a relation which connects his finite, temporal existence directly with the Absolute. As such it certainly stands for the supreme function of Spirit-life, which cannot be further derived, the presupposition of all mediated knowing. Still it is not the same thing whether I have in view the basic and integral relation of Spirit to the World, or the relation of the different functions of Mind to each other; the perspective is different in each case. For ontology there is no appeal from religion. On the other hand, if I am carrying out a piece of epistemological research, religious Belief, as a particular case, is subordinate to Belief in general, which is a mental function just as purely formal in character as thinking, and the essence of it may be defined independently of all direction and content of thought. Thus the problem of Belief is not identical with the religious

[1] *Furcht und Zittern* (German ed., Erlangen, 1882), p. 117.

problem, though Belief finds its completest and most comprehensive expression in religion. Indeed, it is possible to discuss Belief objectively, without ever trenching upon the domain of religion at all.

3

LET us begin by making certain of a few facts as data.[1] First, it is a fact that there is no possible knowledge which does not, in the last resort, refer back to a statement of Belief; intellectual knowledge is never ultimate. Knowing indeed, as it advances, takes possession of domains in which, previously, Belief alone was the arbiter of truth, yet the realm of Belief grows no smaller: it reaches farther in proportion as it appears to diminish. Or, to put it more accurately: the wider the domain of knowledge extends the higher the realm of Belief reaches. It is not impossible that one day an empirical law of Constancy of Belief might be established, which, in spite of all transformations, would, in the domain of Spirit, represent in its own fashion the law of the Conservation of Energy. Even what may be, and has been, proved does not become certainty for me, till I have translated the aesthetic into the ethical, i.e. till I admit the proof. Knowing, then, is fettered to Belief, beyond hope of escape. It starts from assumptions the truth of which is believed; every single piece of knowledge can become subjective certainty only by means of an act of belief; where all belief is lacking, knowledge too is excluded. *What* I believe may be uncertain and even false; from the fact *that* I believe there is no appeal.

The way to obtain a critical grasp of this relation is indicated by the following consideration. If we meet with anything unusual or unlikely, we only believe it slowly and gradually, even though our intelligence tells us there is nothing to doubt and that the event in question certainly takes place. Only in course of time, when the effects again and again point back to their presupposition, do we believe in the latter. Or conversely

[1] Cf. Camille Bos, *La Psychologie de la croyance* (2nd ed., Paris, 1905).

we instinctively believe in a given state of things or a particular truth, although we cannot see its immediate consequences, although proof is still to seek, and perhaps all we know contradicts it; here we include the possible consequences beforehand in our supposition, instead of being guided to it by them. What is thus believed is the premiss of what can be proved, the premiss which, in its turn, is either not susceptible of deduction, or whose further deduction has (consciously or unconsciously) been given up. The axioms of Geometry, for instance, the subject of knowledge (the Ego), the idea of God, do not admit of being deduced. Considered objectively they are not equally credible, but they belong to the same category, inasmuch as they are not susceptible of any proof, they appear (or may appear) subjectively certain, and no definition or grounds of this certainty can be given for the reflective understanding, otherwise than by saying that I do, or am compelled to, believe in them. In the second case I abandon the deduction of the premisses. This happens in nearly every scientific hypothesis, in all practical action, even in every statement of an equation. To study, for instance, a complex of natural phenomena on the basis of the Atomic Theory, means nothing but to work on the assumption that the hypothesis is correct, that there are atoms —so that the supposition itself is not brought in question. If the chemist in every experiment insisted on reflecting whether his working hypothesis was free from objections, he would never advance a step. He believes in it; provisionally, at any rate. The possibility of all action in general rests on the same abandonment of the attempt to find any further motive cause. I can never know with complete certainty whether the presuppositions of my action—say as concerns the persons I am trusting—are correct; I act as if they were and raise no question, I believe in them till further notice. Incapacity to believe entails incapacity for action. If I have once stated an equation, discussion of causes henceforth concerns only the consequences, the statement itself is no longer discussed. Such scruples as whether he is or is not really justified in denoting a comet by x,

the Mathematician cannot admit, in so far as his object is to calculate. The *regressus ad infinitum*, which the process of knowledge seems to demand throughout, is, voluntarily or involuntarily, cut short at some point or other. No further question is asked. The last member of the causal nexus is treated as an assumption, and as such is believed.[1]

Belief consists in the admission of ultimate premisses. This definition is bad inasmuch as 'to admit' and 'to believe' assert ultimately the same thing. It does, however, bring into the requisite sharp relief one extremely important moment, viz. that it is one of the most essential characters of Belief to exclude discussion. It stands for one fixed point in the unceasing flux of thought-life; the truth of it, so far as that comes in question, psychologically considered, holds good unconditionally. Hence we understand why blindly-believing people and races are always stronger than over-reflective ones. To confine oneself, from conviction, to ultimate suppositions (generally quite obvious ones) simplifies life, gives it a secure background, and prevents dissipation of energy. If everything is clear and secure heavenward, man can apply himself more cheerfully to the tasks of earth; the transcendent is not a problem at all, but on the contrary it seems much more certain than anything empirical. On this circumstance rests the colossal force—generally dormant, and only from time to time bursting forth like a volcano —of the Arabs and other Moslems, for whom Christendom would hardly be a match to-day, any more than it was centuries ago. The fatalism of the Oriental, the product of the sublimest resignation, which springs from the spirit of belief, is an unconditionally creative principle. On the same ground rests the

[1] Any one who would see a possible objection to my argument in the fact that scientific hypotheses and mathematical axioms need not be believed, should consider that (*a*) the essence of all beliefs (as opposed to what is known by reason) from our critical standpoint lies in the negative characteristic of not being subject to discussion; (*b*) all the instances adduced, however heterogeneous in appearance, agree in this respect; and (*c*) the difference between a hypothesis admitted only provisionally, and a hard and fast conviction, consists merely in the intensity of the act or process of belief connected with the idea in question.

mighty power of the Catholic Church, and the happiness of its flock; it is made marvellously easy for the Roman Catholic to find his bearings, both in the Here and the Hereafter. All doubt is suppressed by authority, every insoluble problem becomes a dogma beyond dispute, and the torture of uncertainty, and the pain of self-determination, which so often disturb the equilibrium and depress the culture of the Protestant—for harmony is attainable by most men only when imposed from without—are spared to the faithful of Rome. On this lastly depends the unparalleled strength of absolute sovereignty, when it is adapted to the character of the people. If the justice of the autocrat's decision, no matter how irrational, cannot be called in question (and this was the position of the Mohammedans of old to the Padishah), then existence appears not only simple but also morally satisfactory: even the greatest misfortune is not felt as an injustice. Where thought is in the ascendant, where the impulse to know bursts the bands of authority, there the number of assumptions beyond discussion grows smaller, there they are pushed farther and farther back, and higher and higher. Yet everywhere thought is left with some kind of premisses, the truth of which is a matter of belief. Without belief, all thought would be impossible. He who cannot stop at a premiss of some sort can never advance, but must revolve eternally round a fixed point; the complete sceptic is of necessity impotent. Indeed the thesis is defensible that plasticity of mind (the primary condition of all intellectual fertility) is always found in conjunction with potential credulity; the man who is to create must be capable of changing his standpoint and his assumptions, and there is no other reflective position to assumptions but that of belief; whereas the man who consistently and unchangeably wills and asserts the same thing—the founder of a religion, for instance—is prone to lose all his intellectual mobility.

To go on with our critical inquiry. The main relation which we have discovered is the following:—that Belief always relates to the premiss. The most thorough discussion is bound to start from an assumption of some kind, and to this there is no rela-

tion but that of Belief. Our first task now, obviously, is to decide in what the essence of an assumption consists.

It consists in this:—To what we assume, i.e. do not dispute, we implicitly attribute existence. If I assume the unity of Nature, that means for me that Nature exists. If I construct a world-view on the basis of the personal sovereignty of God, I show, by so doing, that the personal existence of God is for me a certainty. *Thus Belief relates directly to Being.* And this is true of Belief alone. No process of knowledge as such leads to the subjective certainty of an existence. It may be proved, ever so cogently, that a phenomenon takes place; so long as I do not believe in it, its existence remains for me doubtful. Of course the absolutely real existence of an object does not depend on my assent; if there is really a World-Soul, no sceptic could alter the fact in any way. None the less, an object first attains existence *for me* through my belief in it. This holds good even with reference to my Self. As soon as I abstract from immediate consciousness, and try to assure myself, in reflection, of my own existence, I recognize that I can only believe in it. To even the most incontestable truths, which no reason could refute, I always have to assent before they have any force for me. And as I can have no experience of a world which would not be my world, so in spite of all possible knowledge, it is still, in the last resort, my belief in it, through which it becomes for me reality.

It is Belief then by means of which the whole world, known to us through the media of sense and understanding, first becomes reality; for until we admit our experiences, till we adopt them as reality beyond discussion, till a thing has become for us the undisputed premiss of all further debate, it lacks the attribute of existence. Sense, intellect, feeling—whatever the functions are called, by means of which mind assimilates the matter of outward and inward experience, reveal to us *what* exists: *that* anything exists I can only believe. And now we understand why no further explanation or grounds of belief can be given, why, in spite of all advance of knowledge, Belief still remains the

last resort; farther than the unconditional *existence* of the world no knowledge can penetrate; beyond this there is no appeal.

Accordingly, my own being becomes for me content of belief at the same moment as it becomes an objective image. As soon as I do not simply exist, but reach myself by the circuitous route of reflection, I can only believe in myself. The Ego then becomes for me the ultimate premiss, i.e. something that cannot be further deduced, i.e. an object of belief. Hence the paradox that it is not enough to *be* some one, that man must believe in himself in order to conquer; hence the assurance of success, the foreknowledge of fate, which has its ground in self-consciousness;[1] hence the miracle that belief seems able to compass the impossible and bid defiance to the laws of Nature; hence finally the possibility of influencing man inwardly from without—the principle of Prussian military drill: we act *as if* the required qualities were grounded in the inward man and issued from within; at last, we really come to believe it, and what we believe ourselves to be, that we become. Belief is, in reality, as I have elsewhere expressed it, the metaphor of Being. Unless man believes in himself, he *is* not strictly speaking, at any rate he is not as a force. Mentally, man really grasps himself and the world only through belief; it is belief that creates Being for the mind. So the conscious life of Man's spirit moves between two foci, of which the one corresponds to the being of the subject, the other to belief in the object. These mirror each other and must everywhere co-operate harmoniously, if there is to be productive power. This relation finds its completest and intensest expression in religion. It connects the individual directly with the Absolute, the finite with the Infinite. The Absolute is the supreme premiss of everything conditioned; the Infinite the ultimate premiss of everything finite. Therefore at this point all knowledge ceases, henceforth Belief reigns unhindered. And since Belief relates directly to Being, the religious function is in

[1] All these facts have found their final elucidation, from my point of view, in the chapter 'Solitude' of *Buch vom persönlichen Leben* (*De la Souffrance à la Solitude*).

reality the central, the inmost ground of man's life.[1] Belief will therefore always remain the ultimate motive force for mankind. For from the moment when man ceases to believe, he must also cease to be. History has shown this often enough—and how tragically! All great deeds have always been the work of strong belief. The object of it may have been never so absurd; with the end of the chimera—whether called the greatness of Rome, the glory of God, or absolute political freedom—the reality also collapsed.

The ultimate premisses of intellectual life are thus Being (in relation to the subject) and Belief (in relation to the object). Neither can be further deduced: Man cannot do more than believe. Therefore it is certainly true, as the fanatics of the Unknown exultantly assert, that even the axioms of Geometry can only be believed; just because they express our Being, denote our limitations, and are the presuppositions of all experience. *That* I am—even this most certain of facts—I can 'only' believe.

4

We know now what the meaning of Belief is; it relates directly to Being; to that which is the presupposition of all possible determinations. Therefore it cannot itself be further deduced, therefore all attempt to find a motive for Belief as such is quite impossible. Our Critique proves that Belief as formal function of the Spirit is an ultimate, that thought, imagination, consideration of motive, and interpretation cannot attain to the essence of it.

This truth, however, relates only to the meaning, not to the content of Belief. *That* I believe is an *a priori*, the ground of the possibility of all motives; *what* I believe may, on the other hand, be dependent on a hundred causes. Now is not belief in Immortality a determinate belief in something quite definite?

[1] For further explanation compare the chapter 'The Religious Problem' in *The Recovery of Truth*, the chapters 'Reason and Religion' in *Problems of Personal Life*, and 'Divina Commedia' in *South American Meditations* (Jonathan Cape).

And if so—how could it have to do with an ultimate undeducible presupposition?

Let us refer to the conclusions of the first chapter. The many-hued manifold of eschatological ideas, which have been developed in the course of space and time, possesses one, and only this one, common trait: the presupposition that Life and manifestation of Life are two different things; that the life-force which rules Man does not coincide with its material substratum. I may call the immaterial principle Âtman, Entelechy, God, Soul, Spirit, Law, or Energy; I may call its substrate Matter, Maya, Appearance, Body, or Shame: the deepest foundation of the ideas is everywhere the same. Even when Man is credited with several souls, or denied even one, and that one defined as Nought, the fundamental distinction persists. It is true that what is common to all ontologies is left undefined; in the determinations of it people and religions diverge widely from each other. Only the attitude of mind which asserts the dualism can be designated as unitary, while the dualism itself undergoes the most manifold and disparate incarnations. Yet this attitude, indefinite though it may be in meaning and expression, provides a firm foothold.

The determinations may be explained and accounted for in the most manifold fashions: by means of race, environment, and circumstances of the time, critically, psychologically, and politically. If any man believes in God and Devil and the sevenfold grades of Paradise, motives can always be found for this. The indefinite basis, on the other hand, is not capable of being deduced in any way. All so-called causes of it are, in reality, elaborations, variations, applications, interpretations of one ultimate assumption. If, for instance, we try to explain it by means of 'Animism', we forget that this animism in its own turn already presupposes belief in a spiritual principle, and only manages to give outward expression to a tiny fragment of what constitutes the inward meaning of the idea of Immortality. Dream-images may indeed strengthen, but never create the belief in question. If the idea did not exist *a priori*, it would

never occur to the mind of primitive Man to interpret the appearance of deceased relations in a way so essentially different from any other memory-images. From the phenomenon of dreams one may indeed jump at the distinction between body and soul, and it is probable that the main root of all psychology is to be sought here; but that the spirit is immortal—such an idea is not to be deduced from dreams. The desire not to perish absolutely is, in the first place, not widespread enough to account for a universal phenomenon, and, in the second place, the wish itself must somehow have an inward ground. All Man's wishes, so far as they spring from an inward impulse, reflect in some sense or other the objective course of Nature.[1] Consequently an explanation in accordance with Nature cannot rest satisfied with men's wishes as the final court of appeal. Finally, so far as the demand for retribution is concerned, it may indeed provide sufficient motive for the foundation of definite eschatological ideas: but it could never call to life the idea of continuance in general, it rather presupposes it. Also it must be taken into account that the demand for retribution has been raised by only a part of Mankind. Even the disquieting problem of Man's final destiny, which can only present itself to the more highly organized intelligences, already involves the unconscious assumption that he actually has a supra-individual or supra-terrestrial destiny. Indeed most eschatologies might be adduced as arguments *against* belief in Immortality being the product of a motive at all: for if Man really believed because he had reasons for so doing, he would not be content with such unsatisfactory reasons as the majority are. The fact is that Man does not believe on grounds of reason, but he seeks for grounds because he believes already: therefore the first that comes to hand is good enough for him. Emerson is perfectly right when he says: 'I mean that I am a better believer, and all serious souls are better believers, in immortality than one can give grounds for.' All apparent reasons are in truth only interpretations of an assumption which itself is above and beyond the range of all motives.

[1] Cf. my *Gefüge der Welt*, chap. iv.

Belief in Immortality, therefore, in its most general and most indeterminate conception—in that embryonic form in which it lies at the root of all ideas of continuance and imperishableness —cannot be accounted for psychologically. And yet it is a qualified Belief, not a purely formal one. It is not belief 'in general', which as a central function of mind could not be further deduced, but a belief in something, however indeterminate this something may be. Therefore it must have a positive ground.

This ground lies in immediate experience. Let us only remember that Belief is not identical with the mental images associated with a belief, that we are dealing with the ultimate premiss of all possible eschatologies, and the thesis loses its paradoxical character.—First as to external experience. Every unsophisticated man who trusts his senses, and whose thinking is not overtasked with lifeless knowledge and confused by 'scientific' prejudices, instinctively distinguishes between Life and Matter. He sees that life can forsake the body; he sees that in spite of all dying the type endures; he sees that in Nature, in spite of all change, there is no standstill; and he believes his senses. Now external experience certainly contains nothing which immediately and unmistakably indicates continuance or imperishableness. It is otherwise with inner experience. If this latter usually seems to science less trustworthy and less cogent than the former, that is due to the prejudice, as general as it is disastrous, which regards what is most intimately human as not a phenomenon of Nature. Human wishes, feelings, assumptions, and so forth are always looked upon as extra-natural, as it were; we are still not clear on the point that universal determinism extends also to the life of intellect and emotion, and that our wishes are never an ultimate and so cannot be deduced from external causes alone, but that they have likewise an inner ground, rooted in the specific nature of Man. Critically, the ordinary opposition of external and internal world cannot be absolutely maintained. 'The outside-us is a form of consciousness itself, one of the vital processes of the soul which can take place only within her . . . the external world and the world

of the Soul manifested in history possess the same reality and the same remoteness from what can be thought as their transcendent substrate.'[1] In the soul-world we are confronted with a process as objective as that of external nature, and it too is only known, not created by consciousness as such. The existence of my Ego can certainly not be demonstrated from positive considerations based upon external data; he who trusts only to outward experience can easily doubt his own existence. I cannot prove this latter even to myself. If I abstract from immediate consciousness and then try to give account to myself of the grounds of my self-feeling, I inevitably arrive at the result that I can only believe the existence of my Ego. Since my Self is the presupposition of all experience it cannot possibly be deduced from anything else. In spite of that, my Ego is the most certain fact that there is for me. I am directly aware of it at every moment of my life, more certainly than of anything of which sense and intellect can be the media. I experience it vitally; and vital experience is more than perception and demonstration. What then is this Ego? It is not to be grasped in itself. For thought it manifests itself as pure Form. Its concrete expression it finds in the changeful content of consciousness, yet it is identical neither with consciousness 'in general' nor with its temporary content.[2] Nevertheless, the Ego, the presupposition of all determinations, is not indeterminate in every respect: it is indeterminate in content, and so far is empty form. Yet the Form itself is determined; it is qualified.

Here lies the point at which we are aiming: the Ego itself, of which no possible deduction or grounds can be given, has, in spite of its purely formal character, a meaning. Self-consciousness makes known to us not only our own being in general, but a qualified, oriented being. Even if we abstract from everything concrete, and strip the Ego of all attributes, there still is left to it one peculiar character: we feel it as function, as energy, as dynamic not as static being; as capacity for creation, for activity,

[1] Georg Simmel, *Vorlesungen über Kant*, pp. 55, 69.
[2] Cf. my *Gefüge der Welt*, chap. iv.

as hesitancy between two possible forms of existence, as principle of rejuvenation, of quickening, of renewal, of free agency in the midst of circumstances. The Ego-consciousness is always dynamic. For this reason the man always lives forward, even when crab-like he persistently turns his glance backward; for this reason he gazes steadfastly towards goals in front of him; for this reason he can never find satisfaction in the moment: where the essence, the supreme premiss of all determinations, is motion and acceleration, the mind of Man must already have become sovereign, to be able to raise itself above the headlong course, and to hold fast the vanishing moment, instead of letting itself be swept along and evermore beholding the fixed point at an infinite distance. For this reason, finally, the man is wholly conscious of himself only in unresting, ever-advancing, productive activity, not in flaccid idleness; when he denies Time he at the same time denies himself.

I experience my Ego then immediately, as function, as a force. Now it appertains to the essence of all Force to point onward to the boundless. All Force is in itself unbounded, unlimited: it may indeed be dammed in from outside, but its inner being is not affected by the external fetters.[1] How then shall I, if my inmost being, as made known to me in self-consciousness, is Force, see anything necessary in external limits?—It may be objected that only critical reflection is in a position to define the being of Force. To define it certainly; yet if my own being is Force, I cannot help being directly conscious of this being, no

[1] Cf. my *Gefüge der Welt*: 'The essence of Force, from our point of view, is its continuity. It may act from limit to limit, from atom to atom; in itself it has no limit. Whether it is transmitted with infinite velocity like gravitation, or with finite like electricity; whether all bodies and all obstacles are transparent to it, as is the case with the former; or whether like radiant energy it can be held up and flung back by resistant media, in itself it knows neither distance nor limitation It is indivisible, indissoluble. It can be transformed but never destroyed, as we learn from the Law of the Conservation of Energy, and if in one direction it reaches zero, this end is at the same time the beginning of a fresh infinite continuum. It may be confined within limits, the sphere of its activity may be circumscribed indefinitely, but the essence of it is never determined by these external bounds. As Stallo says, "All force is force acting at a distance, or it does not exist", and so on.'

matter whether my thought keeps pace with the experience or not. I *experience* in myself all the properties, which only the penetrating understanding knows how to trace in external energies; I feel the continuity, the freedom from limitations. *And with this consciousness, Belief in Immortality, in its most general schematic form, is already given and accounted for.*

For if I experience my Ego as an active force, which as such has no limitations, but points onward into the boundless, then I cannot recognize an ultimate in personal existence, the essence of which is spatio-temporal limitation. I have, of necessity, the feeling that the natural limits are not mine, that my being reaches beyond appearance. This feeling is quite immediate, quite irrational, and seemingly quite unfounded. And yet it is there, it accompanies us everywhere. This is the reason why it disquiets the mind so much. The question of his destiny and his vocation forces itself upon Man in spite of himself: why must he have one at all? There is no logical reason for it. And yet the instinctive feeling overpowers every rational consideration. So then imagination and intellect vie with each other in helping the instinctive urge to attain concrete embodiment and conceptual clearness. The former pictures to itself the possible future, creates myths, gives itself up to speculations born of desire or occasioned by fear; the latter hunts for grounds of belief, for motives and proofs, creates supports for the myth, seeks to penetrate its deepest content, and to explain what is problematic in accordance with reason. Yet belief in Immortality itself cannot be accounted for, from any conceivable creations of imagination or intellectual considerations; rather do they all presuppose it. All forms and images which express a belief are secondary elaborations of the primordial instinct, all so-called motives are in reality consequences, all apparently ultimate psychological data only interpretations of one presupposed fundamental impulse. Man does not believe in a continuance of his life-principle on grounds—rather, he seeks for grounds because he believes in any case. And since he cannot help believing, the number of possible reasons for it is less.

We have gained an important insight; belief in Immortality is as a matter of fact an ultimate, because in its deepest grounds it coincides with belief in a Self. For this Self points beyond all spatio-temporal limitations; and what denies these barriers cannot well be mortal. Death can only be thought as an event in Time. Whoever doubts his own Self has of course no cause to believe in a continuance of his life-principle; yet a doubt of the Self is only possible in theory, and, even in this respect, is only so for him who of set purpose ignores his own immediate consciousness, and admits the reality only of the secondary phenomena of consciousness. All theoretical objections break down in face of the practical fact, that every man is conscious of himself as *Subject* living, thinking, and acting. Immediate consciousness is more cogent proof than the most ingenious argument.

We shall at first not develop the knowledge thus gained any farther. Let us only hold fast the truth, that the thought of Immortality springs from the immediate consciousness that the Ego is a Force, which as such knows no limits. All phenomenal forms of this fundamental impulse are of a secondary character, and may be based, interpreted, and deduced. Many ideas and images expressive of belief are absurd, many self-contradictory, the majority are arbitrary and without any background in fact. They spring from a luxuriant imagination, a childish interpretation of actual fact, an inadequate power of discrimination. They are human and nothing more. But the common basis of all conceivable ideas and images of belief lies beyond the arbitrary will of Man: it lies rooted deep in human nature. If I feel that I am animated by a continuously active principle, that is not a theory which may be refuted: it is a fact which cannot be got rid of by argument, and so must be admitted unconditionally, like any other object of experience. Even if the data of external experience rendered it probable that no entelechy is operative in Man, that the individual existence, with its narrow confines, really denotes the ultimate possible synthesis, the fact would still remain, that self-consciousness bears witness to such an

entelechy, and that this witness has to be comprehended from the nature of Man. Even error has natural causes. And since, in our own case, the ground coincides with Man's innermost being, the error in question can only be accounted for out of the primary character of Man, that is by biology or epistemology[1] but not by psychology.

But is not the possibility that the instinctive impulse corresponds to an error, excluded by its very nature? In the first place there are no unconditioned illusions: a hallucination is indeed false in relation to the object, but true in relation to the subject: so far as the nature of the sufferer goes, the hallucination is an incontestable reality. Secondly, the phenomena of consciousness always somehow reflect the objective course of Nature. This 'somehow' may indeed be of very different kinds: from the harmony of feeling with the situation, down to the most glaring discrepancy, and open opposition (hysteria), there are all conceivable transitions. Yet even here no student of Nature can rest content with establishing the fact of 'error': he has to account for it according to natural laws. And finally, so far as the ultimate data of consciousness are concerned: what should we have gained if science were capable of proving that there is in reality no Self? Man's self-consciousness cannot be 'refuted', and nothing would be left but to assume the untrustworthiness of consciousness once for all, and as to the rest, to go on living as if nothing had happened, unless we choose rather thenceforward to designate error as truth, and by means of this convenient transformation to restore the old order once again. In any case, if there were no Self, all knowledge would be impossible: for if the premiss of all spiritual life is false, how could the inferences and conclusions raise any claim to truth? As surely as we assume the existence of Nature, so surely are we bound to believe in the existence of a Self, and the trustworthiness of self-consciousness.

And so our path brings us back to the problem of Belief. Our

[1] I have explained in a later book, *Prolegomena zur Naturphilosophie*, now out of print, that Epistemology is really a branch of Biology.

supreme assumptions can only be believed: the Self is such an assumption. Subjective being, so soon as it becomes an object, becomes content of Belief. Belief is the central function of mind, the Self the supreme premiss of my existence: accordingly, belief in myself is the undertone and the leitmotiv of my whole spiritual life. But I know nothing of a Self 'in general', but only of one which is doubly qualified. First I know of *myself*; I believe in my own existence, my own personality. The second qualification consists in the fact that I feel this Self as function, as force, which as such knows no limits. This second determination is likewise a primary fact of consciousness. Now if Belief is the central function of mind, and belief in an object in general is the supreme premiss of all thought and inquiry, then *belief in myself as a continuously operative principle is the fundamental assumption of my personal existence.* Self-consciousness coincides at bottom with the instinct of Immortality. Now I may determine and give form to this instinct in what way I like. It may be that I desire to live on in my children or my works; it may be that my need is for personal continuance; it may be also that everything personal seems to me fraught with pain and suffering, and my ardent desire is directed towards absorption in the Absolute: whether I set a forcible term to my entelechy in the grave, or hope for its perpetual active continuance—whatever I may think, hope, or expect: my innermost feeling bears witness to the existence of it. The rhythm of the world-process pulses in my soul: I may ignore it—alter it I cannot.

