

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY

**OU\_166174**

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY





OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 170/1378E Accession No. 5352

Author Bontroux, Emile

Title Education and Ethics

This book should be returned on or before the date  
last marked below.



# EDUCATION AND ETHICS

BY

EMILE BOUTROUX

MEMBER OF THE ACADEMY

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION BY

FRED ROTHWELL

LONDON

WILLIAMS & NORGATE

14 HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

1913



## PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

ALTHOUGH delivered in a school, the following lectures are by no means lessons, in the classic sense of the word. They come under no syllabus, nor are they connected with any special course. They are familiar and homely chats, intended to be listened to, not with pen in hand, as though notes were to be taken and subsequently elaborated for classical purposes, but rather with mind and heart alert, as when we are dealing with things that concern us personally.

It does not therefore follow, nowever, that, in my mind at all events, they are alien to the purpose or function of school life. For though it is not altogether the object of these lectures to be teachings, they nevertheless concern the spirit of teaching.

There is one danger which, unless I am mistaken, is a constant menace to school teaching



as compared with the instruction the child receives in the family or the outer world : the pupils look upon it as something abstract and artificial, bearing no relation to realities, and therefore without any practical value or genuine interest to themselves.

The distinctive object of the following lectures was, in the first place, to remind future teachers of this truth,—a thoroughly elementary one, though often forgotten,—that school exercises do not constitute artificial gymnastics for the memory or imagination, practised with a view to examinations, but that they are made up of the best and purest elements that men have yet discovered for the purpose of raising to its highest point the dignity and power, beauty and greatness of human life ; and that the objects of teaching, when set forth in their true light, instead of being repulsive or unattractive, are really of the deepest and most universal interest imaginable. *De te . . . Fabula narratur* : “Thou thyself art the subject-matter of this discourse,” is what the master both can and ought to make his pupils feel with reference to everything he teaches.

More than this, I do not think that the school, however excellent it be, should take

unreserved possession of the human being, and claim to set up rules and regulations for the entire sphere of the intellect and soul. I believe in the reality and inviolability of mind and conscience, and, in these lectures, I appeal to this autonomous part or element of the soul, to prompt and stimulate it to true being and self-development, to the living of its own life amid all the influences legitimately exercised over us by clever and experienced masters.

It was my purpose,—apart from school lessons, whose immediate object is instruction,—to introduce something akin to subjects for meditation on science and life; something of a nature, more particularly, to induce the habit of reflection.

In short, when giving these lectures, I had in mind a certain idea of education. Nowadays, the scientific term, pedagogy, is continually being used to replace the old word, education. No great harm is done if it really is education, and nothing more, that is meant by the word pedagogy. But I do not think we should be strictly adhering to truth if we meant thereby that the way of bringing up children, formerly designated by the word education, has now had its day, and that a

new word,—a Greek word, at all events,—is needed for an altogether new and exclusively scientific conception.

Leaving words aside, if we consider things themselves, we ought to reject two opposing doctrines, alike exclusive and inadequate.

The first is one which, under the pretence that will and intelligence are two distinct faculties, looks on the education of the will as sufficient unto itself, and depreciates the rôle of intelligence, knowledge, and reflection in the formation of the human being.

Now, do away with thought, and what will be left, under the name of will, except a blind force? And what can the education of such a force be, except a kind of mechanical training, unworthy of man? “The very principle of ethics,” said Pascal, “lies in the effort to think well.”

On the other hand, however, it is quite true that scientific exactness and mere amount of knowledge are anything but sufficient to give an impulse to the will and determine it in the direction of the good. Such knowledge even is not all that is needed to make a man truly intelligent. To say that it is possible to set everything down in formulæ, and reduce education, even instruction, to a mere com-

munication and realization of these formulæ, is to subject man to an intellectual compulsion no less oppressive than a mechanical one. In the first-mentioned quotation, Pascal did not use the word "know," he used the word "think."

And indeed, even if the sum total of knowledge, strictly so-called, is, speaking generally, ineffectual over the power of will and self-determination, which is the principle of human activity, it is not the same with the quality of the very mind and intellect which acquires and assimilates knowledge. Instead of being able to do without thought as thus interpreted, true morality takes thought for granted. Morality implies choice, discernment, delicacy, lofty ideas and character; and all these conditions presuppose the participation of the intellect, as well as of the will; they depend on the kind and degree of intellectual culture.

Education, in its true and complete meaning, is not the acquisition of any particular habit or knowledge, but rather the cultivation of the human being, with all his physical, intellectual, and moral powers; it is not the confiscation of his freedom for the benefit of a machine, however scientific and powerful this latter be

regarded; it is the development of this very freedom itself. The task of the educator is a strange one: to act on mind and conscience in such a way as to render them capable of thinking and judging, of themselves; to determine initiative, arouse spontaneity, and fashion human beings into freedom. The work is as glorious as it is difficult; it is something of like nature with divine creation. It is God's purpose, said Pascal, "to impart to His creatures the dignity of causality."

EMILE BOUTROUX.

## INTRODUCTION

THE present volume consists of lectures delivered, at various times, at the Fontenay school, a training college, so to speak, for teachers in elementary schools. The students enter about the age of twenty, and spend at least two years there. They number about seventy, and are divided into the two categories of science and art students. Several subjects of instruction are common to both: literature, psychology, morals, and pedagogy. This peculiarity is in accordance with the principle which dominates the entire scheme, for in this school all instruction must have true education as its aim and object.

The able and devoted principal is desirous that the students—apart from the regular instruction—should from time to time listen to expositions on subjects that are important in themselves, and quite independent of ex-

aminations, given by persons who have no connection with the ordinary staff, and calculated either to complete their general course of instruction or to instil a spirit of reflection and moral conduct.

Accordingly, I have here dealt with a few questions touching on education and ethics. Still, although these talks were prepared for a special audience, as it were, I did not allow my thought to assume any particular form. I cannot believe that cleverness, however well-meaning, forms any part of a sound method of education: at school, as in life, there is only one thing that is worthy of being offered the human mind, namely, what one conscientiously looks upon as true.

Such considerations, however, hardly apply in the case of a school like the one at Fontenay, in which the students have long passed the age of childhood, and whom a liberal and enlightened management has accustomed to live and appreciate the truth. But if we give wider scope to the problem, and inquire in what spirit we ought, in school, to deal with matters which no longer apply simply to instruction, but to education, properly so-called, we are compelled to acknowledge that an answer is not readily forthcoming. When dealing with children

who are strangers to us, how far have we the right to regard ourselves as educators, in the strict sense of the word? Are we sufficiently sure of the things we teach? Have we the necessary authority for the playing of such a rôle? May it not well be that what we call our principles turn out to be nothing but our individual opinions, after all? Does our right go beyond the teaching of facts, which, strictly speaking, is what the parents expect of us, and which alone admits of some degree of verification? Can we help asking ourselves such questions as these?

One thing, at all events, appears indisputable: the school has no right to show itself indifferent to education. Since it evidently exercises an influence both on character and on intelligence, we must do our best to make this influence a good one. It is here, however, that the difficulty begins.

Some of the finest minds of the eighteenth century considered that enlightenment, by setting man free, of necessity makes him better and happier. According to this theory, it would appear that the school, in fulfilling its educative mission, had no need to regard education as an end distinct from instruction, properly so-called. Pursuing, as though for its



own sake, the march of intellect, by exclusively adopting the standpoint of science as the study of facts and of the relations that exist between them, the school might claim that it is at the same time working at that training of the will which also we expect of it.

It is doubtful if the problem of education in school can be solved in this summary fashion. Even in the eighteenth century, Rousseau inquired whether intellectual progress has moral progress for its necessary consequence; he maintained that, for civilization to have the happy effect of transforming a human being acting by instinct into a reasonable and free individual, it must be dominated by the idea of the moral determinations of human nature. Indeed, experience and reasoning alike seem to demonstrate that instruction is, above all else, an instrument which may be put either to a good or to a bad use—like the tongue, in *Æsop's fable*. It may offer a certain number of resources to education, though it does not include this latter, which possesses principles of its own, and requires to be pursued for its own sake.

Is it not, then, right that the school should openly undertake the dual mission of instruction and education, and employ the means

suitable to each of them? The question is soon answered if we content ourselves with vague generalities, though it will prove very embarrassing to anyone who is determined to give a precise reply.

Certainly, we ought to train and educate, and not merely instruct. But how far, and in what way can this be done? Evidently we could not undertake the task of making family and society useless, and, unaided, moulding the child's consciousness. We have not sufficient power to accomplish such a work; nor have we the right to attempt it. Granted that we have the courage of our convictions, the will to act well; still, how do we know that our convictions are not, in the eyes of others, purely individual fancies of our own? Or that our action will not be looked upon as a species of moral oppression, an attempt to monopolize others?

It may be alleged that there is a means of rendering effective and legitimate this dealing with men's consciences, by having it regulated and sanctioned by State laws or some other recognized authority. Still, the task of moulding the conscience is equally opposed to the idea of human dignity, whether attempted by the State or by an individual. The power at

the disposal of public authority may even render it only the more odious.

Nevertheless, may there not be some supreme means of overcoming these objections? Do they not altogether disappear if we lay down the principle that under no pretext should the action of the educator tend to oppress the conscience, but rather that his mission is to create men capable of thinking and acting for themselves, men having, along with the moral code and the idea of duty, the will to conform thereto, for no other reason than that they feel themselves free? How could moral education involve the taking possession of men's consciences if that which it has to create is, strictly speaking, the autonomy of the conscience?

These formulæ require to be defined with the utmost precision if we want them to be as beneficial in reality as they appear satisfactory from the logical point of view. We know that Rousseau was reassured as to the character of absolutism which sovereign power set forth in his theory, by affirming to himself that there could be no oppression where the compelling of men to be free was the only thing to be considered. One should not deliberately be easy in mind about the legitimacy of dealing

with men's consciences by a process of reasoning similar to that of Rousseau.

Naturally, we ought to regard education as culminating in that identification of will with law which alone ensures the practice of the good and gives the latter all its value. But this end itself sufficiently indicates how scrupulous the educator must be in the choice of the means he uses. Really, in order that the autonomy of the conscience may be true and moral, not illusory, on the one hand, the law with which the will identifies itself must be as universal as possible, and, on the other, the will must retain its full freedom and activity. It is to be feared, however, that the kind of autonomy which the educator is to create will not be of that nature! Is it certain that he will adhere to strictly universal laws and ideas, that he will confine his action upon the child's soul within just limits, if he attributes to himself the distinctive mission of developing his conscience? Will not his very solicitude for the child, the zeal he bestows on him and his anxiety to afford him a favourable environment, be likely to defeat the object he has in view? And may it not happen that, the more he endeavours to create an autonomous person, the more he inculcates on the child his own

personality? And this would happen, moreover, without his knowing it, for it is surprising how readily we acknowledge that others should think for themselves, when they happen to think as we do.

It must not be forgotten that the child's mind is still void of ideas, and that the idea of being someone is very seductive to him. He will be doubly passive if, along with the natural activity of teaching, you prescribe independence and personality. He will adopt your ideas all the more ardently, if he finds himself authorized and induced to believe them his own. He will be somewhat in the position of a man under the influence of suggestion, and who thinks he is all the more himself in proportion to the extent to which his will has been replaced by that of another.

Such is the danger, one that must be carefully avoided; and the safest course to follow will always be to commence the education of conscience with the utmost discretion. This is also the most proper attitude to adopt, for the school ought not to allow the family and society generally to think that they can rely upon it for the bringing up of their children. Of course, the school will contribute thereto to the best of its power, though only as

a collaborator, not as the sole responsible educator. And, after all, though confined to these limits, it is far from being reduced to a state of impotence.

Suppose the masters have been chosen most scrupulously, from the moral standpoint, as they ought to be. Their life, individuality, professional integrity, indeed, their every action and word, already constitute a most effective moral instruction: instruction by example. Nor is this all. Between instruction regarded as immediately and necessarily of a moralizing nature, and education conceived of as separate from instruction, there is a middle term: education by instruction. Now this, strictly speaking, is the rôle of the public teacher: instruction, not preaching. Amongst the subjects of instruction, however, there are some that bear more directly on morals: to these he will give preference in his teaching. Nor let the objection be urged that, in this category of things, knowledge is nothing and action everything, that there is an enormous difference between a lesson repeated without a mistake and the effort to put into practice what one has learnt. Of a surety, Socrates' famous doctrine, according to which the man who is really in possession of the science of the

good cannot fail to wish to do good, was not wholly paradoxical. Of course, all science is not effective in making man better, but ethical science, strictly so-called, is an important motive in a man's actions, all the more so when he sees that his masters themselves conform their conduct to their teachings.

Of what should this teaching of ethics consist? Will it aim at inculcating in pupils a dogmatic system, regarded as the most perfect expression of truth, in this order of things? Far from me the thought of depreciating the magnificent speculations of an Aristotle or a Kant! But here, we are dealing with life, not merely with thought. Now, without considering the difficulty, in the case of imperfectly trained intellects, of understanding these learned systems, who would dare to attribute to any one of them such a degree of certainty as would allow of the teaching of that particular system being made obligatory? Of course we may give them the demonstrative form of mathematics, but we do not thereby change the nature of the principles on which they are based. It cannot be denied that these principles — duty, happiness, dignity, right, freedom, pleasure, interest, solidarity, the struggle for life, social existence, equality.

national existence—are all more or less devoid of that exactness and capacity of proof which characterize mathematical notions. Accordingly, they stand over against each other without any one of them ever being assured of a decisive victory. Left to systems, teaching would be obscure, pretentious, abstract and exposed to the dogmatism and fancies of individuals.

Must we, then, appeal to science, and call upon it to deduce the laws of ethics, starting with those of life and sensibility?

Descartes affirmed this, though he desired to set up a scientific system of ethics: ethics, as thus understood, can only come after all the other sciences. Its object is more complex than any of the rest. As long as the other sciences are imperfect, it is premature to take up ethics. We risk being utterly mistaken if we consistently develop principles that are incomplete or erroneous. Still, one must live, and action does not wait. We are compelled to seek elsewhere for the maxims which even the boldest science says we can hope for only in the very distant future; we must supplement demonstrative evidence by practical common sense.

How, indeed, does each individual proceed



when determining the moral maxims according to which he is to regulate his conduct? To me, this seems the all-important question; it is artificial and illegitimate to adopt for the school a method different from the one pursued by ordinary people in real life.

Now, speaking generally, we do not regulate our conduct by metaphysics; at all events, we do not confine ourselves to any particular system. Still less do we take a pride in scientific exactness; for if we did so, just as we apply to an engineer for the solution of a problem in practical mechanics, *a fortiori* should we consult a deontologist by profession for the solution of a moral problem. Our thought, however, nurtured by life, by observation and conversation, by reading and general knowledge, fastens upon certain ideas which seem more important and true, more noble and inviolable than the rest; and from these ideas we construct a sort of code the infringement of which we deem to be wrong. The more our knowledge and intelligence are developed, the wider is the basis of our ethics and the greater our efforts to introduce harmony and unity therein. But the maxims taken direct from tradition and life are the one thing essential, and we readily adopt one

or another of the systems outlined in our mind, when we think that some particular contrary maxim, brought before the bar of a tender conscience, possesses superior value.

It is all the more fitting to adhere to this method and prefer it to the dogmatic teaching of such and such a system of philosophy, since these very systems, like those that each of us form for ourselves, are really nothing but the reflection of great minds on the moral notions by which mankind lives. This is recognized by Kant, whom we are almost tempted to mention as belonging to the purely speculative type of philosopher. He tells us that he starts with common moral notions. To him, the existence of ethics is a fact, as is the existence of science. His philosophy could no more aim at establishing ethics than at establishing the laws of nature. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he explains how science is possible, *i.e.* intelligible: in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he likewise reflects on ethics, as it is given to us, trying to discover its essential elements, after the fashion of a chemist, by determining their nature and rôle.

In setting up their systems of ethics, then,

the greatest men of genius have acted none otherwise than the masses of the people. Still, it does not follow, by any means, that we should look upon their efforts as useless. On the contrary, we shall be only the more eager to call upon them to help us, as far as our intelligence allows, once we learn that this is the very work they have had in view, whilst elaborating their sublime theories.

What, exactly, is the object we should have before us when reflecting on common moral ideas? Here, too, we must consider actual man engaged in actual life: the problems with which he is confronted are not like those the scholar has to meet. The scholar has several possible hypotheses to examine; it is his business to adopt one by eliminating the rest. What he purposes to set up is a principle devoid of any internal contradiction. But in practical life, what has most frequently to be done is to reconcile causes which, logically, seem contradictory. To succeed, sometimes a middle term is taken, or ground sought on which the contradictions are modified. Frequently a solution is accepted which has real drawbacks, because it offers greater advantages. The man of action knows that in everything there is evil mixed with good; he takes the whole

*en bloc*, provided there is more of the good, since it is not possible for him to separate the one from the other.

The educator cannot do better than teach that which is, in effect, the object of our meditations in real life. He will take the noblest and most profound expressions of moral consciousness, and, following the example of a man who lives and acts in society itself, will endeavour to reconcile them with one another. He will understand that the "city-state" which sufficed for the Greeks will not satisfy the men of the present day; that the latter also see things essentially good in family life, in human brotherhood, in science, justice, respect for the dictates of conscience, in freedom, work, and equality; and he will persuade men that the best conduct is that which, from so many points of view, reconciles the greatest number of interests and makes the least number of victims. He will mistrust the—by no means practical—idea of the absolute. All the works of man are defective in some way. To be bent on retaining only such as are good in every respect, would mean that they would all have to be condemned.

But will not this *rapprochement* of the most diverse ideas risk being aught else than disorder

and confusion? Will men wait until harmony comes of itself, or will they be guided by certain principles? Of course, one must guard against artificial and individual constructions or theories; but it is unnecessary to have recourse to them in order to be able, in some degree, to organize moral ideas.

Much has been said against the method of authority. In science, it has no place, but who amongst us never employs this method in daily life? In the absence of a material or rational criterion, what is there more important than the continued attachment of mankind to certain ideas, the hoary antiquity of some maxim that is still living, the testimony of a Socrates, a Marcus Aurelius, or a Pascal? The virtuous man, said Aristotle, is himself the measure and standard of virtue. And is not the agreement between human intellects, especially the loftiest, as to the ends suitable to the activity of man, a true criterion?

Consequently, I am not without guides; I find controlling principles when I commune with men in general and with the greatest thinkers and noblest men of all times. Perhaps, for practical purposes, the whole of wisdom may be summed up in the well-known line: *Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum*

*puto*. It would be strange if a man were to reject—without wishing to retain anything therein—the ideas and feelings that have created the human race and endowed it with the blessings and aspirations to which, even nowadays, it is attached. How much more natural, just, and healthy in every way to seek in all the mighty manifestations of human nature the fundamentally human element they cannot fail to contain, to accept it devoutly and revivify it by incarnating it within new forms! If we desire to deduce from the preceding reflections certain positive consequences immediately applicable to instruction, these consequences will be the following.

Morality must be lived before it can be taught; it is first introduced into school life by example. Here, less than anywhere else, has the teacher the right to give free play to his imagination or his individual inclination. He can speak only in terms of the universal. Not only will he have regard for all his pupils,—and not merely a few,—but he will speak quite freely, saying only what may be heard by the whole of society. Moreover, what he says is no less binding on himself than on his hearers. Ethics makes no distinction between master and pupil.

To the question: "Why should one do this and avoid that?" the master can give but one reply, the only one, after all, possible to a human being: "This is good, that is evil." We do not bring up children by teaching them to split hairs on the question of duty. The paterfamilias, who is continually being brought into touch with the realities of life, knows that only one answer is adequate and effective: "This must not be done; that must be done." The force of this reply lies in the fact that both great and small are on an equality with respect to it.

The master will find an opportunity of telling his pupils what they ought to do and what to avoid with reference to every subject of instruction. Work, as well as play, should be dominated by ideas of duty, conscience, and honour; and, without the slightest attempt at preaching, children can easily be reminded of the constant observance of these principles. Besides, if we take into account certain subjects of instruction, such as history and literature, it is clear that the man who does not abide by words and material facts, but sees in them their real constituents, *i.e.* the ideas, feelings, and destinies of the human mind, is continually

being supplied with the means of moral culture and instruction.

As an exercise more directly appropriate to this culture, the study of remarkable examples or maxims, found in history and literature, may be recommended.

In all probability, example is the very essence of moral motive. What was it that brought Christianity into being: a theory, or a life?

Maxims are that form of theory which comes nearest to practice. The Stoics and Epicureans, who claimed that their philosophy was a kind of life, reduced it to a series of aphorisms. Leibnitz, in order to guard men against psittacism, which repeats words without being affected by them or making any effort to put them into practice, was fond of repeating: "Reflect on them, and remember." This precept implies that one has the ideas in mind, in the form of maxims. And, as a matter of fact, how powerful is a thought arrayed in that glorious form, under which it becomes established for all time! Would a lengthy discourse make a deeper impression on us than this couplet of Corneille:

*Un père est toujours père :  
Rien n'en peut effacer le sacré caractère ?*



A very forcible maxim remains graven on the memory, constantly recurs to the mind, is assimilated with our very being both in charm of form and in wealth and profundity of idea, and imperceptibly becomes a motive, a principle of action, an element of the will.

Consequently, it would be a very useful practice, though a simple and unpretentious one, to dictate every day to one's pupils either the recital of some noble deed or a maxim taken from the religious, moral, or literary storehouse of mankind. The master would find it interesting if he himself were to choose and arrange them in some definite order. These short stories and maxims might be learnt by heart and frequently repeated. The master would carefully explain them, draw useful comparisons, and, as far as his general knowledge and powers permitted, extract from them the material for more or less lofty and philosophical reflections. Such instruction is possible to the least ambitious, and yet is capable of satisfying the most learned. Have great preachers done anything more than expound the maxims and texts of the Scriptures?

Based on such foundations, the teaching of ethics in school will readily escape the reproach

of being obscure and abstract, uninteresting, difficult, or subject to the fancy or whim of an individual. Let the moral worth of the masters be such as to command respect; let them feel that they possess that freedom of action which is the condition of all good and even of the sense of responsibility; let them give instruction openly, relying on the sympathy and counsel of their natural supporters; and if they do this, the school will not fail to contribute its due share towards the moral education of youth. It will hand on to the young the noblest lessons mankind has bequeathed to us; surely the best way of making men of them.

In this spirit the following addresses have been conceived. It is not their object to teach some particular system dogmatically, but rather to call attention to the most important moral ideas involved in our civilization. These types of ethics should first be considered in themselves, in such fashion that one may become aware of their affinity with the human soul. And it is only when a man is thoroughly master of these types that he has the right to ask himself whether they are in harmony with or in opposition to one another, whether it is better to choose from amongst

them or to endeavour to reconcile them. By adopting the opposite method and judging moral data in accordance with a preconceived system, we should run the risk of neglecting some important conquests of human consciousness and of violating the sublime rule so well expressed in Terence's line, just quoted.

Two of the following lectures specially refer to the practice of instruction and education. The predominating idea is as follows.

It is good to make a distinction between education and pedagogy; at all events when this latter is given the restricted interpretation with which we so frequently meet.

Education, pure and simple, makes straight for the end it has in view, employing the methods suggested by ordinary good sense, tact, and affection, or taught by observation and experience. Pedagogy, as interpreted by its most famous representatives, mocks at these natural processes and cunningly endeavours to substitute therefor methods that are learned and artificial. It usually sees in the child a being apart, an animal to be converted into a man, and which, moreover, can be trained as we please, provided we know how to set about it. Justifying the means by the end, it employs well-meaning falsehoods

and ruses; its various inventions fill it with self-admiration. What is the good of creating a new science, built up on several other sciences, if, all the same, we act like an ordinary, common-sense person? This is why the pedagogy of which I speak never proceeds along a straight path, but is ever on the look-out for side-tracks. It insists upon the child thinking that he is himself advancing to his goal; it claims that he should regard, as the effort of nature alone, what, in reality, is the product of nature engineered and set moving by the operator. When pedagogy speaks only of nature, art is not sufficient; it appeals to artifice.

“This, I think, is sufficiently evident,” said Locke in his *Principles of Education*, “that children generally hate to be idle. All the care, then, is that their busy humour should be constantly employed in something of use to them; which, if you will attain, you must make what you would have them do a recreation to them, and not a business. The way to do this so that they may not perceive you have any hand in it, is this proposed here, viz., to make them weary of that which you would not have them do, by enjoining and making them under some pretence or other

do it till they are surfeited. For example, does your son play at top and scourge too much? Enjoin him to play so many hours every day and look that he do it; and you shall see he will quickly be sick of it, and willing to leave it. By this means making the recreations you dislike a business to him, he will of himself with delight betake himself to those things you would have him do, especially if they be proposed as rewards for having performed his task in that play is commanded him. For if he be ordered every day to whip his top so long as to make himself sufficiently weary, do you not think he will apply himself with eagerness to his book, and wish for it, if you promise it him as a reward for having whipped his top lustily, quite out, all the time that is set him? Children, in the things they do, if they comport with their age, find little difference so they may be doing. The esteem they have for one thing above another they borrow from others; so that what those about them make to be a reward to them will really be so. By this art it is in their governor's choice whether scotch-hoppers shall reward their dancing, or dancing their scotch-hoppers; whether peg-top or reading, playing at trap or studying the globes, shall

be more acceptable and pleasing to them ; all that they desire being to be busy, as they imagine, in things of their own choice, and which they receive as favours from their parents, or others, for whom they have respect and with whom they would be in credit.”<sup>1</sup>

Rousseau wishes to teach Émile the origin of property, and so instils in him the longing to cultivate a garden. He works not for Émile's pleasure, but for his own ; so Émile thinks, at all events. The latter is delighted to see his beans sprouting. The tutor, following out his idea, says : “ This belongs to you ; in this earth there is something of yourself, which you can claim against anyone in the world.” Well, one fine morning, they find the beans torn up, the whole ground in disorder. The child is filled with grief and despair ; everyone shares in his sorrow and righteous indignation. On due investigation, they finally discover that it is the gardener who has done all the damage. Questioned, he replies : “ So it is you gentlemen who have been disposing, in this way, of my land, and replacing my Maltese melons with beans ? I forbid you to enter my garden at all, in future.” The

<sup>1</sup> Locke, *Principles of Education*, xviii.

tutor's object is attained: Émile now understands the origin of property.<sup>1</sup>

Basedow, the celebrated founder of the *Philanthropinum* of Dessau, will not allow any restriction of the freedom to play, in the case of children, but the master ought so to arrange things that the children scarcely ever choose other games than those in which he wishes to see them engage. And since, in the *Philanthropinum*, study is a game, the child ought always to wish to study. In case, however, he offers resistance, he is put to the game of manual labour, which is rendered just as painful and disagreeable as is necessary to induce him, of his own accord, to request that he be allowed to resume his studies. It is important, adds Basedow, to accustom the child to moderate his desires and overcome his dislikes. To succeed in this, from a pedagogic standpoint, he is to be made accustomed to refusals, without being given the reason. Even should we be inclined to satisfy his desires, he must sometimes be made to wait, or only the half of what he wants must be offered to him. Occasionally, eating, drinking, or recreation time will suddenly be broken in upon, and the child put to some other exer-

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau, *Émile*, book ii.

cise. If he shows distaste for certain articles of diet, that is a reason for compelling him to eat them, by depriving him of all other nourishment.<sup>1</sup>

This is what is called the return to nature. In reality, between the child and the end aimed at are interposed a crowd of artifices to which importance is attached, because skill or cleverness is shown in carrying them out, and the teacher is made fully aware of his rôle as an educator.