CHAPTER IV
DURATION AND BEING-ETERNAL

I

WE ended by establishing the fact that our inmost self-consciousness bears witness to a principle, continuously operative within us, which points on into the infinite. Our task now is to approach this fact critically. We do not purpose to speculate or to deduce possibilities from what is fact; our procedure must be so cautious that no thoughtful opponent of metaphysics would be able to confute us. Now, Immortality is not a content of possible experience: an actual infinite cannot be given in Time. Moreover it cannot be thought, since the concepts of Time and Eternity belong to different spheres, and cannot be brought to congruence on the same plane. What unceasingly *becomes*, cannot in the same respect eternally *be*. With the potential infinite it is otherwise; this may be grasped in its essence, apart from its realization, and in spite of actual finitude. For it does not express any completed reality, but a continuously operative unlimited possibility, the possibility of enduring becoming; and what is perpetually *becoming* has no need to *be* at any particular moment. Of this nature is the infinite of analysis; the same character belongs, as we saw, to Man's self; it is a continuously operative function, which points onward to the infinite; therefore understanding of it is not bound up with its actualization, the meaning of it may be grasped within the limits of the finite. For this reason it must be possible to grasp the meaning of Being-eternal—if there is one—within the limits of temporal duration, as presented to experience.

Our first problem, therefore, concerns duration of life. Now 'life' is an idea, not an empirical phenomenon; it lies beyond all observation, and cannot therefore form the starting-point of a critical inquiry. The path of accuracy leads from the particular to the universal and not vice versa. We will therefore turn our attention first of all to the duration of the individual, between the fixed limits of birth and death.

My life manifests itself in temporal duration in one direction, but this duration is not homogeneous, it does not consist of equivalent elements which admit of summation; each moment of my existence differs in quality from the one before and the one after it; it is a perpetual change. My life is no static, permanent being, but a becoming, a change from one difference to another. I *am* in the present exclusively; it is the form of my existence; only my shadow is left behind in the past. And if, many a time, the shadow seems to me more present and more palpable than the concrete present moment, this is due to the fact that my consciousness cannot keep pace with life; in the same way the eye clings to the fiery trail of the falling meteor, because it cannot follow the flight of the star. And if the past does not exist in the proper sense of the word, the same is even more true of the future. Life advances from moment to moment in an enduring present; and no one of these moments is like another. Each vital experience is unique; each moment is for me the grave of the one before it. Life never repeats itself. When I imagine that I am continuing in one stay, I am deluding myself; when I strive to hold fast the moment, I am attempting the impossible. Rather than say man lives on unchanged, it might be asserted he dies from one hour to the next. Life never stands still.

Duration consists in perpetual change. Even if no end in time were set to our earthly course, we could not say that life was eternal being; it would be a progressive becoming—and moreover a becoming in which qualitative differences corresponded to the quantitative stages. Living time is not to be compared to a series of homogeneous units, like mathematical: it consists in the succession of heterogeneous and non-interchangeable moments, which do not admit of summation. The passing of a span of time means for the organism the passing of a definite number of life-processes within it. None of these can be reversed or pass without leaving its trace; what has once happened goes on for ever producing effects.

It goes on producing effects in the sense that the organism

grows older. Growing old—either in the sense of progress or decay—shows more clearly than anything else, how essentially different Time is within the confines of life, and outside it in inorganic Nature, from which we extract our concept of Time, after having arbitrarily interpolated it there. Suns may indeed last; but they are not therefore older; they merely exist a long time. A star too may explode at last, after it has revolved through space for aeons; but it does not perish by an inward necessity. In its own essence Matter is timeless; a crystal lasts on eternal and changeless, so long as external forces do not destroy it. The organism, on the other hand, grows old, independently of the character of external conditions: it lies in its nature to do so. So long as it lasts it must alter: only what is lifeless can endure unchanged.

Prevailing ideas about the essence of growing old still remain obscure; probably because few people feel inclined to reflect about it. The fact is taken as a matter of course, and strikes very few as a problem. And yet it is a tremendous thing that the child shouting for joy to-day will one day look out upon the world as a disillusioned old man, that changes of such a kind should be possible at all. How can it be that one grows older? Why is it so? Such questions are seldom put. Man contents himself with following the process of Nature in feeling, and associating its stages with traditional values. It is not thought, but only estimated. The method pursued is in most cases simple enough. Of the boy we say, 'He is too young yet, let us wait till he grows up'; of the old man, 'He is too old now, nothing more is to be expected of him.' The 'best years' alone are Life proper; the rest of the time is looked on partly as preparation, and partly as lamentable decadence. All development is conceived as quantitative advance. At thirty years of age one is 'more', without qualification, than at twenty; the mature man, thanks to the mere number of his years, embodies a higher value than the youthful hot-head. But if development is arrested, if it is replaced by slow decay—well then, all is over; resignation is the inevitable lot of Age. Thus only too many

people sacrifice their youth for the sake of the stages recognized by convention, live for the future, and are hardly aware of the divine present, since they never really look it in the face. But when the 'proper' age is past, they torment themselves with doleful recollections, and again fling away the golden moment. The girl looks up to the married woman, the student envies the doctor. And the author believes that in each successive work he has surpassed the earlier ones.

And yet, Goethe never surpassed *Werther*. His later creations were, indeed, wider, profounder, loftier; but the consuming fire of his youthful work, the power, stamped by suffering, of the first expression, he never recovered. And he knew it well. Instead of speaking, like others, of progress, without qualification, he spoke of his different 'states'. He strove indeed, till his latest breath, to go forward: his insight grew deeper, his experience richer; in his old age he felt himself master of situations and problems to which earlier he had been unequal. And yet he never forgot that this advance took place only in a particular direction, in relation to certain ends, to definite claims. As a picture by a master hand is perfect at every stage, as sketch no less than as completed painting, and as it is impossible to heighten the perfection of the actual stage (it can only make way for another kind of perfection), so Goethe at each epoch of his life strove after the perfection which that epoch rendered possible, and never failed to recognize that this particular degree of completeness could not be surpassed and outshone by any later ones. For him, nothing was preparation, everything was goal. He looked on his earthly course as unceasing change, as the passing of states equal in value, however different that worth might appear viewed from the angle of petrified ideals. And to each state he surrendered himself wholly; he exhausted himself in the present.

Goethe knew, in fact, just what seems strange to most men: that the sum total of the years corresponds to no quantitative increase of life-value, but to a series of states differing in quality. This is why the ground-tone of his life was so serene: he who is

everywhere at the goal, will see in death nothing out of the ordinary. How can believers in absolute progress endure even the thought of death? He who thinks that he is making unqualified progress with the lapse of years, who looks on youth as only the prelude to manhood, and sees in enlightened old age the highest perfection of the whole life, is bound to look upon death as a frightful injustice, as a headlong fall from the height. Life, in that case, would really be only a preparation for death, and such a thought is appalling. On the other hand, the man who has grasped with his whole being the absolute value of the temporal present has no fear of the end, and sees nothing morally absurd in its being inevitable. And he alone comprehends life. Life manifests itself in perpetual, unceasing change, without pause and without goal. All is transition, nothing is permanent. No state of life can be designated as the 'ultimate' one; death is innate in every birth. Therefore it is as arbitrary as it is senseless to set up any stage as absolute, to regard it as the only one of value. He who thinks in this fashion can never have been conscious of himself in the deepest sense. As the numerical periodic growth of the ether waves bewitches the eye with ever new and incomparable tints, so the uninterrupted course of life manifests itself at each stage in a fresh and unique shape. But each stage contains and expresses the whole life. Therefore none of them can be disowned, none can be supplanted in value by later ones. Is red more than green? What a ridiculous question! But it is not more foolish than the usual one (almost always decided in the affirmative), whether the grown-up man is more than the child. He is different—he is more or less, according to the ends we have in view in our valuation. The absolute difference is a qualitative, not a quantitative, one.

All stages are, in themselves, of equal infinite value—infinite because infinity is the only dimension of the present. However grievously we may suffer at certain periods—periods of fermentation, of revolutionary chaos, of perplexity and inadequacy, however much we may feel inclined to deny their value altogether, to wipe them out of our history, we are bound to affirm

them and to do so unconditionally. He who disowns any state denies life altogether; for only the present *is*. It exhausts the living reality, it embraces the whole of being. But its character is unceasing flux. From the moment of his birth to the hour of his death, man is involved in change; in each successive state he views the world as different. Better? Who would replace the innocent ecstasy of the child trying to lay hold of the sunbeams with his little hands, by the insight of the grey-haired astronomer? Worse? Who would dispense with the clear-sighted judgement and calm consideration of the man of fifty for the sake of the turbid dreams of youth? All stages are precious, for each of them embraces the whole of life in a shape eternally new. The youth has not progressed when he awakens to the seriousness of life: he has become another man. And so Man, and the world with him, appears continually different, so long as he develops; what was, never comes back again: what is, never was before. If the tempo of Man's life is slow, the different states pass insensibly into one another; if it is quick, they are sharply defined. But in either case it is another person, who, once as child, now as man, by and by as old man, looks out upon Nature; the rhythm of life will have it so.

Life does not coincide with the conventional conception of it. We fancy we continue the same—in reality we are changing. We believe we are advancing—the man who has reached the goal is no longer the one who at first beheld it afar. The only permanent is the present moment; Time is its grave. When we think we abide, we are advancing over our dead selves.

'In the midst of life we are in death'; at each moment we are equally near to death. This assertion is no platitude from the hot-house of the calculus of probabilities, it expresses a critical truth. It is not to be understood as meaning that at any time a disaster may overtake us, but that each moment is the completion of an infinite life, and that death only brings to a close what is happening all the time. Man lives only once in the world: this is true of the second, no less than of the whole duration of life. In the youth the child has died, in the hoary head the man in

his prime. And when at last the whole man dies, it means no more than a sustaining of the chord with which his life began, and which, as undertone, has served as groundwork for the whole symphony.

2

OUR duration in Time is one unceasing process. Never anywhere is there a pause. In what then does permanent Being consist? Why, in spite of all changes, do we feel ourselves identical?—Viewed from without, the question is not difficult to decide; because, as a matter of fact, it is the same man who passes through the most different phases. The formative principle, which set him in the world, goes on working uninterrupted. It is an identical complex which develops, differentiates itself, manifests itself in ever new forms, until at last it falls to pieces. But this incontestable objective state of things provides no satisfactory explanation of the consciousness of identity: for the permanent Self is an idea for thought; and what constitutes our concrete self-consciousness is the continually changing stream of conscious states. My individuality, as known to me, consists in what I am now, in the rich complex of relations which connects my present being with the outer world. The man I formerly was, I no longer am; in spite of all remembrance the Past is dead. Even my retrospective feeling of responsibility may arise from a mere *petitio principii*, for the present stage need no longer have anything in common with the earlier ones, the criminal may have been sublimated into the saint. And if the bond of memory between the different states is snapped, all subjective continuity between them is *ipso facto* destroyed. It is true that in normal cases the change takes place so gradually, so uninterruptedly, that the fundamental identity seems more essential, and more emphasized than the actual diversity. Yet theoretically, and without any improbability, the opposite case is conceivable: the actual differences might be so great that the temporal duration of the same man might appear as a succession of fundamentally distinct

individuals. And in this case, if memory were lacking, the self-identical objective existence would be disintegrated into a heterogeneous multiplicity of unconnected subjects.

Nevertheless, every normal man is conscious of his own identity running through all the stages. Indeed, now that the other aspect of the relation has been sufficiently stressed, we may confess that the emphasis laid upon it was an exaggeration. We put ourselves at the standpoint of Buddhist pyschology, which denies the unity of the Ego, as of all Being in general, and ascribes existence only to change and becoming, so that the instability of empirical psychic complexes may appear in its most glaring light. And, for this purpose, we allowed ourselves to compress the flux of reality into a mathematical schema: we treated the moment as a mathematical point without duration, whereas the experienced present always includes some temporal duration, no matter how short; we drew sharper lines than many-hued Nature admits of, except under compulsion. Yet we did not stray far from the truth. Buddhist psychology is correct in its fundamental idea; within the immediately apparent, there is really only change and becoming. Nevertheless, it is the same man who lives through the transformations from child to old man: not only external observation shows this, self-consciousness above all bears witness to it. Our consciousness of identity is quite immediate. If we try to account for it by reflection on memory, or to identify it with the fact of memory, we are distorting experience.

Man is conscious all his life long of his abiding being, though he is in fact involved in incessant becoming. Objectively this antinomy is not difficult to comprehend: the permanent is the formative principle in the man, and on the other hand, the embodiments of it, the states of consciousness and other factors of the psycho-physical complex, are changing. But it is another matter if we confine ourselves to the subjective sphere, and try to penetrate from immediate consciousness to the ground in Nature of the feelings: in this, objective knowledge is little or no help. A principle is not a possible experience; I know of no

'Self' in general, but only of myself. Again I know myself not in the absolute sense, but in relation to the whole world which fills my present consciousness. Under these circumstances, of what kind is the consciousness of my permanent being? The antinomy between being and becoming seems sharper than ever before.—To understand the meaning of it we must be clear on the point that we are dealing not with possibilities but with facts. If it depended on our decision, whether immediate consciousness of what appears to the mind as an idea is possible, we should have every reason to deny the possibility. But it is a fact that we are conscious of our existence absolutely, quite apart from all determinations of it. I feel at all times that I am, and this consciousness remains the same all my life long, lives on uninterrupted and identical in me no matter how the manner of my existence is conditioned. This state of facts is unshakable. Therefore any attempt to resolve the subjective antinomy can only aim at distinguishing and determining the nature of the self-consciousness in the two cases.

The antinomy of being and becoming, in the subjective sphere, can be determined and resolved only in the following way: the consciousness of permanent being relates to a supra-personal; everything personal belongs to the changeful becoming of phenomena.

Let us go back to our previous conclusions. Duration of life passes in unceasing change: between birth and death, from childhood to old age, the man passes through stages of a journey which are always differing. At each stage he is another man, at each moment as one just born. As person he feels only in the temporal present, since he exists only in the present, and at each fresh stage his consciousness is of a different kind. A grey-haired man is scarcely capable of really putting himself back into the mentality of his youthful days; youth sees in the old, beings of another nature, strange and unfamiliar. Even those who are always the same, the irreproachably faithful, whose character never seems to change, and who keep to extreme old age the fresh spirit of youth, think and feel at sixty quite otherwise than they

did at twenty. The person has altered, though the man is still the same.—It will be objected that each man keeps his own experiences perfectly distinct from those of others, that he enjoys them, or suffers in them, but always feels a personal relation to them. That is quite correct: my present consciousness embraces the Past, and everything present is personal. But when I think of the Past, I do not put myself back into what is gone by, but conversely, I relate it to my present existence. Therefore the mood which the Past awakens in me depends really, not on what has been, but on what I am now. If I suffer from an action of earlier days, that is due not to the fact that I committed it then —if I had been then what I am now, I could not have committed it—but that the image of it, or its aftermath, has a painful effect upon my present state. It is not possible to get outside the Present. The feeling of the burden of one's Past arises from the wrong interpretation of a correctly observed state of things: Man rejoices or suffers exclusively in the Present; but the particular nature of this latter is conditioned by all that went before it. Under such circumstances the Past must, of necessity, lose all personal character. It forms, with its elements, a unitary but impersonal complex, which serves as a foundation for my present personal feeling.

The Past is in its essence impersonal, everything personal has to do with the Present exclusively: the correctness of this view may also be demonstrated negatively. If the position were otherwise, it would be quite incomprehensible how Man contrives to be another man at different stages, and yet to feel identical with himself. The discrepancy between now and then would be bound to arouse in him doubt of his own identity; his present consciousness, the range of which necessarily includes the Past, would be certain to appear fragmentary and contradictory. The man decaying in old age would never bear to go on living, if personally conscious of the ruins of his former powers. Actually the memories of youth have lost for him all personal character. He is present to himself historically, enjoys his knowledge of former days, from which his person has long ago

withdrawn, and as another man lives contentedly in the Present. What is past has *ipso facto* outgrown the category of the personal.

Now we are in a position to get a conscious grasp of the significance of the subjective antinomy between being and becoming previously defined. The fact that everything Past is impersonal, and that the Present alone has a personal character, might be taken to mean that continuity is really done away with, and that Man journeys through his life, as through a landscape, in an immediate Present unconnected with any Past. But it is not so; we are conscious throughout of the uninterrupted continuity of our life-processes. Only the person stands to the man in the same relation as the Present does to Time. Life goes on in a perpetually advancing Present; to live, means implicitly to live in the Present. And yet no one moment is like another; the form of the 'Now' always includes a different 'Here'. In just the same sense, the person is the man's actual form of existence, without coinciding with him. At each moment his deepest Self stands in the centre of the field of vision, and this in all cases coincides with the personality. In spite of this, the Self does not coincide with the person; it only lies at the basis of it; the Self lives on as supra-personal in the variegated change of persons. This is the reason why even sensitive consciences make that remarkable, and intellectually amazing, distinction between yesterday and the day before. Not the shadow of a stain may attach to the Present and the immediate Past; actions farther removed are already more indifferent, and after a certain interval of time—it amounts as a rule to about fifteen years —the feeling of direct responsibility completely ceases: the Self, viewed in retrospect, becomes object instead of subject. Indeed we may go farther: the word 'personal' has an intelligible meaning only in reference to the Present. As soon as we fix our gaze not on the passing but on past Time, what was subjective becomes objective, just as freedom, viewed retrospectively, is transformed into inexorable necessity.[1] So then it is

[1] Cf. on this point my *Gefüge der Welt*, 1st ed., p. 320 f., and Henri Bergson, *Données immédiates de la conscience*, chap. iii.

really true that our primordial consciousness of permanent being concerns a Non-personal; and with the person, from the subjective point of view, the individuality also disappears.

Once again the analysis of self-consciousness leads us to results which agree in every detail with the conclusions of objective consideration. The objective meaning of the antinomy of being and becoming consists in the fact that the permanent is the formative principle in Man, the idéal bond which connects his changeful spatio-temporal existence into a unity. This principle is permanent, in spite of all interruption of consciousness, in spite of all the transformations that the man may live through. But the subjective meaning of the same antinomy is that our enduring consciousness of identity relates to a supra-personal, while the conscious individuality, or the concrete person, is involved in perpetual change. Both interpretations assert precisely the same. We are conscious primarily of the formative principle, which governs the flux of concrete phenomena; and yet this does not coincide with the person. The duration of individual life may be defined by saying that a supra-personal energy or entelechy governs the temporal change of personal, conscious phenomena. Or, more paradoxically expressed: we are in essence not identical with our person.

3

LET us now combine our most recent results with those of the end of the last chapter. There we reached the conclusion that the Self is directly given to us not as an indeterminate entity, but as an ever operative principle, as function or force. As such it is bound to repudiate all spatial and temporal limitations. Now what else does this signify but that in essence we do not coincide with our temporal person?—Each stage, each state, is just as much limited as the single content of consciousness. The empirical Ego, the concrete individuality, consists just in the aforesaid phenomena. But since the essence is permanent throughout the change of phenomena, it must, of

necessity, lie beyond them; it is not confined by the spatio-temporal limits. Everything personal, all individuality, lies on this side of the permanent Self. Therefore the assertion is correct that the natural limits are not in reality mine; because I, regarded as entelechy, am not identical with my limited personality.

We have come back again to the grounds in Nature of the idea of Immortality which we reached before, by another line of thought. The general insight then attained, however, now seems qualified in an important fashion: the limitations which the Self disowns have to do not only with time, but with space also: they concern the person in general. If I feel and experience that I am eternal—it is Spinoza's phrase which I prefixed as motto to this book—I really mean not my Self in the empirical sense, but the supra-personal principle which governs my phenomenal existence; I mean, not my limitations, but my unlimited, ever operative entelechy. Many indeed will say that they are of a different opinion; they insist upon their person being eternal. But this will of theirs has to do with the interpretation of the primordial instinct, not with the instinct itself, and nothing is commoner than a wrong interpretation of one's own longings. Our excursion through the variegated manifold of mythologies showed us plainly enough, in what arbitrary and unauthorized fashions presentations of belief are wont to spring up.[1] Uncritical imagination and over-enthusiastic reason are busy everywhere, and only too prompt in the work of providing the obscure longings of the soul with palpable embodiments. These manifestations are then confused with the essence. Instead of feeling that he is immortal, and honestly endeavouring to grasp the meaning of his natural incontestable instinct, Man straightway believes in some dogma or other derived from outside; he fancies that the impulse of his soul is identical with

[1] I am now (autumn 1910) fortunately in the position of being able to refer to a profoundly learned, fundamental, and very important work, which corroborates my views sketched in the first chapter of this book, though they sprang more from intuition than from study: Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (Paris, 1910, Félix Alcan). (See Note to the 2nd Edition.)

the dogma. And so he misunderstands himself. In order to reach his own Self, he calls in the mediation of the priests; instead of listening to his own soul, he rummages in archives. And more and more he loses immediacy and truthfulness with regard to himself.—But how small is the number of men who are at all capable of direct feeling. The majority are dominated by traditional ideas and conventional concepts to such an extent that every impression from the very first presents itself interwoven with memories, and shows itself mixed up with extraneous matter. This is true even of outer experience. How many among us look at Nature with unclouded eyes? The majority see not what is there, but what, in accordance with traditional concepts, they expect to see. Therefore painters, whose sight is keen and unspoiled, are reproached by the public with being 'unnatural', until their mode of intuition has become the convention. Under such circumstances how can we be surprised that hardly any one notices the real meaning of that inner life which is so hard to grasp? Man believes that he wishes to continue as a person; but in this he is mistaken. Of course he is not mistaken about the way his mind reacts to certain definite ideas when once accepted; whoever believes in the resurrection of the body hopes unconditionally for personal continuance. But he is mistaken if he identifies his original feeling with the dogma; by this disastrous association of ideas, he falsifies his soul; he puts an untenable fiction in the place of a sublime truth. This state of things makes it intelligible why so many clear-headed men have chosen to see in the thought of Immortality nothing but a baseless phantom, a barren product of human vanity; they were less superficial than appeared. We need only see how ambiguous the concept of Being-eternal is. Man desires to be eternal; but in what way? Does he long for an eternal, immutable existence? Many would answer in the affirmative. And yet, since the essence of life is motion, eternal stagnation cannot seem desirable. In any case it cannot even be thought; we are quite unable to imagine a life which would not be change. But if we could, the result would be appalling; an

eternal monotony would mean the torments of Hell, even in Heaven. Do we desire Being-eternal in the sense of Timelessness? In so doing we are renouncing our own personality, and life altogether; for Time is the schema of life. The only conceivable Being-eternal lies in the Present, contained within the infinite moment; but this is to be found on Earth. It is Being-eternal as intensive not extensive. If two people are united in passionate love, it seems to them as if they had known each other from time immemorial; now they long to be together eternally. But this 'to be' does not mean 'to remain', this 'eternally' is not 'for ever'; Time does away with Being-eternal. Therefore many a pair of passionate lovers end the moment of bliss by death, so as not to sacrifice its eternal quality. Do we mean by Being-eternal an enduring becoming, a becoming which has no goal? That would be the most rational idea. And yet what Man wishes is just to escape from the birth and death which are contained in each moment; he desires to escape from Time; Samsâra is to him the most appalling of all ideas. In what then does the Being-eternal, which man longs for, consist? He who knows how to think can give no reply, only the unthinking sees clearly at this point. If the trustworthiness of our consciousness of Being-eternal depended on our concepts and ideas, the thought of Immortality would long ago have been disposed of by this one brief consideration.

I said Man deceives himself, if he believes that he desires to continue as a person; that is to say, he is putting an illusion in the place of the natural truth. It is certainly possible that the individual soul outlives death; but the most ardent desire offers no guarantee of this. To reason from the longing to the necessity of its fulfilment is possible only in empirical connexions; not in transcendent. Reimarus in his own day wrote (*Von den vornehmsten Wahrheiten der naturlichen Religion*): 'Can it be imagined that a hunger for a certain food is natural to living men, and yet that this food, by which the hunger might be satisfied and life maintained, should not exist in the world? Can we imagine that birds have been given by Nature an

instinct to assemble at the approach of winter with one accord, and fly above the clouds to a distant land, and yet that there should be in the environs no country where they could continue and maintain their life? Can we think that water insects, towards the end of their existence, should have a craving for the air, and betake themselves out of the water, if after their metamorphosis they were again going to live in the former element? No! the voice of Nature never deceives, it is a call and a hint of the Creator's to each particular kind of life; it is an expression of, and at the same time a means of carrying out, the Divine purpose. How then could He have aroused by Nature in His rational creatures the idea of a longer and better life, and a lively desire for it, if it were not the life for which He has destined us?'—Assuredly the voice of Nature never deceives; but it never points to what is contrary to Nature. If I am hungry, that certainly shows that I am bound to eat, but not what kind of food I need, still less that such food is actually to be had. What has its root in Nature is the desire as such; the idea which I have connected with it may be quite illusory; thought strays only too often from the right path. Our most ardent wishes no more suffice as a ground in Nature for the thought of Immortality than dogmas and mythical ideas do.

The larva which is drawing near the time when it must leave the water, and soar freely in the air as a midge, feels presumably that something important is imminent; but it is not likely that it possesses any clear conception of its future. It may, if it can think, and is disquieted by the mysterious impulse of Nature, easily devise the wildest myths to account for its own actions and behaviour; and if its faith is strong, it will cling with sacred conviction to its own fictions, and undergo its metamorphosis with the confident faith of a martyr. This, however, does not hinder the process of Nature from going tranquilly on its way. If the memory of the insect's final form goes back as far as the larva, there must be many disillusioned midges.—A critical insect would proceed differently: instead of speculating about the possibilities to which the inner impulse seems to have given

birth, it would observe, as accurately as possible, the actual course of events; it would try to form exact conceptions of the meaning of its craving, and then probably, if it compared the inner experience with the outer, it would soon attain to a correct insight. We have proceeded in this latter fashion. We verified the fact of the consciousness of Being-eternal. We analysed it. We tried to comprehend the ground in Nature of all desires for and ideas of Immortality. And then it became clear that the consciousness of a permanent being amid the change of phenomena, which forms the deepest ground of all conceivable eschatologies, refers to a *Non-personal.* This insight excludes, once for all, the necessity in Nature of a personal continuance: for if the ultimate fact of consciousness, on which all wishes and ideas rest, has to do with nothing personal, then it is obviously a misunderstanding if we base the desire for personal immortality upon it, or desire to see in it the guarantee of the fulfilment of our longing; it is an erroneous interpretation. But if we believe that the certainty of being immortal as persons is an ultimate psychic fact, we are, as we said before, confusing the natural truth with an arbitrary fabrication. We are proceeding exactly like our imaginary larva, which preferred to interpret its metamorphosis according to the standard of its own imagination. Immortality is neither a fact to be interpreted, nor a necessity to be demonstrated, but a problem to be fathomed. And therefore nothing but the most thoroughly well-considered criticism can advance us at all.

4

THE limitations which the Ego disowns concern not only Time, but Space as well; they have to do with the Person altogether. When I feel and experience that I am eternal, I really mean not myself in the empirical sense, but the supra-personal principle which governs my phenomenal existence; I mean not my limitations, but my unlimited, ever operative entelechy.