Now, the use of these artifices is an illegitimate use. You have no more right to deceive a child than you have to deceive a man; it is wrong to make him believe that he wants, of his own accord, what, as a matter of fact, is suggested to him. Even were your fraud never to be discovered, you would still have done wrong in setting falsehood to serve truth. But as the chances are a thousand to one that the trick will be found out, the result is that, under the pretence of teaching grammar or geography, you pervert the child's inmost nature.

Moreover, these learned methods are by no means so efficacious or necessary as is imagined.

<sup>1</sup> Pinloche, *La Réforme de l'éducation en Allemagne au dix-huitième siècle*, Basedow et le Philanthropinisme, p. 219, etc.



However ingenious they may be considered, they call the child's interest and attention to something intermediary, and prevent him from fixing his mind on the end in view. Troubled, and righteously indignant at his discomfiture, Émile is in no fit mood to profit by the lesson in political economy his tutor has carefully prepared for him. Accustomed to look upon work as nothing but a game or as material for the satisfaction of his *amour-propre*, the child will take no interest in the object of his studies; and, on leaving school, will lose no time in forgetting the scanty store of instruction so feebly impressed on his mind.

Children must be brought face to face with realities, not with pedagogic phantoms. Nothing less than truth is good enough for them, it alone has the power to force itself upon their intelligence. What a difference in attractiveness and efficacy between instruction in which things are treated as words, and instruction in which the things underlying the words are sought for! A distinguished German professor once told me that in 1867, after completing in a French college a course of studies previously carried on in a German one, he was amazed at the real, the living character of the teaching of philosophy in

France, the instruction he had received in Germany appearing to him cold and scholastic in comparison.

It is the application of these ideas to certain questions of education with which the last four addresses deal. Their tendency is to show that direct mental contact with the main objects of literature and science is both possible and efficacious in the school itself, that truth is intelligible and desirable for its own sake, and that the principal object of the educator is to show it forth as it really is, not to disguise it beneath so-called adaptations.

It is with education as with ethics. To be a man and to mould and fashion men by the contact of the individual with the mass of mankind: such is the law.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGES
PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR . . . . .	V-X
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	xi-xxxix

## THE PRINCIPAL TYPES OF ETHICS

### ✓ I. HELLENIC OR ESTHETIC ETHICS

(a) Its origins . . . . .	1-3
(b) Rational ethics of Socrates . . . . .	4-6
(c) Aristotle's system . . . . .	7-13
(d) Stoic and Epicurean ethics . . . . .	14-15
(e) Effect upon human life . . . . .	16-20
(f) Sources of weakness . . . . .	21-24

### ✓ II. CHRISTIAN OR RELIGIOUS ETHICS

(a) Spiritual interpretation of ancient practices and prophecies . . . . .	25-29
(b) Realization of the Kingdom of God; Christian asceticism; characteristics of the Christian spirit . . . . .	30-38
(c) Spread of Christianity; ascetic and joyous mysticism . . . . .	39-50
(d) Present and future obstacles to Christian ethics . . . . .	51-53

## III. MODERN OR SCIENTIFIC ETHICS

	PAGES
(a) Scope of science; difficulties of setting up a scientific system of ethics . . . . .	54-58
(b) Mathematical demonstration of ethics . . . . .	59-61
(c) The ethics of modern utilitarian philosophers . . . . .	62-64
(d) Biological and naturalistic ethics . . . . .	65-72
(e) Conflict between Hellenism, Christianity, and science, and their reconciliation . . . . .	73-79

## PESSIMISM

(a) Its wide scope and influence . . . . .	80
(b) Definition of true pessimism; analysis of its doctrine . . . . .	81-95
(c) Refutations of pessimistic arguments; importance of belief in duty and in cultivating a spirit of optimism if the influence of pessimism is to be counteracted . . . . .	96-113

## THE MOTIVES OF STUDY

(a) The chief incentives are emulation, love of praise, and utility . . . . .	114-120
(b) The instinct of curiosity must be fostered . . . . .	121-122
(c) Respect for greatness in art, science, and literature should be cultivated . . . . .	123-127
(d) Admiration and love inevitably follow such an attitude of mind . . . . .	128-133
(e) The transition from feeling to action . . . . .	134-136
(f) Intrinsic motives better than extrinsic ones; the Greek conception of work and play . . . . .	137-142

## CONTENTS

xliii

### READING ALOUD

	PAGES
(a) Why does reading give life to the written word? Plato's answer . . . . .	143-147
(b) The fallacy of expressionless reading and the duty of self-effacement; their reconciliation; the immorality of artifice and the virtue of sincerity; appeals must be made to emotion, intellect, and sense; rhythmical quality of the French language	148-160
(c) Technical precepts: timbre, respiration, pronunciation, proportional grouping together of subject-matter; the music of language: intonation, delivery, rhythm .	161-166
(d) The reading of French poetry; the three accents: tonic, rhythmic, and oratorical.	167-174
(e) Form and substance inseparable; the living <i>word</i> contains within itself thought, force, and action . . . . .	175-177

### INTERROGATION

(a) The art of questioning approved of by the greatest men in history . . . . .	178-180
(b) The interest and advantages of interrogation in class; security of knowledge, strengthening of memory, and concentration are all acquired by interrogation; the art of questioning teaches one to speak, to think, and to live . . . . .	181-191
(c) True and false methods of interrogation; necessity of repeating questions and varying their form . . . . .	192-207

- (d) Danger of too much questioning; the enormous importance of interrogation in the case of beginners; effects on adult development . . . . . 208-210

## SCHOOL AND LIFE

- (a) The perils of scholasticism; evil tendency of the school to become a substitute, rather than a preparation, for life . . . . 211-216
- (b) Criticism of the various modes of eradicating the evil, including the pragmatistic method denounced by Socrates; utility though inadequacy of the self-education of children; value of moral instruction inculcated by the teacher, who should be more than a trainer; study of the written word necessary in the cultivation of true independence . . . . . 217-225
- (c) Childhood has its right of existence *per se*, it is more than a preface to mature age; only where this right is recognized is there a sane preparation for adult life; the rôle of the school is to act as a medium between past and present generations . . . . . 226-232

- INDEX . . . . . 233-236

# EDUCATION AND ETHICS

## THE PRINCIPAL TYPES OF ETHICS

### I

#### HELLENIC OR ESTHETIC ETHICS<sup>1</sup>

I PURPOSE to place before you a picture of the great systems of ethics offered us by present-day civilization. Without either going back to origins or entering into a full survey, I shall endeavour to set forth, in their characteristic traits, the main types of perfection in accordance with which, consciously or unconsciously, we regulate our moral estimates and conduct. These types are as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Books for study: Xenophon, *Memorabilia*; Plato, *Gorgias*, *Phædo*, *Republic*, book vi.; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, books i., v., viii., x.; Cleanthes, *Hymn to Jupiter*; Plutarch, *Moral Works*, *Manual of Epictetus*; Marcus Aurelius, *Thoughts*.



Hellenic or esthetic ethics, Christian or religious ethics, modern or scientific ethics. What are the origins, the essential elements and the value of these conceptions? What rôle may they rightly play in our lives?

In the first place, of what does Hellenic ethics consist?

## I

Ethics came into being in Greece when reason grasped the reins of human life, which had hitherto been held by religion.

This religion, which played so great a part in the organization of societies in antiquity, had a dual origin; the religion of the dead and the religion of nature. The religion of the dead is based on the belief that departed ancestors continue to protect the family, provided that its chief pays them a certain degree of worship. With this belief are connected essential moral notions: that of the unity and continuity of the family, that of the obligation and sanctity of marriage, those of paternal authority, property, and fatherland. It would, however, have confined man within very narrow limits had not the religion of nature, the worship rendered to the deified natural forces, the belief in gods who

protect all men,—not merely a restricted group,—broadened the mind of man and created therein a vague sense of universal brotherhood. “A stranger, a suppliant is a brother unto thee,” we read in Homer.<sup>1</sup> The poor and wretched are sent by Zeus; it even happens that they are frequently gods disguised as men.

In its dual form, religion nurtured the practical reason and awakened the moral consciousness. The latter soon turned against religion. The sages were scandalized at the fables of mythology. “Homer and Hesiod,” says Xenophanes, “attribute to the gods all that is looked upon as vile and shameful amongst men.”

From the fifth century onwards, another power begins to break in upon religion, and this is science, which undertakes to explain the phenomena of nature by mechanical and blind causes. The sun and stars, which, in religious thought, were gods, are, to the mind of Anaxagoras, but flaming stones. Moreover, the various schools of philosophy, Ionian, Pythagorean, Eleatic, atomistic, are far from being agreed amongst themselves; their disputes create scepticism in many minds.

<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey*, viii. 546.

Then the Sophists declare that no one can attain to certainty ; that one can know nothing, either of the gods or of the origin of the world ; that man is the standard of truth, and that in every department of knowledge there are, strictly speaking, only opinions. Hence they conclude that, in practical life, there is only one natural law : the search after pleasure.

## II

Such was the state of human consciousness amongst the thinkers of the Greek world when Socrates appeared, the true founder of ethics. He was the first to conceive the idea that ethics possessed a foundation distinct from religious tradition, and that, all the same, it was based neither on custom nor on instinct. He considered that there could be found, in the attentive methodical observation of human nature, the elements of a doctrine in which neither stability, elevation of mind nor authority would be wanting. The main thing to do was clearly to discern the true nature of man. Socrates' ethics is the first attempt at a laic and rational system of ethics.

The spirit of Socratic ethics is contained wholly in the maxim, " Know thyself," understood in the profound, original sense distinctive

of Socrates. Know thyself; that is to say, endeavour, by reflection, to recognize that which, within thyself, is essential, general, and permanent, that which is characteristic of man, and act in conformity with the nature of this true self of thine. Let us then see what the Greeks meant by the true nature of man.

In their eyes, man's distinctive work, the work in which he reveals himself pre-eminently, is the formation of the "city-state" or political community. Some theorists nowadays regard political society as a mechanically natural phenomenon, in which the reflective reason of man has no part. The Greeks did not think thus; they saw, in the "city-state," an institution evidently founded on nature, but realized by the human mind, by thought and industry. The "city-state" was a work of art, the work of art *par excellence*.

Now, what is the "city-state"? What is its principle? It is essentially a harmony, intelligent order substituted for natural disorder, the balance set up between the various classes of men who represent the various capacities and needs of human nature. The moral idea manifested therein is that of moderation, order, and harmony. Thus, what the

Greek finds when he retires within himself is the power to conceive and realize harmony.

Consequently this idea is the foundation of Hellenic ethics. Mental self-culture, which implies the capacity to perceive the harmonious connexions between things, and the making of human life into a work of art by regulating it in accordance with the laws of the mind: such is the common groundwork of the various systems of ethics that flourished in Greece.

If we examine the most important of these systems, more especially that of Aristotle, the most distinctively Hellenic of them all, we shall see exactly the significance and import of this leading idea.

### III

In the first place, the individual should have order and moderation governing all his actions. As a rule, for practical life, Aristotle teaches that it is advisable always to keep to the golden mean. Now, to do this, one must remain master of oneself; consequently, the one pre-eminent virtue is self-control.

This doctrine is carried to great lengths. The sage of antiquity is inclined to regard, as legitimate, every exercise of the human faculties in which man remains master of himself. In

many things he has none of the delicacy or scruples associated with the modern conscience. Sometimes, strange to relate, we see him feigning asceticism and submitting to severe physical and moral tests; but the true Greek has here no other purpose than to strengthen his will. When Socrates remains a whole night with his feet in the snow, he is testing his strength of mind. When he bears with the wrath of Xantippe, he is showing neither indulgence nor resignation, he is using his wife to test himself.

The Greeks hold that the family, the first group of individuals, is a natural institution, but it is man's business to introduce therein all the beauty and perfection of which it is capable. And he will succeed in this, by bringing into the home, order, harmony, and the rule of reason. Why is authority the prerogative of the father? Because it is in him that reason is most developed. Consequently, the father should use his authority in governing by reason. What are to be the duties of man and wife? They must both work for the good of the community, according to their natural capacities. Between the two there exists complementary diversity of function rather than any relation of subordination the one to the

other. And the reason why the child must obey is not that he is weaker than the parent, but because, in him, reason exists only potentially: he obeys a reasonable authority so that he, in turn, may become reasonable. It is worthy of note that, to the sages of Greece, ethics takes no account whatsoever of force; it is the degree of reason alone that regulates the subordination of human beings.

Above the family we have the political association; here human life finds its full realization. Man, says Aristotle, is a political animal: an expression which has an extremely precise and altogether Greek meaning. By it we must understand that man is meant for the Hellenic "city-state," which is regarded, in contradistinction from barbaric, despotically ruled empires, as a community in which live free men, governed by reason.

The State has for its end the realization of justice; the sole ruler in the State is reason, manifested by the laws. These latter, however, are not sufficient for the full realization of justice in a human society, since they set forth only classes of actions, abstract generalities, from which the cases met with in real life are always more or less removed. This is why, along with the laws, there are needed

magistrates who in each case apply the law with tact and discretion, taking all the individual circumstances into account. The magistrate is the law made man, the law being determined in accordance with the varied and changing forms of life.

The idea of justice governs all the political conceptions of the Greeks. For instance, this is how Aristotle speaks of democracy, for which, by the way, he has little liking, though he regards it as a legitimate form of government. The majority, he says, make laws, not because they have the advantage of strength, but because they have that of reason. When a hundred men meet together to deliberate, their various degrees of intelligence are not purely and simply added on to one another, though each is a better man and possessed of clearer vision than if he were alone. The petty, capricious individuality is kept in the background, and the man universal merges into prominence. The result is a unity which is not a total, though it is the very ideal of reason and justice after which each individual vaguely aspires.

Justice, to the Greeks, is pre-eminently the one social virtue. True, it would appear as though there were to be found in Plato certain



maxims that go beyond the mere idea of justice and are inspired by feelings of charity. "We must do evil to no man, not even to the wicked," we read in the *Republic*.<sup>1</sup> Is not this an instance of Christian charity? Not at all, as we may easily see from the context. Suppose, adds Plato, you have a foundered horse, would you beat him unmercifully? Instead of effecting an improvement, you would end by making him good for nothing. It is exactly the same in the case of the wicked man, for he is both ignorant and diseased. By returning evil for evil, you aggravate the disease. You must do what is calculated to cure him; that is, you must deal justly with him and instruct him. Such action alone is reasonable and right.

Brought up by the "city-state," the sage aspires after an even more perfect realization of justice than political justice strictly so-called. Laws and magistrates deal with human beings in whom passion hinders reason; by obeying them, the citizen is acting from constraint even more than from persuasion. Suppose we have a society of men specially given up to the cult of reason and possessed of the perfect freedom that reason confers:

<sup>1</sup> Book i., chap. ix.

such men will be more than fellow-citizens, they will be friends. The common wisdom which will be the principle and bond of their friendship will ensure its stability and perfection, without there being any necessity to have recourse to external means. Thus, friendship according to the Greeks is only the superior form of justice. A man loves his friend because of his merits, his good qualities. Nothing is left to instinct, pure and simple ; nothing to unthinking sympathy. Here, as elsewhere, intelligence is the principle of excellence. It is the aim of the Greek to make of human life the image of reason.

To whatsoever heights we may have attained so far, we have not yet reached the goal of human progress. In reality, we have remained within the porch of the temple of wisdom : we have not entered the temple itself. We have seen reason struggling with nature and endeavouring to bring her under subjection ; we have seen man attempting to realize justice. But hitherto it has not been given us to contemplate justice and harmony themselves, absolutely and eternally realized.

Here we meet with the most significant trait of ethics in the whole of antiquity. The Greek sages set contemplation higher than

practical life or action, the end of which is to realize harmony in individual, family, and political life, and in relations of friendship. Perfect order—whose sublunary nature, a blend of thought and of matter subject to the law of gravitation, can never do more than bring its two constituents closer together—finds itself, on the other hand, fully realized in the economy of the celestial world. The heavenly bodies, composed of subtle matter, were regarded as gods by the Hellenes; they were the very essence of harmony, visible and apprehensible. How could one be content with a necessarily imperfect harmony, when face to face with divine harmony! Did not perfection, so far as man was concerned, consist in subordinating everything to the contemplation of the object wherein reason in all its fulness is manifested?

Now, this contemplation is science; for it is science that enables us to know the laws of the universe. It must not be forgotten that the word law, in the mind of the Greeks, had an esthetic sense that we moderns can scarcely grasp. Our scientists have taken away all poetry from the word. To us, laws are but the general and constant relations of phenomena to one another: to the Greeks they constituted

the order and harmony of things, the proportions assigned to them in respect to the beauty of the whole, the manifestation of intelligence which sets before itself a most worthy end and chooses the most suitable means of realizing it.

Aristotle has eloquently extolled the greatness of science, whose function it is to enable us to enjoy the harmony of the spheres. "If happiness," he says,<sup>1</sup> "is, so to speak, the echo of virtue in the soul, it is natural that the loftiest virtue should produce the most perfect happiness. Now, what faculty have we that is more divine than intelligence? Therefore the virtue or distinctive action of intelligence, *i.e.* science, is likewise the divine virtue *par excellence*."

He adds: "And so we must not follow the advice of those who insist that we can have only human feelings because we are men, and aspire only after the destiny of mortal creatures because we are mortal. On the contrary, we must endeavour, as far as in us lies, to make ourselves worthy of immortality, and do our best to conform our lives with the most sublime element within ourselves. For if this kind of life occupies but a small space in our

<sup>1</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, i., x.

earthly existence, its grandeur and dignity place it above all else."

Such was Hellenic ethics, in its purest and most complete form.

#### IV

After Aristotle, it develops, but undergoes modification. The quality of contemplation and action recognized by Aristotelian ethics offends the systematic minds of the new schools, and an effort is made to bring these two things within the compass of one only.

After the triumphs of Macedonia and Rome, there arose great empires in which the Greek "city-states" had been merged. The Greek philosophers conceived of these empires as extensions of the "city-state": it was their ambition to substitute the "city-state" of Jupiter for that of Cecrops, comprehending, with God, the whole universe. From that time, the barriers which ancient philosophy had set up between the world of action and that of contemplation were broken down. Now that earth was joined to heaven, divine harmony might be realized on earth itself, and supreme virtue—science, sinlessness, and beatitude, in one—was within the reach of man. No longer was he reduced to contemplating

divine perfection from below, he might himself become a god. A Stoic even declared that the sage is greater than Jupiter, because he has acquired for himself, by his own will, the perfection which Jupiter is fated to possess by his very nature.

Whereas the Stoics thus expand the possible so as to comprehend the ideal, the Epicureans, on the other hand, bring the ideal within the scope of the possible. They do not surrender harmony and reason, for they are Greeks ; but they seek in the most spontaneous manifestations of nature for that norm and measure of perfection it is given to man to realize. They, too, organize human life in accordance with a single notion, that of pleasure. Here it is the individual who falls back upon himself, whereas in Stoicism he claims equality with the whole.

## V

Hellenic ethics is not only a theory, an *ensemble* of abstract ideas : it has been realized, has produced great lives, and has had heroes and martyrs of its own. Socrates lived by it and died for it ; we should say that his life and death were sublime, did we regard them only from the outside ; but since they have their principle in reason and reflection, without the

alloy of *abandon* and passion, we ought rather to call them instinct with serene, classic beauty.

I will not dwell on Plato's account of the death of Socrates, with which we are well acquainted; all the same, I will call to mind Socrates' conversation with his friend in prison, when the latter comes to inform him that the gaoler has been won over, and everything is ready for his escape.

"The laws," said Socrates,<sup>1</sup> "would probably add: 'Answer, Socrates, instead of opening your eyes: you are in the habit of asking and answering questions. Tell us what complaint you have to make against us which justifies you in attempting to destroy us and the State? In the first place, did we not bring you into existence? Your father married your mother by our aid and begat you. Say whether you have any objection to urge against those of us who regulate marriage?' 'None,' I should reply. 'Or against those of us who regulate the system of nurture and education of children in which you were trained? Were not the laws, who have the charge of this, right in commanding your father to train you in music and gymnastic?' 'Right,' I should reply. 'Well, then, since you were brought into the

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Crito* (Professor Jowett's translation).

world and nurtured and educated by us, can you deny in the first place that you are our child and slave, as your fathers were before you? And if this is true, you are not on equal terms with us; nor can you think that you have a right to do to us what we are doing to you. Would you have any right to strike or revile or do any other evil to a father or to your master, if you had one, when you have been struck or reviled by him, or received some other evil at his hands?—you would not say this? And because we think right to destroy you, do you think that you have any right to destroy us in return, and your country, as far as in you lies? And will you, O professor of true virtue, say that you are justified in this? Has a philosopher like you failed to discover that our country is more to be valued and higher and holier far than mother or father or any ancestor, and more to be regarded in the eyes of the gods and of men of understanding? also to be soothed, and gently and reverently entreated when angry, even more than a father, and, if not persuaded, obeyed? And when we are punished by her, whether with imprisonment or stripes, the punishment is to be endured in silence; and if she lead us to wounds or death in battle, thither we follow



as is right; neither may anyone yield or retreat or leave his rank, but whether in battle or in a court of law, or in any other place, he must do what his city and his country order him; or he must change his view of what is just.'”

Shall I make mention, along with Socrates, of the great Stoics of Greece, whose whole lives were but the putting into practice of their philosophy, men like Zeno and Cleanthes, who, after wholly devoting themselves to science and finding happiness therein, voluntarily depart from life, because they fear that extreme old age may impair their mental powers and that human nature will thus be dishonoured in their person?

I prefer to take you to the world of Rome, where more interest is shown in practice than in speculation, and where the instances we meet with are even more significant. Here, without mentioning the many noble citizens who, relying on philosophy, resist tyranny and submit to death with the utmost constancy (such as the famous Thraseas, who, condemned to death for protesting against the murder of Agrippina, dies with the words: “Let us offer up a libation to Jupiter the Deliverer!” on his lips), we find in the ethics of antiquity two heroes, one at each extremity of the social

scale: the slave Epictetus and the emperor Marcus Aurelius.

In philosophy Epictetus found the secret of independence and moral freedom. "Either this or that, at the hands of thy master, will befall thee," someone said to him. "Nothing will befall me," he replied, "that is alien to the state of man." Epictetus expects nothing of anyone. "It is utterly useless and foolish," he said, "to receive from another when one can provide for oneself. What! When I find in my own nature magnanimity and generosity, should I receive at your hands land, wealth, or power? The gods forbid! Not thus will I displease that which is mine own."

This slave learns from philosophy to be a king, just as the emperor learns to place his power at the service of society. "Take care," he constantly repeats to himself, "not to sink into the immorality of the Cæsars: that is too easy a performance. Deck not thyself out in their colours. Keep thyself simple-hearted and kind, pure in body and mind, serious, opposed to pomp and ostentation, a friend to justice and duty. Remain such a one as philosophy intended to make thee." And these noble resolves are translated into actual facts. Marcus Aurelius restores the Senate to a

portion of its former rights, attends council meetings, conscientiously investigates public business, and defers to the decisions of the assembly. He extends benevolent institutions. He administers justice as a philosopher, ever seeking for the motive, inclined towards indulgence, and doing everything possible to avoid pronouncing the death sentence. "Men," he said, "are meant to help one another. Dost thou find that men are evil? Then instruct them, for that is the best way to make them better." Some of the laws issued by Marcus Aurelius have been preserved: their aim is to temper paternal and marital authority, to modify the condition of slaves and to favour manumission.

Noble conduct, inspired by philosophy! And yet this same Marcus Aurelius, who seemed destined to realize in this world the "city-state" of Jupiter, once exclaimed: "A philosopher's dreams are but a child's dreams!" Events only too truly confirmed his fears.

## VI

To what, then, is due the impotence of Hellenic wisdom? What causes of weakness lay hidden therein?

It grew and developed in a highly cultured

environment, in a world of sages and of those happy, privileged individuals of whom the free men in Greek "city-states" consisted. It could not prove acceptable to a mass of people like those whom the ever-increasing equality and learning in the Roman Empire summoned to a moral life. Can the masses be expected to allow science to predominate over action, or reflective intelligence over feeling and instinct? The masses cannot be bodies of learned men; they are led by their feelings or their instincts. Greek ethics is an aristocratic system of ethics, consequently suitable only to the few.

Besides, it did not satisfy certain newly experienced feelings which stormed the human soul at the time of the decline of Rome. The nations of the world, ruined by Roman governors and a prey to the incessant raids of the Barbarians, become increasingly wretched; on the other hand, the society of the times is mostly a cultured one, for the schools are flourishing and prosperous. Now, it is a law of nature that intellectual culture and reflection increase the sense of suffering: grief analysed is grief doubled.

Of what avail was Greek ethics in the alleviation of this sense of wretchedness? When Socrates said: "Nature anticipates our needs,

for she is guided by Providence," he denied that there was the struggle for existence. How unrelenting, how harsh and pitiless had this kindly nature become! A system of ethics that is powerless to afford comfort and consolation to the wretched is of no use to the masses.

Nor is this all: to the sense of wretchedness was added the sense of sin. And this again was something unknown to Hellenic ethics. In reality, this latter was a determining factor in creating the sense of sin, by teaching man to fall back upon himself. Other causes cooperated in producing this result, more particularly the sense of suffering itself. When a man is crushed by misfortune, he is inclined to believe that he is being punished, and he experiences the need of expiation and reconciliation. It is mostly, however, the religions of Oriental origin that have developed this tendency in the human soul.

Now, what do the Greeks say of moral evil? To their mind, the wicked man is a man who is unwell; the reason Plato insists on a guilty person expiating his crime is that he regards punishment as restoring the man to a state of health. The sense of sin is something quite different. The sinner is not a diseased person, he is not even ignorant. He feels within him-

self a secret mysterious evil, which dwells in his will, and is capable of persisting amid conditions, physical and intellectual, most favourable to virtue. Is Greek philosophy of a nature to calm the uneasy conscience? This philosophy has difficulty in understanding repentance, that powerful remedy, which it generally regards as an evil passion. What! Is man to humble himself, to take delight in sorrow? Humility and sorrow enervate the soul, said the Greeks; to them, virtue abides in energy, pride, and joy. Scruples and strife within, the torturing longing for some indefinable perfection, are opposed to that harmony and serenity in which the Greek sets his ideal.

Greek philosophy, then, does not descend to the level of the physical and moral misery from which mankind now suffers: neither does it rise to the new heights of ambition which stir men's souls.

The Greeks, who are men of reason, order, and harmony, to whom mysticism is repugnant, are troubled by no sense of the infinite: of the infinite, that is to say, of a beauty which no form is capable of expressing; of goodness and felicity which nature, with all her resources, is eternally incapable of realizing. Henceforth, this strange feeling is one that man finds at

the root of all his desires, sorrows, and joys. Hellenic ethics does not take it into account. From the Greek standpoint, there is something absurd involved in this deliberate mental unrest, this effort to grasp the unattainable.

Greek philosophy was very dignified in its decline. "Though the heavens fall," said the Stoic, "undismayed, the wise man will meet his doom." And indeed, the wise men knew how to die; but they knew nothing besides, and their wisdom died with them.

Meanwhile, another righteous man was going to his death: though how different it was from that of the Stoic! He did not say: "Grief is nothing but an opinion"; he said: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted!"

He did not say: "The ignorant cannot lay claim to wisdom"; he said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!"

He did not say: "Sin is only ignorance; repentance is weakness"; he said: "Man is a sinner, but he has a father in heaven who pardons him who repents."

Nor did he die without looking towards the future, though his last words were: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

It was by this death and this gospel of glad tidings that mankind was to live.

## II

### CHRISTIAN OR RELIGIOUS ETHICS<sup>1</sup>

I MUST confess that I feel extremely embarrassed at the outset of my exposition of Christian ethics. Is it possible for me to formulate any judgment whatsoever on this subject without exposing myself to contradiction? No other doctrine has received so many different interpretations: it would be foolish to offer one as being beyond dispute. And to reconcile all these contraries would be to confine oneself to saying only things of no significance. Here, it is the real, impersonal truth that we are seeking. How is it to be found? Can I strip myself—a thing that would be necessary—of my prejudices and character as well as of the education I have received and the influence of my environment?

Why had I not these scruples when speaking

<sup>1</sup> Books for study: *The Gospels*; Saint Paul, *Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians*; *The Imitation of Christ*; Luther, *Treatise on Christian Liberty*.



to you on the subject of Hellenic ethics? Because this is a fixed doctrine, an *ensemble* of clear, precise ideas, a product of reason, a finished, determined work. It might be found formulated and developed in any well-chosen book: the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for instance.

In dealing with Christian ethics, the conditions are very different. Philosophers did not bring the Christian doctrine into being; it is a product of faith and enthusiasm, something that was first lived. Here, systematic formulæ and expositions are but the shadows of a reality we cannot grasp. We know not where to look for a clear, faithful expression of Christian principle.

Is there not, however, in this very feature of Christianity, some clue given as to the method we must follow if we would treat the subject rightly? Not only shall we incur the risk of contradiction, but we shall also be following the wrong path, if we look upon Christian ethics as a definite, complete system; though perhaps we shall raise fewer objections and, at the same time, be nearer the truth, if we go back to the very fount of Christian ideas, seeking it in what is essentially indefinable, in a principle of life, a fruitful, original

activity stirred into being in the depths of the human soul.

It is on the subject of Christian ethics that I now purpose to speak to you. In order to enter into its spirit, I must place myself at the very heart of Christianity itself, for the characteristic of this latter is that of being, above all else, an ethical doctrine.

## I

The Christian idea was born in an exclusively Jewish environment: Jesus received no trace of Greek education. The way had been paved for this idea not only by the religious character of the Jewish people, but also by certain doctrines, extremely ancient ones, in all probability. Along with the law, strictly so-called, contained in the *Pentateuch*, there had appeared the teachings of the Prophets, very different in spirit. Whereas the former prescribes, in particular, material rites and observances, the latter have a tendency to preach a spiritual religion. Isaiah energetically combats formalism, that false, exterior devotion which by no means excludes wickedness and the oppression of the weak. He insists on the essentially moral character of the divine commandments, and endeavours to reform worship

along these lines. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" saith the Lord: "I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me. . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil."<sup>1</sup> This teaching of the Prophets, substituting true devotion and moral practice for ritual and external piety, was a fitting preparation for the teaching of Jesus.

A fervent and long-established belief of the Jews, kept alive in definite form by the Prophets, conferred upon Jesus his mission. For centuries the Jews had been expecting a king after Jehovah's own heart, who, when the kingdom of this world came to an end, was to establish the government of the people by God himself, and whose coming was to secure the decisive triumph of the Jewish race and of true worship throughout the world.

This kingdom of God, however, was to be altogether temporal. It was to be a kingdom of this world, bringing about the full realiza-

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah, chap. i.

tion of justice and peace amongst men and the restoration of a state of paradise throughout nature. It was characteristic of Jesus that he gave a spiritual, a supra-terrestrial interpretation to these prophecies.

The kingdom he announces is the reign of God in the human soul, and this every man, through love, can realize within himself. The question has been asked whether he did not at first, to some extent, share the Jewish idea of a, royal Messiah. This is a matter of slight importance. What is certain is that he formed a clear conception of the kingdom of God and proclaimed it to be a purely spiritual one. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you."<sup>1</sup>

What does he mean? Manifestly this conception of the kingdom of God is the outcome of some particular conception of God himself. The God of the Jews was, above all else, the Eternal Lord, the Invisible, the Unfathomable, the Holy One, Omnipresent and Omnipotent. The God of Jesus is the Father. God may dwell in us, if we are attached to him as a child is attached to his father.

<sup>1</sup> Saint Luke, chap. xvii., verses 20-21.

Jesus conceived of God as a father: this is the main principle of his teaching.

## II

And now, how will man realize this communion with the Father, so incomprehensible to the human mind? How is he to set up within himself this kingdom of God, proclaimed by Jesus? Let us search the Gospels for an answer.

There is one point that strikes us from the very beginning: the insistence with which Jesus puts his disciples on their guard against the formalistic conception of the religious life. The thing he condemns above all else is Pharisaism.

According to Cohen, the true Pharisees, who were very rationalistic, had really reduced to two essential points the whole of religious dogmatics: the oneness of God, and his absolute spirituality; but people who made boast of the popular name of Pharisees attached exaggerated importance to exterior works and legal observances. It is these, if not the Pharisees strictly so-called, the people who kill the spirit by the letter, and from the heights of their studied devotions look down upon and in their pride condemn the simple-

mind and truly devout, whom Jesus attacks. He calls them hypocrites, whited sepulchres.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness!

“Woe unto you, for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith!”

Throughout the Gospels such apostrophes are frequent: Jesus, the very incarnation of gentleness and meekness, manifested severity and harshness against the Pharisees alone. Formalism he condemns. Works may gain for us the favour and consideration of the world, but they are nothing in the sight of God unless they express inner convictions. Not by virtue of outer actions alone can man commune with God.

What, then, is of importance? Purity in heart. The main thing is not to do, but to be. We must be good, perfect, as our Father in Heaven is perfect. This is the first characteristic of the Gospel: its extreme spirituality. Spirit fills the entire arena of the Christian life.

What is the nature of this life ?

On this point the Gospel gives us something more than negative information. There is a dual commandment which Jesus regards as above the rest, and which, to his mind, includes them all: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>1</sup> It cannot be said that these are new formulæ; they may be found in the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup> Still, the conception of God as a father, gives them, when uttered by Jesus, quite another meaning. What was God to the Jews? The Eternal Lord, the Omnipotent, the Holy One, the Judge of all the earth; between this God and the creature lay a yawning abyss. How scandalous, to men accustomed to regard everything as but dust in comparison with God, was this idea of an intimate relation between God and man, this doctrine of a God with whom the creature maintains a filial connexion!

Here we have the entire Christian revolution. No longer is God adored and feared as a

<sup>1</sup> Saint Luke, chap. x., verses 27-28.

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy, chap. vi., verse 5; Leviticus, chap. xix., verse 18.

master, he is loved as a father. We may all feel ourselves one with him; Christian life is, in reality, communion with God. How cold and dead words are, when employed to express the most profound, complete, and at the same time spiritual feeling the human soul is privileged to experience!

Love for one's neighbour, also, assumes fresh significance, solely from the thought that we are all sons of God, that we are really brothers. The ancients had spoken of human brotherhood, but that, to them, was nothing more than a metaphor. They concluded that men had one common origin because they had one common nature: a purely logical induction. For Jesus, human brotherhood forms, along with divine fatherhood, the first and living truth. To love one's neighbour, and to love God, is to return to the source of life from which love brought us into being.

How great the difference, then, between the tolerance of insult and wrong, such as a Greek sage professes, and the forgiveness and pardon practised by a Christian! The Greek teaches that it is not fitting to return evil for evil, because such a course of action would be an injustice; benevolence and love, we see, have nothing to do with his generosity.



Love one's enemy? Wish him well? Such conduct would be unreasonable and unjust. And yet, listen to the command of Jesus: "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? . . . But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."<sup>1</sup> In this determination to exercise pardon and gentleness there is neither indulgence nor the idea of sacrifice: the lowest of mankind, our worst enemy, has a claim on our love, for, like ourselves, he is a child of God; and we ought to love him in God.

Thus the spirituality of the Christian life is not abstract and negative; it is concrete and living. What is the interior life of a Greek sage in comparison with it? The Greek knows only nature and her laws; outside of himself, universal harmony; within himself, reason whereby he conceives this state of harmony. The interior life of the Stoic receives its nourishment solely from the contemplation of universal order. If, in thought, he would

<sup>1</sup> Saint Matthew, chap. v., verse 44.

transcend spirit blended with matter and penetrate to the one pure and free spirit, he finds only nothingness. Hence the gloom and melancholy of a Marcus Aurelius. But when the Christian lets outer things go and retires within himself, he there finds a reality that is positive and apprehensible: life in all its fulness, the infinite, light-giving love of the Father, the bestower of joy in this world, the pledge and foretaste of an eternity of bliss. , Consequently, the Christian life is the happy life. When we love, all spiritual blessings are ours in addition: what are the trials and vicissitudes of earthly existence to the man whose heart contains the Infinite!

Such is the joyous side of the Christian life. It is a life, however, which does not exclude weeping and sorrow, as we see from the Gospel itself.

The disciple of Jesus does not begin with joy; it is through the narrow gate that entrance is effected into the kingdom of God. The renunciation of self and of the possessions of this world are the first condition of the Christian life. The Christian should love poverty; for "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” The Christian aspires after humiliations, for “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” This present life is the kingdom of Satan; nature, both without and within us, the very members of our bodies, are unto us an occasion of stumbling. Now, no one can serve two masters; the choice must be made between the kingdom of God and that of the world. Jesus even went so far as to say: “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.”<sup>1</sup> The Christian, then, suffers; he even invites all those things that men regard as evils.

Nor is this everything; his faith imposes on him an infinitely greater penalty. Men are sinners, and Jesus came to save them. As the Prophets foretold, he gave his life as a ransom.<sup>2</sup> Men ought to join in this supreme sacrifice. In what way? By repentance and sorrow at offending the Father, in comparison with which sorrow all earthly sufferings are as naught. And the repentance preached by Jesus is an active regret which imposes on man the task of uprooting from his inmost

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, chap. v., verse 29; chap. xviii., verse 9.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah, chap. liii., verses 4-12; Mark, chap. x., verse 45; Luke, chap. xviii., verses 31-33.

self the will to do evil. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."<sup>1</sup> "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel."<sup>2</sup>

This may well be called Christian—or more especially moral—asceticism, instinct with the idea of God the Father, and quite different from Greek asceticism. The Christian separates himself from the world, not in order to be self-sufficient and independent, not from Stoic pride, but because the world comes between his Father and himself, inclining him to sin, and preventing him from realizing that interior purity which alone can bring him nearer to God. But, more than anything else, man hates his sin; it is the will to do evil that he would crucify within himself. His renunciation is essentially detachment from evil; it is real conversion.

Moreover, renunciation and repentance are accompanied by a gentler feeling. Hope, after love and renunciation, is the third characteristic of the Christian spirit. Man knows that of himself he can do nothing, but he likewise knows that he is not alone, that God is with him. Now, in the Father's sight,

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, chap. xviii., verse 3.

<sup>2</sup> Saint Mark, chap. i., verse 15.

good intention suffices. There is, of course, a mighty gulf fixed between our efforts and the holiness to which we are commanded to attain: God's infinite goodness fills this gulf. Every man is called to perfection and felicity; all that is asked of him is simplicity of mind and righteousness, childlike confidence and purity of heart. This is why the poor and lowly, the publicans who seek the Saviour, the sinners who mourn over their sins, are nearer God than the rich, the boasters of their own virtues, or the wise of this earth; for they are free of earthly possessions, which hinder the purification of the soul; they are less exposed to pride and blind selfishness; they better understand the saying: "Ask, and it shall be given you."<sup>1</sup>

### III

Love, repentance, hope; is it possible that these three words sum up the whole of Christian ethics, that they have sufficed to change the very face of the world?

Much has been said of the miracle of the spread of Christianity. Never was the word miracle used more appropriately. There is nothing surprising in an idea being propagated

<sup>1</sup> Saint Matthew, chap. vii., verse 7.

throughout the world, when that idea, conceived with a view to its realization, has been adapted beforehand to the conditions of real life, and has what is called a practical character. What is strange is that a pure idea, conceived apart from every temporal and practical pre-occupation, should take possession of the real world, and enter and become incarnate therein. Now, this has been the fortune of the Christian idea.

Not only was this idea not imagined with a view to its realization in the Græco-Roman world, it was even conceived apart from any kind of political and social consideration. It was the idea of an altogether spiritual and interior life which had no definite connexion with the exterior and positive life. What hold could such an ideal have, not merely upon certain individuals placed in exceptional circumstances, but upon militant mankind, plunged in all the storms and difficulties of existence? And yet, when brought in touch with reality, the Christian principle, pure and ideal though it was, did not fade away and disappear; descending from heaven on to earth, it there became established and lived in the life of time. God was made man and dwelt in our midst.

Pressed by the objections of his enemies and even of his disciples, Jesus, on more than one occasion, was induced to speak emphatically on the relations of his teachings to real life.

“I came not to destroy but to fulfil the law.”<sup>1</sup> He constantly asserts that works are nothing, that piety consists wholly of a pure heart. To those who ask him: “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?” he answers: “No man putteth new wine into old bottles.”<sup>2</sup> As we see, it is the spirit of the law that he maintains and glorifies far more than the law itself, with the works it prescribes.

Still, must not one live, feed, and clothe oneself? Jesus answers: “Consider the lilies in the fields, they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Once he had to decide on a very grave matter: the payment of the tax. To do this was to acknowledge the Roman emperor as one's master. Now, said certain Pharisees, one

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, chap. v., verse 17.

<sup>2</sup> Mark, chap. ii., verses 18 and 22.

ought to call no man master, save God alone. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," Jesus says to them. The meaning of this is: "The tax has to do with the outer life of the world: do not allow anything relating to that life to concern you; conform, without attachment, to the laws by which it is governed; but so far as you yourselves are concerned, seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

As we see, Jesus does not seriously concern himself with the conditions of real life. Can the man whose life is in heaven expect or fear anything that earth may bring?

Still, it is absolutely necessary that Christianity adapt itself to real life if it is to be anything else than a sublime, ephemeral dream, if it is itself to become a reality. Now, real life comprises attention to daily existence, to comfort and exterior freedom; it includes science and art, philosophy, politics, literature, religious worship, in a word, all the natural manifestations and traditional forms of human activity. Can mankind consent to deprive itself of all these treasures, acquired at the cost of infinite toil, and the whole of which constitutes what we call civilization? Numberless and formidable are the practical difficulties



that present themselves: Christianity solves them all.

No sooner was Jesus dead than a serious problem had to be faced. Was the new doctrine intended for the Jews alone, or was it to be announced to all men without their being compelled to travel along the path of Judaism? The question was one likely to decide the future of the new religion.

Jesus is God, replies Saint Paul, and he died to deliver us from sin. To regard him as unequal to the task of redeeming us unless the works of the law are carried out, is to refuse to recognize the infinite cost of his sacrifice. The sacrifice of Jesus does away with all other sacrifices and works. Henceforth, faith is sufficient for our justification. Every man, therefore, is saved, if he believes in the Redeemer; the distinction between Jews and heathen no longer exists. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."<sup>1</sup>

Meantime, Christians are living in a world of reflection and discussion. The Christian doctrine is destined to clash with various heresies.

<sup>1</sup> Galatians, chap. iii., verse 24.

Vague and uncertain, it must receive a formula: in response to this need we have the labours of the Apostolic Fathers and the creation of dogmas. The Christian dogmas are not a product of speculative reason, like the Hellenic doctrines, they are the result of moral and practical beliefs. The Christian consciousness inquires what affirmations are bound up in the faith and love with which it is animated. Feeling, the intimate action of the will, here precedes speculation. It was in this spirit that the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds were conceived and formulated.

From the second century onwards, Christianity finds itself engaged in a struggle with Greek philosophy. Such a groundwork of ideas, an admirable witness to the power of human reason, could not disappear. Philosophical theologians, Saint Justin, Saint Clement of Alexandria, Saint Basil, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, effect a *rapprochement* between the Hellenic and the Christian doctrines. It was the same Logos, they say, the same Word, the same Wisdom, that spoke to the Greeks and was made manifest in Jesus. Thenceforward the new doctrine may be looked upon as the completion and perfection of the Hellenic doctrines, and Orientals may em-

brace Christianity without renouncing the culture so dear to them.

Up to this point Christianity has remained confined within a restricted world: now, the decisive test is coming. It was when Christianity came into touch with the Roman world that it would have perished, had it not been endowed with infinite vitality. For it is a law in history that an alien minority cannot conquer a well-constituted, cultured society, but rather becomes speedily absorbed therein and disappears. Christianity, forcing itself into the mighty framework of the Roman world, seemed as though it must be absolutely swallowed up. It was the contrary that happened. Never was Christianity so powerful as when, in the Empire, it came to close grips with the requirements of real life in every shape and form, social and political, material and moral.

In the Middle Ages, it became the common principle of both temporal and spiritual life.

Whereas in the East it adapted itself purely and simply to the traditions and characteristics of the various peoples and became their national religion, in the West it engaged in a struggle to ensure for the spiritual the supremacy over the temporal.

In France, Italy, and Germany, from the ninth to the fifteenth century, the Christian idea developed in two modes, the scholastic and the mystical, corresponding to different tendencies.

Scholasticism, connected with the name and influence of Aristotle, whom it regards as the representative of human science, aims at reconciling the Christian doctrine with what it knows regarding the Peripatetic philosophy. It acknowledges a hierarchy of human activities. It will not be indifferent to any manifestation of life; but everything belonging to the human order of life will come under the law of religion: a spiritual hierarchy in souls, a visible hierarchy in the temporal world, with the Pope, the vicar of God, at its head.

This doctrine of intermediary powers is met with in the rôle assigned to the Church in the matter of faith and moral conduct. Here, we find the theologians applying a principle laid down by Aristotle. This philosopher insisted on the insufficiency of laws, however perfect they may be regarded, to satisfy all the demands of practical life: to apply law, purely and simply, he thought, without taking circumstances into account, is to risk defeating the very purposes of law. That justice may

really be done, law must be interpreted by wise and virtuous men. In like spirit, the Catholic Church teaches that the written word admits of divers interpretations, and that to oral tradition must be added the authority of a legitimate representative of that tradition, if it is desired that the various applications of the word be adapted to the divers needs of generations and individuals.

In the Middle Ages, there is a different way of conceiving Christian ethics. For the most part it was but seldom mentioned, because mysticism is, by its very nature, inapprehensible, and, besides, mystics are at times suspected of heterodoxy. These pious enthusiasts pursue a course of action which, in certain aspects, is the opposite of that of the schoolmen. Whereas the latter endeavour to reconcile the interests of the temporal life with the duties of the religious life, the mystics draw apart from this world, renounce temporal possessions, and give little heed to form, the visible and therefore imperfect expression of religious feeling: dogmas, rites, and sacraments. They ascend direct to the very source of the Christian life, relying on the words of Jesus: "God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

In the Middle Ages there were two forms of mysticism: the ascetic and the joyous. These two forms do not contradict each other: they rather correspond to the two successive moments of the Christian's life. First, man separates from the world, suffers and mortifies himself in order to prepare for union with God: this is the ascetic phase, beyond which many mystics did not proceed. Afterwards comes the mystic phase properly so-called, in which the soul, having truly succeeded in retiring within herself and finding God within her very being, shares in divine life. Thereupon she is overjoyed, and, her will being identified with that of God, she can freely use everything in this world, in the assurance that only good deeds will be the fruit of a holy will. She has found that true liberty which Jesus promised the Christian: "The Spirit of the Lord . . . hath sent me," said Jesus, ". . . to preach deliverance to the captives."<sup>1</sup> "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?"<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of the Middle Ages,

<sup>1</sup> Luke, chap. iv., verses 18-19.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew, chap. ix., verse 15. Compare Saint Paul, 2nd Corinthians, chap. iii., verse 17; Romans, chap. viii., verse 21.

Christianity passes through a formidable crisis. The human soul is tortured by anguish which strikes at the very springs of moral life. She feels that sin is not on the surface of her being, in her deeds and works, but that it is deep within herself, and she despairs of ever being justified. This time, the religious sense itself is compromised; it creates such profound disturbance in the soul that men go so far as to wonder if the Christian life is really possible, if it would not be preferable to keep to the old life, in accordance with nature, which gives serenity, at all events, if not sanctity.

It was in the consciousness of Luther that this anguish reached its most acute stage. Never before had religious problems caused a man so much suffering. I feel that sin is my very being and substance, thought Luther, and that its might separates me for ever from God. What can I do to rid myself of sin? Store up good works? But then, works are incapable of changing the nature of the soul. Doing has no effect on being, the finite on the infinite, matter on spirit.

This state of torment lasted until he understood, on one occasion when meditating on the words of Saint Paul, that grace was a free

gift. God accords grace unto the sinner, not from justice, but from pity, because he is the Father; and this omnipotent grace regenerates and sanctifies the sinner. Since grace is free, it matters little that works, in themselves, are dead. If I had to merit grace, of myself, then I should be driven to despair, for, of myself, I can do only evil. God, however, does not sell his grace, he gives it in love. I hope, therefore, that it will be given to me. I will believe, and so shall be saved. "The just shall live by faith."<sup>1</sup>

Man being thus born again, his works resume their value in the sight of God. Luther does not consider they are to be despised. To the Anabaptists, extravagant mystics who suppressed all form and declared that all their works were not worth a groat, he replied: "We have never taught that all our good works are not worth a groat; it is the devil who says that. God performs my good works, and if they are divine, the whole earth is nothing in comparison with them." Law and terror before regeneration, joy and the free manifestation of faith after the new birth, such, according to Luther, is the rule of the Christian life.

<sup>1</sup> Saint Paul, Romans, chap. i., verse 17.



These doctrines were the origin of Protestantism, wherein Christianity, breaking away from ecclesiastical authority, is seen to assume a highly spiritual form, to depend on the Scriptures alone, interpreted by each individual in freedom of conscience, to link itself with the development of interior piety, and, speaking generally, to set moral perfection above dogmatic orthodoxy.

At the very time that it was being organized under its Protestant form in several countries, Christianity was compelled to meet the very enemy it imagined that it had long ago vanquished. The Renaissance was working for the restoration of ancient naturalism. In the face of Christian sanctity, it extolled a civilization which deified nature. That everything in the world was full of gods was an ancient Greek adage. If such be the case, there is something divine in every manifestation of natural life: science, art, literature, the joys of this world, are, in themselves, excellent things which it is beautiful and good to take up whenever they appeal to us. What is to become of Christianity before this apotheosis of nature?

Now, even here, Christianity manifests its suppleness and adaptability. It does not

reject this civilization which is claimed for ancient paganism, but makes it its own, clothing itself therewith as with a mantle of glory. It is now to possess a literature and an art radiating classic splendour—painters: Botticelli, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci; musicians: Palestrina, Handel, Bach; poets: Dante, Corneille, Racine, Milton, Klopstock. It is to bring forth orators like Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Massillon, and give life to the philosophy of a Descartes and a Malebranche, a Leibnitz and a Kant.

#### IV

Such vitality and power of adaptation, without abjuring itself, can be explained only by the distinctive nature of Christianity, which is essentially a principle of life, whilst its roots penetrate to the very depths of the soul and the will.

Can we believe that it has eternity before it? In truth, its opponents in these modern times appear to be more formidable than any it has hitherto encountered.

We have spoken of the naturalism of antiquity, so poetical and imbued with the idea of providence and divinity. The naturalism of to-day is altogether different; for it

rejects, as mystical, that cult of the intellect which the Greeks regarded as one with that of nature. Reduced to its distinctive principles, it has come to base the whole of human life on interest and instinct, on the desire innate in each individual to be the strongest in the struggle for life. Such a conception is the very opposite to Christianity; one cannot imagine how it could be adapted thereto. If the immediately real comprises the whole being, if our will has no other motive of action than love of self, there is no room in life for the ideal of holiness and freedom which Christianity offers us.

Another danger arises from the inductions which science seems to call forth. This latter finds the explanation of an increasing number of phenomena in the play of altogether mechanical laws, in which intelligence, harmony, and goodness have no share. What will happen if it claims the moral domain as well as the physical, the inmost workings of the soul as well as the movements of bodies? Will it not succeed in breaking up all that is called spirit and freedom, all that Christianity presupposes and would develop?

Such are the obstacles that Christian ethics meets with nowadays. Evidently, the first

is not the most important. True, man may try to live by mere instinct, despising everything that resembles an ideal. Probably, however, something in him will before long protest against its dethronement. Nor is it likely that the attempt will long be continued in an entire community, for increasing intelligence becomes a serious danger in man, when it is not subordinated to the idea of good ; and a human community could not live by the mere play of natural laws which proves sufficient and adequate for animal communities.

As regards science, if it sets up as metaphysics and as ethics, it is a formidable enemy indeed. Thus considered, it promises man not only food for the body, but also that precious nourishment for the soul which consists in the joy of knowing the real. Is there, can there be a system of ethics that is purely scientific, capable of satisfying both will and intellect ? This is a question we have now to examine.

### III

#### MODERN OR SCIENTIFIC ETHICS<sup>1</sup>

IN this third and last address on the principal types of ethics, I purpose to speak to you of what may be characterized as modern or scientific ethics, and then to set forth a few practical considerations in conclusion.

By modern ethics, I mean those conceptions of ethics that are peculiar to modern thinkers. Needless to say that Hellenic and Christian ideas still flourish in present-day civilization; following on the Renaissance, however, there have sprung up, along with them, doctrines that are alien both to the ancient and to the Christian spirit: it is these doctrines we are now about to consider.

<sup>1</sup> Books for study: Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Ethics* (*Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*); *Critique of Practical Reason*; Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*; H. Spencer, *The Data of Ethics*.

## I

Science is the principal creation of the moderns. Appearing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Descartes, and Newton, it spread in all directions in the eighteenth and reached its fulness of expansion in the nineteenth. At the present time, it is our glory and pride; more than that, it is by science that we live; for it reacts on the mind that creates it, and which it seems to be engaged in utterly transforming. What, then, is science? Or rather, what is that scientific mind which has become an essential element in modern thought?