If we reflect upon the concepts of Being-eternal and Personality from the purely logical standpoint, we reach the result that

they are mutually exclusive. The Person presupposes limits, Being-eternal repudiates them. The individual creature is essentially finite. An infinite individual would be the All (Absolute), and to confound the universal with the singular means to identify two categories of thought, which the discursive understanding is compelled to discriminate sharply. The single individual, the atom, is the final quotient of analysis, the totality is the highest possible synthesis. If we condense the universal into an atom, that is possible certainly, but then the concept of singularity is robbed of its meaning. If, however, we raise the atom to universality, in so doing we transform its essence. An atom unbounded in space would be the whole universe; an infinite individual, so far as such a concept can be formed at all, would be the species, or the totality of life; and an eternal person is thinkable only as Godhead. In each case, raising the concept of individuality to a higher power lifts it out of its own domain. The empirical becomes a transcendent, the fact an idea. Therefore, as I pointed out before, it is conceivable enough that the concept of an eternal life is, strictly speaking, unthinkable.

The concept of Personality, indeed, has a meaning only on the presupposition of Time and Space. It is bound up with limits, and limitation exists only in the realm of appearance. Therefore it is quite impossible to transfer it into the world of ideas, or the domain of transcendent speculations, without this transference leading to contradictory ideas, and to inconsistent conceptions. For instance, in theory it seems conceivable that a spatially limited individual might last an unlimited Time. But if we penetrate to the bottom of this idea, we find that in order to define it we should have to give up the original conception of individuality: since duration of life consists in change, endless duration would have to be accompanied by unlimited change; and such change would destroy identity. Therefore an endless duration of the individual is unthinkable. Indeed, whoever does not choose to content himself with the *Credo quia absurdum* must turn his back on all such theories. Where the person forms the starting-point and goal of the striving for Immortality, there all hope of

comprehension appears to be excluded. If the Person really represented the ultimate possible premiss, undoubtedly those sceptics would be right who see in the thought of Immortality in general nothing but a cobweb of the brain. But the Person is not the highest synthesis of self-consciousness; and with this knowledge the meaning of the idea of Immortality is saved.

We found that our consciousness of Being-eternal does not refer to the man's limitations, but to an ever-operative entelechy. I *am* more than my limitations, more than my person, my person does not reach down to the ground of my soul. With this knowledge the problem is placed on a fresh basis. The instinct of Immortality in reality affirms, *not* that this earthly existence is not ultimate, but that the Person is not so. The transcendent empiricism of belief in personal continuance is therefore not a primary idea; it has arisen from a misunderstanding of the deepest intimations of our souls. This primordial foreshadowing, to which every man can bear witness, negates the limitations of individual existence; and only this latter is perishable—Life itself knows no death. But now, undreamt-of perspectives open out before us. Our critique of the idea of Immortality has not led us astray into the dreamland of human fictions, it does not transport us out of the world of Nature into a transcendent one; rather it shows us the way into the innermost depths of Life. It is easy enough to utter sounding phrases about the nothingness of the individual, and to point to Nature, who prodigally abandons millions of germs to annihilation, or to recall the pathos of the times when thousands went willingly to death for an idea. It is not difficult to show from experience that the individual is of no importance, and to base on this the myth that Nature cares for nothing but the preservation of the species. But what is gained for knowledge by establishing such points? Nothing; the problem remains as obscure as before. The so-called explanations are mere descriptions, their premisses are dogmas, unproven assertions, at best only probable; and a philosophy which allows itself to be fobbed off with probabilities is, in the last resort, valueless. However infinitesimal the

importance of the individual may demonstrably be, the most thorough-going induction will not rid the world of the fact that the individual is the only concrete datum. Society, the State, the Race, Mankind, the Species, Life—for the understanding all these are concepts and ideas ; but ideas possess no empirical reality. And if the idea triumphs over experience, if the apparently abstract dominates the concrete, in this lies the gist of the problem, a problem of a most disquieting kind. Who would rest content with the mere statement of it? If the Person were really the ultimately significant fact, it would be absolutely impossible to see how it ever entered man's mind to strive after something beyond himself, to sacrifice his one and only life for an idea. For no man can get outside himself.

Now we know that, even in the individual man, the Person is not the ultimate synthesis. Consequently the premiss which has lain at the basis of most theories put forward hitherto is false. The permanent Ego, to which Man's consciousness of Being-eternal and his impulse to self-preservation alike refer, does not coincide with his Person. But now the relation between individual and mankind, between duration in Time and Being-eternal, presents itself in a new and much more promising shape. Even if the man lives exclusively for himself, he yet lives for a principle which is more than his limited Personality; his longing for Immortality relates to something which is greater than his transitory Ego. When I live for myself I am living for a supra-personal force, of which my consciousness is only the servant. In this way the gulf which yawns between the sublime might of Nature, who goes her way unheeding over the bodies of the dead, and the petty activities of men who strive with fear and worry to maintain their life, no longer seems impassable. The individual, in his own sphere, behaves no otherwise than the All-Mother does in her mighty one. He, too, disdains the Person for the sake of something higher. Each individual, no matter how narrow his limitations, labours perforce as member of a wider synthesis. To live for oneself, in the strictly concrete meaning of the word, is altogether impossible.

CHAPTER V

CONSCIOUSNESS

V

OUR last observations, well grounded though they probably were, may to many not have been very convincing. Assertions such as 'We are not in essence identical with our person', 'We delude ourselves if we believe that we desire personal continuance', 'Even the most narrow-minded egoist lives not for himself, but for an idea' sound paradoxical in spite of all grounds adduced for them. If it is not I who am concerned in the question of Immortality, what good is Being-eternal to me? many a man will object; and if I live for an idea, it is for my own sake, because it is my personal conviction. It does not seem to be easy to recognize in the inmost Self a supra-personal. A man's arguments, considered objectively, may be never so cogent, and yet need not convince his reader: no intellectual proof will avail against belief in premisses. But we have not yet played our highest trump. I have kept the most compelling argument in reserve till now: it deals with consciousness.

By Life, the normal man always understands only conscious life. For this alone he cares, only to this does his longing for Immortality relate. For consciousness and person seem to be interchangeable ideas; an unconscious person would not be one any longer. No man hopes for personal continuance who does not assume that he will also perceive it: no one clings greedily to his earthly existence who has not in mind the conscious enjoyment of it. What we do not know of does not affect us. But what if consciousness were not an essential? If it turned out that the instinct of self-preservation is not directed to consciousness?—Then the conclusion could not be escaped that the trains of thought outlined, which one and all relate to conscious life and attempt to dispute our critical results on this assumption, spring from self-deception. If consciousness is not a necessary attribute of life, if, even within the limits of individual existence, knowledge of it is not an essential, then the assumption that the conscious personality embodies the ultimate

synthesis possible is shown to be false. The argument would be decisive. And if the conscious person is not ultimate, then the theses of the last chapter are robbed of the last semblance of paradox; they would be irrefragable from the subjective standpoint also.

Now the proof that consciousness does not represent the essential in life is so easy that it is almost difficult for me to set about it seriously: the more so, as I consider I have already produced evidence of it in another connexion as early as my *Gefüge der Welt* (1905).[1] I have shown that the Ego does not coincide with consciousness, and that an equation between the two can only be established at the expense of Truth. Consciousness is essentially discontinuous; the Ego function goes on uninterruptedly throughout the changes of state; indeed the Ego is not affected at all even by the complete disappearance of consciousness. Whether the man is awake or asleep, whether he is aware of himself or wrapped in permanent unconsciousness, whether memory covers the past without any gaps, or is interrupted by long spells of unconscious existence: still Life goes on. And the principle of it is the personal Subject. Under such circumstances it is futile to seek for the essence of Life in consciousness: what may be present or absent, without the situation being essentially altered, cannot be the essence. If Life disappears, all possibility of consciousness is, *ipso facto*, done away. But the converse does not hold good: for this reason alone, the urge of self-preservation, in its deepest significance, assuredly does not refer to knowing about life. If man depended, primarily and in essence, on his conscious existence, he would be bound to dread sleep hardly less than death. The empirical necessity for it, the certainty of awaking again after brief interval, even the likelihood of being reborn stronger—could not counterbalance the annihilation of existence, which on the said hypothesis would be involved in sleep. Even the mere loss of time would seem, in comparison with the short-

[1] I knew nothing then of analytical psychology and psychoanalysis, which I began to study only in 1921.

ness of life, unheard of and disproportionate, not to be justified on any consideration. If a man lives eighty years, he is asleep, roughly speaking, quite thirty of them. Thirty years of unconscious existence—how preposterous! And yet no one suffers from this thought; on the contrary, not a few see in sleep their best-spent time. How could this be possible, if we were concerned primarily with conscious life? Moreover the birth of consciousness proper—I mean the kind of consciousness to which the philosophic concept refers—does not coincide with the birth of the man. Certainly the infant is aware of itself in some form or other; but it does not know of its own existence.[1] This knowledge presupposes a grade of cerebral differentiation, which occurs in man comparatively late, and is indeed never reached at all by most of the animals, whose life in other respects has the same meaning as our own. Is the infant therefore less alive than the grown-up man? Do not those creatures live which, like plants and by far the greater number of animals, possess no consciousness comparable to Man's, which perhaps never even once feel that they *are*, and whose most lucid form of existence is like the state of the dreamless sleeper? The theory which sees the essence of Life in consciousness is in the same plight as only too many world-views which have dominated the human mind for centuries: it overlooks the main point. For a time current opinion was, that the significance of Life lies in thought. And the upholders of this opinion never noticed that, from the mere fact that there is for the majority of men no problem of knowledge, it was reduced to an absurdity. What value can a theoretical view of Life have which excludes nearly the whole

[1] How essentially the consciousness of the infant differs from that of the adult, is shown with special clearness in mental disorders since the parts of the brain, with which the intellectual life is bound up, are yet hardly differentiated in the infant, psychic disorders express themselves directly in muscular movements; the infant's insanity is, so to speak, of a physical nature. 'If we go down to the lowest grade of human life, to the baby,' writes Th. Ribot (*Essai sur l'imagination créatrice*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1905, p. 84), 'we see that its insanity consists almost entirely in the activity of a group of muscles which act upon external things. The mad baby bites, and kicks, and these symptoms are the outward measure of its madness.'

of Life? Is he no man whose range of vision does not extend beyond his bodily existence?—For practical purposes, it is indeed advisable to be as exclusive as possible; social morality can only admit the highest, that which is best adapted to the end: if it proceeds otherwise, it is superfluous. Likewise the philosopher who sees his vocation not in the comprehension of the actual, but, like Nietzsche, in the spontaneous creation of values, is justified in framing his ideal independently of, or even in opposition to, the facts of the world. But it is otherwise for him whose sole and exclusive aim is knowledge. He is bound to keep to what is given, without preconceptions and without ulterior intentions. He is absolutely forbidden to presuppose the existence of certain values, or to set bounds, of which Nature knows nothing. As soon as it is evident that his premisses do not do justice to the totality of existence, he must give them up. But philosophers, for the most part, have gone to work less circumspectly. Man was once arbitrarily defined as 'the rational being'. From this conception followed, logically enough, the nonentity of all non-rational manifestations of Life, and—since these preponderate in the majority—just as incontrovertibly, the meaninglessness of most existences. Now the confusion was great: in view of the fact that the human beings who corresponded to the definition formed the rarest exceptions, of what nature could the meaning of existence be? Help was sought in theories of the most diverse descriptions; last of all in that of progress. But the progress of Mankind is of no benefit to individuals; they appear in it as mere points of transition. The theory of evolution strips them of any unique value of their own; they are not ends, they are nothing but means. And yet the same science of Man which invented the concept of the rational being at the same time proclaims with triumphant mien that each individual soul is the embodiment of an ultimate, supreme end! Thus existence appeared more and more contrary to sense. Yet it occurred to hardly any one that the premisses might be wrong, and that what seemed absurd was probably attributable to them. Philosophy has, so far, hardly

behaved better than Theology; she too has never been just to the totality of existence; she too has done violence to Nature by the arbitrary assumption of values; she too possesses equivalents—though discreet ones—for Heaven and Hell. If the meaning of the world lies in Love, then the loveless are homeless in the universe; if in Faith, then the sceptics go down into Hell. If the goal of the world rests on knowledge, all meaning is taken away from the blockhead; if it is exhausted in the genius, the philistine is doomed. If the progress of Mankind is the end of the world-process, then individual existences are shown to be of no value, and if the meaning of life is suffering, then the whole world stands condemned. Is it then so difficult to see that the meaning of life can only lie in itself? And that therefore absolute superiority attaches to no form of existence? The genius as well as the idiot, the saint as well as the brute; they are all ends of Nature, and all justified.

In precisely the same direction lies the error of the theory which sees in consciousness the essence of life; it excludes a main part of it; in the first place probably the whole of the vegetable world, and perhaps the major part of the animal, but also hardly less than half of human existence. Is it not ludicrous to shake one's head over the absurdity of Nature's realizing her ostensible end—conscious life—with so many gaps and deficiencies, instead of grasping the fact that if Nature appears to us irrational, the blame for it will lie on our own ideas. It is a melancholy theme, which is best passed over in silence, since it might lead us astray into bitter satire. Consciousness, as we know and fancy it, is only one of the many means which Life utilizes for its own maintenance; it does not belong to the essence of Life. Where generation takes place of necessity, because the sexes are not separated in space, or are united in the same individual, there the craving for love is lacking; if the sexes are separated in space, then conscious urge brings the two together. Different means to the same end. In simple relations automatic reflexes suffice for the maintenance of Life; the sea-anemone does not need to make plans. Man, owing to

the tremendous complexity of the conditions of his inner and outer existence, could not continue to live without reflection. Yet even in his case consciousness only comes into play when automatic regulation ceases; all subordinate vital processes go on unconsciously, and the highest again culminate in the possibility of attaining an end without conscious guidance. The expert boxer no longer knows how he fights, the pianoforte virtuoso is master of his instrument even in his sleep: and the statesman of genius reacts to the most difficult situation with the instantaneous and infallible precision of an automaton. We might also say that consciousness was a second best, a roundabout way to gain time; instinct works quicker than reflection. An ideal mind would have the best possible response to every stimulus ready instantaneously; processes which are all too swift outstrip the sluggish consciousness. And so the highest grade of development would bring us back to the automatism of the sea-anemone.

The meaning of Life lies just in itself, not in the means or factors of it. The meaning of walking lies in walking, not in the character of the feet. Whether there are two legs or a thousand, hoofs or fins: they are different means to the same end. So it is too with the functions of Mind or Soul. Love, knowledge, conscious reflection, are means to Life. Therefore, whoever sees the essence in the factor must inevitably end in ideas all crooked. Even in the case of what appears to us subjective, and therefore conditioned by consciousness, we are really dealing with an objective process which is independent of being known. Consciousness is only a mirror of reality, never more; a mirror which may quite well be lacking, without reality being in the least altered thereby. It will not do indeed to hypostatize the 'Unconscious' in its turn, as Edouard von Hartmann has done.[1] But it is a fact that inwardly, judged from the standpoint of our perception, there exists an objective reality just as boundless as

[1] Let it be repeated that this chapter, as indeed the whole book, was written without knowledge of that psychology of the unconscious which began its development about the time my book was published.

the outward one, and that our psychic and spiritual being is not even approximately exhausted by what we can know and experience of it. We are embedded as constituent parts in a psychic world, just as we are in a physical one, and in neither case is what we know of, or will for, ourselves our own, ultimate court of appeal. I shall be met by the time-honoured academic objection, that without consciousness we could have no experience of Being at all, and that therefore we cannot abstract from consciousness, and truisms of the same kind. These considerations are of course correct, like all tautological judgements, but they do not advance knowledge. Of course we could not know if the mind lacked consciousness; to this extent, undoubtedly, consciousness is the final court of appeal. But what does this truth prove about Nature? Absolutely nothing. The *conditio sine qua non* of all science may quite well correspond to a minor detail of the cosmos.

In this, as in so many respects, other peoples have been deeper thinkers than ourselves. Even the Greeks of the Homeric age; the myth of the draught of Lethe, which quenched in the dead all memory of his earthly life, expresses, though in an obscure form, the realization of the truth that continuance of life does not involve continuity of consciousness. And the Hindus, who ascribed to the soul four states (waking, dreaming sleep, deep sleep, and death), have never seen in consciousness the essence of it, but only an incidental attribute. The soul first attains to itself, to final union with Brâhman, in death, and this union does away with all 'states', including consciousness. But even in deep sleep, in which it is said that the spirit 'is encompassed by the self whose nature is knowledge', the Âtman is one with the World-Soul. Its being lies deeper than all possibility of consciousness. In the same way, it was one of the foremost doctrines of Buddha (as it was also of the Sânkhya philosophy), that we may not say of anything corporeal, or of any feeling, or knowledge, or perception: that is mine; I am that; that is my Self. For him, too, the Self lay on the far side of all states of consciousness. The Western mind, used to nothing but

observation of the outer world, nothing but objective theory, has often overlooked the fundamental facts of the inner life. This is the reason why it has so amazingly overestimated, and so lamentably misunderstood, the significance of consciousness. As a matter of fact, the latter only takes in an inconsiderable fraction of life, is characteristic of certain of its states, and appears like a lightning flash at the critical moments of its struggle for existence. It does not appertain to the essence of it. If the Will-to-Life concerned consciousness alone, then this will would be unintelligible. It would be willing the contingent, the inadequate. . . .

Let us now go back to our starting-point. If this conscious existence denotes only a segment of human life—and this fact is incontestable—then the stress laid upon it, both in our valuation of life here and our hopes for the hereafter, rests on a misapprehension. We hope and judge on the basis of an illusion; our premiss is false. The Will-to-Life relates to Life as such, to the synthesis above consciousness. And if this is so, what further objections can be raised, from the subjective point of view, against the objectively demonstrated statements, that we are not, in essence, identical with our person, that even the most self-centred egoist lives not for himself but for an idea. With consciousness the person disappears; what I do not know of is not mine; if my individuality were changed in deep sleep, and from a man I became an animal, I should not be aware of it; and yet the Ego-function would have gone on uninterruptedly. What we feel subjectively as our own person is essentially bound up with consciousness. An unconscious person would not signify any reality that could be experienced, but a concept without content. . . . It is not indeed possible to penetrate from these negative determinations to the positive meaning of Life. But our recent observations did not aim at comprehending this; they were only intended to remove the last obstacles which lay in the way of thorough insight. And this has now been done. If consciousness stands for nothing essential, if it does not, as most men still believe to-day, denote

the primordial ground of all being, but only a possible phenomenon, which may or may not be present, without the character of Life being altered thereby—then all the objections, which might have been brought against our theory on the contrary assumption, are untenable. From the subjective point of view, valid objections can hardly be raised any longer against the non-personal character of that Self, to which the impulse to self-preservation relates.

CHAPTER VI
MAN AND MANKIND

I

THE previous chapters have given us an important insight: that the Self to which the instinct of self-preservation, and the longing for Immortality relate, does not coincide with the conscious personality. Even for the individual man in his willing and striving, this latter does not represent the ultimate synthesis possible, any more than it does for Nature. Life endures at the expense of him who lives, it passes on through individuals, and in the same way the individual man endures at the expense of his states, which he unceasingly leaves buried behind him. The permanent Self is an Impersonal, or Supra-personal; it goes on working, heedless of whether it is conscious or not, and without consciousness there is no personal existence. So the life of the individual reflects the history of the race; every finite existence is an image of the endless one.

The knowledge we have gained relates to the course of Life in Time, and as a matter of fact this alone is directly relevant to the problem of Immortality. But the unity of life expresses itself not only in succession, but in coexistence as well: as each organism represents a point in an endless series perpetually passing in Time, so on every side it is dependent upon its contemporaries in Space. In every respect, and in every dimension, Life is a unity. Therefore we cannot confine ourselves to the one-directional, temporal aspect of it. The state of things we have shown to exist in the successive, we must now try to trace out also in the coexistent. If it is true that the deepest consciousness of self relates primarily to a Supra-personal, the same truth can be established in the sphere of coexistence also. And this sphere is none other but the moral.

When Max Stirner, after the palmy days of the Fichte–Hegelian romanticism of conceptual thought, undertook to defend the concrete Ego as opposed to the absolute one—he writes somewhere, with exquisite humour, 'I do not mean the Ego but Me myself'—he at first aroused no more response than

the Greek sophists did in their own day. They, too, had already aimed at what Stirner attempted in the nineteenth century: to oppose a categorical empiricism, so to speak, to the over-luxuriant growth of abstractions. But the Hellenic world had little comprehension for individualistic tendencies, and the state of affairs was much the same in Stirner's time. By degrees the Spirit of the Time has changed; an individualism, which soon became extreme, began to develop; the moral strictness of earlier days was transformed into Immoralism, and so the latest epoch, I mean the years around 1900, unquestionably ranges itself under the banner of Stirner's ideals. Now it is obvious that Immoralism stands for no very profound philosophy. Whoever merely denies dogmatically what is extant and hitherto recognized is not on that account a free spirit. Its positive assertions are for the most part shallow, and whoever thought Stirner's ideas out to the end was as a rule engulfed in bottomless Nihilism. Nevertheless, there is one thing immortal about this world-view: the intellectual gesture it signifies. Stirner had questioned things which had previously been taken for self-evident, and in so doing accomplished an achievement in the history of the world.

All intellectual progress, indeed, depends exclusively upon the domain of the self-evident diminishing in scope. The blockhead marvels at nothing, the most amazing fact seems obvious to him: the sage never ceases to wonder. No problem was ever solved by ignoring its problematical nature; what is never questioned remains for ever obscure. Doubt alone leads to complete knowledge. Whoever doubted, before Hume, that the transcendent could be reached by knowledge? Who, before Kant, that the existence of God could be proved? For the thick-headed masses the self-evident is the air they breathe, and great minds are like mighty question-marks, towering up in isolation, into the unknown.

It was self-evident to Mankind up to the middle of the last century that there are real higher syntheses above the individual: the Family, Society, the State, Mankind. Nobody—the

rare exceptions are irrelevant, since they were without influence in the history of civilization—thought of disputing this assumption. Not even Kant, the critic *par excellence*, did so; he went no farther back in thought than this premiss. Therefore it was certainly a most important event that men were found who contested what was hitherto an axiom, and asserted that there was nothing above and beyond the individual. Ethics were thereby awakened, once for all, from their dogmatic slumber.

Understand me aright: the significance of Stirner's morality of uniqueness, as one may call it, is not of a positive character, it is contained in the negative circumstance that it succeeded in asserting the independence and autonomy of the individual in relation to Mankind. Previously this thesis, whenever it had been put forward, had never called forth any lasting response; it had never been able to get into the ranks of those ideas which, whether they are admitted or contested, are extant once for all, and often dominate the world more effectively than Mammon and the Sword. And until this has happened, for the history of civilization, an idea does not exist. In Kant's days the man who exerted himself as an Immoralist was, indeed, heeded in so far that people endeavoured to render him innocuous, but theoretically he was of no account. Now when the time-honoured premisses have begun to give way, the time has changed its aspect; what was till then accepted and proffered as self-evident has dawned on man as a problem. Since, in reality, there are only individual men, how do we come to live for the State and for Mankind? How do we come to sacrifice our one and only life for an idea? It is, indeed, strange—and all the stranger because experience seems to justify what now strikes the mind as prejudice. Nations for which duty prevails over individual will are demonstrably the strong ones; but what does 'ought' mean since there are only single beings, each of which can only 'will'? Instinctively we rate the man who sacrifices his life for a cause more highly than the egoist, but why? After all, each man comes first for himself. If I dispute this, I am, by so doing, professing adherence to a dogma which has done yeoman's service for

Mankind from time immemorial, but my knowledge is not therefore any deeper. An assertion is not an explanation, and no thinking man rests satisfied, in the long run, with postulates.

Thus the Immoralists gave proof of acumen when they emphasized the paradoxical nature of classical Ethics: this, as judged from the standpoint of the understanding, is anything but obvious. For denying the self-evident character of social morality they undoubtedly deserved great credit. Only they made the problem too easy: they imagined that, with the negation, everything was over and done with. As soon as they became aware of the problematical character of the concept of duty they cried out: There is no duty! As soon as they discovered that, in the concrete, there are only individual men, but no mankind, they announced: There is no synthesis above the individual. Thus they set up a new dogmatism instead of the old one, the postulate of self-expression instead of the law of renunciation, and to the morality of the philistines they opposed that of anarchy, which is at bottom only a sport of philistinism. Little is gained by such assertions, the true relation of the individual to the community is left as obscure as before. It is true that doubt is no solution of the problem, but it does mean the first step towards it: thus Hume's scepticism was the necessary preliminary to the Kantian Critique. But negative dogmatism is no better than positive—rather worse—and Immoralism stands for a sheerly dogmatic world-view. It denies every bond between man and mankind: yet it does not, by so doing, rid the world of the fact that men have at all times believed in the existence of such solidarity, and that this belief must, in its own turn, have some foundation in Nature. As critics the Immoralists stopped half-way: they never got farther than the doubt, the questioning. But as dogmatists they have, as usual, taken account of only a fragment of experience. It is certainly a fact that, in the concrete, there are only individuals, but over against it stands the no less certain fact that all man's nobler impulses point beyond the Person. These facts seem contradictory, yet neither of

them is done away by the other. Classical morality, too, rests on sure empirical foundations; indeed the fundamental instincts of the soul bear witness on behalf of it—instincts about which Immoralism for good reasons is silent. Thus the ethics of the epoch inspired by Stirner's spirit have indeed raised questions, but have found no tenable answers to them. The problem proper of the critic of morals has never even dawned upon them. This problem consists in discovering the relation which, *of necessity*, unites Man to Mankind. For that such a bond exists, in some shape or other, admits of no doubt.

2

THIS relation the Immoralists have, as we said, denied. From the purely logical standpoint they were justified in so doing, for only individuals are really given us in experience, and the higher syntheses seem at first sight to denote concepts and ideas to which there need be no corresponding reality. But logic is no unconditional authority on Nature; what contradicts a definition may yet exist in spite of that. Therefore we purpose for the present, without any mental reservations, to make ourselves familiar with the facts, and not to interpret them critically till later on.

If we try to take a broad survey of the life-forms of different peoples, as they have developed in Time and Space, we become aware that states in which the individual as such plays an important part—the self-evident premiss of the modern European—form the rarest exceptions. The rule is rather those in which the man's being proper is merged in the group, and this latter forms the premiss of the personal self-consciousness. The group thinks and feels, judges and determines; and the individual does not rebel against its tyranny, because he knows nothing of his own autonomy; he feels himself, from the very first, merged in the community. And this is the case not only among primitive peoples who are apparently incapable of culture;[1]

[1] Cf. especially Lévy-Bruhl's *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (Paris, 1910).

things are just the same in the earliest conditions of what became later cultured nations, e.g. in the primitive age of the Greeks and Romans. Read, for instance, the account given by Fustel de Coulanges (*La Cité antique*, 19th ed., Paris, 1905). The primitive Greek lived and felt primarily, not as individual man, but as member of the family. Where the man of to-day starts from his own person as ultimate premiss, the Greek felt his *raison d'être* in the race to which he belonged; his essence was filial reverence. He felt directly his living solidarity with his fellows of the same stock, dead as well as living. His ancestors lived on in him; at every moment of his existence he felt himself to be their creation, their work. He would hardly have understood the idea of seeing what was ultimate in his own personal existence. Even after death he continued to exist—the filial affection of his descendants was guarantee for this—and in his children he felt that he lived on, in the fullest sense of the words. He lived consciously as member of the family; the family settled matters; it was the only juristic person. It never occurred to any individual to exert himself independently. This was not renunciation on his part, for the benefit of the community, either out of reflective insight or an overflow of generous impulse, as it is among ourselves in time of war, or of other enterprises for the common weal: it was primordial feeling, wholly simple and natural; it never entered any one's head that it could be otherwise. Those times knew nothing of personality as an independent, empirical fact. Wherever it made its appearance it was forthwith interpreted symbolically; the eldest as head of the clan, the hero as representative of the race. In those days there were no isolated individuals, the vital assumptions requisite for that were yet unborn. The race-soul encompassed the single consciousness with fetters of iron, the group regulated the volition of the individual.