Science has for its object the knowledge of nature. Of course, antiquity and the Middle Ages studied nature; but antiquity set out to find in her that order and harmony in which human reason delights; and the Middle Ages, considering nature in her relations with moral being, inquired more especially how man must deal with her in advancing towards his eternal destiny. Modern science examines nature in and for herself, exclusive of the tendencies and desires of the human soul. It regards the world as a mechanism whose first cause is

unknowable, but from which all idea of an end, particularly a moral end, is absent. The scientist starts with observable facts, and reascends, link by link, the chain of natural causes, without knowing where he is going. He has not the faintest idea beforehand of the conclusions to which his investigations may lead him ; his mental state is what is generally known as scientific impartiality.

Science, thus understood, was at first applied only to inorganic beings, celestial bodies, minerals, forces of the physical and chemical worlds, in which are manifested neither life, thought, nor will. Then it extended its domain, the dream of Descartes was realized, and science took possession of living bodies. Later on, the manifestations of sensibility, intelligence, and will fell beneath its sway. Ethics proved no exception, for Descartes had already hinted at the possibility of dealing with it as a science. In Spinoza, this idea takes on a precise form, and since then, many philosophers have attempted to carry it into effect. At the present time, it would appear as though it were indeed on the way to realization, and that the broad lines of scientific ethics had been laid down once for all. Let us see in what this work of the human mind

has consisted, and what results seem destined to be the issue thereof.

In truth, the task of setting up a scientific system of ethics is strange and paradoxical. Ethics, as thus understood, will have to be based on facts alone. To follow nature will be the fundamental rule. This is the motto even of the ancients; but they regarded nature from an esthetic point of view, seeing in her that intelligence and harmony to which human activity aspires. What the moderns have to do is to evolve ethics, *i.e.* the determination of what ought to be, from a reality stripped of all kinship with the intellect and the will.

Nor is this all. Modern societies, in fact, possess a whole assemblage of acknowledged ideas regarding the ideal after which man must aim: mankind has acquired these ideas in a spirit altogether different from that of modern science. Traditional ethics, both Hellenic and Christian, was established freely and spontaneously. The Greek sages heeded neither theology nor science; they simply asked themselves what it was that constituted supreme beauty, the one sovereign boon. Christianity created its type of moral perfection even more freely, liberating itself from



all exterior necessity and taking account of none of the conditions of earthly life.

Science, which finds itself faced with these moral traditions, Hellenic and Christian, and sees them incorporated in human nature, as it were, does not, at the outset, think of challenging their legitimacy: instead of that, it purposes to find their bases in the necessary laws of nature. And so this is the problem it has to face: how is it to adapt the strict employment of scientific methods so as to justify ideas whose special characteristic is that they sprang from the free development of human consciousness? Can the link be made, and the scientific method applied in all its rigour? And if this be done, will the result satisfy moral consciousness? Is there any fitness or propriety between such a method and such an object? We shall be able to judge by the result.

## II

There are several kinds of methods that are strictly scientific. Let us first consider the employment of mathematical demonstration in the sphere of ethics.

Mathematics and ethics have this in common: they are sciences of the necessary; both

lay down principles which they afterwards develop by a process of reasoning. Mathematics determines the relations necessarily realized in matter; ethics investigates all that ought to be done by a free and intelligent human being. Might not the mathematical method therefore be applied to the demonstration of things ethical?

This was Kant's point of view. He dealt with ethics as a geometrician, believing that it was possible to apply to ethical dogmas the kind of certainty that applied to mathematical truths. He starts with the principle that the idea of duty has for each of us the same evidence as mathematical axioms. It is impossible for an honest, self-examining conscience to doubt that it has a duty to perform. If we pay attention, we find this belief implied in all the moral judgments that observation has brought to our knowledge. On this foundation, Kant builds up the whole of his system of ethics. With the utmost rigour, he establishes the reality and dignity of the human person. He shows how man ought to respect both himself and his fellow-beings, how the person ought always to be treated as an end, never as a means; and how sincerity, self-esteem, and attempts to procure the happi-

ness of others constitute fundamental duties. Duty for duty's sake, the effort to improve oneself and to contribute towards the happiness of others: such is the résumé of his doctrine.

We see that ethics, as Kant interprets it, lost nothing by being subjected to mathematical discipline. This ideal is not one whit behind the Christian ideal, as regards purity and loftiness of purpose. The only fault we can find with it is its excessive severity.

But though ethics, in its essentials, remains intact in this system, such is not the case with the mathematical method. The latter has shown itself very complacent; and this ethical mathematics only apparently resembles mathematics, properly so-called.

For instance, is it true that the idea of duty possesses for us the same evidence as a principle of geometry? We know only too well that such is not the case. We cannot affirm that duty exists as we affirm that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. Beneath the combined influence of the facts of observation and the exigencies of thought, mathematical axioms obtrude themselves upon us: it is not so with moral truths, which outstrip the given reality and are not bound down to the necessities of thought.

Again, things ethical are, in any case, unfitted for restriction within exact definitions, like those of geometry. They do not admit of mathematical proof and exactness. And perhaps it is better so, for, were belief in duty as unavoidable as adhesion to mathematical truth, it would not be meritorious at all; it is just because it involves voluntary effort that there is something generous and noble in it.

The practical conclusions, then, which Kant reaches along a line of well-directed deductions, possess, in reality, no mathematical value. To tell the truth, the results were assumed at the outset. The philosopher has demonstrated what he meant to demonstrate. As for the scientist, he does not know where demonstration will lead him.

### III

It may be said of all philosophers and moralists who deduce the rule of our conduct from our natural feelings, that, in ethics, they follow the methods of the physical sciences. In the observation of our psychic nature they try to discover the law which, in fact, governs human actions, and they convert this law of fact into a maxim of conduct.

Some of them, such as Adam Smith, regarded sympathy as the principle of our actions.

Others imagined the primitive character of our nature to be rooted in egoism, not in sympathy, *e.g.* La Rochefoucauld and Bentham.

Stuart Mill endeavoured to reconcile the two great doctrines of interest and duty, by showing that such actions of ours as we call disinterested and explain by sympathy, or the idea of moral law, may in the final analysis, like the others, be reconciled with or brought within the scope of personal interest. Certainly it seems to me that I can perform actions that are disinterested, devote myself to friends and country, sacrifice advantage to duty. Certainly we sometimes pursue the general interest without thinking of our own. This, however, is because experience has taught mankind that this kind of action usually ensures the good of the individual. To keep faith with one's fellow-beings, serve one's country or devote oneself to some noble cause, are all actions which were originally inspired by personal interest, though at present they appear to be ends in themselves. Here we have an application of the law of habit. The idea of certain actions has, in the course of time, become so intimately united with the idea of the pleasure

to which they lead, that it has finally come to take their place and to be itself regarded as a principle of conduct. Man has forgotten the original and true end of these actions; it is the means he now regards as the end. Thus the miser loves money for itself, without remembering the purpose it is intended to subserve.

The utilitarian ethics of Stuart Mill, the perfect type of ethics dealt with by the physical science method, no longer offers, it would seem, that conformity to the judgments of conscience which we found in Kant. This system of ethics may seduce the intellect and produce learned books, but no one, strange to say, would advocate it before an open assembly. Men, in a meeting, will never acknowledge that pleasure and personal interest are the supreme and sole end of human activity. The public conscience, which Aristotle, not without reason, regards as superior to the sum total of individual consciences, would rebel against such language. Stuart Mill exhausts all the resources of his ingenious dialectic in an attempt to include under utilitarianism the morality of dignity and disinterestedness, but without success. Here it is ethics that suffers from the use of the scientific method.

After all, is the method followed strictly analogous, as it is believed to be, with that employed in the physical sciences? It is not an easy matter to admit that this is so. Scientific observation bears upon what is, upon observable phenomena and the relations between these phenomena. And this observation comes about by means of the senses. The scientist, then, proceeds blindly, urged by facts onward to conclusions he cannot foresee. The utilitarian moralist, for his part, observes within himself the workings of the soul. Now, the data of interior observation are neither definite nor primitive. In those feelings and opinions, those habits and infinitely complex phenomena we find within ourselves, how can we distinguish that which properly belongs to human nature, and is primitive and fundamental, from that which is variable, accidental, and derived, contingent, it may be, and determined at the outset by a free will? Besides, interior observation of the principles of our actions makes us acquainted not precisely with facts, but with ends. Even were the object proposed universally desired to the extent that pleasure is, it is still a mere idea, conceived as exercising attraction over us. Now, as we have said, science knows

no ends in nature. It knows only purely mechanical causes and effects.

And so, in the utilitarian system, on the one hand, ethics has lost its greatness: it cannot, without defective reasoning, maintain the higher elements of the code of morals. On the other hand, the scientific method is not strictly applied. Not yet, then, have we come into possession of the scientific ethics for which we are seeking.

#### IV

Science, as we conceive it nowadays, suffices unto itself; it no more needs to submit to the laws of ethics than to take into account those of religion. Of all the sciences, however, is there not one that contains within itself what is ordinarily called ethics?

Amongst other objects, science includes the study of living beings; and this study, biology as it is called, comprehends, so far as the higher animals are concerned, both physical and moral manifestations. There may, then, be an ethical science: that portion of biology which deals with the ethical nature of man. Ethics is only one branch of natural history.

Here, the idea of scientific ethics is very clearly outlined. We shall not attempt to find,



in prejudices and moral traditions, previously imposed solutions of scientific investigations; nor shall we set up as imperative maxims the confused and suspected data of the individual conscience: from without, we shall observe the general laws of life and of the world, and from these laws deduce those which, whether men know it or not, necessarily govern their conduct. Herbert Spencer and Darwin offer us this latter type of ethics, an ethics dealt with after the method of the natural sciences.

Life, according to Spencer, is the lasting adaptation of an individual or group of individuals to its environment. On this basis, what can ethics be? Not, as Bentham and Stuart Mill would have it, the recommendation that man should seek after what is useful to him, directly or indirectly, according to his feelings or the dictates of his individual conscience. Apart from the fact that the ethics of Stuart Mill was but a finalistic and esthetic ethics, devoid of scientific authority, it set before us an object that contradicted itself. To seek after pleasure by taking the interior sense, the subjective opinion, as a guide, is a sure way to miss it altogether. Pleasure, indeed, is the end which the individual pursues, but the latter,

by his feelings, cannot know what procures it. Nine times out of ten, his desires are a delusion and a snare. The task of making us happy is one that we must entrust to nature, *i.e.* to science, which discovers the laws of nature. If we obey the universal laws, including the law of adaptation to environment, of which life itself consists, we may be certain that, sooner or later, pleasure will be ours. Nay, what we call obedience to the laws of nature is really only a metaphor. We ourselves are nothing else than a part of nature, and so the adaptation of each individual to his surroundings and to the whole, the harmony between individual happiness and universal happiness, must gradually and of necessity come about. Such is the ethics of Herbert Spencer: the science of the conditions of human happiness, deduced from the general laws of life and from the conditions under which the human beings in question exist.

However remarkable be its scientific character, it is possible that this doctrine may not yet be the perfect type of ethics as a science. Indeed, it contains some traces of finality. This law of the adaptation of the individual to his environment, assumed to be absolute and supreme, is not a direct result of the

observation of nature : it still implies the idea of harmony, as the end of universal evolution.

Darwinistic ethics is more strictly scientific. Darwin himself does not trouble to draw up a system of ethics, but when some objection to his system is sought in ethical ideas, he examines them and explains them from his point of view. He lays it down as a principle that the general law of the living world is the effort of each organism to continue to exist ; and also the preservation and increase of those particularities useful in the struggle for existence. Vital competition and natural selection are the only causes of organization and change which nature brings into play. Now, in the struggle for existence, ethical feelings do play an important part. Sociability, love of family and country, honour, are all special forces added on to our physical and intellectual powers. What goes under the name of ethics can only be the study of the ethical factor which mankind introduces in the struggle for existence.

Here, the idea of scientific ethics is very nearly realized. Even in Darwinism, however, do we not meet with an ultimate memory of finality ? Is not that individual development, that triumph in the struggle for life

which, according to Darwin, the innate tendency of every living being has for its object, is not that also an end? Is the love of life indisputably that inevitable, universal law which Darwin takes for granted? One fact, at all events, seems to prove the contrary: suicide, and the distaste for life, of which man is capable.

If the last word on scientific ethics was not spoken in Darwinism strictly so-called, we find it in many recent works in which evolutionism and Darwinism have developed in a scrupulously naturalistic direction. Taking it literally, the true naturalistic ethics is nothing more than the natural history of morality, without any hypothesis set up as an imperative rule interfering with it. The natural sciences try to discover what laws govern the formation and changes of the various beings in nature. They enable us to see, without our forming the faintest preconceived ideas, along what successive phases these beings have passed in reaching their present condition. This method of research is applied, purely and simply, to the study of the moral being. It is proved that our moral feelings, which appear simple and innate, are really complex and derived; and an attempt is made, both by

synthesis and by analysis, to connect them with the general mechanical causes of the universe.

Thus we see that the method is absolutely scientific, and ethics, as a science, has a veritable foundation. The result, however, at which we arrive, is evident, and it is given by naturalism itself: there is no longer any ethics. Already disfigured and mutilated in the systems constructed after the method of the physical sciences, ethics altogether disappears in those that deal with it after the method of the natural sciences.

Take, for instance, the notion of right: how could this notion continue to exist? The idea of right is based on that of freedom; and naturalism cannot see in freedom anything but illusion. Science will explain historically the genesis of the idea of right, and the result of its explanation will be the resolution, purely and simply, of the idea of right into the conditions of existence in which human communities find themselves.

And how is charity to be defended? It is absurd in a system where the destruction of the weak by the strong is the only social law known to nature, the only principle of what we call progress. To practise beneficence, that

is, to interest oneself in the outcast, the weak and the wretched, to spend one's time and strength in keeping them alive, is the same as to attempt, from ignorance and superstition, to oppose the inevitable march of nature: a foolish, barren task.

And so the naturalistic system fully satisfies the conditions of science, but it annihilates ethics. That was bound to be the case. At the first blush, the idea of setting up a scientific system of ethics may have proved extremely fascinating, but ethics and science march in opposite directions. Science studies what is; ethics, what ought to be, what is fitting or obligatory. It is impossible to bring the latter within the scope of the former.

But then, it will be said, though a little science unsettles ethics, much science re-establishes it; for, when studying things closely, we note that the traditional moral ideas are not arbitrary inventions but necessary phenomena, based on the nature of things.

My reply is that I cannot continue to attribute authority to ideas, the origin of which is shown to lie in the mechanism of brute forces. Why should I respect them? Nature has made them, I am told. Yes, but she

has made many things that are not respectable. These ideas, which, it is imagined, ought to guide me in the search after pleasure, actually hinder me: wherefore sacrifice the certain for the uncertain, the clear for the obscure, the present for a future that does not concern me? Consequently, I put aside derived laws and indirect means, to consider the one fundamental law. This law, science tells me, may be formulated: life for life. A strange formula, if it is supposed to govern my conduct. For if life has no other end than itself, it has no value whatever in my eyes. The man who kills himself is precisely the man who believes that his life cannot any longer serve him for any other purpose than to live.

### GENERAL CONCLUSION

From this study, which has been mainly historical, we must see if we cannot draw a few practical results.

The rights of science are indefeasible: of all the powers before which the human reason finds itself, science is the one which obtrudes itself most irresistibly upon the reason. But if science cannot establish ethics, can it really abolish it?

(The scientist is a spectator, and science is a mirror wherein reality is represented, epitomized. Now, does the spectator exclude the actor? On the contrary, he calls for and demands him. There would be nothing for science to observe, were there not an activity which is ever producing phenomena. Can I not apply this principle to my moral life? )

Science, shall I say, applied to man, cannot prevent me from believing myself someone and acting as such, since it awaits my actions so as to have an object to analyse. We must not ask of science to give us the rules and regulations of our acts, nor must we fear that it will prevent our adopting any particular rule that it has not sanctioned. (Science cannot order us to do anything, not even to cultivate itself: we are free to choose some external principle of action. Our only obligation with regard to science is that we take care that the rule we adopt shall not contradict its fundamental conditions and acquired results.

But where is this rule to be found? In Hellenic ethics? Or in Christian ethics?

These two combined seem to comprehend the entire human ideal; the one is the ethics of the intellect, the other that of the will.



Harmony and love, good and duty, beauty of form and sublimity of spirit: these sum up all that man can wish: all our ethical conceptions, then, must come under Christian and Hellenic ethics.

It is no easy matter, however, to reconcile these two doctrines. The one deals with the present or temporal life, the other with the future or eternal life.

Hellenic ethics sets before us, as an end, that state in which nature is in harmony with spirit, without therefore abdicating its own distinctive essence and value. The term of this wisdom is the serenity resulting from the perfect harmony between corporeal and intellectual perfection. Certainly, Hellenic ethics is idealistic: its object may even be regarded as the raising of man above instinct and animality. But what it has in view is the coincidence of form with idea: it is the realization of idea and the idealization of nature. Its object is to find the point where matter meets spirit, to unite the latter to the former in the most harmonious fashion. Not too much of anything, either in the spiritual or in the physical order of things: such is the Greek maxim.

Thus, Christian ethics is far from being the

ethics of moderation. Far rather is it the ethics of a passionate love, an infinite desire. It insists on our being perfect as God himself is perfect. It orders spirit to free itself from matter as the butterfly leaves behind its chrysalis; for finite nature cannot contain infinite spirit. Is this transcendent ideal, in which nature is sacrificed to spirit, capable of being reconciled with the Greek ideal, which, whilst maintaining both within strict limits, unites them in one harmonious whole?

We must resign ourselves to the fact that we can regain neither the serenity of the Greeks nor the joyous enthusiasm of the early Christians. (To the ancients, ethics is a doctrine; to the Christians, a belief. By reason of the conflict between Hellenism, Christianity, and Science, ethics is to us a problem.) Let us not, however, be unduly depressed on that account, for, because it is a problem, it is therefore the very leaven of life. The attempts we are incessantly making to solve this problem invigorate the soul:

*Ce n'est qu'en ces assauts qu'éclate la vertu,  
Et l'on doute d'un cœur qui n'a point combattu.*

Are we, moreover, to believe that we are reduced to the necessity of seeking and doubting?

If the question seems insoluble in theory, it may be possible, in practice, to come nearer to a reconciliation. According to this view, let us see how the rôle of Hellenism, Christianity, and Science may be interpreted.

Science, as we have said, does not allow us to form moral conceptions incompatible with the truths it pre-supposes or establishes. But whilst it makes us more and more thoroughly acquainted with reality, it places the forces of nature more and more at our service. It is for us to use them well. Science can supply us with the instruments of morality.

Now, this very morality may be inspired both by Christianity and by Hellenism, if each of these two systems makes certain concessions to the other.

Hellenism desires that man should spiritualize nature: cannot Christianity consent to this? To transcend nature, is it necessary to do away with it? The lesson to be learned from Greek ethics is that nature is not only a collection of atoms governed by blind forces, but that, in everything that is, the intellect can discern an esthetic and ideal element. The Greek will teach us to add on an idea to all reality, to unite reason to force, reflection to instinct, joy to work. He will show us how

the humblest occupations of human life may be regarded as beautiful.

Strangers once came to visit the illustrious Heraclitus. They expected to find him in most imposing surroundings, whereas he was actually engaged in preparing his food with his own hands. As they were amazed to see him engaged in so menial an occupation, Heraclitus remarked: "Here, too, gods are to be found."

Thus the Greek idea ennobles the meanest and lowliest existence: it causes life to be esteemed and loved. The spirit of harmony delights in our world, everywhere finding itself at home therein.

A joyous, serene life, however, no longer proves sufficient for those brought under the influence of Christianity. The man who has become conscious of his will and his power to love will have nothing to do with the peace and calm of wisdom. In particular he is unable to find quiet and happiness in the mere contemplation of visible harmony. And so he will give a welcome to that ethics of intention and spirit, of love and sacrifice, which orders him, by means of his will, to do what nature with her loftiest instincts and forces could not do: to create within oneself an in-

visible, superior nature : in a word, to aim at that indefinable perfection which is the dream and aspiration of the human consciousness.

Is such ethics compatible with Hellenism ? It would appear to be so, provided that, whilst assigning to man a supra-sensible destiny, it recognizes natural life and the legitimacy of natural life, and refrains from setting up renunciation of the world as the condition of this higher life.

Man is a traveller seeking his home. Science walks by his side, offering him the various powers of nature he happens to desire ; but science, indifferent to the path he is to take, is incapable of serving him as a guide. And yet, there before him appears a beautiful young genius : the genius of harmony, the genius of Greece herself. He takes man by the hand and goes with him through the most enchanting lands. They reach the summit of a mountain : - all around stretches a marvellous picture, radiant with grace and light. Heaven and earth blend in one, nor is it possible to discern the line that separates them. " Behold, here thou wilt find happiness," says the genius. And the traveller is tempted to exclaim : " This is my home at last." An indescribable thrill, however, passes through his frame ; a

feeling of uneasiness is aroused, and he begins to question himself. Is there no other destiny for him than thus to contemplate the various beings of nature, from without and in their *ensemble*? He wishes to have a close view of all these beings which, seen from above, blend into the harmony of the whole; to know their nature and activities. He descends into the valley and looks. Alas! they are beings that toil and suffer and destroy each other, burdened with physical and moral infirmities of every kind. Then he has a presentiment of another destiny for himself: the communion of feeling, *i.e.* of suffering, with all these wretched creatures. The invisible world, the world of souls, stands revealed before him. To help his brethren and love them, to employ every effort in making them good and happy; is not that the ideal after which he aspires? "Thou art indeed beautiful, my visible home, abode of harmony and serenity. But thou, my invisible home, hast all the sublime mystery of the infinite and the divine. Is it not my destiny to strive to attain the latter, all the time I am living in the former?"

## PESSIMISM <sup>1</sup>

I WISH to speak to you to-day on the subject of pessimism. All the same, it is my intention to give you neither a summary recital of its manifold forms nor even a glimpse of what a complete study of the question would involve. Whether in religion or literature, in philosophy or morals, in theory or practice, pessimism, from the farthest antiquity, has inspired so many works of every kind, that it would prove no easy task to analyse and co-ordinate its divers manifestations. I think I shall find it easier, as well as more immediately useful, if I inquire which, amongst the reasons on which pessimists lay greatest stress, are the ones that seem specially calculated to affect us, and then try to discover the true value of these reasons. And so I shall question myself, observe the impression made upon me by the

<sup>1</sup> Books for study : Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea* ; Leopardi, *Operette morali* ; Ed. von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*.

language of pessimists, and discuss such ideas as have struck me, to try and discover if I ought to adopt them. It is according to this view, *i.e.* from an eminently practical standpoint, one that is actual and relative to ourselves, that I shall endeavour to find the meaning and value of pessimism. I may at once acknowledge that my conclusion will not be a subtle and original one: it will consist, quite simply, in the condemnation of pessimism, a condemnation that common sense has already pronounced. A reasoned conviction, however, is of greater value than an opinion based on instinct alone; and in these days of analysis and criticism, it is anything but unprofitable that truths, however evident, should produce their claims to acceptance.

## I

What, then, is pessimism?

There is a disposition of mind which is commonly called pessimism, though unworthy of the name: that peevish, morose humour which causes everything to appear in the darkest colours. You have had a sleepless night or some bodily ailment, everything is a burden and the general outlook is black. But then, all this is only something that has happened



to one individual: yourself. Everything in life is not evil because a man chances to be indisposed. In all likelihood, the same man will see things in their brightest colours as soon as his physical state improves. His judgment on the world is but the mirror of his organic condition: it has no value whatsoever. To be able to call oneself a pessimist, it is not sufficient to regard the world as evil, you must have a plausible reason for your belief, a reason, too, that can be communicated to others. Pessimism is not an individual humour, it is a theory.

Now, in order to hold a theory worthy of the name, is it sufficient to say: "I am in pain, therefore life is nothing but suffering and consequently the world is evil." After all, a great many pessimists, quite famous men, even, seem to have reached this conclusion. Certain critics claim that the argumentation of Leopardi often amounts to no more than this.

A mere statement or formal declaration of evil, however painful, is insufficient as a foundation for pessimism. Consider suffering and poverty, even death, which most certainly casts a shadow upon all our joys: all these discords in life can legitimately make you a

pessimist only if you know that they are in truth the workings of an evil genius or an implacable destiny, and that all man's efforts to modify them must turn against him. "I suffer, therefore the world is evil," is a fact set up as a principle, the surface and transitory state of things taken for their substance, their eternal essence.

True pessimism is a doctrine, a reasoned conception of the nature of things, an *ensemble* of ideas tending to demonstrate not only that evil holds a place of considerable importance in the world, but also that it exists therein for itself, and must for ever permeate and corrupt, in an equal, if not an increasing, degree, all the works both of nature and of man. And because it is an abstract doctrine, a philosophy, not a mental state, we must not imagine that pessimism is a phenomenon that can be neglected in practical life. The method we adopt towards suffering in real life is largely governed by our conception of the totality of things. That which permanently guides our thoughts, which we endeavour to communicate to others, is our philosophy. Ideas, though invisible, are very real and powerful forces. Certainly, so far as pessimism presupposes reflection and science, it does not come within

the scope of everyone ; but just because it is a subtle and learned doctrine, it is all the more likely to lead serious-minded people astray, and to exercise the greater influence the more cultured one's mind happens to be.

Of what, then, does this doctrine consist ? Of course, we are not trying to find its profound metaphysical principles, but rather looking at it from a practical point of view. Therefore we will define pessimism as the belief that the world is organized in such a way that evil and suffering are inevitable and irreducible, and, of necessity, have a larger place in the world than good and happiness. On what reasons may such a belief be founded ?

One of the arguments advanced is nature's impassibility and indifference concerning man. Whether she is propitious or unfavourable to us, nature knows nothing about the matter ; it is by mere chance if her phenomena bear any connexion with our thoughts. In former times, the Greeks, doubtless impelled by the desire to make the world inhabitable, peopled it with gods fashioned in the semblance of men. Heaven and sea, the winds, all the forces of nature were so many beings who thought and willed as we do, and who, by

prayer and sacrifice, could be moved and flattered, appeased and rendered favourable. To them the universe was not immense, as it is to us; they saw its limits, it was not at all metaphorically that they spoke of the vault of heaven. Man was the centre of this little world: it was an easy matter to persuade himself that this dwelling - place, whose *ensemble* and beautiful ordaining he could compass with a glance, had all been arranged and appointed on his behalf. These were charming dreams, poetical illusions of a past that can never return. To us, nature is gloomy and unheeding; we are lost in her staggering immensity. We try to hide from ourselves our feeble interest in things: in our towns and cities we contrive for ourselves an artificial nature, gentle and pleasing, fashioned after our own tastes. But this is not nature. We throng the fashionable resorts, wander in forests ordered and set out for our own pleasure, promenade along sea-fronts lined with rows of smiling, dainty villas, and vaunt the charms and delights of such communion with nature. Here, too, we deceive ourselves. Those who, far away from countries in which the impress of civilized man is everywhere seen, find themselves, for instance, in African deserts, in

the presence of real undisturbed nature, cannot repress their feelings of dread and dejection; no longer do they recognize the symbol of divine unity and eternity in immobility and infinite space; they see only the expression of brute force on every hand. More especially does the sea, nowadays, give men an impression of blind omnipotence: in this connexion, it has inspired our poets and novelists with their most striking descriptive passages.

Nature's indifference to man is now the universal theme. In his *Tristesse d'Olympio*, Victor Hugo, that religious and optimistic poet, says:

*Nature au front serein, comme vous oubliez  
Et comme vous brisez dans vos métamorphoses  
Les fils mystérieux où nos cœurs sont liés!*

Lamartine, in *Le Lac*, would seem, at first, to have been less disillusioned. "May something of us remain here!" says the poet:

*Quê le vent qui gémit, le roseau qui soupire,  
Que les parfums légers de ton air embaumé,  
Que tout ce qu'on entend, l'on voit ou l'on respire,  
Tout dise: "Ils ont aimé!"*

The poet, however, knows only too well that this is a dream which cannot be realized. No one can cast anchor on the ocean of time, even for a single day. And how vain to lament

the inevitable transformations of all creation ! If man would be surrounded with objects that sympathize with him, he must avoid looking at real nature and build for himself in imagination an ideal nature. This latter alone can retain the memory of the emotions it has witnessed. Such is the meaning of *Le Lac*, and so when we compare Victor Hugo's tears with Lamartine's smiles, the latter prove to be more melancholy than the former.

Are these simply a poet's impressions, the fancies of a literary artist ? Not at all ; there can be no doubt but that these impressions manifest the very spirit of modern science. It is the latter that has mercilessly driven all poetry out of nature by reducing her to nothing but matter and motion. In nature, the ancients saw harmony, beauty, and order, the expression of divine wisdom and providence. Science insists on seeing nothing more in nature than mechanical forces, atoms that collide, draw near to and separate from one another in quite purposeless fashion, and in obedience to no other law than that of the conservation of energy. How can we expect a collection of atoms to have any tendency to set itself in harmony with our needs, our aspirations ? Modern pessimism is but too well established ;

for it is the echo in the human soul of the following principle, proclaimed by science: everything in nature is, at bottom, only brute matter and mechanical motion.

And so nature's indifference to our happiness is our first grievance against things. Still, we reply, even though this indifference be cruel and unpleasant, all the same, it does not deprive us of all our joy, for we are living beings, and life itself is a boon.

That is a profound error, continues the pessimist; the general laws of life constitute a second reason, a more serious one than the first, for declaring that the world is evil. You declare that life is a boon because you look at things superficially, because, in your blindness and egoism, you consider only yourself, who happen, just now, to be experiencing a certain measure of comfort, and you leave out of account all other living creatures, because you shut your eyes to all those results that do not please you, without troubling to inquire by what sacrifices they were obtained.

Nature's method is selection. The meaning of this is that, in order to enable a few rare individuals to reach some degree of success, nature carries on the most destructive experiments, *in anima vili*, on thousands of other

individuals. Many are called, but few chosen ; such is the law ; and the destruction of some is the very means nature employs to save the rest. Nature is like an artist who, for a single painting, makes a hundred sketches, which he destroys as he proceeds. In like fashion does she practise ; but her rough attempts—which behold the light of day only to disappear immediately—are living, sentient beings.

Still, are even the chosen assured of living ? By no means. Nature would appear to show a certain refinement in the matter. Her most perfect creations are also the most fragile ; she is continually reminding them that their existence is a pure favour on her part, and that they can do nothing either to deserve or to retain it. Man is nature's masterpiece, and yet, as Pascal says, a slight poisonous emanation, a mere drop of water might kill him. How complicated are the various organs of his body, how numerous the enemies that threaten his life ! Death remorselessly lies in wait for him, and when he begins to reflect, he finds it no easy matter to understand how he is to avoid the toils and snares of the destroyer for any length of time.

And yet, at this very moment when I feel



myself living and experience a certain degree of pleasure, do I not regard my life as a boon? Yes, on condition that I refrain from meditating and forget that I have an intellect. But if I look around and think of the condition of my fellow-mortals, of the sufferings implied in my own comfortable state, of the tears that make up my joys, I cannot possibly find any delight in my privileges. There is no small degree of egoism in the idea that everything is for the best when all the time you yourself lack nothing. And there lurks more or less of this egoism in every living man. Life is a forward march, it is oblivion: oblivion of those who have had to disappear in order to make room for us, of the dear beings we have lost and from whom we imagined we could not part, of those who are annoyed by the system to which we owe our present position, and finally, of those who serve in order that we may be free.

But if we consider in itself this pleasure which has been so dearly bought, it is still incapable of satisfying us, for it bears within itself its own negation. It is keen and can be experienced to its full extent only if it has been preceded by suffering or some feeling of privation; not only that, but it becomes

blunted by habit and finally terminates in utter satiety. In children, tears are quickly succeeded by laughter; in man, laughter follows close upon tears. "From the depths of our pleasures," says Lucretius, "arises a bitterness that oppresses the heart as we are actually gathering the flowers of joy." Scarcely have we attained to the good things for which we crave, than their mere touch causes them to lose all value in our eyes.

Will it be alleged that life is a boon, if not in itself, at all events as regards the end assigned to it by nature? What is this end, asks the pessimist; what is the meaning of life?

It is frequently said that life, though vain and unintelligible to the man who works only for himself, assumes a very clear meaning to the self-sacrificing man, and especially to him who devotes himself to the sacred work of education. Most certainly, this is one of the noblest and most useful tasks we could set before ourselves. But does it solve the problem? What will be the mission of the very children to whom I devote my whole life? The mission of bringing up children in their turn, they doing the same as long as there are human beings left on earth. And if

such be the case, is it not evident that the problem is perpetually being postponed, never solved? The means is of no value unless it enables one to reach the end. If what we took for an end is but a means similar to the one which practically does not differ from that which has been acknowledged to be only a means, then there is no further reason for pursuing the object set before us. Believing we are advancing, we remain rooted in the one spot. If life is not a boon in itself, how can it become one through merely being transmitted to others, and nurtured in them so that they, in their turn, may pass it on?

And so, the pessimist says, not only is nature insensible, she is also evil, for she has created the evil thing called life.

Is this all? One refuge would still appear to be ours: belief in progress. If brute nature is insensible, or even evil in certain directions, cannot time ameliorate and modify it? Has not man, in particular, the power to curb the forces of nature, adapting them to the satisfaction of his needs and desires?

But even to this objection the pessimist does not yield; on the contrary, he finds in it his third and supreme argument. Progress, he says, does but increase evil, after all. If

we only examine and minutely analyse it in all its aspects, it will show itself to be rather baleful than beneficent.

We see material progress on every hand; but, after all, what are its effects? It allows of the satisfaction of needs which did not previously exist, and thus it creates these needs. It prompts man to discover that he lacks a thousand things, to be constantly suffering from new-created wants. For true nature, content with little, it substitutes a false nature, restless and insatiable. We could not live nowadays as our ancestors lived. Take the chateaux of the Renaissance: those vast, bare rooms, paved with bricks or tiles, which it was impossible to shut in or keep warm. Even the very poorest of us would complain of lack of comfort in those palaces. And man is so constituted that we cannot say whether it is the necessary or the superfluous that he craves the more ardently. Doubtless this thirst after enjoyment, however deceptive it be, possesses one advantage, in that it gives an impetus to production and work. But here, another contradiction is seen. Progress consists in causing nature herself to do the work which, in past times, men did with their own hands; its tendency is in the direction of

increased production by a decreasing number of workers. What is the lot of those whom progress has rendered useless ?

Such is material progress, such the ever-increasing evils it produces. And this progress is both necessary and inevitable; for it is but the application, to human life, of mathematical and physical science, whose conquests seem never-ending. In spite of the part which human freedom appears to play in this matter, we have here too an inevitable effect of the laws of nature, the persecution, as it were, of some evil genius embittered against us.

But then, we reply, can we not enjoy as an unmixed blessing that moral progress which makes man great, just, and good, which lifts him above nature, and which is dependent mainly on our own efforts ?

Who knows, replies the pessimist, but that this very progress is the spring of our deepest and most poignant troubles ? Moral progress implies the conception of an ever loftier ideal. The higher, however, the perfection we conceive, the more are we disillusioned with reality, and the sadder when we think of the enormous difference between that which is and that which ought to be. The idea of justice causes

us to suffer when we consider how good and evil are portioned out in this world. The thought of a refined pleasure, truly worthy of a man, prevents us from taking delight in the artless amusements of the masses. The sense of beauty, harmony, and greatness makes us perceive everywhere nothing but mediocrity, baseness, and discord.

But our greatest evils arise from a sense of moral delicacy. This is an exquisite, almost morbid sensibility, which causes us to suffer from a host of things, of which others have not the faintest suspicion. It makes us repudiate all egoism and think anxiously of others. Now, who knows but that, in this life, egoism may not be the best means of being content with oneself and with others? Moral delicacy makes a man into an Alceste. And an Alceste, who esteems mankind and would improve it, is eternally being flouted by a Philante, who despises men and profits by their vices. Moral delicacy causes us, in all our actions, to regard ourselves from the standpoint of others; it tortures us unremittingly, even when our intentions have been pure and upright.

Thus, moral progress must of necessity induce us to regard ourselves as unhappy and

culpable, even when everything that befalls us is propitious, and our actions are altogether free from reproach.

By such reasonings as these does the pessimist persuade himself, not only that nature does not trouble herself about us, but that the inevitable working of her laws makes life an evil, and what we call progress an increased evil. And, as regards every human action, he concludes with the words: "What is the good of it all? Why must we do anything, since our intention is bound to meet with deception; since, when sowing good, we shall, of necessity, reap evil? He alone knew the real nature of things, who said: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.'"

## II

And now that we are brought face to face with this system, have we no reply to give?

The first refutation—I say the first, without claiming to enumerate and classify all that might be made—is the one based on physiology. You maintain, says the physiologist, that the sum-total of a man's sufferings is necessarily in excess of that of his joys. This opinion is based solely on your ignorance of the conditions of pleasure and pain; we will now show

you that you have only yourself to blame if you are unhappy.

At any given moment the human organism is capable of supplying a determined amount of force. The organs of the vegetative life draw on this source for their power of functioning. Well, then, suppose an impression takes place; the reaction it calls forth uses up a certain amount of force. If this force is taken from the amount that is indispensable to vegetative life, pain results; still, this does not necessarily happen. Our supply of force may prove greater than the needs of our vegetative life; in that case, we have a reserve disposable for motive life—life, *i.e.* which is opposed to life as nutrition. Feeding on this reserve, motive life causes no pain; on the contrary, it affords joy. The error into which the pessimist falls is to suppose that all reaction is suffering, as though reaction were necessarily brought about at the expense of the forces indispensable to organic life.

Knowing the cause of the evil, adds the physiologist, we also know the remedy for it. This consists in procuring, by means of nutrition, as large a store of forces as possible, and employing for motive life only the forces left disposable by vegetative life.



The question of pessimism would thus seem to resolve itself into a problem of hygiene. The whole secret of happiness would appear to consist in securing, for our activity or work, an increase of physical strength.

This solution is an instructive one. It is both our right and our duty to realize, to the best of our ability, in ourselves as well as in our fellow-beings, such conditions as are favourable to life and activity. There can be no doubt but that, if we realize these conditions, we shall lessen the amount of evil there is in the world. We ought, therefore, to collect and put in practice such instruction as shows us how we may ward off physical suffering, which is so frequently connected with effort.

But even if this reply offers a certain practical utility, none the less is it incomplete and inadequate for our purpose. Such a reply is a plea in bar. We are neglecting the moral causes that act on man's imagination and the reasons that appeal to his intellect, and considering only his physical condition. In all these ideas and reasonings we have described, we are determined to see nothing but the reflection, the expression and symptom of a physiological disorder. Is it then true that to be in good health is all that is needed to

become an optimist, and that it is suffering and nothing else that leads to pessimism ?

Our thoughts are not connected to such an extent as this with the state of our organs. We may experience comfort and yet be pessimists, just as we may be deprived of many of the necessaries of life and yet remain optimists. Some people think we need only consider the disposition a man shows in his conduct, in order to discover whether his pessimism is sincere or feigned : they are greatly mistaken. A gay, light-hearted man may believe most seriously that the laws of nature are, in themselves, hostile to human welfare, and that his own comfort is but a fortunate and fleeting chance. Why do you expect that his own contentment is all that is needed to enable him to regard everybody as in a state of happiness ? The morality you attribute to him is none other than that of Sganarelle when he said : “ After eating and drinking to my heart’s content, I want everybody else in the house to be tipsy.”

It could not, moreover, be alleged that, co-existent with physical health and comfort, pessimism is no more than the whim of a dilettante, devoid of practical consequences. In the first place, health and gaiety of disposition in

themselves do not satisfy a man who thinks: he aspires after intellectual enjoyment, and this he cannot have so long as he regards the world as badly constituted. Then, too, ideas react on feelings and sensations: at all events, things happen as though such were the case. And so the propagation of pessimistic ideas must, sooner or later, have an influence on the disposition and the physical health as well, especially if these ideas find, in certain social or physical conditions, a soil and environment favourable to their development and fructification.

In order to oppose an effective resistance to pessimism, we must go back to its causes. Many regard the main cause to be the diminution of belief. For the man, they say, who believes in Providence, in a fatherly protection and guidance in this world and a just recompense in the next, or even for him who believes in the religion of action and is convinced that human effort will, sooner or later, meet with its due reward, the miseries of life lose their sting. It is by emptying heaven for the benefit of earth that the latter has been made uninhabitable. It is by refusing the help of God that men have become incapable of helping themselves.

There are, indeed,—who would deny the fact?—beliefs that are beneficent, capable of sustaining and comforting us in times of misfortune. There is a salutary faith, which gives us one reason for living, when the world would seem to have taken them all away. Such beliefs should be respected and kept alive: for if we love mankind we ought to regard as valuable anything that lightens the burden of human suffering. Can it be said, however, that here is to be found the sovereign remedy against pessimism?

It is comparatively easy to keep alive, in oneself or in others, existing beliefs; it is not so easy to re-establish beliefs that have been destroyed. Here, utility, in particular, is an insufficient claim for recognition. An intellect that shows respect to truth cannot embrace an idea from considerations of interest, exclusive of the relation this idea bears to reality. In order that belief may obtrude itself effectively upon me and remove all scruples from my mind, I must be shown that it is true knowledge, justified independently of any benefit I may obtain thereby.

Besides, this is not perhaps the main objection raised by such a way of considering

the matter. After all, it is possible to create beliefs artificially, and the mind is more accommodating than one might imagine. But then, one must be certain that it would be a good thing to use this power.

Experience daily shows what control may be exercised, by proper methods, over the consciousness of another.

Take a child, put him in a previously determined environment, allow him to read only certain books, and show him things under one aspect alone. Inculcate in him definite physical and moral habits, and then let him reflect and reason so that his knowledge and habits may find expression in principles and convictions: in this way you will actually have moulded an adult human consciousness, wedded to ideas that will form one with it and can never be divorced.

This power which we have at our disposal is a real one. There is something terrible about it, however, and, in my opinion, it ought to be used with discretion. In these days there is much talk of suggestion: now, the mode of influence in question is in reality a suggestion, one practised upon an individual healthy in mind and body. Is such a practice free from reproach, from a moral point of view? You

may, at your pleasure, as on a *tabula rasa*, impress on a child's nature characters that are almost ineffaceable, . . . but how heavy the responsibility!

You are acquainted with the theories—paradoxical enough—held by Tolstoi. This noble educator was terrified at the idea of bringing up a child. When we taught this defenceless creature our ideas, principles, and science, in accordance with a method and in a spirit that we ourselves determined, were we not encroaching on his freedom, running the risk of stifling his very nature beneath our conventions, and, in a word, substituting our personality for his own? What right had we to attempt a task pregnant with such serious consequences? And Tolstoi began to suspect that we had no right to educate, and came to the conclusion that the school system ought to be a free order, an untrammelled impulse of the mind towards instruction.

Doubtless Tolstoi carried his scruples too far, for the child's very personality can be realized only if it is cultivated; still, it was a mistake to ridicule his idea, a noble one indeed. Tolstoi clearly saw that a human being is something sacred, and that the educator should

restrict his activities to advancing the normal development of the child's mind, without the faintest thought of making of the child his own "tool" or "product." Looking at the matter from this standpoint, we shall do well to refrain from suggesting any particular beliefs to the children in our charge, as we have the power to do.

Although our influence is more restricted as regards the adult, it still exists; a sense of honesty and integrity, however, forbids our using it. And besides, what would be the value of beliefs inculcated on one from without? Would they really be of a redeeming, a salutary nature? Possibly they might succeed in calming the soul's need of certainty and in lulling it into indifference or Pharisaical disdain, but would they make it brave and strong? To impose one's beliefs on others is not only an illegitimate undertaking, it is perhaps even less efficacious than might be imagined.

It would appear, too, that you might act in such a way even upon yourself that, voluntarily, you adopt any particular belief. You could, by appropriate methods, start along a path culminating in the mental state you have in view. By the power of will, in accordance

with the laws of habit, belief gradually finds its way into mind and heart.

But would an upright, sincere soul, one that knows the cost of truth, be willing in this fashion to adopt beliefs deliberately, without first ascertaining whether or not they are based on reason? Remember that the man who undertakes such a task begins by being false to himself, and that afterwards he works himself up to believe in this falsehood of his and to forget that he is its author. Now, have we the right to treat our intellect in this way? Ought we not to respect it, as well as that of our fellow-beings? And is not this very respect one condition of our dignity and moral worth? If we were to choose between repose without thought and thought without repose, what is there to prove that we should not have to decide for the latter?

Consequently, neither the rules of hygiene prescribed by the physicians of the body, nor the beliefs prescribed by the physicians of the soul, prove effective remedies against pessimism. Neither the ones nor the others have condescended to examine the reasons on which this doctrine is based. We have set forth these reasons and tried to present them in



their full significance. Now let us see what value they possess.

It is not impossible, it would seem, to reduce them to a single element. At bottom, pessimism is based on a certain conception of nature and mankind.

It regards nature as consisting of blind forces in aimless activity, working in a purely mechanical fashion. According to this idea, every being in nature tends to occupy the largest possible place, without any wise and higher power assigning to it limits or boundaries in view of the existence and development of other beings. There is no other limit to the activity of any force than that of the other forces in the world.

Analogous is the conception of human nature. The pessimist places this nature in a boundless, unregulated will which aspires only to realize itself as much as possible, *i.e.* to an indefinite extension and the enjoyment of whatever comes within its scope.

Because he sees in nature no other god than force, the pessimist declares nature to be indifferent, even hostile, to human happiness.

Because he regards will alone as the basis of human nature, the pessimist looks on man as inevitably doomed to suffer: from his point of

view, he is right. Here we have a will which regarding itself as sovereign and independent, claims to realize its sovereignty, *i.e.* to fill infinity. All that the world offers it is finite: consequently, no sooner does it gain possession of a thing than it tires of it. At bottom, this will knows not what it wants; for, in this world, it cannot possess the infinite: in reality, it is but the desire for something else, the need of that which it has not, a longing for the impossible. In these conditions, by no possibility can it ever be satisfied; its very conquests are nothing but deceptions and illusions.

What must be thought of this, the main idea of pessimism? We must acknowledge that it is not devoid of value. Who has never felt within himself this need of change, this inability on our part to be satisfied with our present state? Do not the most ardently desired objects lose somewhat of their value once they come into our possession? Is not that mysterious land, which, from afar, held out the most wonderful promises, similar to other lands once we see it at close quarters? Again, who would affirm, as against the pessimist, that the forces of nature are either intelligent or controlled by an intelligence, that they tend to realize an esthetic and moral order

of things? Is not modern science based on the idea of physical causality and mechanism, as fundamental laws of nature?

True; but is this the entire man, is this the whole of nature? Certainly we recognize in ourselves an infinite need of change; but is there nothing more? To say that man is a will and nothing else, is to say that he recognizes, as superior to himself, no rule, authority, or duty. Now, conscientiously, are we sure we are thus our own masters, sure we have the right to make any use we please of our will, sure we have no other destiny in life than self-affirmation, according to a modern barbarism, apparently the offspring of this very claim? As regards the doctrine of duty, some have said: "What do they know of it?" But is it not more particularly of those who, denying duty, look upon man as independent and irresponsible, that this question may rightly be asked? As a matter of fact, science, properly so-called, teaches us nothing that contradicts the notion of duty; and this notion continues to exist in the human soul, in spite of clever refutations and clumsy apologies.

It is more difficult to submit to examination the idea formed by the pessimist of the character of the natural forces. We cannot

pierce into the heart of things and understand their essence: we know them only from without. And, when we look at them without any preconceived ideas, we wonder more and more whether that element of order and harmony they offer is not a negligible quantity compared with the element of incoherence and disorder; whether this very order and harmony are not themselves capable of being explained solely by the working of mechanical forces.

And yet, how can we persuade ourselves that nature is but aimless motion and matter? Does not man, in such a universe, appear as some extraordinary, supernatural being? Would he not be, *quā* man, isolated in the world, without any connexion or relationship with other beings? If the doctrine of evolution, so prevalent nowadays, is to be believed, man is the offspring of inferior species, the final product of an altogether natural development. But if this be the case, there must be nothing in him wholly foreign to nature. Why, then, should not the natural forces be governed by something analogous to the rule by which our will is controlled? In fact, throughout the progress of beings from atom to man, these forces have accomplished a wonderful work. Though intelligence may

not have contributed to the creation of beings in the extremely simple fashion generally recognized, who can affirm that it has not contributed at all thereto ?

Now, if we recognize that there is a rule for our will, perhaps, too, an ideal direction for things, pessimism has no longer any *raison d'être*. In such a world our efforts are no longer ineffectual, nor our good deeds illusory. Every time I have followed the rule, I have done something altogether good, and I may be content. Whilst working along the lines of my destiny, I have, in all probability, placed myself in a state of harmony with things themselves.

All we have said, from the pessimistic standpoint, of the inanity of life and progress, loses its force when brought in contact with the idea of duty. We now see moral progress as possible, without on that account being inevitable: it depends on ourselves whether we submit our will to duty or declare it to be independent; and moral progress, which is capable of producing such terrible consequences, is likely to be limited in its beneficent and salutary effects if our will intervenes to regulate and direct it in accordance with moral ideas. Life, also, from this standpoint,

assumes a certain meaning and value. It is when we wish to live, purely and simply for the sake of living, that we finally discover that life has no meaning. But when we agree to try to find for life an end outside of itself and regard the performance of duty as being that end, we always retain a reason for living; duty is always to be considered.

Lastly, what shall we say of nature? Were she really inert and indifferent, consisting solely of blind forces, it would none the less be possible to work for the good of mankind. Nature would seem to be a kind of huge machine, whose force must be directed to moral good. Who knows, however, but that the appearance of man realized nature's desire, so to speak, and that the beings all around us are rough sketches of the work which has been so wonderfully accomplished within ourselves? It may be, after all, that things bear a resemblance to ourselves and that they also tend towards the ends which reason suggests to us. Everything, then, has not disappeared from that glorious world of antiquity, in which it was so pleasant to live. Strife and destruction, a little good bought at the cost of much evil, such, alas! is what we now behold. But underneath this sorrowful reality

there may be a better tendency, one destined to become more and more manifest. We are not merely acting as artists and poets when we look on the pleasant side of things and tax our ingenuity in discovering some trace of beauty and goodness in every one of them : in doing this, we are judging nature as indeed she doubtless wishes to be judged. The thought, too, that the ideal is no vain word, that it is active, and secretly permeates the most material parts of the universe, reconciles us to things, once for all, and enables us to work at our task not only submissively, but with joy and confidence.

Does this mean that we are to indulge in a quiet, contented optimism which regards evil as only the shadow that makes the light conspicuous ? We must not despise pessimism to such an extent : on the contrary, we must remember that evil is but too real, and that it is either selfish, cowardly, or base to deny it or resign oneself to it. Both in nature and in man, evil comes from the operation of forces that are opposed to good. Therefore it is by struggle, not by simply yielding to the play of natural laws, that we may hope to diminish it. Deliberate belief in good forms our reason for entering upon the struggle, our support in all

our trials. Seeing the evil and determined to have the good, we will devote ourselves, in a sympathetic and religious spirit, without harshness or arrogance, sorrow or bitterness, to the relief of human misery. Our optimism will then consist, above all else, in the belief that it is noble, not useless, to fight against the evils that beset us.

To sum up, pessimism has no power over the man who believes in duty. Belief in duty is the source of ideas and feelings which remove the soul from its influence. But this very conclusion shows us the peculiarity of the problem in question. We shall find no solution for it in either experience, philosophy, or the data of science. This problem is altogether different from those investigated by science. No doubt it is imposed on us by the nature of things ; still, its solution will not be given us from without, it can come only from ourselves.



## THE MOTIVES OF STUDY

I WISH to inquire into the motives to which preference should be given in exhorting the young to study, to try to find out the best means and incentives to intellectual work. From the outset I must acknowledge that I can bring you nothing new, nothing personal, on the subject. All the same, I do not regard this as a reason for not dealing with the matter.

We have here a practical question to consider, one that is as old as human culture itself. Now, in such things, it is better to be on our guard against originality even more than against commonplace ideas. To have the same thoughts as others is not necessarily a sign of error. You remember what Pascal said on the subject of moral truths: "They are called great and noble, lofty and sublime. That spoils the whole thing. I should like to call them low, ordinary, and familiar."

On the other hand, the very simplicity of these truths does not prevent frequent medi-

tation on them from being of great service. In the world of action, knowledge is nothing; application, everything. That knowledge may become transformed into action, it must transcend the sphere of memory and form one with the will itself. The method of obtaining such a result is not to allow our attention to be turned aside from practical truths as from something commonplace and well known, but rather to keep these truths ever present in mind, to consider them under divers aspects, to call upon every kind of reason or example that is calculated to give them more value, strength, and life. We must guard against repeating moral maxims in parrot-like fashion, said Leibnitz, without experiencing a serious desire, deep within ourselves, to put them into practice. And, to counteract what he called psittacism, he recommended the observance of this precept: "Reflect well and remember."

In this spirit let us try to discover what reply should be given to the question: "Why do we study?"

There is a higher motive which ought to dominate all our actions as well as our intellectual and moral life, and that is the idea of duty. But we are not forbidden to seek a basis for the practice of duty in the inclinations

and tendencies of men. This is both legitimate and efficacious. In effect, duty is not opposed to our nature: it only orders us, before giving play to our natural energies, to discriminate and choose the best of these energies.

As regards intellectual work and study, it is those principles of action which are distinct from duty, though susceptible of favouring its performance, that we purpose to determine and analyse.