This state of things, which in the West found its classical expression in the primitive period of the Greeks and Romans, still prevails to-day in the East in a very similar form. Orientals strike the European as disconcertingly imper-

sonal:[1] the gap between high and low is, in Japan for instance, incredibly narrow. On the one hand the average level is higher than in the West—none of his Eastern fellows is as raw as our proletarian—on the other hand their great men do not bear comparison with ours. The result is uniformity. The family, the clan, social convention, dominate the Japanese to such an extent, and regulate his behaviour so exhaustively, that there is no room left for independent initiative. It seems unthinkable to the most powerful Samurai as well as to the poorest labourer that he should live and act otherwise than his father did, or than the community expects of him. For every man his position, his occupation, and the whole course of his life is mapped out from birth. Either he has no conception of liberty, as the European understands it, or he shrinks from it as something barbaric: to him it is like the condition of reptiles and birds, who know no law.[2] From the cradle to the grave his life is strictly predetermined; any possible volition is stifled by duty.

It is important to understand that this outlook on life has its roots not in reflective theory, but in primary consciousness. The Japanese feels primarily as a member of society, this state of things is for him the natural premiss of consciousness. He, too, like the primitive Greek, feels his vital solidarity with his forefathers; he, too, is no isolated individual. Only his disposition is more social and less metaphysical than the Hellene's, so that the feeling of successive solidarity (with ancestors and posterity) falls somewhat into the background, compared with that of simultaneous solidarity (with his living kindred and fellows in race). He gives the impression, accordingly, of being more social, more political, more accessible. The family, in antiquity, was austerely exclusive; the Japanese is the most considerate of men, ready, at all times and with all men, to put his own personality in the background. This gives him his incomparable charm in peace, his formidable pathos in war.

[1] Cf. Percival Lowell's *The Soul of the Far East.*

[2] Cf. Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan, An Attempt at Interpretation* (New York and London, 1905), p. 101.

He goes to death as a matter of course, in a way inconceivable to us. He fights, not as an individual, for a more or less abstract fatherland, but as a Japanese for Japan. To him his country is not a mere idea, but an experience as vivid as his Ego is to the Westerner. So, without the quiver of an eyelash, he accomplishes feats which fill individualistic Europe with uncomprehending amazement.

The Chinaman feels just as impersonally: for him, too, the family is more than the person; he, too, by nature, strives after no unconditioned self-determination. Indeed, the same seems to hold good, though manifested in most diverse forms, of the majority of Orientals. Among the Arabs also, racial feeling outweighs personal consciousness; the family feeling of the Jew, too, often proves stronger than his personal ambition; and indeed Aryan India of Vedantic times seems to have produced no individualities in our sense of the word. It was not, properly speaking, the individual philosopher who was the thinker but the spirit of the great Hindu people. Hermann Oldenberg writes: 'Everywhere an impersonal community is acting, and the individual bears only the imprints which the common spirit has stamped upon him.'[1] Undoubtedly the peoples of the West are more individualized than those of the East—but they were not always so. Thus it is very questionable whether the Greeks, before the time of their decadence, ever attributed any great significance to individuality: a great Athenian was an Athenian first and foremost, a citizen of his own city: as such he felt and thought. Even the philosophers, Plato included, saw nothing necessary in the self-determination of the personality.

What, with qualifications, is true of the Greeks—with qualifications because they were not essentially a political people—is true, without qualification, of the Romans. It admits of no doubt that for them the idea of the state, of the *Respublica*, was much more vital than that of the individual. A Cincinnatus certainly felt himself as Ego only in so far as this Ego belonged to Rome; and if Coriolanus thought otherwise, that formed an

[1] *Buddha*, p. 160.

exception, which his contemporaries as well as generations of his descendants regarded as monstrous. An atmosphere of marvellous unity is wafted to us from those centuries; never probably in the whole West has any people lived so entirely as an organism, as an indivisible individual, as did the Romans of the age of the Republic. Not till the great revolutions which ended in the establishment of the Empire did the emancipation of the individual begin, did the consciousness of individual uniqueness awaken. And shortly afterwards Christendom engraved upon its shield the device of the individual as End-in-himself.

It is indeed incontestable that personality (as we understand the word) was first called to life by Christianity. Certainly the idea of it was discovered earlier. The Sophists had reached this limit by the path of negation; all later schools of philosophy were cosmopolitan in mind; and when the state and the community are losing in repute, this is necessarily to the advantage of the individual. The philosophy of the Stoa was indeed consciously adjusted to the individual. But the ideas of the schools and academies lacked living force, their influence was confined to a narrow circle, they could not translate themselves into life-values. Where Christianity had not kindled the flame, no one believed in an 'infinite worth of the human soul', however firmly he might be convinced of his own continuance after death. The individual was valued as member of the family, fellow of the same stock, as bearer of a name or a vocation, as symbol of supra-individual syntheses—always in relation to something else, never in himself. That man as man, 'intrinsically', apart from his qualities, could be an end never occurred to any one; the mere suspicion of believing such a thing would have appeared monstrous to the best part of the Pagan world. In this respect the coming of Christ undoubtedly marks the most important turning-point of the world's history, for it really entailed a transvaluation of all values. Everything specifically European derives, however indirectly, from Christ. To mention only the most recent, and for us therefore the most vivid, consequences of his life on earth: the declaration of the

Rights of Man, Socialism,[1] the philosophy which starts from the individual subject as its ultimate premiss, and above all the ethic of Friedrich Nietzsche, which, far from abolishing Christianity, has in reality drawn the uttermost inferences from it: without the tacit assumption of the infinite worth of the human soul, the morality of the Superman, which treads the rest of Mankind underfoot for the benefit of the genius, would have been impossible. Let us have no delusions on this point: European thought is permeated through and through by Christianity. Its supreme axiom is the individual as end in himself, and this axiom sets the direction of the whole of modern life. Whoever would revolt in earnest from Christianity must first of all renounce Individualism. Paganism knew nothing of personality, in our sense of the word, though it certainly produced men not inferior to those of the Christian era.

We are wont to regard the transformation in our mode of thought, which goes back to the Nazarene, as an unqualified advance. This may be so: but where the object is to understand, it is always a doubtful business to evaluate. The absolute autonomy of the ethical personality may be the ideal of all Ethics: he who views reality from the standpoint of the ideal will hardly be just to the facts. It does not behove the seeker after truth to regard the phenomenon as a mere stage to hypostatized ends-in-themselves: this view may be morally necessary, in any case it does violence to Nature. Schopenhauer has said, 'Art is everywhere at the goal', and the same is true of Life. For this reason evolutionism—even in its most harmless form—is fatal to knowledge, at any rate at first. It is indeed incontestable that peoples develop, that their original homogeneity differentiates itself into ever greater heterogeneity. The politically autonomous individual arises by differentiation of the amorphous group, and in the same way the consciousness of uniqueness is formed by differentiation of the confused, half-social, half-individual self-consciousness of primitive man. Only we

[1] Cf. for the deepest significance of the latter Leonie von Ungern's pamphlet *Der Sinn des Sozialismus* (Darmstadt, 1919, Otto Reichl Verlag).

may not, without more ado, transfigure these facts into values. From the perspective of the cosmos, the fully developed man appears not as more than the embryo, but only as different. We have simply to recognize what exists. Therefore we do not propose to regard the Christian view of Life as the completion of the earlier ones (which would be a judgement of value), but simply to set down the fact that it came after another one, and try to comprehend its relation to other and different forms of Life.

With Christianity, then, personality was brought into the world as a value. Ever since the spirit of the time into which the man is born has been a Christian one, each has felt himself first and foremost as an individual, no matter how his feelings and convictions may have been shaped otherwise, nor whether his instincts impel him to self-assertion or to positive self-sacrifice. Even the modern depreciators of 'le respect humain', who deny all value to man *qua* man, can only be understood on Christian hypotheses. Individualism is one of the unconditional premisses of European thought and feeling.

But if we now survey the results of our cursory geographico-historical investigation, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that our premisses are not the only ones possible. There have been, and there still are elsewhere, states of being in which no value is attached to the individual as such. Even among ourselves political science is bound to proceed *as if* the individual was nothing, and the state everything. Accordingly it is dinned into every one at school that the only thing that matters is the 'Cause', and that nothing is more honourable than to die for an idea. Nevertheless, even the poorest European thinker secretly feels this teaching a paradox; it disquiets him; his most intimate presupposition is still his own person, and not the community. Among other nations the latter seems to be the primary assumption: to the Japanese, Japan is as close as his own soul is to the Christian. His immediate feeling, not merely his objective reflection, tells him that the individual is of no importance. Indeed, among many peoples group-feeling seems completely to supersede self-consciousness. And this phenomenon

cannot, without doing violence to the truth, be explained away as secondary—by belief in authority, auto-suggestion, reflective insight, practical motives: it is a primary, original phenomenon of consciousness, not to be further accounted for. There are, in fact, impersonal nations for members of which an independent Ego-consciousness is lacking; most Orientals belong to them in some respect or other—this is why they are so frequently adherents of religions which, like the Buddhistic, deny the unitary soul, and recognize only unstable complexes of consciousness, or attribute to each individual a series of souls for each of which there is a special destiny in store. Feeling of Self, in our sense of the word, is at any rate no necessity of Nature: it is only one phenomenal form among others of Man's consciousness.

Take note: I am only stating the facts, not explaining them. We are still a long way from the comprehension of this remarkable state of things. Let us now observe the shifting relation of the individual consciousness to the social in its effects from the standpoint of philosophy of history.

There is no doubt about it: the more firmly the members of a group cling together, the more powerful the group is: a highly-strung patriotism, which stifles all personal considerations, has hitherto always led to the advancement of a nation. The communion with others raises the person to a higher power. A unanimous body of people, which not merely metaphorically but actually possesses a collective soul, and whose psychological behaviour is governed by special laws,[1] which are often contemptuous of the individual, is stronger than any single personality. Great historical events have everywhere been bound up with the subordination of personal interests to the will of the community—whether it was because the masses blindly followed an individual, or because a common impulse of the time set the direction for them all. At such a time the individual is literally swamped in the stream of the community; the man forgets that he possesses an Ego, he sees only the Cause.—

[1] Cf. Gustave le Bon, *La Psychologie des foules* (Paris, Flammarion).

Great ages, however, may be considered as paroxysms, as periods of overpowering suggestion. If we wish to penetrate to the root of the problem, we must turn from the superlative to the positive. What was the relation of the individual to the community in times when the peoples had reached the summit of their power, and walked in peace as victors upon the heights? There seems no doubt about the answer: the individual was not indeed lost in the national spirit, but neither was it sovereign ruler, as many short-sighted psychologists would fain make us believe. The individual did his utmost, but only as conscious member of the community: his guiding motive was the sense of duty. In the case of impersonal nations, such as the Japanese, this relation may not appear very clearly: when self-consciousness *per se* draws no sharp line of division between itself and the rest, will and duty are hardly to be distinguished subjectively—any more than we can say positively concerning the generous impulses of men in the mass, that the individual who cheerfully sacrifices himself for the Cause does so from a sense of duty. Duty presupposes reflective consciousness, and the individual when merged in the community loses this: he lives as in a dream, as in a state of intoxication. In nations, however, where the person is the centre, the situation is obvious enough. The Romans provide the classical example of this: in their palmy days they felt through and through only as citizens of Rome, never independently nor in opposition to the city which was their symbol: every man felt himself subject to a categorical imperative. Such, too, was the frame of mind of the Germans who welded the Reich into a unity. Is it possible to imagine a more masterful personality than Prince Bismarck's? And yet the mainspring of all his action was not self-will, but sense of duty. He felt himself always a servant who had a task to fulfil, never a master who might act as he chose. The great days of a people, politically speaking, have always been those in which sense of duty has prevailed over self-will. But to possess a sense of duty means to recognize something which points beyond the person.

As under certain conditions the individual is merged in the

organism of the community, so that even the subject perceives no sharp dividing line between himself and the rest, so at other periods the community crumbles into unconnected individuals. This is the opposite extreme. This feature distinguished (outside our own epoch) the age of the decadence of imperial Rome, and the palmy days of the Renaissance. Even the age of Petronius was deeply imbued with individualism. Each particular person was interested exclusively in himself, and indifferent in his attitude to the common weal. Many an emperor even was like-minded. And if the Roman Empire, in spite of defective patriotism and unparalleled political indifference, still stood firm for centuries, till, long marked out for such fate, it at last collapsed beneath the onslaught of the barbarians, that was due to the firmly based and articulated principle of its structure, not to the facts: the state machine was so thoroughly well consolidated, and functioned so admirably out of sheer inertia, that it could even stand bad emperors and disloyal officials. Now, the individualistic epoch of Rome produced very few outstanding personalities; but this was due to the human material: the chaos of nations offered few germs for pre-eminent growth. Gloomy ascetics, accomplished journalists, subtle aesthetes, cunning diplomatists; the biological material for anything higher was lacking.

The Renaissance too, as we have said, was individualistic in thought: the number of powerful natures which that time saw bloom and fade was great beyond all precedent. In it the morality of the superman was no artificial creation of spineless aesthetes, as it was in Alexandria and Rome; in those days it was the direct outcome of the vigour of the blood. Nature matured the principle. And yet we are mistaken if we judge that age to be, in every respect, a culmination; it was so only so far as concerns some favoured few. However highly developed a few persons might be, formless anarchy ruled among the mass. The Renaissance is one of the most chaotic and undisciplined ages we know of: if it seems otherwise, that is due to the condition of Italy at that time. The Empire was disintegrated into

atoms of petty states ruled over by kinglets, who all carried on hostilities against each other. So long as there were no external enemies, nothing prevented the tyrants from fancying themselves all-powerful; each of them could overrate himself with impunity. Yet how small the proud men of the Renaissance proved, when a well-disciplined Great Power, such as France, fell upon them! The Italians of those days were great *only* as individuals; or, more accurately, as the few individuals we know of whose names have left their mark upon the time. Whoever knew of Goethe only might, in the same way, claim the period from 1820 to 1830 as a brilliant period for Germany. Italy, as a nation, assuredly stands higher to-day than it did five or six hundred years ago. Politically, the Renaissance period is the exact opposite of a climax—the Florentine Republic constitutes no real exception, and Venice is a problem by itself—and what is true of the body politic is true also of the majority of the individuals in it.

About the latest individualistic period it is difficult to speak generally, and at the same time objectively; for one reason because it has not yet lasted long, and then because its unimpeded development has been prevented by the Socialist development which has been mixed up with it, and lastly because in the highly differentiated condition of modern civilized peoples it is scarcely possible to draw conclusions which would hold good for the whole of Europe.[1] The Frenchman is the most advanced, yet even he is not the extreme individualist that he should be, according to the dogma of evolution; he is less so than the German. Perhaps this is due to his blood, at any rate it is due to his culture being of such long standing. The French national spirit is already so perfect in form that it hardly seems any longer capable of alteration. Involuntarily it repeats itself, even when it is creating a new fashion, generally in the spirit of the palmy days of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And if, as recently, it gravitates back to the Gothic Middle Ages,

[1] Let the reader remember at this point that the book was written in 1906 and that nothing in this chapter has been changed since.

this is undoubtedly an atavistic phenomenon. To-day the French are the most impersonal of European nations. They all, more or less, want the same thing: they lack the free play of imagination needed for unconventional initiative. I mean the imagination of life, not of mind, for their minds are still the most richly inventive of all Europeans'. The highly individual Anglo-Saxons, on the other hand, are too unintellectual, too unreflective, to go as far as downright individualism, quite apart from their profound political instinct.

Even in Germany extreme individualism does not, properly speaking, touch the people. They as a whole are still in the normal stage, when self-consciousness and national-consciousness are in equilibrium, or else, after a short individualistic phase, there is developing, to meet the demands of socialism, a repetition of the early group-consciousness on a higher plane. Yet in Germany the other extreme of the relation between individual and community—where it exists at all—seems more pronounced than elsewhere: the individual feels himself *opposed* to the community. I am myself—in antagonism to the universe. There are no duties except to myself; I am my own and only end.

It cannot be denied that this assumption, so far as it forms the vital basis of consciousness, is adapted, as no other is, to promote the complete development of the personality; the axiomatic right of every individual to live his life to the full, unquestionably affords him the best possible moral basis for realizing all his potentialities. Yet this advantage has its compensating drawbacks: man does not stand alone in the world, he is conditioned on every side by his fellow men; and with the intensification of the Ego-consciousness, the feeling of solidarity with Mankind fades away. The individual feels himself isolated, out of touch with his brethren, knows of no duties towards others; and where men live thus detached, the nation, at all events, cannot be strong. Scattered stones do not form a house. The individual, too, loses more by excessive isolation than he gains. Every man, even the genius, is dependent on the

world around him; if this fails him, he cannot attain to full exercise of his powers; the man who is too unique remains sterile. Thus the excessive exaltation of the personality takes place in the long run not only at the expense of the community, but also to the detriment of the elect. What then about those whose consciousness of uniqueness seems justified by no special excellences? They rank lower than the conscious member of the herd. If they disown their membership in wider syntheses this is due to their narrowness of mind and heart. Their conscious Self does not reach beyond the empirical confines of their person, their life withers away in constriction. To have the moral right to live for oneself alone, one must *be* some one; otherwise one not only sins against humanity, one commits ethical suicide.—Significantly enough, it has always hitherto been a sign of the end of a nation when the individual impulse has so far outweighed the social that it has become antagonistic to it. Assuredly personality is the fine flower of humanity; yet if we survey the state of affairs impartially, and analyse it like conscientious scientific inquirers, we discover that this flower is only too like that of the aloe, which entails the death of the plant. The zenith coincides with the end. Great men, for the most part, die childless, or leave behind them no long-lived posterity; nations too highly differentiated have to make way for those less refined. This is not an objection, merely a fact. The aloe, too, is bound to flower at last, even though this involves its death; the insect, too, has to beget, although it yields up its life with its seed. To this extent the most extreme individualism, which repudiates all community with others, and in the end destroys the nation, is no symptom of disease. In one aspect it is a natural state of things, in another a tragic destiny. *More* than personality Man cannot be. And since Life never stands still, and knows no abiding stay, the dream of a future age in which only supermen would live refers to a chimaera.

This is the natural aspect of personality; the existence of it in no way detracts from the value of this latter. The world of

values stands in no direct relation to Nature, it only makes use of the latter as the means of embodying itself, as material. But we must not discuss the world of values here; it is just the one-sided nature of our observation which guarantees its serviceableness for knowledge.

If we now survey as a whole the road traversed, we perceive that the development of the relation between Man and Mankind seems traced by the following curve: at first the individual's self-consciousness is a social one; primarily he feels himself member of a group, and this is for him what is most concrete. In later stages the individual emancipates himself, and acts as a conscious self within the racial organism. Finally, become completely autonomous, he feels himself isolated, unconnected with his brethren; but then all is over with him. But this view is counterbalanced by a wider outlook: the relation of the individual consciousness to the social is a shifting one. From the preponderance of the mass-instinct which stifles all individual volition, to the complete autonomy of the individual, there are all conceivable intermediate stages. There are types of men who have not discovered the Self, probably never will discover it: their centre of consciousness lies in the group, their will is essentially heteronomous. In this case it seems really possible to speak of the soul of a people, which would be more concrete than that of the individual. Further, there are forms of life in which the primary instinct of the autonomous individual is not self-will but sense of duty. In these the centre of consciousness lies indeed in the Self, but this Self feels first and foremost that it ought, not that it wills. Here no national soul is sovereign lord, yet the individuals think, feel, and will, in such solidarity, so entirely in relation to the whole, that the nation acts as a unity, though it is not actually one. Lastly we meet with conditions in which the emphasis is laid so strongly on the individual Ego that all solidarity seems done away; at this point there is no longer a people, but only isolated persons. If now we examine this shifting relation more closely, we perceive that, in spite of all the mutability of its factors, the *relation*, as a rule,

remains on the whole a constant: the more the national soul is sovereign, the less the individual is of any account, the more the individual is a personality, the weaker generally the people, as a people, is. Of course, this holds good only *grosso modo*: national temperaments are too diverse for them all to be measured by the same standard: it is certainly not feasible to set up a 'constant of humanity', about which the different races in their development would oscillate. Among dwellers in the Far East the unity might quite well be damaged by a degree of individual differentiation which among Aryans would mark the lower limit of a powerful synthesis; indeed, a type of man is quite conceivable, who, along with the highest grade of differentiation attainable by us, would exhibit a national unity as compact as that of the Japanese.[1] Yet even for this type there would be a critical point beyond which the unity could no longer maintain itself; the unequivocal nature of summed-up experience justifies this generalization. Thus, if the assumption of a constancy of the relation between the variable factors may be valid only for actual determinate temperaments, nevertheless, subject to this reservation, it does in fact stand for a kind of empirical law. At all times and in all places, the happiest and most powerful condition has been that in which the individual has felt himself autonomous, and yet an organic member of the community—in this form the equilibrium reached its highest degree of stability.[2] And at all times and in all places an exaggerated measure of

[1] This is the ideal of German National-Socialism. Hence its individualistic, really Nordic, hero-worship on the one hand, and on the other its extraordinary sympathy for Japan. (Author's Note to the English edition, 1937.)

[2] On this rests the greatness of England, hitherto always the strongest European nation. The personality of the Briton is certainly very pronounced: and yet he feels first and foremost as an Englishman, not as this or that individual. The fundamental features of the English character are remarkably uniform, just as English handwritings are. Even greatness among them has pronounced conventional features. And yet nowhere is there less trace to be found of herd-mentality than in the United Kingdom: the general opinion is also every man's personal conviction. They do not pursue such and such a course of life because 'one' does so, because 'it' is the proper thing, but because each individual independently is of the same mind. For this reason the English are the political people *par excellence*; for a very long time now their statesmanship has been masterly. And yet since the days of

individual differentiation has destroyed the dynamic unity of the nation. Therefore, in the case of syntheses which extend beyond the individual, natural relations are undoubtedly involved—experience compels us to come to this conclusion.

3

OUR last reflections, too, contained nothing but facts. The complexes of laws which we finally considered we were able to establish are mere abstract descriptions of fact, but tell us nothing about the grounds of them: from the empirical data which we have collected and then reduced to their simplest formulae, not the smallest deduction can at first be drawn as to the *necessary* relation of the individual to the community. What does 'national soul' mean? 'The nation no more has an Ego than the eleven planets taken together have an Ego, although they revolve round a common centre', says Stirner, and no logical objection can be made to the statement. The herd-instinct denotes, in the first instance, a psychological and subjective relation, not an essential one. If I do not like to live alone, this wish tells me nothing about whether I am fundamentally connected with the rest or not. Mass-psychology teaches nothing decisive about the necessary relation of the individual to the community; the social Ego, the best characterization of which we owe to William James, stands for something purely empirical, that world of current ideas and prejudices which is for everybody part of the 'givenness' he starts from. And that our ideas are conditioned by all around us, first and foremost by the men and women we mix with, is self-evident. What constitutes the *natural* solidarity of Man with Mankind cannot be deduced from ideas and mental images, but only from Man's Being—from what lies at the basis of all possible ideas and images. And

Cromwell there has not been a single statesman of the first rank among them, as Count York von Wartenburg has quite correctly noted in his *Weltgeschichte in Umrissen*, while unpolitical Germany has produced a series of them. Englishmen do not require them: where all are reasonable no genius is needed.

since our observations hitherto tell us nothing decisive about this Being, the Immoralist theories which deny the existence of any supra-individual synthesis are so far unrefuted.

Nevertheless, the path to insight now lies open before us. It hardly occurs to the man of to-day ever to put the question to himself, whether the personal Ego really represents the ultimate synthesis which lies at the base of self-consciousness;[1] this problem now forms the central point of our interest: it is indeed incontestable *on the basis of experience* that Man's consciousness does not necessarily start from his personal Self. Non-personal peoples will only what serves social ends, but they do so neither from sense of duty, nor personal conviction, in the strict sense of the word, since they do not clearly distinguish their own persons from the rest, and think originally from the standpoint of the group. For the primitive Greek, the family in its unending temporal duration was the most vivid and essential presupposition; even among ourselves the soul of woman draws no sharp line between herself and those whom she loves. It is precisely among the most powerful nations that the sense of duty outweighs the impulse of the individual's will—and it does so instinctively, not from intellectual insight. But when it is a question of duty, the individual does not suffice as supreme premiss. It is not practicable to evade the problem by the facile consideration that the world of duty stands in no necessary relation to the world of existence, the latter belonging to Nature, the former to the realm of freedom. As if freedom were not a phenomenon of Nature! It is just the idea of duty, that one 'ought to' do certain things, which has to be comprehended from the nature of Man. Here, indeed, if I am not mistaken, lies the crux of the problem. Unprejudiced observation shows that self-consciousness does not necessarily start from the personal Self, since this is not the only possible, the only natural premiss; experience shows likewise that between the

[1] This situation as described in the text, written 1906, has begun to change only with the Russian Revolution. (Author's Note to the English version, 1938.)

individual and the community an objective solidarity exists. Subjective feeling and objective existence point back to each other. Our task is to grasp the relation critically; in what way could this be possible?—Obviously, only by means of the analysis of the moral consciousness: for this, and this alone, is concerned with the immediate solidarity of men with each other. If it should turn out that ethical Man starts *originally* from supra-individual syntheses, no matter to what ends the instinctive impulse may lead, or what forms it may take—then, but only then, would the theory of the isolation of the human soul be refuted, then it would be firmly established that the predicate of necessity attaches to the factual relation, and that there is by Nature a solidarity between Man and Mankind.[1] Our next problem, therefore, concisely stated, is as follows: Is 'I ought' a primary factor of consciousness? For all volition which points beyond the individual falls within the domain of the concept of duty.

4

THE Immoralists of our day think to solve the problem by wiping out the concept of duty. There is no 'ought': Nature knows nothing of commandments and the day of a non-natural ethic is past. The question is whether the 'ought' is really a non-natural, arbitrary, and artificial product.