## I

The most important motives, those to which appeal is perhaps most frequently made in all exhortations to work, are emulation, love of praise, and utility. That these are motives of the utmost value cannot be disputed. It would be useless to condemn emulation and eliminate it from the work of education, though there have been times when we have allotted it too important a place. Amongst the Greeks, everything was a matter of competition: physical exercises, art, and poetry; indeed, emulation has occupied a place of honour from the remotest antiquity. The victors in the Olympian games were celebrated by a Pindar; their names were graven in golden letters on marble tablets. It was

to the ambition of obtaining the first prize that the world owes the immortal works of Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Open Quintilian; he attributes the utmost importance to emulation. It inflames the mind, he says, and frequently inspires greater ardour for study than the entreaties of a master or the prayers of parents. Apart from its universally recognized efficacy, emulation possesses a characteristic which gives it exceptional value. In the school, it represents real life; for the essence of life may be said to consist of strife, rivalry, and competition. Now, children should, as early as possible, be initiated into the conditions of reality.

Along with emulation, the love of praise is a very powerful and natural motive. It was frequently extolled by the ancients. "It is honour," said Cicero, "that sustains the arts; all men passionately undertake any work which holds out the promise of glory."

The utility of intellectual work is justly acknowledged by all. This utility adopts two forms. Study initiates us into science, which gives to mankind dominion over nature: a pre-eminently manifest utility. And there is another, less evident, which the scholars of the Renaissance clearly saw and defined when they

affirmed that study, applied to fine models, adorns and civilizes the mind, inculcates politeness, and develops humane feelings. The German scholars of the eighteenth century went even further. To fashion an honest man, according to our ideas, was not sufficient, they intended study to effect an intimate education of the mind, to mould and shape it, so to speak; for such is the meaning of the German word *Bildung*, so inadequately translated by our word *culture*. At all events, we are sure we are right in emphasizing in the young the utility of study.

Still, however legitimate and efficacious emulation, love of praise, and the consideration of utility may be, are these motives all-sufficient? Should they be set in the foreground of our consciousness?

They possess one common characteristic which we must note: they are extrinsic motives. They offer study not as an end, but as a means: inviting us to apply ourselves to study, not for itself, but for the benefits connected therewith. Consequently, the ardour we put into our study from these motives will by no means form a criterion of our love of the work itself or of the things to which it refers.

Do you study for success? Good: but if you work solely with that end in view, once the examinations are over, you will cease your studies.

Do you study to obtain some post or other? What could be better? Once your end is attained, however, you may never think of opening your books again.

Do you study in order to learn how man may appropriate the forces of nature? But if study has no other meaning for you, then you confine yourself to technical knowledge and never think of making disinterested research into any subject.

Lastly, do you study in order to adorn and cultivate your mind? But, even then, you do not like the subjects of your study for their own sake. It is your self that you look upon as an end; works of genius are unimportant to you except in so far as they contribute to your pleasure or interest. You will refuse, then, to bind yourself. You will take up books of study, or lay them aside, as your whims or necessities dictate.

Consequently, never to speak to children of anything but examinations, honour, and utility is almost equivalent to turning them away from study and at the same time compelling them to take it up. But the incentive of some

reward or benefit it is affirmed is still the most efficacious means of deciding a person to make an effort. An artificial attraction must be given to that which, in itself, lacks attraction.

Such is the opinion of many people. But is not this a very hasty solution to the question as to the interest which study, of itself, may offer? Work requires effort. Is it, on that account, a penalty, a punishment?

Let us lay aside our prejudices and set phrases for a moment, and examine the reality of things. Let us try to discover what is the natural impression of the human mind when brought in contact with the main objects of literature and science. Were this impression a spontaneous inclination to study, recourse to extrinsic motives would be less necessary than is imagined.

## II

The first feeling aroused within us by anything that is new is curiosity. This is quite as true of the child as of the man. The child is continually questioning; his eager, restless glance shows how strong is his desire to receive enlightenment on everything he sees. True, it sometimes happens that, no sooner does he go to school than his curiosity dies, the light

fades from his eyes, and his face becomes expressionless. His intelligence and sprightliness disappear and give place to awkwardness and indifference, laziness and languor. All this, however, is the disastrous effect of lifeless instruction, not the natural sequence of an initiation to study.

There is a tale related by Homer, showing to what extent the Greeks regarded the desire for instruction as one of the most powerful instincts in human nature. When the sirens, in their attempts to seduce Ulysses, cast about for the most irresistible of all arguments, they promised him—not the thousand aspects of pleasure—but knowledge alone. “Come to us, glorious Ulysses! No one ever sails past this spot before listening to the sweet strains that escape from our lips; then they take their departure, transported with joy and knowing many things. We know the sufferings of the Greeks and Trojans on the mighty plains of Ilion; we are learned in all that takes place on this fruitful earth.” The instinct of curiosity was peculiarly strong in the Greeks, the representatives *par excellence* of human genius in antiquity. And this instinct manifests itself in man, whenever he is permitted to follow his natural inclinations and tendencies.



The more it satisfies itself, the more it grows and expands.

We should therefore, from the outset, make use of this precious instinct in prompting children to a love of study. Guard against weakening it or neglecting it altogether. By its aid the pupil eagerly sets forth, of his own accord, along the path he has been enjoined to traverse. Man ought to keep unsullied, throughout life, that ardent desire to learn; which is, as it were, nature's invitation to study.

Still, though this is a powerful and legitimate motive, evidently it is not all-sufficient in itself. Curiosity is a capricious, vagabond faculty, inciting us to seek after what is novel, easy, or piquant, in preference to what is true, great, or really beautiful. It loves to pilfer rather than to search or examine deeply. It possesses all the charm and levity of youth, and therefore needs guidance. How will it obtain this guidance? Will nature offer us other impressions capable of rightly determining this initial tendency or disposition?

### III

The subjects offered for our study are by no means the easiest; they are the most

glorious in the whole of literature and science. Here, the natural feeling is that of respect.

Now, what are the conditions of this feeling? For a thing to be capable of commanding respect, it must call into manifestation a will obedient to some lofty and holy law, or, in default of a complete working out of this law, a disinterested effort on the part of the subject to surpass himself, to stretch forward to the ideal. And for anyone to be capable of commanding respect, he must have the conception of spiritual greatness and be able to bow before it: in a word, he must have the religious sense.

Now, it happens that these conditions are fully and excellently satisfied when the child is brought in presence of the masterpieces of human thought.

Indeed, what are literature and science other than man, infinitely transcending the animality in which he took birth and rising above himself by a process of self-subordination, by devotion to an ideal? In science, man abases himself; he sacrifices his imagination and mental habits, his prejudices and desires, to the investigation of the nature of things in themselves. True, in literature, man takes himself as his object. But he does not con-

fine himself within his own individuality ; it is life or mystery, the eternal or the beautiful, that he endeavours to lay hold upon and express. Literary activity seeks after God in spirit, just as scientific activity seeks after him in matter.

Both of these, then, should inspire a feeling of respect in us, if we are capable of such a feeling, if we really possess the religious instinct. But who can deny that the child, if left to himself, is conscious of his own weakness and dependence, and disposed to offer worship to whatsoever he looks upon as great and good ?

True, there are theories that tend to destroy our respect for great works. Genius is analysed as regards its elements and causes ; the attempt is made to prove that the appearance of a great man is, at bottom, nothing but an accident of fate, a kind of successful issue, determined by a fortunate concurrence of coincidences under the combined action of environment and heredity. But the means employed by nature in realizing her noblest creations is of little matter to us. Flowers are still beautiful, even after they have been brought within the category of chemical substances. What though the man of genius be explained in terms

of physiology, none the less do his powers transcend those of ordinary mortals.

And yet, certain critics come along and say: "To understand the writer, we must first study the man." Now, the latter is for the most part like any other man: interested, vain, or jealous, a slave to the prejudices of his caste or his age, at times a charlatan, frequently a plagiarist. By accusations of this kind, based on very detailed and great erudition, it is intended to wean us from a respect which is looked upon as superstitious, and to substitute science for feeling, in the study of literary works.

We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by such malicious criticism. The work and its author are, and must remain, quite distinct from each other. Of course, it is possible to have harmony between the two. Style, in particular, may not simply be an attribute of the man: there are times when it is the very man himself. But again, how often do we find a lack of proportion between the work and the individual! There is no doubt but that the work may be superior, whereas the individual may be commonplace. This is owing to an author aiming necessarily at the composition of the noblest and loftiest work

possible. He writes, not for himself—whatever may at times be said by those who consider themselves misunderstood—but for the whole of mankind; and whatever there is within him supremely great awakens at the call of that ideal reader: humanity. Frequently the individual is only the theatre of the genius working in him—working without his knowledge. Now, it is the work of this genius that we purpose to study. Naturally, we shall appeal to history and biography for all the help they can give us in thoroughly understanding it; but afterwards, we shall consider it in itself, leaving out of account the author's personality.

Well, then, man spontaneously experiences a feeling of respect in presence of the monuments of literature, the conquests of science. Is this a healthy and good feeling? Ought it to be nurtured and cultivated?

It may seem that such a disposition is but little in conformity with modern ideas. Ever since the Renaissance, ever since the time of Bacon and Descartes, the superstition of authority has disappeared. Is not free criticism more glorious, more fruitful than respect?

Certainly, respect is a dainty and delicate feeling which it is fitting to reserve for what-

ever is truly great and noble: a considerate feeling which ought not to degenerate into blind superstition. But when we study proved literary masterpieces, we can only benefit by acknowledging their greatness and seeking above all else for that which makes them monuments of the power of the human mind. Once imbued with respect, we may without danger enter upon a most minute criticism. In the first place, a masterpiece will bear such criticism, and, in the second, even if we find genius at fault, we shall not in future be tempted to plume ourselves on our discoveries and victoriously compute the faults of a Corneille over against our syntax. Criticism, when modest and sincere, will instruct us without perverting our judgment.

Can this feeling of respect, so natural and healthy, be an efficacious incentive to study.

At first glance, it seems rather to keep us at a distance, to separate us from the great masters in literature, by making us conscious of our vast inferiority. Consequently, the proposal has at times been put forth that we should bring children in touch with the less important authors before introducing them to the greater.

Respect, however, does more than incline

us to a sense of reserve: it is a complex feeling into which both repulsion and attraction alike enter. We dread, though at the same time we desire, the presence of the one we respect. To feel respect for the subjects of our studies is in itself a wish to enter into closer touch with them.

#### IV

Indeed, the mighty creations of literature and science inspire in us something more than respect: so austere a feeling is but the prelude of gentler emotions. The more we come to understand a masterpiece, the sooner we discover that it is beautiful as well as great, that it responds to the most ardent aspirations of the soul. When this happens, respect is succeeded by admiration, and admiration by love. This is the soul's natural march in the presence of things that appear excellent in her sight.

Who doubts but that the objects of our studies, when regarded in their true light, are, in the highest degree, deserving of love and admiration? I am not now speaking of the practical results of the sciences, the beauty of which is apparent to all: nor even of those lofty theories which arouse such keen

enthusiasm amongst scholars. But academic matters, strictly so-called, the elements of grammar or arithmetic, the resurrection of the past by means of history, man's relation to the earth as explained by geography: all these departments of knowledge, even in its humblest form, contain in a few simple symbols such a sum-total of effort and discovery, inventions and ideas, victories over nature and methods of human amelioration, that they are bound to fill with wonder and delight even the one who catches but a faint glimpse of their import. The alphabet is looked upon as something abstract, something tedious. But what could be more wonderful than to succeed in writing down on paper, with the aid of twenty-six letters, every word we utter, *i.e.* every idea and thing? So amazing is the result that it would appear to have suggested one of the boldest and most fruitful hypotheses in the science of nature itself. We know that profound philosophers of antiquity, such as Democritus and Epicurus, explained the infinite diversity of qualities which the world around us shows forth, by means of small bodies, identical in nature and differing only in form. This ingenious hypothesis is found at the present time in atomic chemistry. It



would seem as if, according to Lucretius, the thought of the alphabet was in the mind of the founders of atomism, and was the origin of their invention. Wonderful, too, is numeration, which, by the aid of a few signs and words, permits of the naming and classifying of all possible numbers, and enables the intelligence of a child to embrace infinity. And these creations are capable not only of being admired, but also of being loved, for they are the work of the human mind which here is manifested in all its glory and freedom. Left to his natural impressions, man loves science, as being the ideal object, the possession of which is to satisfy the confused desires of his mind.

Even more directly are we in communion with the spirit that lives and finds expression in literary work. Whether near or far away in time, we listen to men who tell us of their joys and sorrows, their feelings about life and the world in general. There is a strange, penetrating charm in this mysterious converse with men of genius belonging to the remotest antiquity; and instead of finding the ancients uncouth and barbarous in their ideas, we are amazed, the more intimately we come to know them, to see how like to our own were their

feelings. Hand a copy of Homer to a child, without putting into his head any thought of impositions or of Greek translations, and you will be struck by his interest in the narrative, the eagerness with which he takes sides for or against the heroes of the epic. The same thing will happen in the case of Corneille's tragedies or of any other classic masterpiece. The simple and great, however ancient, are more akin to an artless, unaffected nature than the false and complicated, however modern. Wherever the human heart unbosoms itself, or a man's emotion finds expression in power and beauty, we, in turn, love and are moved with compassion or sympathy: we love the brother whose inmost soul we can enter, and who, himself, understands us all the time. The great poet gives himself, and the gift of self calls for a like gift in return.

The objection will be raised that admiration, and even love, may be only an amateur's enjoyment, the dainty sensations of a dilettante. If so, they would be distinguished feelings, possibly enough, though vain and selfish after all.

Such, indeed, would be the case, were not admiration and love preceded, and, as it were, sanctified by respect. Enamoured of our

aristocratic sensibility and wholly absorbed in the delight of analysing our subtle impressions, we should place a Homer or a Corneille at the service of our own paltry personality. Respect obviates this aberration, crushing within us all false pride and self-consciousness. For this reason, respect ought to precede love. One must purify oneself to have the right to approach the altar; one must strip oneself of egoism in order to hold communion with the ideal.

Admiration and love, in their due place, are very efficacious motives. Love tends towards the union of souls. If, then, we love some particular science or literary work, we shall not content ourselves with acquiring that half-knowledge of it which maintains us in a state of ignorance. We shall be determined thoroughly to sift and make our own the ideas that have impressed us, and endeavour to infuse into our very essence the finest achievements of human genius.

From this point of view, we shall find a strange charm and virtue in two methods, despised though they sometimes are: reading aloud and learning by heart. He who loves an author—especially if the latter be a poet—likes to form an idea of the work in question

as it came into being beneath the enamoured gaze of its creator. Now, if reality and life are thus to be restored, what better method could be found than reading aloud? Through the emotion caused by the sounds that proceed from a thrilling voice, the imagination actually resurrects and fashions into shape the vague phantoms that slumber in the pages of a book. And when we have succeeded in making some masterpiece our own by memorizing it, how delightful to be able to call it forth at any moment, to possess it as the sage of old possessed his fortune, wholly invested in interior wealth, and to blend and fuse into one with that soul to which divine beauty has revealed itself!

Now, the more frequently we read a masterpiece, the more do we discover in it new aspects; we love it with greater ardour because we understand it better. Love and knowledge react upon each other; this is why admiration, and love, its goal or objective, are motives of ever-increasing power.

Still, we are forced to acknowledge that the mind, if determined by these motives alone, would not obtain from study all the advantage that might be expected. Whereas there was a risk that respect would leave it cold and

timid, admiration and love might hold it in a state of purely passive contemplation. Now, it is not our destiny to become ecstatic over things, but rather to act. How is the transition from contemplation to action to be effected?

## V

It is unnecessary, by means of artifice, to force nature to proceed towards the end assigned to her by reason; all that is needed is to allow her to follow her own course. Just as respect conceals a secret, timorous aspiration towards love, so love, without knowing it, has a tendency to imitate and create.

This instinct shows itself in the child as soon as intelligence is awakened. Watch him surrounded by his toys: those that interest him most are the ones he can take to pieces and build up again, thus affording him an opportunity to be doing something. The famous toys of Nuremberg mainly consist of reduced models of things which adults use; from which fact we see that children take special delight in imitating and reproducing what they see us do. No sooner does the child begin to study than he also has the desire to

teach what he has learned, unless his instinct be thwarted: frequently he wishes to teach in accordance with a method of his own invention. A favourite game for little girls is to play at school with their dolls. Where is the child who, once he perceives the beauty of a masterpiece in poetry or art, does not dream that he, too, may become a poet or an artist?

And in spite of the disappointments and delusions that experience brings in its train, man retains this disposition of mind. He feels it is indeed by action that he attains to self-realization; all the more so when his action is governed by a loftier ideal.

What admits of no doubt is that this instinct is good and beneficial, if the progress of the human mind really comes about through a series of creations, invariably prepared by means of imitation, and not through the inevitable working of exterior forces. Still, in order that man's work may be beautiful and capable of living, admiration and respect for great things must precede the exercise of productive activity. The man who, like a god, would create without a model, will express, in his work, nothing more than his paltry personality. If he does not compare himself

with anyone else, he will easily be satisfied, and even though he works with the utmost zeal and ardour, he will acquire but a sort of frivolous virtuosity. To accomplish great things, intelligence and work must be inspired by a very lofty ideal. Now, by means of love and respect, we may all participate in the life and power of genius itself. Into the soul that has taken the necessary initiations, the god descends and renews his creative work.

The instinct of imitation and production will prove the most fruitful of all incentives to study, if appeal is made to it at the right time and after suitable preparation. For, in order to be capable of reproducing things, one must have a far deeper knowledge of them than that needed if one desires merely to describe or enjoy them. He who would imitate a model will minutely separate it into its elements and analyse it, in an endeavour to discover the laws and methods by which it came into being. Whereupon, the disciple—who has now become the emulator of his master—will not simply attain to wider knowledge, but this very knowledge itself will be of a different nature. He will discover the genesis of things and come to know them in

their origins. Now, to come into possession of the methods by which a science was invented, to make our own as much of the creation-process of genius as is capable of being transmitted, is assuredly the noblest recompense for our labours that we can anticipate.

## VI

To sum up, the various extrinsic motives with which we content ourselves at times when we would induce children to study, are by no means the only ones that present themselves to the educator. There are also intrinsic motives, alike extremely efficacious, legitimate, and natural. Such are the desire for knowledge, a disposition or liking for respect, admiration, or love, the instinct of imitation and production. Before studying with a view to the advantages set before him, man wishes to study by virtue of his intellectual and moral constitution itself.

If such be the case, evidently it will be fitting to appeal first to these favourable inclinations. What is true of mankind as a whole must be true of our pupils, destined as they are to become men in the course of time. It was with a joyful feeling of the expansion



of his being that man created science, literature, and art: to be initiated into this creation cannot be a painful task for the child. Let us, therefore, give up the idea that children can interest themselves only in praise or rewards, or in the various advantages our present school system sets before them. Let us recognize that they are able to take an interest in things themselves, and they will do so.

Still, one may ask whether all the studies demanded of the child are of a nature to be loved by him in this fashion, and whether several of them are not both very necessary and very arid and uninteresting at the same time.

Truth to tell, if there are studies which, in spite of all we can do to find the human, the endearing element in them, continue to be dull and unattractive, we may ask ourselves whether or not they really have any educative virtue; if indeed they fill their right place in classic instruction. After all, what is our mission? The creation of intelligence and character in accordance with the idea of human nature. Now, joy is the sign by which we recognize that mental activities are being directed towards their natural end.

Moreover, in emphasizing the power of the intrinsic motives, we have had no thought of eliminating the others. On the contrary, we retain them all the more carefully because they seem more legitimate and effective once they are subordinated to disinterested feelings and tendencies. Emulation loses its acuteness and becomes generous strife in those who are animated above all else by the desire to learn and to do well. Praise is no longer the satisfaction of our vanity which we try to obtain in every possible way, once we come to know that there is but one thing—true knowledge—that possesses any value at all; still, it remains an important mode of encouragement. Finally, the solicitude for utility, required by the conditions of life, takes none of its nobility from the soul, when we estimate that the many advantages we derive from study must themselves be devoted to the development of science and literature and of those generous ideas which redound to the honour of mankind.

The objection will also be made that study, when thus linked to the natural impulses of the soul, loses its seriousness and becomes confused with play. Is it not a return to the theory of the attractiveness of work when we

require that admiration and love shall be the child's motives ?

If such were the case, it would be disastrous ; for this theory is assuredly a false and dangerous one. It begins with a falsehood, and, if it succeeds, it enervates the soul ; if it fails,—a more likely event,—it destroys the child's confidence in his master.

But without at all reconciling work with play, may we not inquire whether the opposition we frequently set up between them is natural and true ? We find it professed by the Romans, a serious nation, doubtless, though coarse and brutal in their games, as they were harsh and strained in their practice of duty. On the one hand, violent constraint ; on the other, unchecked laxity. Is that the ideal of human life ? Not thus did the Greeks conceive of work and play. Games, with them, were noble and well regulated : work retained ease and grace alike. Work and play were but the alternate exercise of our divers powers.

As for ourselves, whilst recognizing more expressly than did the Greeks the necessity of the idea of duty, we should perhaps do well to prefer their conception of life to that of the Romans. Why should work be opposed to play ? Is the one less indispensable than the

other? The unregulated freedom we demand for play has no excuse except in the trouble and inconvenience that we believe to be inseparable from work. As regards school discipline, how much truer and nobler is it to regard what is called play as the exercise of one part of our faculties, mainly physical, and what is called work as the exercise of another part, chiefly of our intellectual faculties! Now, both would fain be free and regulated at the same time. In the one, as in the other, we ought to find that harmony between spontaneity and proportion in which grace and perfection consist.

And finally, we shall perhaps be told that study, as we understand it, makes the teacher less necessary. But then, is it not the true mission of this latter to teach his pupils to do without him? In family life there comes a time when the parents, after having, for long years, found their happiness in the care and devotion they have bestowed on their children, say to them, not without considerable anguish of heart: "Your education is now at an end; the time has come to depend on your own exertions." In like fashion, the teacher, who worthily accomplishes his task, instructs the children how to suffice unto themselves, to

become men. He, too, when his work is finished, says to his pupils, not without a tinge of regret, though with the satisfaction afforded by the consciousness of duty usefully performed: "Now go, dear children, you have no longer any need of me."

## READING ALOUD

I LOOK upon reading aloud as one of the most efficacious of the various methods of instruction and education. When I recall my school life, I find that the most vivid memories are those left by some particular reading or other, delivered at odd hours by a professor with a gift in this direction. Besides, is not the effect of vocal delivery upon human beings a matter of daily observation? Without mentioning the theatre, to what an extent does the delivery of a speech influence its effect! Have you not noticed that, when reporting on some eloquent effort, care is always taken to state the manner in which it was delivered?

There has never been a time when educators have not realized the importance of reading aloud. In Athens, the child's first master was the grammarist, whose main duty consisted in making him study the poets. Slowly and with measured intonation he declaimed, sen-

tence after sentence, passages from Homer or Hesiod, and the pupils repeated them. In Christian churches, the public reading of sacred texts has ever been an essential part of worship. How the early Christians must have been filled with emotion when they heard Saint Paul's letters read in accents of devout piety! And reading aloud is recognized to be of greater importance than ever nowadays. In German schools, I have had occasion to note that this practice occupies the front rank, especially in girls' schools. The object is to stir up national feeling in the children's minds,—along with a due appreciation of the beautiful and of the talent of the authors,—by the prestige of vocal delivery and an intelligent choice of texts.

In France, the cult of reading is one which the authorities have long ago done their best to develop in schools. So much has been said and done in this direction that I rather fear this talk may be devoid of interest for you. Still, if I can induce you to reflect once more on the matter, I shall have contributed to the development in you, not only of a well-reasoned conviction, but also of a disposition and bent of mind which, from a practical standpoint, cannot be valued too highly.

I purpose to call your attention to the following points. Of what does the power of reading aloud consist? How must one read that this power may be manifested?

## I

Reading gives life to human utterance: in this word, life, we have our answer to the first question. But, then, what is this life, what is the meaning of the metaphor?

Here I must call to my assistance a passage from Plato, who, near the end of the *Phædrus*, when comparing the written word with painting, expresses himself as follows through the mouth of Socrates: "I cannot help feeling, Phædrus, that writing is unfortunately like painting: for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence. And the same may be said of speeches. You would imagine that they had intelligence, but if you want to know anything and put a question to one of them, the speaker always gives one unvarying answer, . . . and if they are unjustly assailed or abused, their parent is needed to protect his offspring, for they cannot protect or defend themselves."

What does this mean except that the author



commits to writing only the final results of his reflections? He retains in his mind the innumerable facts and ideas, reasonings, tests and verifications that have paved the way to these results. And so, around each thought expressed in writing, there hovers and swarms an invisible host of accessory and explanatory thoughts. This host of thoughts cannot be summoned forth by the written word alone: it is the province of the human voice to arouse them in the minds of the listeners. The innumerable shades of meaning in the spoken word are so many beacon lights which help us to see the connexion between ideas and their origin, the oppositions, comparisons, and distinctive aspects of things, the goal towards which thought is aiming. And this is the task to which the writer who recreates himself, as it were, in the mind of reader or listener, has devoted himself: it is intelligence, lulled to slumber in its material envelope, that awakes, and bestows renewed life upon him.

Such is the first effect of reading aloud: a very powerful and sure process of enabling the text to be understood in all its preciseness and fullness of meaning.

It goes further than this, however. Consider the direct action of the spoken word.

In the human voice there is an indescribable something that is communicated to man, affecting him in the profoundest part of his nature. This corresponds, in a way, to what in physics are called synchronous vibrations. Reader and listeners thrill in unison; the emotion of the former is even strengthened by that of the latter, and *vice versa*. Now, this phenomenon takes place under the influence of the mind whose work is being called forth. It is the author who now lives in them; it is his love of truth and beauty, the secret spring of his thoughts, that enters the soul of his devoted listeners. And so the reader causes the author not merely to be understood, but also to be loved. At the sound of his voice the written language loses whatever obscure, material element it may possess and becomes a pure symbol; it allows itself to be assimilated in an ever greater degree by souls that seek each other, and ends by becoming nothing less than the connecting link between these souls themselves.

*Dann geht die Seelenkraft dir auf,  
Wie spricht ein Geist zum andern Geist.*

Faust's words are realized. Whilst the whole body thrills, the gates of the soul open wide and spirit communes with spirit.

Thus, reading aloud enables us to understand and feel with singular vivacity. But to understand and feel strongly is almost to will; and to will seriously is to begin to act. If the works that are read in our presence emanate from superior intellects, then reading aloud will arouse within us nothing less than a disposition to surpass ourselves, to rise to the level of these intellects in our own thoughts and actions.

## II

How are we to read, if we would produce such results?

A very distinguished man, who was both a subtle artist and a profound mathematician, once said to me: "There is only one way to read well, and that is to read without any expression whatsoever. Pronounce every word faithfully and correctly, and then leave me to give life to the language in my own way and according to my own imagination. In your efforts to interpret the author, I see only an indiscreet claim to interpose yourself between him and me." It was through following a somewhat similar line of thought that certain poets, imbued with the inviolability of art, founded a theatre of marionettes some years

ago. Such players, at all events, would make no attempt to substitute themselves for the author.