The bugbear of the Immoralists is the categorical imperative: against this their heaviest artillery is directed, it produces from them an instantaneous outburst of fury. To this there would be no objection, if their attitude arose from real knowledge of the subject. But so far as I have been able to ascertain, the

[1] I may state here myself explicitly, what every one who knows my later works well will have found out for himself, that in this book I am using the word 'Nature' in a wider, more comprehensive, but, on the other hand, less distinct sense than I have done later. In the final expression I have given of the relation of Man to Mankind, in the chapter 'Humanité et Nations' of *La Révolution mondiale et la responsabilité de l'esprit*, I even deny that there exists a 'Mankind' as a natural phenomenon. Yet there is no contradiction between my latest and my earliest formulations. (Author's Note to the English version, 1938.)

persons in question have never properly understood Kant, and only one here and there has even read him. The main point indeed has escaped them: that Kant's object was, first and foremost, not to draw up a system of morals, but to establish a state of facts.[1] He was endeavouring to demonstrate and find grounds for the fact of experience, that there is an elementary undeducible phenomenon of consciousness, which we denote by the term 'ought'. And no matter whether Kant was exhaustive or not: the point can be proved. The (logically justified) doubt of the character of the 'ought' as fact cannot hold out against experience. It may be questionable perhaps *what* our duty is—weighty objections may be brought against Kant's own ethical system; but *that* we 'ought' our inmost self-consciousness bears witness.

In order to lay hold at once of the core of the problem, let us think of the type of man whom the Immoralists specially have in mind: the creative artist—say Richard Wagner or Nietzsche. The artist of genius is, by definition, as it were, an extreme individualist: he desires only to express himself, treads underfoot the wishes of others, and spurns every social obligation. And yet no professed altruist is as keenly conscious as he of a task which, cost what it may, he is bound to accomplish. He *must* realize what lies in him: he *must* give Mankind his uttermost—even though he hates or despises them. Let any one read Richard Wagner's letters, Nietzsche's confessions, or Beethoven's heartrending laments. Even the case of Gustave Flaubert, the artist who probably loved Mankind least, comes under this head: he sacrificed himself for a Cause, the idea of his Art. But the word 'Cause' is obviously only a provisional symbol for supra-individual syntheses, closer determination of which has been renounced, and these syntheses again, in the last resort, concern the man, even if not the individual. It is merely a question of the way one looks at things and of temperament, whether one is conscious of living for a Cause or for

[1] Cf. on this point besides Kant's own writings Georg Simmel's *Vorlesungen über Kant*, pp. 80 ff., and H. S. Chamberlain's *Kant*, pp. 702 ff.

Mankind; in essential questions it comes to the same thing.[1] Whoever has mastered even the rudiments of Psychology must notice that no artist, however isolated he may feel, is sufficient for himself: he cares for fame; and fame, according to Ihering's striking definition, is 'not a mere tribute of gratitude which the world pays, but the expression of the enduring *influence* of him whom it crowns'. Many a man gladly renounces the appreciation of his contemporaries, but he reckons all the more on being understood by posterity. To this there are no exceptions; and whether one cares about the world of to-day or of the morrow makes no essential difference. Every artist lives, in some shape or other, for Mankind and is conscious of a duty towards them. For this reason he feels, as a rule, justified in being supported by others, or—which is only the other (negative) side of the same relation—in being absolved from their claims upon him. He has indeed different duties, but they are all the more imperative. So many a genius has ruined himself, and given up his personal happiness, in order to fulfil his task; he has sacrificed himself for his work, which, once completed, was of benefit to others but not to himself any more.—It is said: the creative impulse is the artist's dominant instinct. That is understood. In the same way the sense of duty was Bismarck's strongest motive; in the same way the Japanese will die for his country, at any cost. But Duty, too, can only lead to great deeds through the agency of the individual will, and with this in mind it is not difficult to deny the existence of all obligation. But this view is neither profound nor acute, and does not rid the world of the fact of the *sense* of duty. It is not the same thing whether my person is for me a means or an end; this distinction is indeed the greatest that can be imagined. The artist, who in the eyes of the philistine lives only for himself, lives, in reality, for his work; his person is for him a means, not an end. Indeed, can a better definition of Duty be found than the following: To will

[1] Let me refer here to the final statement or solution of the problem in question from my point of view, contained in the chapter 'Der Urzusammenhang der Menschen' of my *Buch vom persönlichen Leben*, published 1936. (Author's Note to the English version, 1938.)

from the standpoint, or on the assumption, that one's own person is never an end but only a means? But now, if we look more closely, we perceive that between a Wagner's ruthless need for self-expression, a Bismarck's stern sense of duty, and the impersonal impulse to self-sacrifice of a Japanese, *there exists absolutely no difference in principle*. However amazing it may sound, it is so; for they are all, at bottom, only means for themselves, not ends. Not indeed with the same consciousness, in the same direction, or with the same intensity: the Japanese sacrifices himself by instinct, without any reflection, for his country; Bismarck's conduct was dictated by conscious insight, by the sternest self-discipline; and if Wagner felt an imperative urge to devote his life to Mankind, this urge attained expression, in the first place, in the form of tyrannical self-assertion. Yet the differences in manifestation, closely examined, are seen to concern merely differences in the means, not in the essence: starting-point and goal are the same for all three; they live for themselves, and yet at the same time, implicitly, for something higher: each man's volition implies at the same time an obligation. Indeed, it would be impossible in any case completely to disentangle the will-impulse from the sense of 'ought to', so closely are the two interwoven: even the frivolous man of the world, the necessity for whose existence seems questionable to any third person, credits himself with duties which unconditionally demand his existence. And if the extreme individualist, who repudiates every obligation to society, speaks of 'duties towards himself', that is more than a euphemistic mode of speech; the expression corresponds to an undeniable phenomenon of consciousness. *What* we ought to do is, theoretically, quite indeterminate, and many people in practice give way to illusions about it; but *that* he ought to do, whatever it may be, each man knows. To this there are no exceptions. The form of volition everywhere implies that of obligation, and this formal character alone is decisive for the problem.

I express myself here more briefly perhaps than is desirable to make clear this extremely important position. The design of

this book forbids me to go more into detail.[1] My task now is to discover the premisses which alone suffice for the understanding of the indisputable facts.

At this point we are met at once by a very serious difficulty. We know that the meaning and end of Life lie in itself, not outside it.[2] Any other reading is directly opposed to the facts, and leads to absurd consequences. If I live for an idea, I do so because to fix this end is for me a condition of life; if I serve the truth, it is because I cannot continue to exist without knowing; if a person is the end and aim of my existence, that proves that I cannot live without them. Life is its own and only end. Now how does this knowledge, which otherwise may be taken as assured, harmonize with the fact that we sacrifice our person for a Cause, that we recognize duties which point beyond ourselves, that we go willingly to death for the sake of an idea, and, as was shown before, see in our own person only a means, not the end? Is there no contradiction here?—I think not; only closer determination is needed. Life is indeed its own and only end, *but the person is not.* The ultimate premiss of the individual is certainly his life, but not his empirical Self. Every man knows himself primarily as part of a higher whole: this supra-individual synthesis is the deepest and ultimate premiss of the ethical self-consciousness.

This premiss sounds strange—and yet how did Man come, not only to live for others, but first to become conscious of his life at all in relation to others, if things were otherwise? It is indeed a fact that every man, no matter what the trend of his nature may be, sees his own proper significance, his *raison d'être*, in Humanity. Even the most exclusive and hard-hearted self-consciousness is bound up with a Non-Ego. All valuation is a setting-in-relation; the individual can become conscious

[1] This has been done in the chapters of *The Recovery of Truth* entitled 'The Ethical Problem', 'World-Conceptions', and 'Life Configurations', also in the chapter 'Moralism' of *America Set Free*, and in a final form in my *Buch vom persönlichen Leben* (published in French, divided into the two books *La Vie Intime* and *De la Souffrance à la Plénitude*). (Author's Note to the English version, 1938.)

[2] Cf. the Epilogue to my *Gefüge der Welt.*

even of his own 'absolute', 'incomparable' worth only in relation to others. The *Ego* postulates a *Tu* as correlative. But if this is so, then the assumption that the moral consciousness takes its start primarily not from the person but from higher syntheses is inescapable: for the facts are not intelligible on any other hypothesis. And it is a fact that every man's striving points beyond his own person. Even the Nihilist lives for an idea, even the Anarchist, in his own fashion, seeks to serve Mankind, even the Aesthete is for himself, at bottom, more means than end: means to life as a work of art, to the aesthetic perfecting of the existence which he posits as an objective value. Oscar Wilde was undoubtedly serious when he submitted himself to trial (which he might quite well have evaded), on the ground that tragedy must not be lacking in his otherwise perfect life, and the tragedy was bitter enough for him. Only on the aforesaid supposition does the certain fact seem intelligible, that in principle there exists no difference between a Wagner's ruthless need for self-expression, a Bismarck's stern sense of duty, and the impersonal impulse to self-sacrifice of a Japanese: the supra-individual synthesis is the common premiss of them all. The artist strives unrelentingly after his own highest perfection, because in this way alone can he fill his place among men, an end which the Japanese best attains by self-immolation, and a Bismarck by loyal devotion to duty in the service of the Cause. Indeed, so firmly closed is the circle which unites Man to Mankind that the statement may be converted. Wagner could only fulfil himself by living exclusively for himself, Bismarck on the contrary only by serving others. And if now we remember how shifting is the reciprocal relation between self-consciousness and national consciousness as disclosed in our ethnologico-historical excursus, it seems certain that this supra-individual synthesis is for primordial consciousness a reality, *not*, as it is for reflective thought, an abstract idea.

Now we are in a position to grasp the place of the 'ought' in the system of the real, to recognize that the moral world stands in no opposition to the world of Nature: the 'ought' is nothing

else but volition as part of a higher unity. Kant's maxim, 'Ask yourself whether, if the action you are contemplating had to happen by a law of that Nature of which you were yourself a part, you could regard it as possible through the agency of your own will'—this maxim, so often contested because misunderstood, points directly to our premiss; the natural fact of the sense of duty is not intelligible on any other hypothesis. But on this it seems comprehensible enough; if the primordial basis of the moral consciousness is not the person, but a supra-personal synthesis, then it is self-evident that we 'ought', then the phenomenon that Man is for himself not an end but only a means loses its astonishing character.

But if, in conclusion, we turn back to our former trains of thought, we perceive that we have not discovered anything unknown before; our way has led us back into familiar latitudes. We discerned, at the proper time, that the Self, to which the instinct of self-preservation and the longing for immortality relate, does not coincide with the person; it is a supra-individual for which we live.[1] Does this result agree with the supposition which we have at length reached?—It is true that at that time we had in mind only the successive unity of the Self, its duration in Time; now it is a question of an all-round solidarity. But the reality with which we have to do is the same. Viewing it from another side, we have come to the same conclusions: that fundamentally we are not identical with our person.

5

THE existence of a supra-personal synthesis, which forms the supreme premiss of all self-consciousness, may be demonstrated on yet another line of thought: on the ground of human valuations. Every man distinguishes, originally and directly, between Good and Evil. However doubtful it may be in theory

[1] This idea has found its final expression, from the author's point of view, in the chapters 'Death and Life Eternal' and 'The Ultimate Meaning of Freedom' of *The Recovery of Truth*. (Author's Note to the English version, 1938.)

what is to be pronounced good and what bad, still our fundamental judgements of value spring, not from convention, but from primordial instinct. It is true the Red Indian considers it moral to scalp his enemy, and the nun trembles in fear of everlasting torment in hell if she has eaten meat on a Friday; in the domain of particulars and externals no universal law prevails. Nevertheless, every man who does not purposely deceive himself feels the difference between what is great and petty, noble and vulgar, sublime and base. Every one—no matter what the complexion of his personal principles—is directly conscious that the sage who is the embodiment of a spiritual existence is more than the hedonist, the man of wide ideas more than the narrow-minded egoist. Even the degenerate, the criminal, has a suspicion of this; the child feels it with marvellous, often uncanny, certainty. This impression is wholly immediate, neither to be accounted for by reflection, nor to be explained away on grounds of theory; the feeling of value, in the general form specified, is a primary phenomenon of consciousness. He who, in theory, has got ever so far beyond Good and Evil, still in his innermost heart distinguishes between positive and negative values. Even the born criminal is dimly conscious of the metaphysical significance of murder. Even the most brutal man usually commits a crime only when no one whom he loves sees or knows of it.

These are facts. Efforts have been made to explain them in the most diverse ways, but without any final success. When the Hindus pronounce sin an error, and assert that one who knows can will nothing wrong, that is at bottom correct, but is only a description, not an explanation. Just as little are our primary judgements of value to be comprehended from the standpoint of an ideal, a possible world-goal, for this means a reduction of the known to the unknown: the moral order of the world is a problematical idea. And by the hypothesis of a 'kingdom of ends' in contrast to Nature absolutely nothing is gained. Nor does the utility of the good—understood in the widest sense of the term—which is beyond question, supply the key to the

problem. Because it is better for the race that the strong should triumph over the weak, the noble over the mean, that is no reason why the individual's primary feeling of value should assert the same. On the contrary, it is peculiar and strange in the highest degree that Man should recognize objective values which exist quite independently of the character of his own person. Each man is his own nearest neighbour, and therefore might be expected to adapt his value-judgements to his own nature; the coward should attribute positive value to cowardice, and the wicked man to wickedness. Instead of this the man reverences what points beyond himself, what perhaps excludes or negates his own being. Even the criminal looks up to the saint, whether he owns it to himself or not. Indeed, each man knows accurately enough in his inmost heart what he is worth objectively, whether others over- or under-rate him, and whatever mask he chooses to wear before himself or others. The rogue knows that he is one, even though he proves the contrary to himself every hour, and though men may look up to him as a saint. So many a man leads a blameless life only because he is conscious of his fundamental wickedness, and would fain give the lie to this consciousness. He who will know men 'by their fruits' must always bear in mind the possibility of the reaction against influence. In any case we generally know ourselves better than we admit to ourselves. He who is sincerely humble will have his reasons for it, he who is essentially proud and sure of himself (not who only makes a parade of pride) is mostly objectively justified. In the vain self-glorification of famous men lies hidden, at bottom, more under-valuation and contempt for others than over-valuation of the man's own person.

How is it conceivable that every man instinctively (not from reflection) recognizes objective values? How is this fact to be understood? Emphatically not on the supposition of the single individual as the last resort of consciousness. It is and remains a monstrous paradox that Man can recognize as a value what arraigns, excludes, or negates his own life: but the fact is there.

Then the premiss must be false: the starting-point of the ethical man is *not* his own person: it is a supra-personal synthesis. But if the self-consciousness of the individual proceeds primarily from this latter, then—but only then—it becomes intelligible how the individual's fundamental value-judgements coincide with what is most serviceable for the community, how it is possible that the man can deny himself in favour of what is other and higher.

6

ALL roads seem to lead alike to the astonishing results of the last chapter; but now these latter have assumed a much more concrete form. To feel directly that the individual impulse to self-preservation is not directed to the person, is indeed scarcely possible. On the other hand, every man's consciousness testifies that his striving points beyond himself, that he recognizes supra-personal syntheses. And now nothing is left to us but to accept the conclusion we had previously drawn: if the individual represented the ultimate fact in the sight of Nature, then it would be incomprehensible in any natural way how Man in his volitions and valuations can start from supra-individual syntheses; we should have to take refuge in another extra- or supernatural sphere, and the hypothesis of a world beyond reality is of no use to knowledge. If, on the other hand, we postulate in Nature a synthesis above the individual, then the facts can be comprehended in an all-inclusive unity. A phenomenon accessible to the senses this synthesis is not: perception bears witness only to individuals. There must be a wider category of reality. Our ideas and general concepts such as mankind, race, community, must correspond to *realities* in the sight of Nature, and thus would not be mere abstractions, mere human schemata of thought, even though Man abstracts them by thought from experience.

In the case of Life this real character of what is apparently merely abstract can be directly demonstrated. The unity of Life is nothing empirical, for the senses know only of sharply

distinguished forms. Nevertheless the supra-sensible synthesis is valid in the most objective sense of the term. Every living being is, as an actual fact, conditioned by all the others; if one member of the chain were to fail, the whole synthesis would collapse. Each organism is the product of the generations from which it derives, and the ground of being for those which succeed it. But among the coexistent forms of Life again such an all-round correlation prevails, that no single one of them can be left out, without damage to the community. The type, the species, is an idea: and yet it is the idea which goes on being, identical with itself, not its temporary incarnation, the individual. The Self, too, is an idea for thought; and yet—what endures in us is just this ideal entity, not the concrete which vanishes from moment to moment. The solidarity of organisms in space is nothing material, it is impalpable—and yet it exists. The ultimate realities which we encounter in the study of Life—no matter whether we are investigating Life as a whole, or the most specialized phenomenal forms of it—are everywhere super-sensible unities.

The objective solidarity of Life is a fact. It is a fact that the ultimate presupposition of every single existence is not this existence itself, as short-sighted empiricists imagine, but the totality of Life. It is quite impossible to abstract from the highest, seemingly 'only' ideal syntheses, if the concrete special case is to be exhaustively comprehended. What else have we been doing in the course of this chapter, but demonstrating this objective synthesis in the *subjective* sphere also? We began by establishing facts. We investigated the life of the species Man, with the same dispassionate objectivity with which the zoologist studies the life of the beehive. And from this it became plain that men in actual fact, from whatever point of view they are regarded, are interdependent; in Mankind too, each particular organism is conditioned by higher syntheses, and is intelligible only from the standpoint of these latter. And this is true independently of all psychology; an observer for whom Man's mind was as inaccessible as the bee's is to us

would arrive at the same results. But then we turned to the subjective aspect of the same relation. We might, indeed, on the basis of the rule derived from experience that phenomena of consciousness are everywhere the reflection of real relations, have assumed *a priori* that the objective solidarity of Life finds its echo in consciousness, and that conversely the facts of consciousness point back to realities. But *a priori* assumptions do not suffice: their *raison d'être* must be found and they must be tested by experience. To this testing we devoted our care, and in so doing we found that Man feels primarily as member of a higher synthesis. We were led to this conclusion, in the first place, by the comparative psychology of individuals and peoples, but afterwards by the critique of the moral consciousness. It was the latter which yielded us the decisive arguments; for Ethics have to do with our inmost being, the moral consciousness brings to expression the deepest nature of Man. Analysis of it led us, under the compelling force of necessity, to the acceptance of a really existent supra-individual synthesis. It then appeared that all ethical impulses proceed from supra-personal syntheses. Unless such a synthesis lay directly at the root of self-consciousness, it would be perfectly unintelligible how it could ever occur to the individual to sacrifice his person for an idea. The fact was proved that Man posits values, the validity of which he recognizes, independently of the character of his own personality; and this would be incomprehensible, unless he started unconsciously from a supra-individual premiss. Further it was shown to be an undeniable fact that every man is primarily conscious of a duty in some shape or other; and the concept of duty presupposes something which is more than the individual. Consequently the personal Self cannot be the ultimate premiss of the moral consciousness: a more comprehensive synthesis must lie at the basis of it, as the deepest of all; of its existence for consciousness there is no possible doubt. But this subjectively certain synthesis is precisely the one whose existence objective inquiry demonstrates with compelling force. Being and consciousness correspond to each other. If now we survey

both aspects at once, we arrive at the following conclusion: the moral world mirrors Nature instead of being opposed to her; it is her subjective counterpart.[1] The spiritual bonds which hold men together—love, duty, feeling of value—are the expression of natural relations. The unity of Mankind, however certain it may appear, is not to be directly apprehended from without; for the thinking mind it is an idea, an abstract relation. To immediate feeling, however, to the primordial moral consciousness, it reveals itself as living reality. Every sincere man knows that the ground of his soul lies deeper than anything personal. The synthesis of Nature finds its echo in consciousness.

7

LET us now turn back again to the shifting relation between the individual and the community. We were met by the peculiar fact that the nature of the self-consciousness may be a very different one; from unconsciousness of a personal Self, up to the highest emphasis upon the latter, we encountered all sorts of stages. The impersonal member of the herd knows nothing either of autonomous volition or of autonomous duty, he feels his ethical centre outside him in the group. The politically mature man wills independently what the immature one executes at the bidding of others, his will is the mirror of duty; lastly, the extreme individualist recognizes only himself, his sovereign personality. He acknowledges no duties except towards himself.

Now autonomy and heteronomy, like egoism and altruism, denote oppositions which exist only on the surface; at bottom there are no such. Also the external laws, which I obey, can only

[1] This is, of course, a provisional formulation; the finally correct one, from my point of view, is to be found in the chapters 'Moralism' of *America Set Free* and 'The Ethical Problem' of *The Recovery of Truth*. I also repeat here that I use the concept of 'Nature' in this book in a much wider sense than I have done later, just as I here discriminate less clearly between 'Ego' and 'Self'. However, this is only a question of different points of view, of further differentiation, and moreover of nomenclature: it does not affect the essential truth of the argument. (Author's Note to the English version, 1938.)

attain validity through the agency of my own will, the law of my own inner life; heteronomy, too, is bound up with the self-determination of the personality. Everything that seems to relate to others, relates in the last resort to myself. In this the moralists who recognize only Man's duties towards himself are in the right. Their thesis does not contradict the classical morality, it only gives it a deepened content. Everything which we do to others we do at the same time to ourselves. The extreme altruist no more acts contrary to his Self than the convinced individualist; if he thinks otherwise, he is the victim of self-deception. We had discovered previously that between a Wagner's ruthless need for self-expression, a Bismarck's stern sense of duty, and the impersonal selflessness of a Japanese no essential difference exists. This means that, in principle, it is the same whether a man recognizes only duties towards himself, or only duties towards others; the difference has to do with the phenomenal form, not with the essence. What then is the critical meaning of the relation?—If one identical essence lies at the basis of all differences in the presuppositions of the moral consciousness, then the real state of the case must be as follows: the difference has its foundation in the subject, not in the object, so that the quality of the Self is a different one, according to whether it asserts or denies itself, whether it is emphasized or vanishes into thin air, but the Self itself will everywhere have the same meaning.

Let us compare the opposite extremes: the Ego-consciousness in the strict sense of the word is lacking: the Self-consciousness reigns supreme. In what does the difference consist? First, the man *is* in either case, whether he is conscious of an independent Self or not; the bystander can see no difference so far as being goes between a solipsist and a Kapila who would proclaim the non-existence of his person. Further, a man's centre of being *cannot* really lie outside him: that is a sheer impossibility. However much a man may feel that this centre lies in Mankind, in the group, or in a beloved being, in every case it is *his* Subject which determines his life. Consequently

the difference, which as such is a fact, must be conditioned by the manner in which the Self-consciousness, which is everywhere the same in essence, is centred and emphasized..

We recognized that the deepest ground out of which the ethical self-consciousness grows is not the person, but a supra-individual synthesis: or put it otherwise: it is a relation of the individual to the Whole. However strange this conception may sound, it is forced upon us. If we admit the validity of it, we understand without difficulty how it is possible that personal self-feeling may, under certain circumstances, become a downright impersonal one. According to the point in the aforesaid relation on which the accent or the centre of consciousness falls, the nature of the self-feeling will be different. In the great and fully developed personality, the supra-personal synthesis is condensed into the person; in the case of a member of the herd all emphasis on it is lacking or falls outside it; the resulting picture must in each case be a different one. At first sight the assumption seems a paradox. On the other hand, if we admit it, the paradox of the national-soul, the group-feeling, the family- or race-feeling, which is more vivid than the self-feeling, vanishes—that is the paradox of the actual *facts*, which as such are irrefutable. The said relations then seem no more remarkable than the Ego-consciousness, at which no one is amazed. And since our concepts exist only for the purpose of making the facts intelligible, and have no influence upon their existence and nature, nothing is left for us but to acquiesce in what is strange. One identical synthesis lies at the basis of all kinds of consciousness, but in each case it seems differently centred, differently stressed. If the emphasis is laid on the individual, we get personality, moral autonomy, sense of responsibility; if it is laid on the other side of the synthesis (the community)—we have impersonality, herd-instinct, moral heteronomy, primary group-feeling, preponderance of altruistic tendencies. But in principle we are everywhere dealing with the same thing. Everywhere the Self is the premiss; only in each case it appears in a different setting. And though all the meaning of our ethical striving

depends just on this setting—first on the fact that we give a form to what is indefinite, and then on what kind of form it is—Nature at this point knows nothing but identity. The theory of man's soul as an absolute monad, then, contradicts all the facts; everywhere the individual soul forms part of a higher synthesis. Even if only *one* man inhabited this globe, he would feel himself a member of a Whole. He would see before him tasks which pointed beyond his own person; he would recognize objective values, be conscious of a duty—even if it were only the duty of preserving the dignity of the last man.

8

THE isolated Ego with no intermediaries! The person as the ultimate fact of consciousness! How narrow most men's outlook must be, if the unnatural character of such premisses does not at once strike them!—As embryo the child is not separate from the mother; her life-force pulses in its body. For years after birth the child's feeling of dependence is so strong that an independent Self-consciousness cannot form at all. But the moment when the man for the first time becomes clearly conscious of possessing an Ego almost always marks a crisis; on many it has left an ineffaceable impression. I take as an example the confession of Jean Paul Friedrich Richter: 'I shall never forget the vision, told hitherto to no one, in which I was present at the birth of my self-consciousness, the time and place of which I can specify. One morning, as a very young child, I was standing in the doorway of the house, and looking towards the wood-pile on the left, when suddenly the inward vision: I am an Ego, came over me like a flash of lightning from heaven, and has remained with me clearly ever since—my Ego had beheld itself once for all. Illusions of memory are here hardly conceivable, since accounts from other people could add nothing to an event which took place only in the Holy of Holies destined for it in Man, and the novelty of it alone gave permanence to the everyday details which surrounded it.' It must indeed be a

memorable moment, when the psychic complex for the first time parts asunder, when the problem of the independence of his soul for the first time presents itself to the man. Such an event is not less important than the birth of his body; whoever reflects upon it can scarcely grasp it. But most men never even have a suspicion that it takes place. So they start blindly from the assumption that Man is psychically a monad from the very first. This supposition is indeed more plausible than the right one; but he who is striving after truth must credit even what is most astounding, until it is disproved. And how amazing the fact of physical birth already is. What was just now fused in one cleaves asunder into a duality never to be bridged again; out of an indivisible unity there emerge two isolated and solitary human beings.—To my mind, this relation, which can be verified any day, is in itself enough to open any man's eyes to the fact that, from the standpoint of Nature, the exclusive character of the individual is not the primary, the fundamental phenomenon. The solidarity of men with each other, which is so often flatly denied, is in reality the primordial fact. The child feels it to be so till the moment of the birth of his Ego.

This Ego, once safely born, grows and conforms itself more and more to the world, first of all contrasting itself with the parents, from whom quite recently it was still unsevered. The harmonious world-image in the child's mind becomes distorted as it grows up. The youth feels himself hard pressed on every side, misunderstood at every turn, and in the impotent struggle his Ego hardens into its shape. Then the time draws on when the opposition disappears again, the time of the first great love. In this the two feel themselves one, in this even the most uncompromising individualist seeks to be merged in another. By degrees the Ego withdraws into itself again, the range of its being depends upon the width of its personality. Only in superior persons does it lastingly embrace wider syntheses. The sage thinks cosmically, lives primarily in the universal; the narrow-minded man feels himself in contrast to everything else. Yet the limitation of self-consciousness to the person is never a necessity.

Think of the soul of Woman. She feels primarily her organic connexion with others, and can hardly withdraw into herself in the sense the man does. Woman lives in those she loves, in their wishes, joys, and sorrows. If she distinguishes between herself and others, she does so by abstraction. The mother feels herself no less one with her children after their birth than before; and, in another direction, the solidarity of the family is, for the woman, a matter of immediate experience. She has indeed difficulty in grasping relations which are too wide—such as the Fatherland and Mankind—she does not feel them. Far fewer people exist for the woman than for the man. But whoever comes under her notice at all, does so in a far more vivid sense than he does for even the most warm-hearted of men; he belongs, in the strictest sense, to her Ego. Otto Weininger has drawn from these facts the conclusion that Woman is lacking in soul: but it was his fate in everything to end in an absurdity. Woman experiences the organic connexion of all life more vividly than Man; she is nearer to Nature than he is, and for Nature the supra-individual syntheses are the primary, the fundamental phenomenon. Instead of reproaching Woman with want of soul, we ought rather to look up to her: she spontaneously feels these great syntheses, whose existence only dawns with difficulty on the refractory mind of Man. And yet the man's self-consciousness is based on the same supra-personal relation; the man, too, is no isolated exclusive monad, however he may like to delude himself on the point.

Does our pride, does even our intellect, kick against admitting this truth? Are we to reject it because it seems to us obscure?—But concepts have to adapt themselves to facts, not vice versa; it is no argument against the world that we do not understand it. The vital reaction which we term thought is bound up exclusively with the conscious, independent, final stage of man's life; it develops after birth, generally so late that its earliest stages remain unknown and foreign to the understanding. Therefore it is easy to understand that its premisses are adapted only to the later stages. We think it a matter of course to see

in Man only an exclusive monad—but why? Only because our capacity for thought does not attain maturity till the stage when this view of things seems justified by the facts. If the embryo could think, if intelligence were associated with the germ right back to its lowest form, our psychology would not be a monadology. In that case the solidarity of the vital unities would be our self-evident premiss, and the problem which disquieted us would rather be how this solidarity could ever be torn asunder at all.[1]

9

ALL conceivable lines of observation and thought lead to the result that the supreme premiss of the ethical man, whatever he may pretend, is not the person but something higher; the Family, the Nation, Mankind. The moral consciousness reflects the natural synthesis; the figments of the intellect, which strives to isolate the man, are reduced to an absurdity by the living consciousness. Every man feels himself primarily as member of the community; for this he lives, whether he knows it or not. For this reason alone we care for fame, for the remembrance of the generations to come. What could fame matter to us, if we were thinking only of our own person? This passes away at death; and no religion holds out any promise that fame reaches on into the Hereafter. Ambition is the exact opposite of egoism: it strives after the continuance of the man's influence beyond the confines of his pilgrimage on Earth, his influence in the service of Mankind. He who desires fame desires what is greater than his own self; he wills himself as means, not as end; he wills that his entelechy should live on beyond all temporal bounds. He clings indeed to his name, but does not the father, who gladly gives up his life for the good of his child, do so too? And as the child carries on his life, but not his person, so the

[1] The ideas of the last two paragraphs have found their final expression in the theory of Man being in all respects not a monad, but a relation between Self and Not-self (in the widest sense), in my books *The Art of Life* and *Das Buch vom persönlichen Leben, Problems of Personal Life* (Cape), and *De la Souffrance à la Plénitude* (Stock, Paris, 1937).

Napoleon who is alive to-day is not identical with the dead Emperor of the French. He is a mythical figure, in many respects greater, in many less, than the historic individual of the same name, but at all events different. And every man who thirsts for fame knows that he will be changed after death. He does not even care to live on unchangeable. He desires only that his influence may continue, with the greatest possible strength.

What we have said is true of the future. Is it not also justified in respect of the past? Whence comes pride of ancestry? Whence the longing to possess a history on the farther side of birth? Whence the value that every man of normal sensibility sees in his membership of a connexion reaching far back, if he does not desire to be anything more than his own restricted person? At first sight it does not seem to matter what *was* earlier, or what *will be* later, if only one exists oneself. Yet no one thinks so unless he is maimed in heart and soul. The aristocrat is proud of the family characteristics, which for centuries have distinguished the bearers of his name; if he himself were his own ultimate premiss, he might very well be ashamed of being so far from 'unique'. Great nations, like great men, have always attached a great, often an excessive, importance to birth and descent; for the Greek, for instance, nothing surpassed a noble lineage. Even those among our great minds who could not themselves look back to any tradition have always been convinced adherents of the aristocratic principle. Every powerful nature seeks to extend its boundaries—forwards by means of fame after death, backwards by the conscious carrying on of what has been handed down. Only petty souls feel themselves lessened by the consciousness of belonging to a higher synthesis; the superior man feels it as an intensification of his personal worth.

From the moment when they see their children provided for and happy, the grey-haired parents are ready to die. When he has accomplished his life-work the genius closes his eyes in peace. Goethe looked upon the time that he lived after the completion of *Faust* as an unmerited gift, which he accepted in

thankful humility. Epaminondas was content to give up the ghost when once he was assured of the triumph of his army. When a man of far-reaching projects dies before he has been able to carry out his plans, he yet rejoices in the day when the goal of his labours will be attained. He resigns himself contentedly, if a little sadly, to the thought that he was born too soon, if only he possesses the certainty that others will one day accomplish what he hoped to do. What is supra-individual gives the ground-tone to all endeavour; if the work is done, the individual retires. Every man—and more consciously in proportion as he is greater—sees in his own life only a means to higher ends. He looks upon his person as an office which Mankind has entrusted to him.

This state of things is remarkable in the extreme, but it cannot be disputed. Everywhere we encounter supra-sensible syntheses possessed of the highest reality, everywhere the idea seems victorious over the phenomenon. The moral consciousness of the individual points primarily beyond his own person, all essential impulses do the same. Whoever loves already bursts his bonds; whoever delights in works of art, absorbs into himself the life of others. And he who strives after perfection, who longs for the intensification of his personality, shows by so doing that he is cramped by his empirical limitations. But now it becomes plain how ruinous our modern worship of the person is, especially in the intemperate form which Socialism gives to it: as commonly understood it leads to the apotheosis of the crassest empiricism. Whereas other ages attributed the highest reality to ideal syntheses—to human greatness, to heroism, to the elevation of the people, to Mankind, to the religious idea—the man of to-day revels in the peculiarity of the individual; in what is perishable and transient *par excellence*! He is in love with his limitations, instead of feeling them as fetters. This ethical empiricism is much more disquieting than the theoretical one of our Nature-philosophers. The latter only does harm to science, the former sins against life. Goethe, to whom these people most love to appeal, would certainly not

have owned them as his disciples. Nor would Nietzsche. Is it likely that Nietzsche, the inveterate enemy of every kind of anarchy, the representative of the standpoint that man is something which must be surmounted and overcome, would have preached the infinite value of *every* person? On the contrary, he recognized the right to existence of the ideal alone, though a concrete ideal. But Goethe understood by personality the creative force in Man, his ever operative entelechy. He would certainly have agreed with the dictum of Walter Calés: 'Personality is the very opposite of individuality.' For personality is a supra-empirical force, an energy which repudiates all limitations. Goethe's personality is still an influence to-day, more alive than ever, incarnate for ever in the world-process; whereas the individual who was the vehicle of the genius perished long ago. 'Individual' is something essentially limited and transitory, feeble and inadequate, indifferent and irrelevant. He who reverences the personality in the genuine sense, reverences the supra-individual, reverences the idea, reverences the manhood. Beethoven once wrote about some relatives, who gave him little satisfaction, the noble words: 'Rest assured that, even in their case, Humanity still remains sacred to me.' Even in the genius it is the manhood which hallows the individual. This sublimity of the immeasurable, of the imperishable, which surrounds the creative power—that we ought to reverence; it is the highest which our life contains. But he who trembles in awe before the temporal manikin is worshipping the dust.

10

FROM time immemorial it has struck the mass of men how little importance the great man attaches to his personal existence. It is an axiom of experience that the more valuable a man's life actually is, the less store he sets by it, the more readily he hazards it. Now we comprehend the deepest reason of this phenomenon: the person is really no ultimate fact, not merely from the standpoint of Nature, but also from that of the inmost

self-consciousness. No one—not even the solipsist—feels himself an isolated absolute, without intermediaries; he feels himself an atom or an organ of society, or in contrast to it. And he who has no direct relation to men yet has one to humanity. The very man whose personality is so self-centred that he can recognize no duties except towards himself is just the one who stands in the most direct relation to Mankind. All striving points beyond the person. The ethical consciousness is the negation of this latter, self-consciousness is fundamentally bound up with what is higher. The more deeply we penetrate into ourselves, the more we transcend our limitations. Instead of coming to a stop at the personal atom as the final quotient of analysis, we discover in the Self a universal, a supra-personal, which spurns all earthly boundaries.

What is this supra-personal which forms the ground of the person, and to which all individual life relates? It is hard to determine, the outlines of it are wavering, the meaning obscure, and hardly to be grasped in concepts. Now it manifests itself as an impersonal Cause, now as the family, now as the unity of the nation. In the highest case it coincides with Mankind, in the very highest with the connected Whole of Life. Objectively, all life forms a mediated unity with no lacunae, the mirror of which is the moral consciousness. But this unity remains an idea for thought, as such undeducible, and what cannot be deduced cannot be explained. At this point the intellect is brought up short against its own limitations, and has to be resigned to give up any deeper insight. The facts postulate the idea. But if we seek to pass beyond this latter, we are turned back sharply to the facts. And these we are compelled to admit. We have recognized, with all the clearness attainable in these highest regions, that the primordial ground of the person is a supra-personal; we have tested this knowledge in all directions, and everywhere found it conclusive. And yet in itself it remains for us an enigma. What Mankind is, I know not; what Life is, I know no more. Each time the equation of the world is solved, the result is a mystery.

But how does the problem of Immortality appear, in the light of our most recent knowledge?—If I feel that I am eternal, that means I feel that I am more than my person. It is an old experience that happy parents show little longing for personal continuance; they see themselves living on in their children, and their own end does not trouble them. In the same way the genius, the hero whose deeds are undying, takes little interest in what may happen to his person after death; the most intimate, the noblest part of him, goes on working on Earth, the rest he gladly lays aside. So the greatest figures of the Christian era, even when they were wholehearted believers, were wont to trouble very little about the salvation of their souls. Only he who possesses nothing better lives for his own person; only he who is leaving nothing living behind him cares seriously about the fate of that. The great man, in all ages, has known that his finite existence is only a point in an endless series, and that the true reason and true meaning of it lies in this latter.

For many people this insight was incarnated in flesh and blood. The curse of antiquity was: 'Write ye this man childless', the bachelor was regarded as a criminal, and aversion to marriage as a perverse kind of suicide. Nothing was farther removed from vigorous nations than the theory of our decadents—The noble thing to do is to die out. For among such peoples the Man feels himself a member of his race, the heir of the past, the guardian of the future; an end in himself he never is. And how should a man, who does not see the meaning of his existence in his own person, ever take death seriously in a metaphysical sense? 'Death when it reaches the domain of such a man', says the Mahâbhâratam, 'becomes a thing of nought, even as the man becomes a thing of nought when he reaches the realm of death.' Death affects only the individual, not Life, and he who transcends the person vanquishes Death. For even if the person is finite, 'The bounds of the soul', says Heraclitus, 'thou canst not find out, nay, even though thou treadest every road; so deep a ground hath she.'

CHAPTER VII
INDIVIDUAL AND LIFE

I

IT is a state of things as strange as it is undeniable that the individual organism cannot be comprehended from itself alone, but only from Life as a whole. Only the single living being is the object of observation; nevertheless, its empirical behaviour remains unintelligible, unless it is viewed from the angle of higher syntheses. First of all from that of the species; even those who deny that this idea has any real content are compelled perpetually to recur to it. The whole argument of Weissmann's famous treatise on the duration of Life rests on this as its supreme premiss; and in truth the meaning of death cannot be understood from the individual alone, while, on the supposition of the species as the highest reality, it becomes directly plain from the facts. The problem of propagation points beyond the individual; the same is true of heredity, of variation, of evolution, and of differentiation. Indeed, at bottom, every biological phenomenon reveals the same position. Since all organisms refer more or less directly to each other, and only exist in relation to each other—since accordingly the unity of Life exists in the most concrete sense—it is obviously not possible to understand any one of them in isolation. All delimitation mangles the actual facts of existence.

Now the results we arrived at in our study of the moral consciousness are wholly of the same nature: in the subjective sphere as well, the individual cannot be comprehended from the individual alone. Everywhere there are higher syntheses, apparently existing only in the sphere of concepts, and not till these are assumed does the concrete case become intelligible. This is true of the sense of duty, of all valuation; it is true of almost every ideal, no matter how personal its conditions. This agreement of the results of self-analysis with the data of objective experience is significant in the highest degree: the personal consciousness seems everywhere to be the mirror of what meets us outside ourselves as ultimate impersonal reality.

This truth may be recognized as established in principle; but we have not yet grasped its deepest content. Now, when we know that all Life can be comprehended only from its totality, that the moral consciousness too gives expression to the same state of facts, and that the individual, from whatever point of view it is regarded, is never ultimate:—now, it behoves us to widen our frame of reference, and to raise the problem of Man and Mankind to the higher power of the Individual and Life: not till we have done this can we comprehend the former exhaustively.

2

WHAT is the significance of the individual within the totality of organic events? The answer to this question presupposes an accurate determination of the concept of individuality: and if we undertake to find one, it very soon becomes plain that this, in any unambiguous sense, is impossible. If we hold fast everywhere to this concept, it has to be specially defined for each type of organization: and in each case the definition includes a different content.[1]

In fact: if individual and vital unity are to be taken as interchangeable concepts, then there must be individualities of different orders. An infusorium, which can divide *ad infinitum*, cannot be compared with a human personality. No more can this latter be set in any relation that would be true to the facts for the individuality of a worm, which when its head is cut off reproduces it without more ado, or to that of the star-fish, each of whose single arms restores the entire animal forthwith by budding. The essence of individuality, as we meet it in the

[1] One difficulty at the outset lies in the non-identity of morphological individuality with physiological: a unitary form need not be independent, what functions as a unity may appear to analysis as manifold. According as the point of view is a static or a dynamic one, the problem takes on a different form. Here already, as we see, the concepts begin to become confused. In what follows, however, I avoid this initial difficulty by understanding Individuality once for all as the *actual vital unity*, no matter how this may be constituted. This definition is certainly lacking in exactness, but it is sufficient for the purposes we have in view.

higher animals, is limitation in accordance with law, complete exclusiveness, and self-containedness. But there are colonies of creatures which strike us as having no limits (because the number of their members may be increased as convenient), which nevertheless are unconditionally to be pronounced unities, since they possess a unitary apparatus of digestion and circulation, and also propagation seems to proceed more from the colony than from the single member of it. Further, there are organisms in which the independent individuality represents only a stage, and in the course of development degenerates into an organ. Again, in other cases, what were originally organs become independent vital unities, and so on. Here no unambiguous definition is possible. Already in the year 1866 Haeckel could write: 'To the oft-repeated question about the absolute individuality of organisms, the answer can only be given, that no such thing exists.'[1]

When the absolute is unattainable Man endeavours, at least, to mark off the relative: thus the heterogeneous grades of the individualization of Life have been classified and reduced to systems. Of such there are many. Haeckel, in his day, distinguished six orders:

1. *Plastids* (Cytods and cells or 'Elementary Organisms').
2. *Organs* (Cell-stocks or Cell-fusions, simple or homoplastic organs, compound or heteroplastic organs, organ-systems, organ-apparatus).
3. *Antimerae* (Counterparts or homotype parts). 'Rays' of the Radiata, 'Halves' of the Endiplurae—bilateral symmetrical animals—&c.
4. *Metamerae* (Consecutive parts or homodynamic parts). 'Stem'-members of the Phanerogams, Segments, Rings, or Zonites of the articulates and vertebrates, &c.
5. *Persons* (Prosopae). Sprouts or buds of plants and Coelenterates and so on, Individuals in the sense proper to the higher animals.

[1] *Generelle Morphologie* (Berlin, 1866), i. 268.

6. *Corms* (Stocks or Colonies). Trees, shrubs, &c., compound plants, polyp-stocks, salpa-chains, &c.

'Each of these morphological individuals of a different order is capable of manifesting itself as an independent vital unity, and representing the physiological individual. Very many organisms remain all their lives adherent to the lowest stage of the Plastids, e.g. most of the Protistae and many Algae. The second category of the form-individual, the Organ, appears as an independent vital unity among many Protistae, Algae, and Coelenterates.[1] The vital unity remains at the third stage the Antimer-state, among many Protista and some of the lower plants and animals. The fourth order, the Metamerae, appears as a vital unity among most Molluscs, many of the lower worms, Algae, &c. The fifth category, the person, represents the physiological individual in the case of most of the higher animals, but only of a few plants. Finally the sixth order of morphological individuals, the Stock, forms the physiological individuality among most plants and coelenterates.' To-day other classifications are preferred. Edmond Perrier distinguishes plastids, merids, zöids, and demes;[2] German science for the most part contents itself with distinguishing cells, persons, and stocks. It matters little, however, what system is adopted: all conceivable classifications are inadequate, because they are arbitrary, they create sharp divisions where there are only gradual transitions. But at least they all give clear expression to the one fact that the concept of individuality includes no one unambiguous content. The individual is, as it were, the x of zoologists, which has to be defined anew for each concrete case.

Is it possible to determine the concept of individuality less ambiguously genetically? Félix le Dantec writes: 'In each species, the individual is the highest morphological unity which heredity is capable of reproducing faithfully.'[3] According to this, in colony animals it is the colony, and not the single mem-

[1] *Generelle Morphologie*, i. 266.

[2] *Les Colonies animales et la formation des organismes* (2nd ed., Paris, 1898), p. 721.

[3] *L'Unité dans l'être vivant* (Paris, 1902), p. 140.

ber of it, which is the individual, since in course of time, and under favourable conditions, a colony springs up out of every germ; in the protozoa the single cell is the individual, among men the man, &c. But finally the very correctness of this definition proves that the concept in question, so far as it is intelligible, cannot be transferred to the totality of organisms. A concept which can be adapted to everything is in itself perfectly devoid of content. It would be almost more to the purpose to set up the colony as the most general vital unity: for all animals, with the exception of the unicellular ones, are, as a matter of fact, colonies, and the differences in functional centralization (which are the basis of the concept of individuality) seem so indefinite and wavering, in comparison with this one feature running through all, that they may easily be pronounced non-essential. This is Edmond Perrier's view. But this, too, is not satisfactory in all respects. We cannot abstract from such an important class as the unicellular organisms, and if we regard Man as a colony, that is indeed quite possible and correct as well, but it does not get us any more forward: among the higher animals the unconditional unity of the organism is the dominant trait.—What are we to deduce from all these inadequate results?—If, on the basis of knowledge of the protista, no concept can be formed which would fit Man, and if conversely the ordinary concept of individuality as abstracted from Man fails when applied to other types of Life—then obviously the defect lies in our concepts, not in the facts. If all animals are 'really' colonies, as Perrier insists, that is not to be ascribed to the defects of that eminent inquirer's observation, but to the language and terminology which willy-nilly he was bound to make use of. The concept of individuality is of purely human origin; and every attempt to transfer what is specifically human to the totality of Life is bound perforce to miscarry. Certainly all organisms represent vital unities; but their unity is often so entirely different from ours (which everywhere unconsciously forms our starting-point) that our capacity for expression, and therewith our comprehension, fails altogether.

3

ZOOLOGY has long been aware of these difficulties and long ago gave up striving after the impossible. It states the fact that each form of Life has to be comprehended on different suppositions, suits its concepts to the facts, and as to the rest goes its own way. Now what interests us is precisely what Zoology sets aside; it is just its negative results which for us are of positive value. Experience teaches us that individuality, in the human sense, is not a universal and necessary characteristic of Life; in the overwhelming majority of organisms nothing comparable to this phenomenon is to be found. What position, then, really attaches to the individual in the whole of Life, if individuality is a specific phenomenon, and does not appertain to the essence of it?

To penetrate to the depths of this problem, let us, to begin with, assume that every vital unity possesses the value of a human personality.—Are we also, once for all, to attribute human consciousness to it? With this latter hypothesis we should evidently not get far: for a being whose functions are not centralized cannot possess consciousness in our sense of the word. To ascribe one to each several plastid, on the other hand, is a thing to hesitate about, because it demonstrably perishes in any higher synthesis: Man's self-consciousness is not the sum of the feelings of the parts, but a supreme synthesis over and above them. Let us, then, abstract from consciousness, and confine ourselves exclusively to the objective meaning of individuality, seeing in each, as in Man's, provisionally an end-in-itself. Let us begin with the lowest organisms.—Here a spectacle we did not anticipate unrolls itself before us: the individual appears exclusively as a means, not an end in any respect. First of all the 'immortal' protozoa: here certainly the process of Life goes on without any dead bodies, the plastids divide endlessly, without any of them ever dying a natural death. But at each fresh division the original living being perishes, and Eduard von Hartmann is perfectly right when he compares the

fission of the Protozoon with the death of the Metazoon.[1] Propagation and Death are here one and the same phenomenon. From the point of view of the infinite worth of the protiston-soul this process appears much more destructive even than dying proper—it operates as degradation: for hopes, at least, may accompany a dead man into the Beyond, whereas in fission the living being demonstrably remains here on Earth, and only its personality is lost. The immortality of unicellular organisms constitutes, perhaps, the bitterest satire upon individuality as an end-in-itself that could have been devised.

Now let us turn to the multicellular organisms. In all animals whose functions are not centralized—up to and including worms—vital unity is something relative and transitory. Every animal issues from a cell; this represents the first vital unity in Time. Yet this primordial individuality, when it does not altogether collapse, is very soon transformed into a dependent organ; it becomes part of a higher unity. A single polyp, for instance, issuing in its turn from a germ, represents at first an independent vital unity. Yet its existence is a merely transitory one: by proliferation a colony comes into being, and functions which were originally independent and exclusive become collective; and when the colony has reached its highest degree of stability, the independence of its constituent members is entirely lost. This is true even of homogeneous colonies; in differentiated ones it is true in a far higher degree. Polyps are usually divided into those which nourish and those which beget: there are some which only assimilate, others which can only generate (not digest at all). In spite of this, it would be untrue to say that each polyp is to be regarded as a dependent organ of a higher unity, for the colony is not, strictly speaking, a unity; it is, to say the least of it, not individualized. Or let us observe the Siphonophora, those most amazing of all living creatures: here differentiation has been carried as far as it conceivably can be without centralization. There are a series of well-defined kinds of polyps clearly distinguished from each

[1] *Das Problem des Lebens*, 1906, pp. 295 ff.

other, which reproduce, grasp, swim, catch, or feed, and all co-operate in the most selfless fashion for the common weal. Yet these polyps are not genuine organs, but rather independent beings which have united. The majority of them, if detached from the whole, and placed in favourable conditions, are capable of going on living independently, and by degrees reproducing the whole colony. A Hydra may be cut into ever so many pieces: out of each of them, when external circumstances permit, there grows a fresh unmutilated animal; conversely, two Hydras may be jammed together, and then, far from devouring each other, they will amalgamate into a new and more corpulent organism. Among the Siphonophora the equivalence of the parts does not, indeed, go so far—swimming-bladders and tentacles are not capable of living on their own accord. But yet, theoretically speaking, each organ is an organism in itself, without any necessary connexion with the whole. If at this point we try to establish an ultimate unit of Life (not one arising from abstraction), we stand at a loss before the question: Is the Siphonophoron a person, a colony, or a state? Are the parts of it organs or individuals? Each of these views is defensible. Individuals may become organs, or organs individuals; there are no hard-and-fast lines of division. If we assign to the polyp the value of a person, its fate does not seem conspicuously more worth having than that of the plastid: when it does not categorically renounce growth and reproduction, it cannot maintain itself as an individual; if it grows at all, it properly renounces its Self. Are we to see the person in the colony? But a person whose limitations are accidental, which 'might just as well be otherwise', contradicts the strict idea of itself. Certainly it might be a person in the eye of the law, like a limited liability company, or a state; and a state is not an individual. In the realm of the coelenterates there is not room for the human concept of individuality: in it every unity is transitory, the one and only thing permanent is the type. An individualistic world-view is unthinkable from the standpoint of the corals.

Since an exhaustive survey of all the forms of Life is not to our

purpose, I will turn at once to the linear animals. These operate unconditionally as unities, however equivalent, in principle, the segments may be. In a worm, or a crustacean, head and tail-end are distinguishable, and each individual part is not, as in most of the lower animals, in a position to reproduce the whole. Nevertheless, many a worm propagates itself by growing beyond the normal number of its segments, and then sloughing off the surplus, and leaving it to go on living independently. An annelid, deprived of its tail, soon sprouts a new one, and if it is beheaded, this loss, too, can be made good. Certainly the converse process is not possible in the full-grown animal—the head is not capable of generating a fresh worm out of itself. But this does not prevent the head-segment from being the starting-point of growth in Embryogeny; it produces the rest out of itself by budding. And in the same way the queerly unsymmetrical nauplius-larva of the crustaceans corresponds morphologically to the head of the later and final form. Let us keep firm hold of this case: in it the original individual becomes, in course of development, an organ. It is, at bottom, the same process we have already encountered among the coelenterates. Here, indeed, the process is not reversible as in the former case—not every segment can become an individual; only definite parts of the organism are vehicles of the whole capacity for hereditary self-formation. Still, we are dealing in essentials with the same state of things.[1]

[1] This is really so: the abrupt lines of division, which since Weissmann people have been pleased to draw between body and germ-plasm, do not correspond to the facts, but only to inaccurate thinking. What is complete cannot develop further; the plasticity in growth and propagation of living substance has everywhere limits. Where differentiation, so far as intensity goes, remains at a minimum, development in Time can apparently go on to an unlimited extent; thus the infusorium divides indefinitely because it does not reach any more advanced stage of differentiation. The human cell, too, may be said to be virtually capable of almost unlimited division, since from one ovum there proceed upwards of sixty trillions of plastids. Only in this instance we no longer get like but unlike from like; the daughter cells, except a few, become differentiated; and the differentiation is always in a perfectly definite ratio to the duration. To sum up: Life can endure only where it is capable of reacting teleologically to change of external conditions. And this means, only so far as it is itself capable of change. But this plasticity decreases in direct proportion to increasing differentiation. A germ-cell is

Accordingly, the individuality of the worm, too, is difficult to grasp; even in the clearly segmented linear animal what was originally independent not infrequently becomes a member of a higher unity. But is the same not true of the highest organisms, of Man? If we observe him from birth only, this is indeed not the case. But what justification have we for transferring the beginning of his life to this external event? Every one begins his existence as an ovum. The stages of development before birth are just as essential as the later ones, and correspond pretty much to the larval states of insects. The man who has seen the light of day bears much the same relation to the embryo which he was, as in the butterfly the final form does to the caterpillar; every moment of embryonic existence must be counted in at its full value, and reckoned in the total duration. And if we follow the intra-uterine development in this way, seeing in each stage the equivalent of the later personality, we become aware that here also a concept may include very many contents; the ovum perishes at its first division, what was originally highest and ultimate becomes a secondary organ: and not till late is the seething cell-colony ordered under the ultimately all-inclusive unity. Seen in cosmic perspective, the concept of individuality does not even fit Man, since it does justice to only one of his life-stages. Man, too, lives and endures for a time without being an individual.