However plausible my friend's theory might appear as maintained by himself, I think that anyone who did not come beneath the charm of his explanations would find it a gross paradox. Indeed, to read without expression is not to set forth the text in all its bareness, ready to be clothed in any kind of vesture, it is rather to read with a false expression, to distort the very meaning of the text. Besides, such a course of action would make speech utterly monotonous and wearisome to most audiences. Now, no one will admit that such is the duty of the reader. And finally, this is a demand to do something really beyond our power. It is impossible for anyone who feels keenly to refrain from showing his emotion both in voice and accent. If he is to obey such an injunction, the reader will have to do himself violence, so to speak, and this will impart to his delivery a false, artificial element.

All the same, it would not be wise on our part purely and simply to reject my friend's paradox. It is quite true that our first care must be to read what there is in the text, all

there is in it, and nothing else. This is trivial advice, though not useless. Whether it be from thoughtlessness or the habit of contenting themselves with an approximation, whether it be from lack of flexibility or from anxiety as to the effect, many persons, more or less, distort and misrepresent the text, without reflecting that exactness is the one thing that constitutes honesty in the reader, and that no other qualities have any right to be exhibited if that be absent.

But this is not all. Our poet-mathematician testily reminds us of one of the principles we ought to hold most highly: the impertinence on the part of the reader in diverting to himself that attention which ought to be bestowed only upon what he is reading. Even on the stage, I feel doubtful whether the actors really have the right to expect us to admire, as personal, the interpretation they give of the plays entrusted to them, and to elicit applause for themselves. At all events, the educator, in the performance of his task, may not try to find occasion for obtaining a personal success. If admiration for his talent is the main impression his pupils receive from his reading, then his effort has proved a failure.

Nor even ought we to read in the same spirit as a society man, whose object it is mainly to amuse and entertain his hearers. Great thoughts, couched in noble language, are not for us a mode of pleasure, however genteel. What we have in view is to rise to a loftier plane, by sharing that higher life which the man of genius has been privileged to enjoy. On this level the reader has not to set himself apart from his listeners, to get himself applauded or thanked by them. His rôle must be one of self-effacement before the author whose mouthpiece he must confine himself to being. He is on an equal footing with his audience, and it is his very self-effacement that is the excuse for his presence.

If such be the case, the problem we have set ourselves is a very embarrassing one. On the one hand, we must read with expression, and consequently put something of our own in our manner of reading ; on the other hand, we must efface ourselves and bring our listeners into direct communication with the author. How are these two conditions to be reconciled ?

It would seem that the first thing we should aim at is to get the reader to feel what he is reading, to love in order to inspire love.

Here again we encounter a famous paradox,

that of Diderot. The actor, says this brilliant critic, ought to have no sensibility at all, but much judgment and penetration. He ought to be sure of himself, an impassioned spectator, as it were. He should possess the art of imitating everything without himself feeling anything.

I do not know if this theory is unreservedly true even with reference to actors ; it certainly cannot be accepted by those whose aim it is to elevate others, not to shine themselves. We have no right to call forth any particular feeling unless we ourselves feel it. To regard oneself as superior to the emotion that great happenings call for, when it is one's mission to inspire this emotion, is not a becoming attitude for the educator. Besides, artifice constitutes a very dangerous method. Once the pupils detect it, they lose that unreserved confidence in their master without which he can have no influence over them.

Still, there is something important to remember in the famous *Paradoxe sur le comédien* ; that neither in order to express what we feel nor even to feel at all can we rely upon brute nature. Of course we must be natural ; but then, all that is in nature is not natural. Affectation itself is in

nature. The natural implies choice between the workings and laws of nature; it is spontaneity and simplicity in the manifestation of man's true nature, *i.e.* of reason and honesty. Consequently, the natural is the result of co-operation between nature and judgment.

As regards the manner of representing feelings, psychologists lay it down that no expression, however primitive and spontaneous it be supposed, is purely automatic, but that there necessarily enters into it an element of choice and will. *A fortiori* ought we to exercise judgment and reflection if we would find the right expression of feelings which are frequently very complex and delicate.

More than this: feeling itself may go astray unless it be guided by reason. Sincerity, feeling's first virtue, is not to be found in nature, pure and simple. Were it otherwise, nothing would be more sincere than passion, or blind impulse. To have the right to proclaim ourselves sincere, we must conscientiously attune our thoughts and feelings to the ideal of truth and goodness within ourselves; and this cannot be effected without study.

Then, again, merely to persuade ourselves that we ought to become one with the author,



is not everything. Here, a distinction must often be made. If I read a poem of Lamartine, it is in fact the author's real or ideal personality that is the soul of the discourse. But in dramatic poetry, like that of Corneille or Molière, I have to identify myself with the characters of the drama itself. If I read a dialogue like the one between Cineas and Pyrrhus in the first Epistle of Boileau, I must emphasize the intention of the author rather than the individuality of the characters, who in this case are but symbols. If I read a fable of La Fontaine,—that strange poet, who purposes, so he says, to sow the seeds of virtue in men's souls, but proceeds to his goal by the longest way, delighting in everything he meets and occasionally forgetting to arrive there; for whom morals and life, the world and nature, have perhaps been, above all else, the opportunity for exhibiting the exquisite art of a painter or a dramatic author, a humorist or a writer,—the point of view I have to adopt does not fail to call for the most careful consideration.

But the reader does more than manifest his feeling, it is his aim to give life to that which he reads. What principles must he adopt to ensure success in this aim of his?

In these erudite times we are only too ready to believe that the distinctive mission of the interpreter is to restore things to their environment, to endow them with their true historical aspect. By consulting documents, we can reconstruct, with ever greater fidelity, the feelings and mental habits, the gait, the prevailing mode or fashion, and even the speech of our ancestors; we can actually sense the past. It would appear as though this impression were one that a capable reader owes me; I expect him to set forth the *Chimène* of 1636.<sup>1</sup>

Is this really the end to pursue? I am not speaking of the enormous labour which the slightest amount of reading will call for if we wish men and things to live again in the recital, with every historical feature and detail. In spite of all our science, how often shall we be forced to confess our impotence! Nor am I speaking of the difficulty there will frequently be in making one's audience enthusiastic over reconstructions that mainly interest the learned. But entirely to relegate a Molière or a Corneille to the past, to refuse to see in them anything else than the product of their age and environ-

<sup>1</sup> The heroine of Corneille's *Le Cid* symbolized in the highest degree the conflict between love and duty. (Translator's note.)

ment, is to do them a wrong, to betray them. Great men work for eternity: they conceive and bring forth their immortal works with eyes steadfastly fixed on the future, intent on the idea of absolute perfection. Can it then be true that all their efforts have been to no purpose, and that, like any ordinary individual, they wholly belong to that portion of space and time to which their material life was confined?

Over against this theory we find the one frequently brought forward by theatrical people. We must rejuvenate, they say, the characters in the ancient works, and dress them in present-day fashion; that is the way to make them interesting to the public, to afford scope for originality on the part of the interpreters.

Doubtless there are certain advantages in this method. Shakespeare gallicized to suit the taste of the eighteenth century, was welcomed by the contemporaries of Voltaire. At the present time, he is applauded at Jeddo, in Japanese guise. And one might bring philosophical reasons to support the theory in question, and say that, since a classical work belongs to every age and the vague and indeterminate are but cold abstractions, it is perfectly legitimate to represent the classic types

in succession, under the form in which each century presents them in real life.

But from the educator's standpoint, which we have now adopted, we cannot acquiesce in this way of looking at the matter. To excite interest at any cost would never be right or advisable, and the most ingenious reasonings will not blind us to the arbitrary, the false element introduced by the transformation of Alceste into a man of our own century.

We want truth and nothing else. Now, the principle which ought to guide us is the dual nature that eminent works usually present: on the one hand, they belong to their own age; on the other, they belong to all time. Their historical character, too, is the framework within which their human character has been set. We shall endeavour to set off or emphasize these two elements, by giving each its respective value. We shall show the never-ending struggle in Alceste—*l'homme aux rubans verts*—between sincerity and social life.

And so, not content with imparting his personal feelings, the reader will both see and enable others to see, in their own true light, the things which the writer had in mind.

There remains a third means of captivating his audience, and this consists in appealing to

sense as well as to emotion and intellect, in charming them by the very music of the language. It must not be forgotten that languages were originally meant to be spoken. The spoken language was written before the written language was spoken. Evidently the classical languages of old possessed, to a greater extent than do our own, the property of charming the ear whilst ideas are being offered to the mind. Still, it would be a mistake to suppose that our modern languages have nothing in common with music. In particular, French possesses a harmony of its own, to which foreigners are very sensitive, and which it would be wrong for us to neglect. It has neither the sonority and crispness, nor the flexibility and languishing grace of Italian. It does not resemble a howling wind, rumbling thunder, or the clang of arms, like German. It expresses things with a kind of discretion, and carefully avoids such an appeal to the senses or the imagination as would be likely to dim the clearness of the understanding. And yet, what variety within these limits, what an infinite number of *nuances*, what dainty, suggestive hints! Is it possible to confuse the bold emphasis of the line:

*Rome, l'unique objet de mon ressentiment,*

with the melancholy strain in the plaint of Phèdre :

*Ah ! que ne suis-je assise à l'ombre des forêts !*

The characteristic of the music distinctive of the French language is delicacy or nicety in metre or rhythm. The melody is confined within a restricted scale, without on that account being uniform. The tonic accent is emphasized to so slight a degree that it is frequently unnoticed by foreigners. The many differences of quantity should be obtained without ever acquiring either the extreme brevity or the extreme length of certain English or German syllables. Rhythm is not absent, though it is light and supple ; it denotes more particularly the flow and direction of the thought. A distinguished German professor once told me that he was fond of comparing the rhythm of the German language to a series of hammer strokes on an anvil, and that of the French language to a waving field of golden corn. One of the characteristic features of French is the existence of what is called the mute *e*. As a matter of fact, this *e* is scarcely ever mute, except before a vowel ; it has a dull kind of sound, and its veiled sonorousness largely contributes to the sober grace of the

language. Voltaire perfectly understood its charm when he remarked that feminine endings leave in the ear a sound that is maintained even after the word has been uttered, just as a harpsichord resounds when the fingers have ceased to strike the keys. And indeed our authors are well aware that, in spite of appearances, they are in possession of one of the most delicate musical instruments imaginable. If you watch them at work, you will find that they speak the sentences as they write them down: to them, musical quantity or harmony is the accompaniment, and, as it were, the symbol, of logical order. This is the reason why these sentences are truly realized in the human mind only when they are spoken, when they are perceived with that harmony which forms an integral part of them.

### III

A few technical precepts may be added to these general remarks.

The quality of the voice is of considerable importance. It ought to be produced easily and with full sonorousness. As far as possible, one should read standing, or else leaning against the back of the chair, thus giving the voice the requisite fullness without forcing it,

and obtaining a clear, rich, mellow timbre. It is strange how vocal charm gradually makes its way into the very soul of the listeners, preparing them for the reception of the ideas expressed. One essential element in voice delivery is the art of breathing. Respiration should be free, tolerably frequent, gentle, and imperceptible.

Then comes pronunciation: it is well known to what extent this may prove serviceable or harmful. Faulty pronunciation has frequently injured the effect of the most eloquent speech. Identity or difference of pronunciation has a real influence upon human relationships, one that is often out of all proportion to the actual importance of this characteristic. Speaking generally, pronunciation is an index to the environment in which one has lived and the education one has received; it prejudices either in your favour or against you the persons with whom you are not acquainted. Consequently, one must do everything possible to acquire a clear, correct, and elegant pronunciation. Here, the most important element is articulation, for the consonant is the soul of the word, and continues throughout its evolutions. Thus we find that a short-hand writer confines himself for the most part



to consonants. Anyone who perceives these distinctly has no difficulty in making out the entire word.

The third point includes the suitable grouping together and the proportional emphasizing of the different parts of the discourse.

We must first unite what has to be brought together and separate whatever represents thoughts that are distinct. Continuity should alternate pertinently and harmoniously with discontinuity. It is a fundamental rule to observe punctuation with great exactness, for it indicates the important pauses. To sustain the voice and to punctuate it well, said M. Got, are the first two conditions of good reading. A punctuation sign frequently replaces a conjunction, pointing to some relation of co-ordination or subordination. How unwise it would be to refuse the hand held out by the author himself, guiding us along the various developments of his thought! Dramatic authors, in particular, pay great attention to the slightest details of punctuation. This is very noticeable in Molière, whose indications have all the more value from the fact that he combines the experience of the actor with the theoretical knowledge of the writer.

Still, punctuation is not everything: the

relations that the various parts hold to one another and to the whole must be taken into consideration. The syllables of a word group themselves around one of them; an entire sentence depends upon one or several words, a paragraph upon a sentence, and a whole discourse upon a few pregnant ideas. For the different parts of the discourse, plans must be drawn up, like perspectives in a picture. By appropriate expenditure of energy, certain parts should be made to stand out prominently over against a dull, or at all events less distinct, background. As a general rule, a piece of literature is an organism whose parts, though having a distinctive life of their own, are made subordinate to the whole. This subordination must be manifested, and care taken that the details are not given a value that detracts from the *ensemble*. If you are reading one of La Fontaine's fables, offer a vivid picture of the heron with his long beak, or the woodcutter staggering beneath his bundle of faggots, for the author likewise takes pleasure in making a complete portrait of each object, regarded separately; all the same, do not forget to impress upon your audience the unity of the composition and its general meaning. An offhand, simple manner is usually prefer-

able to an anxious preoccupation about details or the desire to attach undue importance to each word. Sometimes there are sentences which must be uttered in a uniform tone of voice in order to emphasize the one all-important word:

*Puisqu'il faut être grand pour mourir, je me lève !*

The final class of precepts deals with the music of language.

We must find out the correct intonation, vary it with the utmost propriety, moderation, and naturalness, and, for the most part, prefer a very simple and almost uniform recitative to the tone-variations inevitable in strict music.

The delivery, likewise, speaking generally, will be calm and measured, and rather slow. There is nothing that appears so long as a speech delivered too rapidly.

Finally, it is a good thing to read rhythmically. In a sentence, not only are there parts that correspond to each other, alternate ups and downs, so to speak, but such an *ensemble* as a speech, or an act of a drama, possesses rhythmic motion like a musical composition. This is a characteristic frequently met with in writers like Molière, who possess a keen theatrical

sense. A skilful interpreter divides a lengthy scene into symmetrical parts; after a long ascending movement he reaches the culminating point, bursts out with the decisive word, and then, after a brief pause, resumes his reading in a calm voice, and begins a new rhythmical development. Rhythm is the law of life. As applied to delivery or diction, it impresses and carries away the audience, making them live the very thing to which they are listening.

It will be seen from these remarks, both general and technical, that one cannot read aloud without some degree of preparation. Improvised reading, said M. Got one day to his pupils, is but the *clair de lune* of spoken language. By this I suppose he meant that in improvised reading, the light cast upon things is uncertain, they lack vividness and do not show forth with the right perspective.

Not only must there be self-preparation, the preparation of one's audience is quite as important. It is better to give any explanations that may be necessary before commencing, and then to read on without a break. Interposed comments on the text destroy all the charm. When the text requires to be explained in detail, let the explanation come first, and the subsequent reading be uninterrupted.

And lastly, it is fitting that the reader should know by what sign his success is indicated. *The silence of the audience is this sign.* Unless silence and quiet are absolute, the reader should say to himself that he is offending in some respect and should endeavour to correct himself. Movement and noise are the result of dissipated activity, and this does not happen in the case of those who are really attentive.

#### IV

The way to read French poetry would appear to call for special consideration, but we will deal with a few points only.

It is quite evident, in the first place, that poetry must not be read like prose. Since there is rhythm and rhyme in poetry, as M. Legouvé well said, the rhythm and rhyme must be made perceptible. In this connexion, certain modifications in pronunciation may be necessary, and these we may, with a good grace, allow to the author—who expects them of us—and not transform his poetry into unwelcome prose. The pleasure of finding a kind of singing effect in mere words is well worth this slight sacrifice.

All the same, when reading French poetry, we must be careful not to indulge in a melo-

pœia that is exaggerated and contrary to the genius of the language. There can be no doubt but that there is less difference between French prose and poetry than was the case amongst the ancients—less difference even than we find in most modern nations. Our poets early endeavoured to realize the charm of verse without surrendering any of the sovereign qualities of prose; the result has been that poetry bears a special relation to prose, which it is the reader's duty to recognize. In his manner of interpreting verse, he must be actuated and inspired, scrupulously and exclusively, by the distinctive genius of French poetry.

Before we can know how French verse is to be read, we must first inquire upon what principle it is based. The question is certainly an embarrassing one.

Some people affirm that French verse is, in reality, composed of musical measures or bars, of crotchets and quavers, and that it is built up on quantity and duration. The only difference is that the correspondences which, in music, are exact and definite, are only approximate in poetry and allow of considerable latitude.

In opposition to this theory we would remark

that one can always substitute two quavers for a crotchet, but in French verse, two syllables can never be substituted for one. If we attempt to scan French verse according to the principle of duration, we are continually brought to a stop by insoluble difficulties, from which we extricate ourselves only by arbitrary inventions. In short, if poetry is read in accordance with this principle, the comparison with music is both exaggerated and unpleasant. How would the hemistich :

*Va, cours, vole et nous venge !*

sound, divided into bars of music ?

Others insist that French verse should be based on the tonic accent and contain a definite number of accented syllables, distributed, according to rule, throughout the whole of the line. Thus the normal alexandrine would consist of a series of four tonic anapests ; the accent on the sixth and twelfth syllables would alone be obligatory. In support of this system, Quicherat said that, since all foreign poetry is based on certain conditions of accentuation, it is extremely unlikely, *a priori*, that French poetry, their sister and contemporary, could have adopted any other principle.

But this argument *a priori* does not con-

vince us. Rather do we find that the tonic accent, which is far less marked in French than in other languages, would not offer an adequate basis for versification, as it does in several of them. In languages like German, in which poetry is based on accent, entire syllables may be added or taken away without destroying the line: such is not the case in French. And then again, as also in the system of quantity, we are continually being stopped when we attempt to scan poetry according to accent. How many accents are there in the hemistich:

*Va, cours, vole et nous venge . . . ?*

Four, apparently; and that is one or two too many.

And again, would not the following line of Vigny:

*Dieu ! que le son du cor est triste au fond des bois,*

be quite spoiled if we were to accent any other word than *Dieu*, *triste*, and *bois*: if, for instance, we were to accent the word *cor*?

When read according to the principle of accent, French poetry loses all its grace and suppleness. It must be allowed to retain its freedom and swing.

French verse is based on rhyme and the



right number of syllables. It must be constructed in such a way that the one who is listening finds it easy, pleasurable and devoid of monotony to count the syllables. To guide the listener in this task, the versifier can make use of quantity, the tonic accent, the pauses dictated by the meaning, rhyme, and cæsura. The return of the rhyme at a moment more or less anticipated adds a keener pleasure to that of composing in imagination a fixed total number, in accordance with diverse, harmonious relations.

From this definition of French verse, several interesting consequences ensue.

In the first place, what are called mute *e*'s must be pronounced, however softly. We have seen that they are not completely mute, even in prose: much less are they mute in poetry. I have heard French pronounced by foreigners who imagined that the mute *e* was not pronounced at all. They would say: "Souviens-toi d' c' qu' j' t' dis." That which is absurd in prose cannot be regarded as a law in poetry.

Nor can we say that, in poetry, the method of pronouncing the mute *e* consists in lengthening the preceding vowel, in saying, for instance:

*Qu' ell' mêm' sur soi renvers' ses murailles,*

in such a way as to maintain the duration, whilst the number of the syllables is lessened. As a matter of fact, no one pronounces in this fashion. This way of drawling out certain syllables is contrary to the lively swing and dash of the French language.

On the other hand, how charmingly the mute *e* sounds, when unobtrusively hinted at, so to speak, in lines such as the following :

*Dans l'ombre de la nuit cache bien ton départ !*

In the matter of rhyme, a distinction must be drawn between classic and modern verse.

The rule in classic verse is that "rhyme is a slave: it must only obey." Consequently, we should guard against making it too pronounced. Since the phrase, as a rule, finishes or offers a pause at the end of the line, it is not difficult, in verse of this kind, to perceive the rhyme.

In modern verse it is frequently of greater importance. As metrical division is here more varied, rhyme should contribute all the more to emphasizing the line. That it may be noticed the more, the *rime riche* is intensified. And since it now mainly attracts to itself the attention of the ear, it is only logical to entrust it with the central idea of the proposition. Finally, the rôles are turned about: it is to

the sound of the rhyme that the other words in the line rise and move forward, as it were; consequently the reader will make it conspicuous, as one does the chord on which a melody has been built up. All the same, he will guard against giving it such emphasis that the listeners, amazed at its richness and rarity, actually fail to grasp the meaning of the sentence.

We have now to consider accent. This is of three kinds: tonic, rhythmic, and oratorical. How can we reconcile these three accents with one another?

A famous writer used to work with the idea that, in every well-conceived phrase, perfection of rhythm necessarily corresponds to perfection of thought. This is an artist's dream. In reality, there is no pre-established harmony between form and substance: only too often is it the case that the immediate and adequate expression of a thought, that is exact and clear in itself, proves intolerably discordant to the ear. No one can escape this condition, the most gifted poets and skilful artists can only more or less cleverly conceal this radical difference, without succeeding in abolishing it.

And so, in the majority of cases, we must refrain from giving each of the three accents

all the force it would admit of, taken by itself. We must submit to a compromise, whereby each of them is emphasized only in so far as it enables the others to be maintained. After all, the French language lends itself, better than most, to this compromise. Since the tonic accent is but feeble, it is usually overpowered by the oratorical accent. In the line :

*Et ce fer, que mon bras ne peut plus soutenir,*

if I emphasize the words *ce* and *mon*, the tonic accent of the other words does not enter into rivalry with those accents that the meaning calls for.

It is a more delicate matter to reconcile the oratorical with the rhythmic accent. In classic verse, rather strict measures have been taken to ensure that the rhythmic accent shall always be respected: these consist in making obligatory the hemistich and preventing the sense from being completed in another line. The reader should not follow these rules in too slavish a fashion. They were necessary at the outset to allow an unaccustomed ear to count twelve syllables with ease. The poets, however, were not long before they gave them a very wide interpretation. When Racine writes :

*Me voici donc tremblante et seule devant toi,*

it is clear that there are pauses after *donc* and *seule*, but none at all after *tremblante*. To a practised ear, a scrupulous respect for the oratorical accent rarely fails to produce, in our classics, a very natural and pleasant rhythmic accent.

Modern poets have gone farther. Whilst continuing, as a general rule, to regard the alexandrine of Boileau as the type of a line of poetry, they allow of frequent and audacious violations against traditional rules. This extension of the poet's freedom is quite legitimate. The more practised the ear becomes, the less need has it of fixed pauses for counting the twelve syllables. It delights in attempting new combinations. And so we will follow the romantic poet in his efforts to render the rhythm more supple and bring it indefinitely nearer the oratorical movement. We will object only when we find it quite impossible to become conscious of the due number of syllables, whilst respecting the meaning. Such poetry may be read as prose, from which it differs only by ill-starred rhymes and distortions.

Thus, French poetry, well read, is very musical. It offers the ear a series of varied and pleasant timbres, an ingeniously regulated progression, recalling, in its way, a succession

of measures, rhythms of various kinds, which retain a degree of symmetry throughout all their suppleness and freedom.

All the same, it would be erroneous to make any close comparison between this poetry and music, strictly so-called. The effect obtained by the composer when setting a poem to music is not one that should be aimed at, however remotely, by the reader; for poetry, if it is really beautiful, always loses something in the process. We must give full assent to the saying of Lamartine: "Fine poetry contains within itself its own music."

## V

Now that we have reached the end of this lecture, I feel inclined to ask whether we have not deviated from our track so far as to find ourselves in opposition to our principle. It was our intention that reading aloud should really be a sort of communication set up between the soul of the author and those of the listeners, whereas now we are complacently seeking after a method of charming the ear by words, regarded from the physical standpoint. Are words entitled to such a cult? Goethe's Faust, reading in the holy book which he undertakes to interpret conscien-

tiously: "In the beginning was the word," refuses to write down what he reads. "I cannot give so preponderant a place to the word," he said. "Before it, comes thought; and before thought, force; and before force, action." Was there no justification for Faust's scruples?

Here, we must draw a distinction.

The word does not merit a special cult of its own, if by this expression we understand form that is desired for its own sake, that is sufficient unto itself, and sees in thought nothing but a pretext to produce itself. The cult of such a word is mere dilettantism, art for art's sake. This would be sheer idolatry to all who believe in truth.

But dilettantism does the word an injustice. In reality, form and substance are inseparable. Thought remains imperfect until it finds that expression which alone renders it communicable: who, -indeed, thinks, except to impart his thought to another? Conversely, the word derives its principal charm from the perfection with which itself, a sensible phenomenon, produces the invisible and causes it to be seen. We admire this coincidence of the one with the other, the material with the spiritual.

As regards this full sonorous, living word, the

only one that is what it ought to be, Faust need have had no hesitation in writing that in the beginning it was; for, in very truth, underneath its material elements, it contains, within itself, intelligence, force, and action.



## INTERROGATION

IF we cast a cursory glance over the intellectual history of mankind, we see that the greatest minds attached considerable importance to interrogation, which they regarded as an admirable instrument in all methods of discovery and education.

Socrates was persuaded that he had received from the oracle at Delphi a special mission, which consisted in questioning both himself and others, with the object of testing such knowledge as each man imputes to himself, and of eliciting from the human mind all it contains that is adapted to the control of human conduct.

Plato regards dialectic as the divine science. In his *Cratylus* he gives the following definition: The man who possesses the art of questioning and answering, I call a dialectician.

Montaigne, in his chapter on the *Institution des Enfants*, says with picturesque precision:

“Let the master not confine himself to asking the child to repeat the mere words of the lesson, he should insist on its meaning and substance as well; . . . what the child has been taught, let him be invited to set forth in many aspects, and apply to different objects, in order to discover if he has thoroughly understood it and made it his own, taking Plato’s teachings as the line along which his progress should be directed.”

Rousseau<sup>1</sup> regards interrogation as the method of instruction *par excellence*. No regular lessons: you set objects before the child, and when his interest and curiosity have been aroused, you ask him some short, concise question or other, calculated to start him on the path of discovery. The main thing is to call forth in the pupil that feeling of amaze and wonder which is the beginning of true science.

Kant, too, in his science of teaching, attaches very great importance to interrogation. He regards it as the one supreme mode of moral instruction. In such matters, he says, the master makes a direct appeal to his pupil’s reason: if, perchance, the pupil cannot answer, he suggests the reply by guiding his reason.

<sup>1</sup> *Émile*, book iii.

Along these lines Kant wrote a treatise on moral catechism.

And, in fact, even now a days, interrogation everywhere occupies an important place in school life.

In Germany it takes up almost the whole time of the class. Right on to the end of a boy's studies, instruction retains its catechetical character.

Consequently, there can be no doubt whatever as to the importance of the subject upon which we are now entering. On the other hand,—for that very reason, even,—it is far from being a new subject. In the moral order, however, the oldest things are frequently the most living of all.

The questions we shall try to answer are :

First: In what does the utility of interrogation consist?

Second: How must we proceed in order to interrogate with effect?