4

ANY more thorough observation of the lower forms of Life leads to the knowledge of the strictly relative character of organic individuation. Embryology everywhere bears the same testimony, quite independently of whether Ontogeny is interpreted

potentially capable of taking any form, and can be utilized for any function; a muscle-fibre can only contract, a nerve-cell only convey stimuli. Therefore, among the parts of a differentiated organism growth can go on indefinitely only if the parts themselves are not differentiated; and this is the case with the sex-cells alone. Certainly an organism is conceivable which even in its highest degree of complexity would still remain infinitely plastic, but this theory does not correspond to any actual experience.

phylogenetically or not. Now what about the adult forms? Do these, at any rate, possess an absolute significance? One would think so, and yet the case is otherwise.

Only that can be considered independent whose meaning lies in itself, which can be fully comprehended from itself alone. So we shall call only that living being independent which is capable of living permanently by itself. A man without stomach and belly would clearly contradict this definition; he must infallibly die of hunger. Now there are actually classes of creatures among which monstrosities of this kind normally appear: the males of the rotifera possess neither mouth nor intestine, and the ephemeridae, too, are hardly capable of feeding: they are destined to speedy death. Eating is the larva's most sacred occupation: the final form wants only to generate. If we try to understand these phenomena from the standpoint of the individuality as an end-in-itself, it is absolutely impossible. If the individual is really what matters, creation, as it is, must be condemned as an utter failure; then one would have to pronounce that it everywhere ended in a lamentable *à peu près*. But every world-view which ends in a *blasphemia creatoris sive creaturae* is *ipso facto* unsound: to attain, by dint of thought, which is itself a specific expression of Life, to the negation of Life itself, is a grotesque vicious circle: nonsensical results cannot have rational premisses. So the facts with which we are here dealing are seen to be wholly incomprehensible from the individualist standpoint, and are only intelligible at all on the supposition of a supra-individual reality. The males of the rotifera, butterflies, and ephemeridae, destined to die of hunger, evidently have their *raison d'être* in the succeeding generation; while breathing their last they lay the foundation of this latter. The meaning of their Present lies in the Future.

Among unicellular organisms reproduction and Death coincide, not only in Time, but in essence; but among the multicellular they are seldom very far apart. In propagation by budding the mother cell breaks up into daughter cells: and in sexual reproduction the parents only too often perish. Thus

the drone dies at the moment when his semen rejoices the heart of the queen; the female spider devours her mate; and the female butterfly, when her duty is fulfilled, dies of exhaustion. Why should the individual generate, if it were itself the ultimate? The glare of the marriage-torch lights up the grave. Yet there seems to be no greater happiness than to perish in initiating a new life. The most personal appetite points beyond the person.

Thus individuality, even as the highest expression of the species, is seen to be relative. If among the lower forms of Life its outlines are indistinct, so even in the completely self-contained and exclusive form which marks its highest expression its *raison d'être* lies outside itself. The significance of the final form (Imago) lies in the coming generation. What is outwardly sharply defined exists, in its essence, no less in relation to other forms of Life than do the members of a polyp-colony, which has come, by perpetual division and proliferation, to form a continuous unity. Indeed, strictly speaking, the phenomenon of sex, by itself alone, proves the relative character of all individuality: for, from the standpoint of Nature, it takes Man and Woman together to make up the human being. The man exists only in relation to the woman, and vice versa, and both see their ultimate meaning in the child. But yet male and female individuality denotes something distinct throughout. What, then, if a man suddenly became a woman? It would mean a complete change of personality. Among the crustaceans the Copepods actually achieve this monstrosity. And in the case of very many organisms it seems to depend entirely on external conditions, whether the maintenance of the species is assured by non-sexual methods, or whether separate sexes are bound to co-operate in it. What, then, about the 'Eternal Feminine' and the sexual antithesis as the fundamental category of the universe? What we revere as absolute, from the personality up to the idea, from the standpoint of the cosmos only too often shrinks into a transient relation. The maintenance of Life proves itself everywhere the essential thing which conditions all others; and

not infrequently, to attain this her end, Nature seizes upon means which horrify even the mildest individualism.

5

THE maintenance of Life in general: that is, in fact, the one and only end of Nature, which can be deduced with certainty from the data of observation. The means vary *ad infinitum*, the end remains everywhere the same; and, to all appearance, individuality is one of the means. If it were more than a means, its shifting character would be unintelligible; this consideration is provisionally decisive. Let us now examine in what way the individual can be a means.

The primordial phenomenon in the process of Life is growth, as Carl Ernst von Baer was the first to state clearly.[1] Nothing like it is to be found in the inorganic world. Time exercises no direct influence upon Matter. But duration of Life expresses itself, in the concrete, as growth, at first within the limits of the individual (when such exists sharply defined) and afterwards beyond it. Generation is only a qualified and specialized expression of this primordial phenomenon, and by no means appertains to the essence of it.[2] It is of the essence of the organism to grow indefinitely. In the case of plants we see this

[1] Cf. in his collected Essays and Addresses (St. Petersburg, 1864, and Berlin, 1882) especially the essay, *Über das allgemeinste Gesetz der Natur in aller Entwicklung*, and *Welche Ansicht der lebenden Natur ist die richtige?* The aforesaid works have long been out of print; it is high time a new edition was put in hand.

[2] I know quite well that even to-day many people still adhere to the view of Darwin, and above all of Herbert Spencer: the sexual function is, in its essence, opposed to growth, because with the appearance and development of the sex organs a cessation of growth is associated, and on the other hand vigorous growth may lead to a suppression of sex activity. But this view is not justified in any respect: if strenuous mental and bodily labour are more or less mutually exclusive, this does not prove any opposition between mind and body, but only that the same energy cannot pursue two paths at once. In the same way growth of the individual is, beyond a certain point, probably incompatible with growth beyond the individual; but not because they would be opposed processes, but because the same process cannot go on in different directions at the same time. In such general questions as growth and generation mere observation is not enough: we must also be able to interpret it.

clearly; among them, most strikingly perhaps among the fucoidae, those endless sea-weeds. Also the colonies of the inferior animals, especially of the immobile ones among them, bear eloquent witness to this truth; in the same way the segments of worms sprout unceasingly from one another. Here indeed the products of growth do not remain united, but the separation, in this case also, does not appertain to the essence of things. Theoretically indeed, it seems conceivable that a cell would continue to grow indefinitely; if it did not divide, death would not come near it. There is no inward reason, immanent in life, to be found against it. External causes, however, militate against this. According to J. J. Thomson a system of interlocking vortex rings, when these reach the number 7, breaks up into a double system; only such a system appears thenceforward to be stable. And with precisely the same aim the infusorium, as soon as it has attained a certain volume, is bound to divide if it is to continue to grow. It is mechanical grounds which condition the cell-division; the living entelechy knows of nothing but uninterrupted growth.

If we survey with an unprejudiced eye the lower grades of organization, we cannot help observing that the varying forms of generation and individualization are determined and regulated throughout by external conditions. An immobile polyp-colony continues to grow to almost any size; if it swims at large, it at once exhibits hard-and-fast limitations; only what is absolutely adapted to its end can hold its own against the dangers of a wandering life. With just the same aim external conditions set a limit to the number of the worm's segments. And if, in the end, it is always the same form, this is because it is the only one which can endure. It is for teleological reasons that the superfluous parts are sloughed off, and then begin a new life on their own account. Certainly we are not yet in a position to comprehend the necessity of the form-limits in each particular case, but that it is a question of obedience to a strictly physical law can to-day no longer be doubted. Only in accordance with the norms which hold good for Force and Matter can any type of

life gain embodiment, therefore every form must be susceptible of being based, and accounted for, on physical grounds. Assuredly the extraordinary formations of the Karyokinese are the outward expression of inward tension-phenomena; most probably they will one day be imitated and artificially produced. The number of whorls, of extremities, the arrangement of organs and functions—all these relations are necessary in the strictest sense of the word. If I do not overrate Man's intellect, it will one day succeed in accounting for them exhaustively, and, as it were, determining *a priori* what they must be, as can be done even now with the formations of the crystal world. The directions of growth originate in the essence, the boundaries arise from the interaction of the inward law with the external world. And in the same way external causes and relations actually determine the limits and character of the individuality.—In the case of the protista it is directly plain that generation and self-development are properly one and the same process. Where cell simply supervenes on cell, in stereotyped duplication, it may easily be seen that growth is the primordial phenomenon, and that form separates itself from form only to render growth enduringly possible. The volume of each organism has its critical point; if the cell grows beyond a definite size it is bound to perish; as a unity it is no longer capable of life. Even where a colony springs up through continuous budding, as in plants, salpa-chains, and many polyps, the essential unity of growth and generation is not difficult to detect. But the problem loses in clearness with advancing differentiation.

A polyp for instance no longer directly generates a polyp but a Scyphistoma, which develops later on into a jellyfish swimming at large; this splits off sex-products, from which, in their turn, sessile polyps proceed, and so on. It is the phenomenon of alternating generations, in what is perhaps its least complicated form. Or man begets a germ, which lives for the space of nine months as a parasite in its mother's body, afterwards to enter upon a free existence of its own. Or, a parasitic crustacean (Sacculina), which dwells as a shapeless sac in the organs of the

crab, gives birth to a larva which swims at large, and, in later stages, relapses in its turn into obscene parasitism.[1] Or, a salpa begins its career as an independent mobile individual, then becomes fixed, and produces, by budding, an exclusive colony, from which later, by sexual reproduction, spring new particular animalcules, and so on. The instances enumerated come from the most widely differing regions of the organic world, yet everywhere we have to do with what is essentially the same: on the one hand with the growth of the individual beyond itself, on the other with the reproduction of the same by means of dissimilar intermediate stages.—In the face of such phenomena does the identification, in principle, of all propagation with growth hold good?—In the first place we must grasp the fact that objections, which would rely on the phenomena of death and sex, are untenable so far as the core of the problem is concerned. It is, at bottom, indifferent whether the succeeding generation preserves material continuity with the preceding, as the green twig does with the branch of hardened wood, or whether the fresh parts push off the old ones. The growth of a worm reproducing itself asexually may be expressed in the schema that life, in its advance, passes over from the older to the younger parts, as in a tree. Only here the older parts are gradually sloughed off: what, in the tree, appears as continuous growth, meets us in the worm as a series of spatially distinct individuals. Nor, when they are closely examined, is it otherwise with the generations of men; the child, too, arises from the body of its parents by cleavage, and grows, throughout a prolonged span of time, in conjunction with the mother; in the earliest stages of its development the life of the embryo is hardly to be separated from that of the mother, even conceptually. But if the parents live on after the birth of the child, this, regarded from the highest point of view, is a secondary relation; in many organisms, comparable throughout to man so far as individualization goes, such as the lepidoptera, the death

[1] Cf. for instance Frédéric Houssay, *La Forme et la Vie* (Paris, 1900), pp. 727 ff.

of the parents nearly coincides in time with the origination of fresh life, and among the protozoa death and reproduction represent one and the same phenomenon. Certainly it causes the greatest possible difference in the phenomenon, whether the successive generations exist side by side or not, but this difference does not penetrate to the essence. Whether the great-grandchild has its material basis in the deceased ancestor, as the green twig has in the weather-worn trunk; whether endless generations live on together in Time as the polyps do in the colony; whether the successive individuals are abruptly severed by death, or whether, as in human beings, one generation overlaps another in time; in the end it everywhere comes to the same thing.

Equally unessential, as regards the core of the problem, is the nature and character of the propagation. Sexual and asexual reproduction are not diametrically opposed; for 'it is not the merging of two germ-cells, which is the essential precondition for the arising of a fresh individual, but conversely the springing of the fresh individual out of *one* cell is the necessary presupposition of the merging'.[1] Whether this one cell, in its turn, can only arise and become capable of division owing to the union of two others, or whether it does not need this preliminary, depends on whether a combination of qualities is requisite or not. In the case of man it is unconditionally necessary, in very many other organisms it is not; Loeb and Wilson have shown that in echinoderms the fertilization which always takes place in normal cases can be replaced by means of chemical stimuli, and whether the daphnes are propagated sexually, or by virgin birth, depends on conditions of nourishment and atmosphere. The apparently ultimate and essential phenomenon is therefore merely one possible means among others, for the purpose of the preservation of the species. Life advances in either case, only it treads different paths, according to the way external conditions are shaped. We can therefore no longer shut our eyes to the evidence that the manifold phenomena

[1] Th. Boveri, *Das Problem der Befruchtung* (Jena, 1902), p. 32.

everywhere have—even when it is least apparent—an identical essence as basis. Everywhere, speaking concretely, the aim is the unending duration of Life, unending growth; but reproduction and growth are not two kinds of events, but two modes of expressing what is everywhere one and the same relation.

So much we now recognize—but do we also understand it? It is not easy—Time and insight are meted out to us in accordance with the duration and character of man's individuality; and the measure of it comes short of the totality of Life. Yet a god has bestowed upon us the faculty of imagination, the capacity to rise in spirit above our limitations. We too can—for a time at any rate—look down from cosmic heights upon what is earthly: man can think as superman. If now we place ourselves, in spirit, at the standpoint which we might expect Nature to take up if she were conscious, the darkness which enshrouds us begins to clear. Fontenelle said once, 'Within the memory of the rose, no gardener has ever been known to die'; for the ephemeridae the life of the May-fly is eternal. But how does the life-process appear, when viewed from the topmost heights?—For Nature there are no enduring individuals, but only an enduring Life. For her, Man's life does not last a moment. Of the passing of the generations she is hardly aware. The flux of individuals means even less to her than a change of mood does to us. She is not conscious of the death of anything living. She cannot distinguish between growth (i.e. expansion of the individual) and reproduction (i.e. expansion beyond the individual). Thus the flux of the generations of men might appeal to her in much the same way as the segmentation of the worm or the growth of the tree does to us. In swift motion what is separate gives the impression of continuity; the Mother-of-all *sees* how the type maintains itself beyond all individuality. She rejoices in the perpetual, boundless Becoming, and has no suspicion of the problems which torment the mind of Man.

6

THE primordial phenomenon is growth. It takes place in manifold forms, and one of them is the series of separate individuals. Therefore, regarded from the standpoint of life as a whole, no absolute significance attaches to the individual as such. Must we further say that Nature cares for nothing but the preservation of the species?—However strange it may sound, to all appearance it is so. The individuals pass away, the type endures. Throughout all dying the form abides.

If we confine our field of vision to the highest organisms, this state of things appears at first perfectly unintelligible. But how do matters stand among those creatures which propagate by means of simple division or homogeneous proliferation? Where the individual is ill-defined the boundaries of the species are also wavering. If life advances over dead bodies, we say the type is permanent. But where the members of it do not separate? There the supra-sensible unity has at the same time a material basis; there the concept 'maintenance of the species' corresponds to something concrete. The single tree is, to express it in a rough and ready way, a species just as much as a person; for it embodies the succession of endless generations; it condenses into itself countless particular existences; almost every twig, if planted as a slip, is capable of beginning an independent life. And if now we refer to the conclusions of the last section, we discover that the phenomenon of unlimited growth coincides in content with the theory of the preservation of the species laid down there. To many this may seem self-evident; and yet this insight opens up to us the way to vistas of great significance; it leads us to the realization of the important fact that no difference in kind exists between continuous and discrete forms of life. It is, in essence, the same thing, whether growth leads to a continuous whole, as in the tree, or to a series of sharply defined particular existences, as in Man; independence is not the condition of self-sufficiency. *Consequently it*

must be possible to compare the functions of discrete and continuous vital unities objectively with each other.

The vertebrate has at its disposal well-differentiated organs, each of which serves a definite purpose, is of benefit only to the whole, depends on the latter, and is not capable of living by itself alone. In worms, the organ may become an individual, and conversely, the latter can replace an organ which has been lost. But among the coelenterates it is impossible to decide whether the multiform polyps are to be pronounced organs of one individual, or differentiated individuals of a collectivity, as constituted by the social division of labour. Every member of the Siphonophores is a virtual whole, and yet it actually functions as a mere organ. If we consider organisms in a descending series, we see that the organs become more and more individualized as the individuality of the complete animal becomes less definite; if we reverse the perspective and advance from simple to complicated organisms, we perceive that the concentration and centralization of the vital unity steadily increases as the organs more and more lose independence. Republics turn into autocracies. But now that we know that the individual everywhere stands for what is relative, that between independent and inter-connected forms of life there exists no essential difference, should we not expect the completely self-centred and self-contained individual to be, in his turn, the organ of a greater whole?—The males of the rotifera, and the final forms (Imagines) of many insects, are, as we have seen, only fitted for generation; incomplete in themselves, they are intelligible only in reference to the coming generation. They are, so to speak, organs of the race, of the successive incarnation of life. Here the word 'organ' is a metaphor—states which succeed each other cannot be directly compared with those which are simultaneous. Yet there are really organisms in which the independent individual actually, and in the full sense of the word, functions as an organ: ants and bees. Among the latter the queen alone is capable of propagating, the industrious workers are sexless. But among the ants, the division of labour is carried so much

farther that among the workers, in their turn, there are different, morphologically definable classes.

Many insist on seeing in the beehive a formation just as arbitrary as in human society. But they are mistaken: among bees the division of labour is just as necessary, just as much based on physico-morphological conditions, as in the heterogeneous organs of the human body. If only the queen can propagate, while the worker bees are sexless, if again the former has need of the latter that she may not die of hunger, then both are unconditionally dependent on each other. In the sight of Nature, it takes queen, drone, and worker together to make up the bee. But this situation is the same as exists between those which feed and those which beget in the polyp colony. Only the factors of it are here of a different nature; there can be no doubt that bees are thorough-going individuals, in our sense of the word; exclusive, sharply defined, particular existences; so far as human consciousness goes, an individualistic conception of life might easily arise among them. And yet it would obviously belie the facts; the different types are not capable of living entirely on their own account, they can last only as organs of the community. The beehive forms in fact an organic, necessary, natural synthesis; in spite of the most pronounced individualization of its members, the community is the real unit in the sight of Nature. Compare the writings of Sir John Lubbock, of Augustus Forel, read Maeterlinck's marvellous romance of the bee: from every exact description the astounding fact shines forth, that the individual bees are only to be understood in relation to the swarm, in just the same way as polyps which feed and those which generate mutually condition each other, and as the heart can only be comprehended in relation to the organism in which it beats.

What then about human individuality? Certainly the division of labour has no morphological grounds here; each man is capable of existence on his own account, has his meaning in himself, and two are sufficient for the maintenance of the species. But if now we review the results of the previous chapter,

do we not find ourselves compelled to acknowledge that the significance of the human individual is just as relative and transitory as that of the rest of the organic world?—The striving of the individual points beyond himself: his *raison d'être* does not lie in his own person. The moral consciousness proves the existence of a higher synthesis. But this synthesis, which makes itself known to us potentially in the feeling 'I ought', is the same which is present *de facto* in other animal groups. That the polyps of the Siphonophora co-operate harmoniously for the common weal seems to us morally indifferent; and yet they are doing precisely what the ethical postulates demand of man, within the framework of humanity: each polyp labours for ends which reach far beyond its own person, the weaker makes way for the stronger, and the bad are weeded out. Conscious endeavour, therefore, reflects natural existence. We are concerned indeed in the one case with a physical, and in the other with a psychic, synthesis, and many think this involves a specific difference. They are mistaken, however. Whether propagation takes place of necessity, as in the case of unseparated sexes, or whether an imperious, most personal urge drives animals to mate, comes in fact and in essence to the same thing: the bond of love, even though a psychic one, is neither less strong nor less real than the physical affinity between stigma and pollen in the flower. The physical phenomena, just like the psychic, are merely forms of expression and means to the maintenance of life; viewed from the centre of the latter, both are on the same plane. Conscious psychic syntheses also belong to the realm of Nature: the sense of duty, the moral consciousness, are, in their own peculiar fashion, expressive of natural syntheses. Man, as a matter of actual fact, is inseparable from Mankind. Externally he stands alone, isolated in the universe: yet his innermost, most vivid self-consciousness bears witness that he is, in reality, no less straitly united to the community than the polyp to its colony.

Then should Society, as Herbert Spencer teaches, be considered an organism?—We must not embark on such premature and facile syntheses. The character of unconditional necessity, as

it distinguishes genuine vital unities, is lacking throughout in social formations. The state is only one form of association among others, its existence is not a categorical necessity. Forms of society can be imagined which have never yet been realized, but are no less possible than those known by experience. The limits within which the higher synthesis, of which each man feels himself a member, attains concrete form are shifting—shifting to the verge of downright arbitrariness. Mankind can be as much thought, felt, and experienced as a unity as the nation or the family, and the ethical centre of individuals varies accordingly. But this indeterminateness of external boundaries is just what is distinctive of life: everywhere the same type of life attains form within different limits. Two absolutely identical individuals have never yet been discovered; father and son are never alike, heredity is a variable function, even the character of the species alters in course of time. And yet the fundamental type remains the same.—This holds good of even the most elementary manifestations of Life. When they are complicated by the appearance of psychic phenomena and products, the indeterminateness of the boundaries increases at the same time. Wholly unreflective creatures, like corals, produce the most perfect forms; the sagacious ant, already, builds in wavering outlines: but Man is equally skilful at both what is beautiful and what is ugly. The animal's instinct is infallible; capacity to go wrong constitutes the Man. Yet the error too springs from truth; indeterminateness of external form is, in its turn, most strictly determined.—Nor is it otherwise with the forms of men's social life. At all times and in all places the individual is part of a higher unity; this feature is constant. It finds its enduring expression in the moral consciousness. But the outward forms in which this unity takes shape are shifting and, looked at from the natural standpoint, accidental. They are not on the same plane as products of Nature, they are *creations of the Spirit.* Therefore they are necessary indeed, inasmuch as the limits of every work reflect those of its creator, but the reflection does not involve any identity. If Mankind were not really a unity in

the sight of Nature, men would not unite in societies; even Imagination follows the norms of Nature. Nevertheless, Society is no more an organism than the Sistine Madonna forms part of Zoology.[1]

7

LET us now proceed to gather up the long-drawn-out threads, let us try to grasp the ultimate significance, the true position of the individual in the whole of life. The concrete vital unity is everywhere a transitory one, no matter whether it is sharply defined or not; nowhere does the individual represent the ultimate reality. Looked at in Time, the meaning of it lies in the future, but in the actual present it is for supra-individual syntheses that it lives. The polyp labours for the colony; the artist creates for Mankind. Nowhere is it possible to understand the single existence from itself alone.

Remarkable enough! The meaning of the present lies in what is to come after it. All life is incessant striving onwards, without pause and without rest; each stage yearns, so to speak, to be overcome. Individuals bloom and fade, grow together or cleave asunder, are lost in higher syntheses, and disintegrated in chaotic change. In a few hours the infusorium may live through several particular existences. The independent polyp becomes an organ, soon to die completely, overgrown and surpassed by its own offspring. Among the Pyrosomes (a species of Salpa) the mother is not directly succeeded by the son, but as it were by the grandson: the firstborn propagates while still an embryo, and falls to pieces at the birth of the new vital unit. Countless organisms are capable of propagation as larvae, so that only every other generation attains the form of full maturity. Even Man's son is not, strictly speaking, his immediate successor, but a later descendant, who, if a generation corresponded to each stage of development, would be separated from

[1] The truth that the forms of social life, state and culture included, really belong to the plane not of Nature, but of Art, has found its final formulation from my point of view in the essay 'Life as an Art' of my *Art of Life* (Selwyn & Blount, 1937).

him by centuries; the process which, in other creatures, passes over independent forms and finds expression in the amazing phenomena of alternating generations, of the interchange of sexless and sexually differentiated stages, and so on, seems here condensed and foreshortened. But Man, too, is in the last resort a final form (Imago), just like the butterfly. The last and most important shape is not the only one; the embryonic existence, even if invisible, yet exists. The full-grown man, too, does not see in his personal existence what is ultimate; he recognizes his own significance as lying in what is to come after him; he feels the command to continue himself in some shape or other. He forms part of a future which he will never live to see.

This stream of life, flowing in one direction, vanishing beyond every present into the dim unending future, is the most tremendous phenomenon we know of. We *want* to go onwards, though every step brings us nearer to the grave, and, like Faust, no one dare in earnest cry to the moment 'Stop' unless he already carries death in his heart. How senselessly—senselessly in the view of Man's arrogant intellect—we rush onward all the time is perhaps most strikingly illustrated by the profound fable of the man and the genie. Anatole France tells the tale as follows: A genie gave a child a ball of thread, and said to him, 'This is the thread of your days; take it. When you want time to pass quickly for you, unwind the thread: your days will pass fast or slowly according as you have unwound the ball quickly or not. So long as you do not touch the thread, you will remain at the same hour of your existence.' The child took the thread; first he unwound it to become a man, then to marry the betrothed he loved, then to see his children growing up, to get offices, to gain honours, to overcome troubles, to avoid the griefs and diseases that come with age, finally alas! to put an end to a burdensome old age. He had lived just four months and six days after the visit of the genie.[1] Each man can test the appalling veracity of this fable for himself. Without a stop we pelt along into the future, till at last we stumble over our own grave.

[1] *Le Jardin d'Épicure*, p. 19.

Our own will strives forward just as unrelentingly as Nature in her impersonal course urges us onward. We too see in our passing states only points of transition, and in the end our whole personal existence has been no more than a point of transition. . . . There is something elevating in the fact that the innermost instinct of the individual is in harmony with the objective course of the world. Instead of clinging to the moment, the only real, we try to outstrip it, we harry ourselves out of life.

8

EVERY time my mind turns from the pure, lucid, universal syntheses to the individual, my heart shrinks. For the grandiose, serene necessity which, viewed from on high, appears to rule this world is then abruptly transformed into the most hideous, distorted contingency; into injustice immeasurable and unspeakable. Goethe's words:

After laws mighty,
Brazen, eternal,
Bound are we all,
The course of our Being
Here to fulfil—

utter the truth. And yet if we plunge but for a moment into the endless depths of the suffering human soul, into the boundless woe which may make the shortest span of time an eternity, the harmony of the universe is shattered, and the grim rule of blind Force appears to be the only reality. There is no reproach to Nature in Death: in the void suffering too ceases, and an abrupt end, even of the highest bliss, everywhere appears the most merciful solution. But what is endless, what to all eternity has no term, the affliction which has no prospect of deliverance —that is terrible. Of those condemned to endless torture Dante says with shattering brevity:

These have no hope of Death . . . (*Inf.* iii. 16).

Let a man put himself in the place of one condemned to life-

long imprisonment. Perhaps an accident has cast him into prison, some deed of which at heart he was guiltless; now he is cut off for ever from Mankind; his existence is not merely joyless but, what is much worse, absolutely meaningless. He knows not why he should continue to exist at all any longer, his life is a parody of death; a single unpremeditated moment perhaps has ruined his lot for ever.

Let us have the courage to face the whole content of this vision! Let us forget all Critique of knowledge, let us put the question of the Why? and the Wherefore? of life as simply, directly, and painfully, as any woman whose heart is broken by the pangs of love. After all, the mood of the moment is the most real thing there is; a single moment of genuine happiness outweighs the sun; and the darkest night is light in comparison with the blackness in which the soul in torment groans. Let us not trick ourselves out of our feelings by thought, let us linger consciously in the purple deeps of the personal life. And then let us suddenly realize the iron truth, that life is not to be comprehended from the person alone, that the most maddening pain as well as the most blissful happiness may be no more than an irrelevant phenomenon. . . . No Art can reach to the pathos of Nature.

It is necessary and just, we say, that the deed of the moment should have endless expiation; even the criminal does not think otherwise. And yet the idea is inconceivable that there could be any grounds which could justify the annihilating of a human life, a unique phenomenon never to be repeated—however worthless it may otherwise seem. On this point, if anywhere, Christianity has seen deeper than any philosophy; at this point the whole greatness of the poet-spirit of Russia shows itself. And yet we feel that we are insincere if we condemn Nature on this account, for our deepest instincts are just as inexorable as she is.

If we pass in review the few thousand years spanned by history, a chill comes over us. The final verdict on every epoch has been: In vain. Millions of men in all ages have sacrificed

themselves for ideas, and no sooner were these latter realized than they ceased to command interest. History is the burial-ground of values. Nevertheless, it is only thanks to mortal values that the immortal world keeps a meaning for us. I am not even thinking of the women we love, the ideals we cherish, the gods in whom we believe. I am thinking of the mere dates of the calendar. Viewed from the standpoint of the cosmos, the stages of the Earth's ecliptic are all of equal worth; but for us the turn of the year is an important event, rich in emotional values, in images and golden dreams. Are we, in virtue of knowledge, to disown these moods?—In so doing we should disavow the human part proper of our nature. The monotony of the world-event is for us hidden beneath a wealth of many-hued symbols; what Nature overlooks we exalt into a value. We make for blind Necessity a garland of shimmering hopes; and the finite moments, all alike to the cosmos, we fill with immeasurable bliss, with ineffable woe.

Ill is it for us if we destroy in ourselves the immediacy of personal feeling. By so doing we rob life of its meaning. If everything happens in accordance with mighty, brazen, eternal laws, that does not belie the kindlier truth, that we are directly influenced only by personal motives. Caesar may have embodied an historic mission, the logic of which still has its effect today; but what urged him on to his mighty deeds was ambition and overflowing joy in life. The impersonal laws manifest themselves in persons only; what is bound to be is ardently desired. And if the significance of the individual is a relative and transitory one, yet this significance can make itself known only within the framework of individual impulses.

9

THE thought that the individual ought to be regarded only as an insignificant member of a supra-individual synthesis is truly shattering in its effect. Primordial impulse drives men to die for ideas; and where instinct leaves off, conscious insight steps into

its place. In fact, men have always found reasons for the inexplicable. No sage has ever doubted that there is something higher than individual existence; conscious Mind, of its own accord, follows the process of the world.

Man knows, for the most part, what he is doing when he offers his life as a sacrifice; the animal assuredly does not, and yet its behaviour is the same. To my mind, in this not-knowing there lies hidden a deeper pathos than in the might of conscious self-renunciation.

Look at the beehive! Here the individual is of no account at all, the community is everything. Nowhere among men is there to be found such joy in sacrifice, such sense of duty. The life of the bee is toil, toil, and yet once more toil. Hardly ever a moment's rest. She works and works and works again . . . and yet never for herself. The queen has to be looked after, the young brood fed, the idle drone to be driven off. Unhesitatingly the worker bee sacrifices herself for the common weal. Even the queen is not an end-in-herself: she is the store-house of the Future, she has to bring forth for the community. Her life is consumed in her vocation.

And the community is inexorable towards the individual. The barren or too-aged queen is made away with; the sickly incapable worker is driven out, if not actually put to death; and as soon as the queen is fertilized, the drone has to die. An iron, impersonal, draconian law governs the beehive. The present life is seen as a mere stage, a stage towards the Future.

In this the bees can hardly know what they are doing. No, of course they do not: for the more conscious Mankind becomes, the more lenient it seems to be. No European ruler would dare any longer to treat even the most pitiful human life as a mere means: the more thought prevails in us, the more humane are our feelings. The highest insight is wedded to kindness. And yet the grim law of the beehive is appallingly rational; it is perhaps *the* reason, the sovereign, inexorable reason of Nature.

Human existence as a whole is, as facts show, no less merciless, no less ruthless towards the individual, than the life of the

beehive. If we survey, in distant, foreshortened perspective, the events of the most humane epochs, the deeds of the most sublime idealism, the picture unrolled before us is no more consoling than that of the bee's life. Here the individual is sacrificed from blind necessity, there the same thing happens on grounds of 'humanity'. Eternal Love, the guiding principle of Christians, has only too often drawn the sword from the scabbard and kindled the pile of faggots; the Rights of Man were expressed first of all in equality on the scaffold; 'Love of Man' invented the torture of imprisonment for life, and the Socialist ideal of society, which promises to vanquish Nature and bring absolute happiness to every individual, begins its career with plans of revolution which do not materially surpass those of Attila in mildness. Whatever men may think and desire and believe, their actual behaviour, in its main outlines, remains unaltered.

What, then, about conscious insight?—However much it would fain perform, it has so far accomplished little. On the whole, the primeval forces of the psyche are still stronger than the gods of light. Even yet it is more Nature that lives our life, than we who live on our own account. Nevertheless, consciousness is a precious gift: it enables us to understand what is ruthless as friendly, to devise noble motives, at any rate, for what is our undoing. We too, no doubt, sacrifice the individual to the community; but we do it for his own good. Man, too, strives unceasingly after annihilation; but he calls it the search for happiness. So the bee, too, may find her highest satisfaction in her impersonal, unselfish behaviour. She would probably raise the most indignant protest against the interpretation we have given of her life.

10

THE meaning of every Present seems to lie in the Future: if we look more closely, we discern the cause of this state of things without difficulty. It coincides with the fact that all Life-processes are adapted to an end, and aim at a goal. It is impossible to understand life from mere causality, as is practicable in

inorganic events; an organic process is not intelligible till, beside the question 'Whence?' the further question 'Wherefore?' has been answered. And this 'Wherefore?', followed out in Time, leads perforce out of the Past, across the Present, into the Future. But I cannot abstract from Time: it is the schema of Life, all the processes of this latter go in on one direction in Time. And if I follow them I am bound of necessity to look forward. I do not comprehend the division of the ovum till, besides knowing the grounds which produced it, I also know the results to which it leads; it is absolutely correct to say: the ovum divides in order to develop into the embryo. And the different phases of this latter, in their turn, are only to be understood from the fully developed form. But things are exactly the same in the wider syntheses, in the advance of Life onward through the living being, and the same is the meaning of the striving of the individual towards what is beyond itself. For what does the bee work? Not for herself: for the Future, for generations which she will never live to behold. The phenomenon is fundamentally the same as the division of the ovum that the embryo may come into being. But reproduction is, in essence, one with growth. Because Life is Becoming, directed to a goal, the meaning of every Present—so far as man can grasp it—must lie ever farther and farther on in the Future, the meaning of the individual must be in the race.

This teleology corresponds to a necessity just as blind and unconditional as that of all organic regulations. As in the embryo one phase strives towards the next, so the completely developed individual lives in relation to its posterity. Between unconscious adaptation to an end and the conscious volition of the person there exists no difference in essence: he who apprehends it otherwise must be able to show that the visceral processes are not adapted to an end, because no end need be represented by the mind before they can take place. Rather the reverse is the truth: we can only set conscious aims before ourselves in so far as striving towards an end forms part of our nature. Therefore it makes no difference to the problem whether a being

consciously lives for the Future, or unconsciously sacrifices itself for what does not yet exist.

This unconscious striving towards a transcendent goal, this orientation towards a future beyond the individual, is in reality peculiar to everything living. The midge begins its life in the water, and ends it in the air; but at the end of its life-course it is bound to entrust its ovum to the water again, to an element which is wholly foreign to its latest stage. Here the compulsion which forms the will of the female midge clearly points beyond the individual. The butterfly's existence is exclusively correlated with flowers; it lives on their honey, its desires and anxieties concern them alone. Yet when it advances to the stage of laying eggs, it seeks out the green parts of the plant, on which the caterpillars can feed when they creep out of the eggs, to finish its incubation there. What do the leaves concern the butterfly? And assuredly it does not know what it is doing, assuredly it has no suspicion of the needs of the offspring which resemble it so little. The housefly feeds, for preference, on the sweet foods on our tables; but when the time arrives for it to breed, it seeks out the filthiest places, because its brood can only thrive in these. An imperative urge drives the male spider to mate, and yet it has to pay for its pleasure with its life. The drone flies joyously to the wedding which is its doom. But many of the beings whose highest happiness is at the same time their end may have a foreboding that they are compassing their own death. Man, too, feels that Love is akin to Death; in the moment of supreme bliss he too is ready to perish. And the sinister idea that Love is a sin, a tremendous guilt for which one will have to pay the penalty, springs from the same instinct. 'The majority of creatures', writes Maeterlinck, 'have the dim feeling that a very uncertain chance, a kind of transparent membrane, separates Love from Death, and that the secret idea of Nature wills that we should die at the moment when we transmit life.' This is what actually happens in the lowest forms of Life; whatever reproduces itself, renounces its own Person. The Present falls a victim to the Future.

Man, too, sees his own meaning in a time which he will not live to see, in generations which he will never know, in an unending continuance which is the negation of his own person. Nearly every man feels it a sacred duty to carry on his family, to perpetuate his name; why? It is hardly intelligible on grounds of reason. How many existences are truly worth living? Misery comes to greet only too many in their cradles. Bitter cares accompany most men to the grave. With his children Man brings tribulation into the world. Happiness is fleeting, treacherous. Greatness is not hereditary. And the dull mass of Mankind presents the least attractive spectacle in the whole organic world. Long ago Montaigne lamented:

Unless above himself he can
Exalt himself, how poor a thing is Man.[1]

And yet the majority see a value in continuance *per se*. Woman is conscious of the mere fact of her motherhood as a value; noble parents see their *raison d'être* in a good-for-nothing son; and he who creates spiritual values, labours for a posterity which will very likely look down with contempt on all that is spiritual. . . . We all live for the Future in some shape or other, more or less consciously. We desire to bring realities into the world, to create values which will outlast us. We desire Fame, Myth . . . and this volition represents the same striving which already characterizes the lowest grades of life: the urge to grow on into what has no end, to break through the limitations of the person, the love of eternity.

II

LET us now pass on to the final synthesis. Life is an unending growth and becoming. It hastens forward unceasingly. It knows no final goal. It sweeps along through individuals, generations, and races. It pursues straight or crooked ways according to the situation. It does not shun roundabout ways

[1] This is exactly the meaning of the passage in Montaigne; the actual words are Samuel Daniel's. (Tr.)

if such seem demanded, and then it quickens its flight. Now it preserves continuity with the Past; now it violently tears itself loose from the previous stages. And often the temporal connexion collapses from overstrain.

Here its temporary embodiments are clearly defined, complete, and exclusive. There again the outlines are wavering and fleeting. Elsewhere its haste crowds generations into brief moments. We turn dizzy if we try to take in the totality of the Life-process with a sweeping glance: for instead of steady forms there is revealed an eternal flux.

Where does the individual abide in this rushing stream? It does not abide at all: usually it does not even emerge. Only in special, not too frequent cases do the stages condense into enduring shapes.

Do we hold fast the moment?—do we cling to Life in its temporary expression? Already it has vanished. The cell has divided, the organ has become an individual, and this latter again an organ. The insect has been transformed out of all knowledge, and the final, most glorious form sinks forthwith into the grave.

Do we try to understand the Present, do we follow with vigilant glance the shifting complex, setting Cause and Effect side by side? Yet what do we discover? Only from the standpoint of the Future is the Present to be comprehended: and the Future retreats ever farther and farther. Only he who knows the final form understands the behaviour of the larva: the labour of the bee benefits future generations; and he who will comprehend the ways of men must not only know them, but first and foremost their ideal. But the ideal lies on the farther side of the person.

The individual is transient, nay more: a transition stage—a stage which is not even invariably necessary. We can scarcely imagine what life without consciousness, without personality, must mean. And yet we see this paradox realized a million times over. It does not seem to affect the essence, in what fashion life advances, in what shape growth takes place.

In the sight of Nature the proudest personality is no more

than the shoot is to the plant, or the segment to the worm. . . . A chill comes over us: how is it then with our Self? How fares it then with our soul, with the permanent Ego? But the Self is itself something supra-personal, it does not coincide with the conscious person. My person means for me no more than the individual does for Nature.

Life endures at the expense of what lives: it passes on through individuals. And in the same way the particular man endures at the expense of his various states, which he leaves unceasingly buried behind him. The life of the individual, too, advances over the bodies of the dead; it reflects the progress of the race. Each finite existence is an image of what is unending. Thus for me, too, the person signifies something relative and transient. What is Life? Unending, unceasing motion; nowhere and never any resting-place. Like a mighty wave, Life rolls onward. At each moment it is made up of other matter. Not the substance, but only the direction, is unchanged. So it rolls on into the Future which ever escapes it, to dash itself to pieces one day perhaps on the lowering cliffs.

12

LIFE thus is a Becoming, a Becoming without a final goal. In every concrete thing we have discerned transient stages, in the most pronounced individuality nothing more permanent than state of consciousness in Man, and mood in Woman. What have we to say to it? Are we to disown the concrete altogether, to see the only reality in the process of the species, and deny any peculiar value to the individual?—Many Nature-philosophers have thought so: no less a man than Schopenhauer has represented this view. And yet it is short-sighted—short-sighted, superficial, and presumptuous as well.

In Nietzsche's posthumous papers are found the following fragments: 'In natural science the moral depreciation of the Ego goes hand in hand with the overestimation of the species. But the species is quite as illusory as the Ego. The Ego is a hundred times *more* than a mere unit in the chain of creatures,

it is *the chain itself* in every possible respect; and the species is merely an abstraction, suggested by the multiplicity and partial similarity of these chains. That the individual is sacrificed to the species, as people often say, is not a fact at all: it is rather only an example of false interpretation.' And again: 'We are *more* than the individual; we are the whole chain itself, with the tasks of the possible futures of that chain in us.' In these thoughts there lies hidden more profundity, more inkling of the truth, than in all the theories of natural science put together. They point straight to the solution of the problem.

Let us go over in our minds the marvellous, often paradoxical phenomena which our incursion into the organic world has revealed to us. The whole variegated manifold of the vital process may be compressed into one empty schematic formula: all concrete life strives towards its own extinction. For when the cell divides, the polyp buds, the drone mates, the man sacrifices himself for Mankind, each of them in so doing disowns his personality. The individual is something relative, transitory, perishable, its meaning is to be found in supra-individual syntheses, and its innermost instinct urges it imperiously to perish for the benefit of the higher syntheses. But it is clear that Death cannot be the goal of Life; the End of Life is Life itself. When the will to Life, or to intenser ever-increasing Life, is everywhere demonstrably the fundamental motive, could the ultimate yearning be directed to the End?—Assuredly not. No conscious organism would sacrifice its person, if in so doing it renounced itself; the innermost impulse would not urge the drone to death, nor the worker bee to her daily toil, if they did not find their highest happiness therein. The individual sacrifices himself, not that he may die, but that he may *live*; but this is only possible if the governing principle of Life points beyond the person, if, in Nietzsche's words, the Ego is *more* than a unit in the chain of creatures. Or, to express it more accurately, in so far as, between the individual and the species, there exists no essential difference.

Let us go back to our former trains of thought, to our reflec-

tions on Duration and Being-eternal. Only the Present *is*. The Past is dead and the Future yet unborn; the moment is the only reality. He who disowns the moment is committing suicide; he who lives it to the full lays hold on Eternity. Man's life passes away from moment to moment; the present is the form of his existence; outside it there is no Being. But the Present is evanescent; it dies away unceasingly. How can it embody the supreme value?—Let us widen our sphere of thought; only the actual individual life *is*. Its progenitors have departed, its posterity are waiting to emerge; only the present life exists. But it passes away from moment to moment. It is essentially perishable. It is a transitory relation. The only reality is, at the same time, *not*—'Being' metaphysically understood. How is this antinomy to be resolved?

Not in the mode beloved by speculative Nature-philosophers: 'the only reality is the species, individuals are of no consequence'. For by the assertion that the only reality is non-essential, knowledge is not perceptibly advanced. But the purely metaphysical solution, too: 'the Essence (ἐντελέχεια, Âtman, Life-principle, Idea) endures, individuals are appearance, if not illusion, and fade away like the colours of the rainbow'—this, too, fails at the critical moment; for it bequeaths us, as its final word, a distinction (correct enough, indeed), whereas our one and only concern is a synthesis. Between Idea and Manifestation, Principle of Life and Matter of it, we too have already distinguished sufficiently, and to do so was helpful at the proper time. But now it is no longer of use. Thought indeed is bound to separate Idea and Manifestation: but they exist only united, only in and through one another. The organism is not the type on the one hand, and its phenomenal form on the other; it is their indivisible unity. The Being of Nature knows nothing of the distinctions of thought, we shall never get close to her with these. If our aim is to merge the antithesis of individual and life, as it appears to conceptual thought, into the synthesis which it is in fact, we must advance beyond any insight hitherto attained.

Let us look into our own soul! How deep the vanishing

Present goes. The Past is an endless Not-being, and so, too, is the Future. But the moment we cannot grasp nevertheless embraces Infinity, condenses within itself the Past no less than the Future, the deeps of Eternity. Whenever I consciously realize my life, I turn dizzy; this advance from what no longer is to what is not yet, is hardly thinkable; this highest, most living Being, which makes itself known only in passing away, and never comes to a stop anywhere, is a marvel of which we know not the like. How is it conceivable that anything which ever was no longer is? that anything which is not yet, ever can be? The thought is beyond our grasp, but the fact exists. Man's mind breaks itself on reality.

But what if between Being and passing away there existed no opposition? Goethe says:

All must crumble into nothing
That in Being would endure.

In actual fact: if Time is the specific existence-form of Life, then Life can only 'be', *in so far* as it passes away. As the flame only burns in so far as it burns away, so Life endures only in perishing. If we seek for permanent syntheses outside the passing moment, we pass Life by. Since its 'Being' attains expression only in 'Becoming', and its Becoming only in Change, the vanishing moment must embrace the whole reality.

Nietzsche said: 'We are *more* than the individual; we are the whole chain itself, with the tasks of the possible futures of that chain.' That is to say: in that which now is, is united, in virtue of the specific existence-form of Life, all that ever was and ever will be. The Present *is* the Future: for if the 'now', the passing moment, did not exist, all Future would be cut off. Out of nothing, nothing can come into being: what is to be to-morrow must have been to-day. The whole of the Future is dormant in the Past.

But then the individual, however transient and impermanent it may be, is something great beyond measure. For it condenses within itself, at each moment of its existence, the whole process

which unfolds itself in Time; it embodies Life itself. The changeful stretch of our road, which we construct in retrospect, has no existence in reality; only the present *is*. All identification of passing with past time, all picturing of the temporal by means of spatial schemata, falsifies the actual facts.[1] For this reason the picture which we construct in retrospect of the evolution of an organism or type of organization does not coincide with the living reality. If we trace the Odyssey of a living being, which does not repeat the same form till the third or fourth generation, and endeavour to comprehend what we have observed, we are indeed inevitably reduced to the theory: that the different, dissimilar phases are simply means to the end of continuous growth. But the theory never gives more than an image of the reality, it is not identical with it. *In concreto*, the means contains and embodies the end, the transition stage includes the whole process. The individual *is* the type, the present state *is* the future; the utterly perishable is at the same time the only abiding being. And so our study of the process of Life, which opened with the depreciation and negation of the individual, brings us in the end to the knowledge of its immeasurable value.

The individual is more than it appears. It is not merely the embodiment of the empirical moment, it is not merely transient, mere phenomenon: it is, at the same time, the eternal process. It bears the whole burden of the Past, it is big with the unending Future: each phase already includes the goal. And now, all at once, the whole stretch of the way we have traversed lies open before us. No longer do we marvel that the instinct of the individual points beyond itself, that its most personal longing so often urges it on to death: now we understand how the tremendous enigma is possible, that the present life, which alone is real, can sacrifice itself for a future which it will never live to see; the Future lies hidden in the Present, the Infinite is contained in the Finite. When the individual seems to be

[1] Compare on this point Bergson's essay *Les Données immédiates de la conscience*, chap. iii. The problem is so exhaustively treated in that book that any repetition of it is superfluous.

sacrificing itself for the species, it is in reality living for itself. For the essence, the Self, is not identical with the finite person.

13

How does the problem of Immortality appear in the light of the knowledge just gained? As the ray of light shoots through Space, and shines on to all Eternity, when the star which sent it forth has long been extinguished, so there is no power which can annihilate the life which animates us. The nearer we drew to the meaning of the individual, and the more clearly we grasped its transitory character, the more vivid at the same time became our knowledge that its essence was indestructible.

And this truth is for us no longer an antithesis. We no longer make a sharp distinction between Idea and Manifestation, between the immortal spark and the crumbling ash. From the original antithesis we have risen to the synthesis: we feel ourselves eternal, *because* we are mortal. Just in its transitoriness does imperishableness affirm itself; if death did not hang over us, we could not be eternal: for only to that which passes away is duration assured. The 'Being' of life expresses itself in change, in motion, in perishing. As music *is* only as it dies away, so Life blossoms only as it fades. In it every pause, every enduring sameness, is equivalent to Not-being.

We feel ourselves eternal *because* we are mortal. We change from hour to hour; one state dies away into the next. Concrete life is replaced no less quickly in the individual than in the succession of generations. We stand amazed at the metamorphoses, the bewildering transformations of the successive incarnations of life in the lower animal world: our own term of years presents the same spectacle. We live only in so far as we hasten towards the grave: we abide only in so far as the Present is fleeting: only in so far as we change do we endure. Only in this flux of Becoming does permanent Being make itself known.

Thus permanence is one with transiency. A life which does

not die away from moment to moment is unthinkable: if I pine for any other, I am turning away from Life. For the only possible meaning of any individuality—be it clearly expressed, or barely indicated—and so its value for eternity, lies just in its relativity. Only in so far as it is a stage, is it at the same time a final goal. Imagine a force which was not motion, not change, which was conceivable as rest: under no circumstances would it be a force. It would then not be indestructible, not infinite; it just would not *be* at all. And so is it with individual men. Take from them their transitory character: they are robbed at once of their Immortality.

Do I will to live? that means: I strive towards the grave. The longer and the more intensely I live, the more at the same time do I perish. I die every moment, my last hour is nothing but a repetition of my first. Do I will to live for ever? that means: my will points on beyond myself. Do I will to be Eternal? I disown my limitations. And if I feel and experience that I am eternal, I confess thereby that the boundaries of individuality are not the bounds of my Being.

So, then, the will to eternal life is, at its deepest, identical with the will to death in Time. The Self to which the impulse of self-preservation and the longing for Immortality relate, is a supra-personal. The ultimate significance, the supreme value of the person lies in its being mortal.

What a depth of the most abject paltriness does not the fear of death imply! Life surges onward through us, foaming against its barriers; all the impulses of the soul point on to what is boundless: and is consciousness to cling to just these bounds?—Consciousness deceives itself only too often about its deepest motives: not seldom is it an obstacle in the way of Nature; it boasts that it commands, whereas it can only follow.

I said: Being-eternal is bound up with the will to death. Think of the supreme, the eternal moments of life—the moments of love, of enthusiasm, of divine inspiration: what would they be if they were not fleeting? What happiness would make us truly blessed, unless its end lay ahead? What value

would the single existence have if it were not unique? There is such a thing as happiness only because it draws to an end. What does not pass away we cannot experience, what does not escape us we cannot hold fast: only the transient is wholly ours.

Let us look Death bravely and quietly in the face. It is the completion of Life not only as fact but as significance. It not only closes our existence, it crowns it as well. It gives the individual life absolute reality; it imparts to it unconditional value. As the limits of a thought make it actual, so it is Death that finally makes Life real. Non-being gives Being its eternity. Let us therefore be proud enough to will the end. This resolve lifts us above our limitations. We have overcome Death.

. . . . . .

Life is Becoming, motion. Everything concrete appears only to vanish again. One moment is the grave of another. Unresting impulse urges us on into the unknown future. Man changes from Present to Present. He dies from one into the next. No state endures. He begins as child and ends as old man. At each stage the world appears to him otherwise, he is himself another. And if in his last hour he sums up the results of his life, he discerns that the person who is dying is not the same as the one who was born in days gone by. He has lived through as many particular existences as there have been moments to be counted in his lifetime. What was it that was abiding in the unceasing flux—the abiding for which he lived, for which he toiled, for the eternal continuance of which he longed?—it was not himself; it was a supra-personal.

Life is Becoming, motion. Every concrete thing blossoms only to wither away. One moment is the grave of another. So, too, one individual is the grave of another. Life strides onward over the bodies of the dead. Generations succeed each other in breathless haste. Blind impulse urges the living to sacrifice himself for the unborn Future. All creatures strive onward to far-off goals, which hardly one of them knows, and which none of those now living will ever reach. For what do individuals live?

Not for themselves. What is it which abides in the unceasing flux—the abiding for which they live, for which they toil, for the eternal continuance of which they long?—It is not the individuals either of to-day, or of to-morrow and the day after: it is a supra-individual.

Life is Becoming, motion. Every concrete thing comes into being only to pass away. One moment is the grave of another. So, too, one species is the grave of another. The types which once prevailed in the world, to-day exist no longer. We men, too, shall one day be forgotten. And yet Life urges us onward, irresistibly and consciously. Our ideal lies in the remotest future, in a future which perhaps lies beyond the race of Man. We will the advance, in the end even the advance beyond humanity. We cannot stand still. No type of life has ever yet been able to do so. All races pursue their own extinction. What is it which abides in the unceasing flux, the abiding for which they live, for which they toil, for the eternal continuance of which they long?—It is not the temporal types, races, and kinds; it is the eternal Life itself.

So everywhere the same spectacle is presented to us. The individual existence, in the change of its states and stages, is the reflection of the process of the race, the process of the race over the dead bodies of individuals is the mirror of the advance of Life.

Watch the mighty wave in the Ocean. Ever the same, it rolls onward, undeflected, to unknown goals. Unshaken, solid, and enduring as a rock it seems, and yet, at each moment, the structure of it alters, at each instant the water of which it is composed changes. What is the wave which abides? We can see it, we can hear it roar, but we cannot comprehend it; it escapes us. All that is palpable is unstable. Only the direction of motion is unchanged. What is this direction?

Man's existence is like this wave. At each moment the conscious person forms the crest of it. It seems always the same. And yet at each moment it is composed of different elements. Only in change is its Being made known.

Life is like this wave. It rolls on into the darkness of the Future, always the selfsame wave, only rarely checked perhaps by cliffs, changing its direction a little. The wave seems everywhere the same: and yet at each moment it is made up of different matter. It changes unceasingly. What is the wave which abides? It is not to be comprehended. All that is palpable is unstable. Only the direction of motion is unchanged. What is this direction?

What is Life? We can see it, we can feel it; comprehend it we cannot:

Before it words turn back,
And thoughts, failing to find it.[1]

All philosophy ends at last, in resignation before the Inscrutable, in awe before the great Mystery.

[1] *Taittirîya-Upanishad*, 2. 4.

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