## I

If you enter a class where the master is questioning his pupils, and then another where no questions are being asked, you are at once struck with the difference.

In the first, there is considerable life, gaiety, and high spirits: the children are attentive to what the master is saying, glad when they answer correctly, and eager to give an even more complete reply. In a word, it is a class in which considerable interest is taken in what is being taught.

In the other, on the contrary, we find a dull, heavy silence, lack-lustre eyes, tired looks, and general indifference. What are these children thinking about? At first, if they are well disposed, about the lesson, but as the latter drags along, their imagination wanders, and their games and occupations, the master's trifling deficiencies or unconscious, habitual movements, enter the mind one after the other. It is astonishing how severely critical we can be about anything in which we are not directly concerned. Pupils who are intent upon their work have no time to ridicule the master.

Is this difference the result of the children's idleness or of their evil instincts? Will punishment suffice to induce an absent-minded boy to attend to the lesson? Such judgment would be superficial; we are here dealing with the laws of nature herself. Immobility and passive attention may produce the effect of repose,

purely and simply ; in reality, they are something quite different. We must not forget that the waking state is for man a state of activity, of natural expenditure of energy. To obtain immobility, it is not sufficient simply for a man to let himself go ; against a spontaneous tendency he must oppose a voluntary effort of like intensity. The result is a duplication of expenditure : fatigue. Now, simply in order to direct our spontaneous activity in a certain way, a far less effort is necessary ; here, we are both obedient to and master of nature. This is the difference between the pupil who has only to listen, and the one who is asked to reply. The former has to exercise upon himself such a strain as, if prolonged, is distinctly harmful ; the latter intelligently uses the energy which is seeking to find an outlet. And for that very reason the latter is gay and happy, whereas the former suffers. As Aristotle says, pleasure is the consciousness of activity which is not only free, but also directed towards its own appropriate end.

But then, interrogation in class is more than a matter of interest, it is beneficial to the minds of the pupils.

First, it serves to give security to knowledge. We must not take pleasure in depreciating

knowledge, even in favour of judgment or any other higher quality. Knowledge is the condition of any exercise of the intellect. It even governs the sciences which appear to be pure reasoning. A pupil will make no progress in mathematics unless he engraves all the essential propositions on his memory, according to the progressive stages of demonstration ; for the faculty of deduction would speedily be transcended did not memory come to its help. And in life, more specifically, how could we do without knowledge ? It is this that makes decision prompt and certain, enabling us to look upon the subtle and special side of things because we are already acquainted with their essential parts.

For knowledge thus to be efficacious, however, it must be really solid and positive. And this must be the case in life far more than at school. To work out a problem on the black-board before a class, our knowledge must be more certain and reliable than if we attempted to work it out in the seclusion of the study. Besides, the environment determines the associations of ideas by which memory is aided. We are more embarrassed in an examination room, where things and persons alike disturb our wonted associations of ideas,

even without taking into account the importance of the occasion. But in life, amid all the play of human passion, the noises and pressing difficulties, dangers and obligations which render it impossible to collect one's thoughts, how certain our knowledge must be, if we would make use of it! How insignificant a faultlessly repeated lesson in geography compared with the geographical knowledge that can be applied on the field of battle!

Now, in order to acquire this solid and substantial knowledge, which alone is efficacious in school, and above all in life, two things are necessary.

The first consists in learning by memory, strictly so-called, by means of continuity and repetition. This power—which is still so largely animal—of retaining received ideas and images must not be despised. It is nature herself within us, laying down the very foundations of instruction. Still, memory alone could not give us true knowledge.

In this connexion I will quote an amusing comparison made by Socrates in the dialogue entitled the *Meno*.

Meno has asked him how it comes about that there is so great a difference, in the minds of men, between knowledge and right opinion,

and Socrates replies: "You would not wonder if you had ever observed the images of Dædalus: but perhaps you have not got them in your country?—Why do you refer to them?—Because they require to be fastened, in order to keep them, and if they are not fastened they will run away.—Well, what of that?—I mean to say that it is not much use possessing one of them if they are at liberty, for they will walk off like runaway slaves; but when fastened, they are of great value, for they are really beautiful works of art. Now this is an illustration of the nature of true opinions; while they abide with us they are beautiful and fruitful, but they run away out of the human soul, and do not remain long, and therefore they are not of much value until they are fastened by the tie of the cause; and this fastening of them, friend Meno, is recollection, as has been already agreed by us."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, we really know only what we understand: intelligence is the necessary substratum of memory.

If these are the conditions of knowledge, there can be no doubt as to the efficacy of interrogation in realizing it within ourselves. Not only will interrogation confirm our know-

<sup>1</sup> Professor Jowett's translation.



ledge, preventing us from regarding a faint idea of things as profound acquaintance therewith, it will also be excellently adapted to strengthen the memory by means of repetition, to make it trustworthy by an appeal to judgment and reason. By questioning, we keep the roving imagination of children long fixed on the same object, compelling them to consider, in everything they learn, the value of words and the reasons of things.

Such is the first purpose of interrogation, though its scope extends beyond this. It is capable of developing within us the most important capacities: of teaching us, after its own fashion, to speak, to think, and to live.

To be able to speak is always and everywhere useful. The English are wont to say that there are three things which make a man: to manage a boat, ride on horseback, and defend one's opinion in public. Whatever be our station in life, we ought at all events to know how to speak; for the noblest feelings, the truest thoughts may remain ineffectual unless they are well expressed; and in everyday life, speech and action are coming perhaps more and more to be intimately blended. And what is better calculated to teach us to speak than a well-directed plan of interrogation?

The question supplies the mould into which the answer will be cast. The work effected in the mind of the teacher is continued in that of the pupil, and he does his best to express himself clearly and definitely, logically and accurately. At first, the answers are timid and brief, but speedily they become more elaborate, and the pupil speaks on, imperceptibly obeying the laws of speech all the time.

Nor is this all. Interrogation applies to thought, which is behind speech and is its origin or source. To think is first of all to judge, *i.e.* to discriminate the true from the false. Now, this was the claim that Socrates first made upon interrogation. In ways innumerable, he turned over and over again the opinions his interlocutors set before him, testing them by all sorts of comparisons, and so proving their value to all men. The Socratic method is the best for moulding the judgment, since here we have not to think for ourselves but rather to enter into communion with others, in which case the collaboration of one intellect with another is necessary.

To think is also to search, to endeavour to find out ideas or learn the nature of things. From this aspect, also, Socrates informs us how fruitful interrogation may be. By his maieutics,

he claims to bring forth science from the very depths of the human soul: truth to tell, moral science is his sole object. Rousseau, too, insists that skilfully worded interrogations will enable the pupil to discover for himself what it is proposed to teach him. Without carrying too far the idea of instructing by interrogation alone, we may yet say that the latter is eminently calculated to teach the practice of deduction and induction: the implements that science uses. The master who is very attentive to his pupils, who is aware of the precise state of their knowledge, is able, by skilful comparisons, to bring forth from this knowledge such consequences as it contains. He increases the sum-total of his pupils' ideas, and at the same time enables them to see that, in deduction strictly so-called, the mind extracts, but does not create: somewhat as a chemist can extract from any body only such substances as it contains hidden away within itself. Far more delicate is the art of induction. Here, in short, we have to predicate more positive science than we actually know, our conclusions have to extend beyond the premises at our disposal. Now, this bold operation should not be effected by chance, as a matter of routine or individual feeling. Still, in the absence of adequate data, we must

imitate deduction as far as possible, take advantage of every sign or clue, multiply, vary, and reverse the tests, and compel nature herself to direct us in our investigations into her laws. There is nothing more suitable than interrogation for guiding the pupil's mind in this work. Without making him believe that he is discovering, of himself alone, what in reality is being suggested to him, it is possible, by a series of well-selected questions, to give him some idea of the way in which science came about, of the observations and tentative theories, the hypotheses and intelligent selections of which our knowledge is the fruit.

Thus, we see that interrogation teaches us to think, as well as to speak. Shall we go so far as to say that it teaches us to live? Consider the case of a man who is asked a question and gives an inadequate reply. What is the cause of this inadequacy? Doubtless it is ignorance, in many cases, or some fault in the question itself. Still, these are not the only causes: it may happen that no apposite or relevant answer is given even to a well-framed question, because it is either not understood at all, or understood but imperfectly; and this not merely because it deals with an unpleasant subject, but simply because one does not care

to listen, to enter into another's thought, to dwell upon the subject indicated. To listen attentively, to confine oneself, in one's answer, within the limits of the question, implies obedience, subordination to another; and this is a thing that many find intolerable.

The habit of being questioned will fashion the minds of children to this kind of obedience, and give them that docile will which is the first condition of a docile intelligence. But interrogation does not presuppose docility only: if the child would answer well, he must have self-possession, speak in a sufficiently loud voice, banish every trace of shyness, and, if need be, brave a jesting audience and try to win its approval. Thus, a certain degree of self-confidence is here called for, especially if the pupil is requested in his turn to ask for an explanation of points he grasps but imperfectly. A just and well-balanced temperament of deference and self-confidence are, as we see, the qualities developed by interrogation. And are not these also the essential conditions of social life? Do not the relations between men continually imply that we should enter into their views of things, their interests and desires, and yet be capable of commanding respect and honour?

Thus, the influence of interrogation has an ever-increasing effect on the mind. It appears as though this influence might become even more profound, and attain to the inmost life of the soul. Interrogation implies an ever-alert intellect both in master and pupil. Unforeseen contingencies happen: both have constantly to be reconsidering what they intend to say. By this means, intellectual activity is kept alive and developed.

More than this: these alert intellects react on one another; they lead one another on and acquire an intensity of life which they could never, of themselves, have attained. Collaboration is more than an addition, it is a multiplication of forces.

At the same time, these ideas, so conformable to human nature in general, this reason, the true link that binds men together, are illumined and established in men's minds. How is mutual understanding possible without speech? How can one become a man unless one has dealings with men?

Finally, this action upon the intellect is succeeded by another of a more strictly moral nature and exceedingly important. Whilst engaged together in their search after truth, masters and pupils come to feel for one another

a greater and ever-increasing sympathy. A noble task accomplished in common with others, is a principle, as well as a symbol of love. Now, the saying of Socrates is a profoundly true one, that a pupil learns nothing from a master he does not love. And so we find that the beneficent influence of interrogation pierces down to the very source and origin of all intellectual and moral life.

## II

Such is the import of interrogation : now, how is it to be carried out, if these results are to be obtained ?

It is clear that everything must be subordinated to the interest and advantage of the pupils themselves. Your questions must not be framed for the purpose of exhibiting your own learning and dazzling your listeners with it, of amusing yourselves, turning the children's ignorance to ridicule, or carrying on investigations and experiments at their expense. You should avoid asking questions that deal with your own personal affairs, that are intelligible only to those who are well acquainted with your labours, your favourite theories, your habits and prepossessions, pre-

judices and paradoxes. You could not expect the pupil to follow, throughout its manifold wanderings, a thought that does not know its own destination. The first condition of the legitimacy of a question is that the questioner should himself be capable of answering it. And it is good that others also should be able to answer. Nor should interrogation be regarded as purely and simply a means of discipline. If you ask your pupils captious questions, and compel them to give silly answers, they ridicule and turn each other to scorn, and you acquire the reputation of keeping your class in good order and discipline. All the same, you are encouraging the growth of evil propensities in the minds of the pupils.

All these precepts are evident enough : they can be deduced directly from the end which instruction has in view, and which consists in working for the intellectual and moral education of youth and aiming after the good of the children in our charge. Perhaps a few precepts, of a more special nature, may be added.

In the art of interrogation, are there any particular difficulties against which it is important that we should guard ourselves ?



On this matter there are several opinions which it is interesting to examine.

According to the famous paradox of Jacotot, it is not necessary to know in order to teach. A good text-book and the knowledge of its use are sufficient. It seems as though this principle would apply very well to interrogation. Nowadays, we everywhere come across teachers' books that correspond to the pupils' books. Thus, possessed of the law and the prophets, what could be easier than to question, give decisions and make corrections, award good or bad marks, distribute punishments and prizes, without oneself knowing anything about the subject-matter? This method is alleged to be a thoroughly practical one, capable of enabling pupils to pass their examinations. Whether or not it instils into their minds any genuine knowledge is another thing: at all events, it is a method that is inadmissible, because it is immoral. It places falsehood on a level with sincerity. These masters, lacking in knowledge, teach their pupils that they can pass their examinations simply by affecting a semblance of knowledge. Instead of it being possible to obtain credit for teaching that of which we are ignorant, we ought, literally, to teach only

what we know. What right has a master to impose on his pupils knowledge which he himself has been unable either to acquire or to retain? Science is not a collection of formulæ which are handed about from one to another; it is the very life of the intellect. No one who is without it can arouse it in others. And therefore it cannot be regarded as beneficial for the teacher or professor, in questioning or even in teaching, to have before him a collection of books, notes, and aids of various kinds. All this is serviceable only if he is teaching what he does not know, and this is what he ought not to do. The genuine teacher has, incorporated in his own person, all that he ought to have for the instruction of his pupils: on his inner resources alone does he draw for questions and explanations concerning the lesson. This is certainly no easy condition to fulfil if it is the purpose of the teacher to astonish his pupils and their parents by extempore research and the reality of his erudition, though it can be realized by any person of average intelligence, if he has no other ambition than to impart to the young such knowledge as is useful to the ordinary well-meaning individual.

Another paradox from the same source con-

sists in saying that all is in all, the result being that one can teach all in reference to all. According to this paradox, it is unnecessary, in our interrogation, to proceed in an orderly, methodical fashion. Concerning whatever object presents itself, all that is needed is to ask such questions as are suggested by that object. This theory is not so erroneous as the former one. Assuredly, interrogation should put life into teaching, and we cannot have life without a suppleness of bearing that altogether excludes rigidity. Moreover, along with such ideas as are strictly inherent in the subject, there may be others that have little or nothing to do with it, and yet are important in themselves. Interrogation is a useful means of dealing with them. And so it will be admitted that the questioner need not regard himself as forced to link questions on to questions in the way that geometry connects together the various parts of demonstration. Thoroughly master of his subject, since he is perfectly well acquainted with what he is teaching, he is both worthy and capable of treating any part of it with the utmost freedom. This very freedom, however, if the master is intelligent, will be that of the artist who can draw, without a compass,

a single harmonious curve; not that of the idler, whose sole guide is chance. He will not forget that he must train his pupils to grasp the relations between things; that order, connexion, and unity are essential elements in every masterpiece of nature and spirit; and instead of capriciously breaking the sequence of the ideas he has in view, he will do his best to emphasize it, to impress it on his pupils. Speaking generally, it is a good thing, as Descartes said, to split up the difficulty, and confine oneself to the subject with which one is dealing. By dissipating your energies and flitting about from one subject to another, you tire your memory and make yourself incapable of acquiring those permanent, solid ideas, determined by a knowledge of causes, whereof the Greek philosopher speaks.

A third way of simplifying the problem in question consists in maintaining that it is useless to prepare one's interrogation, since this latter ought to be living, ought to be inspired by the circumstances of the case. We cannot reject this opinion to the extent that we rejected the first or even the second. It is perfectly true that we have no right ourselves to learn, at the very last moment, what we purpose to ask of our pupils: we ought to

question them on those subjects only which we have thoroughly mastered. Above all else, preparation consists of that solid instruction which one has received and keeps alive by exercise. But it does not follow that all special preparation is useless or evil in itself. On the other hand, however thoroughly one knows his subject, every time he wishes to speak on it, he must quietly collect his thoughts and reflect on the best way to arrange and set forth his material. Consequently, the master will think beforehand about the things on which he will have to question his pupils. Nor is this all; he will ponder on the very questions he will have to ask them; if need be, he will set them real problems, calculated to stimulate the intellect. Only when one is quite prepared, can he trust implicitly to the inspiration of the moment. A good discourse or speech is one that is both improvised and well thought out.

Thus, interrogation cannot be left to chance; like every art, it admits of a combination or blend of freedom with obedience to rules. What, then, are the special rules to which the notion we have formed of its rôle gives rise?

What ought one to ask? From whom?

And how? These are the three points we shall now examine.

We must not be afraid of asking the same questions frequently, for we really know only what we have forgotten and learned anew several times. Moreover, we must reflect that there is a great difference between understanding and learning, between comprehending and apprehending. Certainly, we know thoroughly only what we have understood; but the converse is not true. An intelligent pupil, more particularly, may understand, especially just after listening to the explanations of an able master, and then forget it all immediately. Reasoning is not memory; it deals with the form and order of discourse, not with its matter or substance. Now, in order to make use of any knowledge in daily life, it is not enough to have understood it once. It must be held and possessed, and this is possible only by means of continuity and repetition, combined with an ever more profound understanding of the thing. Do not be dismayed if there is brought against you the reproach of tautology, of endless repetition, to which such a method may give occasion. As a matter of fact, only too frequently do we pass to another

subject before the pupils have acquired a thorough knowledge of the former ; only too ready are we to suppose that what ought to have been learned in the lower classes is actually known in the higher. Besides, we are under no compulsion to give this necessary repetition a tautological character. It is right, as Montaigne says, "de mettre la chose en cent visages," to adapt it to different objects and set it forth under all sorts of conditions. In this way, some abstract, bookish word or other is gradually converted into a reality. We must take care that the best scholar in the geography class does not come to look upon valleys as mountains, once he finds himself face to face with nature herself.

Though it is useful to ask the same questions frequently, varying the wording, of course, it is evident that fresh questions must also be asked. The former of these two practices will give stability to the pupil's knowledge ; the latter will teach him to think.

At first, the pupils should constantly be urged to compare the newly acquired knowledge with the old. Comparison effects a better comprehension of the true nature of things ; and the connexion between what comes after with what has gone before, whilst

relieving the memory, develops ideas of order and logic, ideas of rational progress.

Afterwards, the pupil should be requested to make numerous applications of every rule that has been taught him. The rule ought not to be a dead formula. The ideal would be its transformation, in the mind, into a mode of its very activity, with no further need of being represented distinctly in consciousness in order to be put into practice. This result will be obtained by the multiplicity and variety of the applications of the rule.

Finally, the children must be trained in reasoning, strictly so-called, in deduction and induction. In deduction, the questioner induces the pupil to collect the various elements of his reasoning or argument, and, unaided, to make the inference contained therein. This exercise is as pleasant as it is useful. The rigour of the method disciplines the mind; at the same time, the pupil finds a certain degree of satisfaction in possessing all the elements of the problem and succeeding in solving it without help; whereas he is annoyed when asked questions and the data requisite for answering them are lacking. He must also be trained in induction, and it is here that the questioner will prove himself particularly



keen-witted and ingenious. An apt or pertinent generalization is the highest attainment of the intellect. The pupil must be guided and shown that he is being guided; he must be induced to work his mind methodically and afford it all the joys of discovery without himself feeling puffed up with pride or shutting his eyes to difficulties. Strictly, we are now considering the way in which science comes about. One would like to be able to go briefly over the path that the human mind has followed in attaining to its present knowledge. It is a path along which the master will endeavour to take his pupils.

Speaking generally, in all those exercises which have as their object to teach one to think, the master should see to it that the children have something to find out without ever having anything to guess. Guessing is a brilliant power, seductive by reason of the rapidity with which it takes place, and the air of wonderment in which it is enveloped. It is deceptive, however, and even when the guess is a good one, it does not afford true knowledge, inasmuch as no reasons are given. For the most part, it is the trick of an idle pupil who wishes to reap where he has not sown, and seeks a pretext for depreciating

work. Children ought to be trained to investigate methodically. The correct solution, if discovered by chance, is a false one, whereas there is truth in sound reasoning even though the solution has not been found. Moreover, guessing has a place of its own in method itself, but its purpose is to set forth the hypotheses to be examined, not to offer solutions.

Such are the things with which interrogation ought to deal ; now, we must consider to whom it should be addressed. In Germany the whole class is asked each question, and then the master points to the pupil who is expected to give the answer. If he remains silent, the master points to another, and so on, until the answer is forthcoming. This is a very lively, animated method, keeping all the pupils alert from the beginning to the end of the questions. It realizes the idea of constant collaboration, on the part of the pupils, with one another and with the master. Anyhow, the important thing to remember is that all the pupils should be questioned very frequently, the stupid as well as the intelligent. The master should also see to it that all alike take an interest in the questions asked.

Whilst we are trying to find out whom it is right to question, ought we not likewise to

ask ourselves whose business it is to question? Is it the master's alone, or may not the pupils themselves ask for enlightenment and explanation from the teacher? Some may not know how to decide, reflecting that the master himself may be in a difficulty and unable to answer. On this point, I remember that Fustel de Coulanges was wont to regard the *École normale* as a place of which he was very fond, because there one had the right to say that one did not know. How should we dare to dispense with this right, claimed by Fustel de Coulanges? Of course it may happen that the master finds himself in a difficulty: his memory may fail him or he may be really ignorant as regards some particular point: in that event, it is better not to conceal the fact from them, but, there and then, to make all needed investigations. The master is an interpreter of science, not science itself, and the surest foundation of his authority consists of the example he sets of a most scrupulous respect for truth and duty.

Lastly, how must the questioning take place? Here an interesting point is raised, whether or not it is right to leave the pupil time for reflection before answering. It appears to be the general practice in Germany

to exact an immediate response. And, after all, in the affairs of everyday life, what is the use of knowledge which is manifested when the time for applying it is past? Life is a battle, and ready wits are needed in warfare. The guiding principle is that knowledge ought to be disposable, and that one does not really know when the need for investigating and reflecting may come. I do not wish to extol these ideas exclusively; more particularly do I think it regrettable to frame questions in such a way that the child could not answer except by an appeal to memory. Still, our store of knowledge ought not to be a library, in which what is sought can be found only after consulting the catalogue and glancing along several shelves; it ought rather to form one with us, so that we may be master of it and able to use it at will. The instruction we receive must not be something brilliant and fleeting, but rather something that will serve the purpose for which it is intended.

Such are the main practical observations we have to offer. It has been possible to develop and dwell upon them somewhat, only because we have removed one important objection which many an experienced individual would certainly have offered at the beginning: "All

this presupposes that the pupils will answer the questioner ; whereas, as a matter of fact, they never do answer.”

Rest assured that, in a school class, interrogation is absolutely indispensable. Once we are convinced of this, we shall not hesitate to say to ourselves, with Kant: *Du kannst, denn du sollst*—you can, for you ought. Who is to define the true limits of possibility in ethics? Could anything be more depressing than this idea of an insuperable fatality, whose existence, after all, no one can prove? It is for man to demonstrate possibility by facts. The difficulty presented by the use of interrogation is made manifest by the objection mentioned, and this difficulty is one that must be analysed and remedied methodically.

If the children do not answer, this is due, in the first place, to nothing more than the fact that they are ignorant and inexperienced. Either they do not know at all, or else their knowledge is imperfect ; besides this, they are unskilled in expressing themselves. Subsequently, it is a case of timidity or bashfulness, self-consciousness or *amour-propre*. Their ideas are in a confused jumble owing to the conditions in which they find themselves ; they dread the master's reproaches,

the jeers and taunts of their companions. The reason of their silence will be found in circumstances of this kind, at once moral and intellectual.

An idea of the means to be employed may be obtained from a detailed analysis of the cause. Let the question always be suited to the pupil's intelligence. The master's knowledge of his scholars should always be sufficiently intimate to know exactly whether they can or cannot answer some particular question. The main thing to consider is that we should not give a bad mark to the pupil who cannot find a word to say; we should rather encourage him to reply, accustom him to ever greater self-expression, teach him something and induce him to make progress. An exact adaptation of the difficulty of questions to the pupils' knowledge, and a judicious, attentive gradation in difficulty: such are the first conditions to be satisfied. To these we may add repetition, which always facilitates effort. And finally, the master would be well advised to put into his voice something of the affection he has in his heart. How effective is the tone of one's voice in emboldening the timid, rousing the idle, giving energy and life to the intellect! Success is

bound to be the portion of the master who is seriously determined to accomplish his purpose.

In conclusion, are we to declare, with Rousseau, that interrogation ought to take the place of every other method of instruction? It would be an exaggeration on our part to affirm this. Interrogation should supplement ordinary lessons and the use of text-books, not replace them. If applied alone, it would not suffice to give the mind exact and precise ideas, to enable it to see clearly, in a whole, the concatenation and proportion of the parts composing that whole. Then again, although it excites the mind, it is none the less on that account an external stimulus, and the master would be wise to direct his efforts towards making such stimulus unnecessary.

It is better, then, to keep to the middle course between two extremes. Not to ask questions at all would be to renounce a task which the master alone can perform. To learn the elements of human knowledge from books is not an impossibility: what we do not find in them is the vast mass of explanations, developments, and applications necessary in order that these elements may be assimilated by certain

definite intellects. On the other hand, too much questioning accustoms the pupil's mind to require a shock in order that it may be set working. Our object is to make men, that is to say, persons who have within themselves the principles and conditions of their own actions. Interrogation, like all modes of culture, needs to be practised with considerable moderation and discernment. In the case of beginners, it is of the utmost importance, being better suited than any other mode of instruction to their natural vivacity and restlessness, their intermittent attention. Throughout the whole course of school life, it occupies a place of its own, though its claim becomes less and less pronounced as time advances. When the moment of separation arrives, you ought to have brought your pupils into such a condition that they can do without you. Is this equivalent to saying that your influence will be dead? Nothing of the kind. Frequently in after life, when in danger of contenting himself with vague, confused notions of things, the man who was once your pupil will hear your voice demanding explanations, compelling him to reflect. No longer will you need to question him, for then he will question himself: your respect



for truth, your very scruples, will have become a part of his consciousness. Often, too, recognizing the source of the questions, so sane and vital, that he feels surging up from the depths of his soul, he will send out to his former master thoughts laden with the most tender and grateful memories.

## SCHOOL AND LIFE

### I

THE question of the relations that exist between school and life has stirred the imagination of moralists of all ages. The ancients long ago denounced the tendency of the school to assume to be, not a means, but an end in itself. *Non scholæ*, said a famous maxim, *sed vitæ discimus*. Rabelais and Montaigne heap ridicule and sarcasm upon the school that turns out only scholars and not men; Rousseau gives a new lease of existence to school-teaching, by definitely assigning to it life, not instruction, as its end.

In our days, people have vied with one another in maintaining, developing, and applying these principles. And yet the same criticism is still heard on every side. The school, it is urged, is a preparation for competitive examinations and the exhibition of a bookish science, rather than for life itself. Look at this child who has most creditably

repeated his geography, arithmetic, or history lesson. Take him when he has left school and is brought face to face with living realities: in front of him stretches a country the description of which he knows by heart; an arithmetical problem is set him, similar to those he has learnt theoretically; events take place that are connected with those dealt with in his history classes. And in this very world, the key of which he is supposed to possess, the child finds himself quite out of his element; he cannot recognize, as they really are, the persons and things whose pedagogic symbol he has mastered. What has he learnt, after all? A number of words and ideas, but very few facts of like nature with those to which life introduces him. Load him with prizes, diplomas, and certificates, but make no attempt to utilize him: he is a good pupil, but he is not a man in the true sense of the word.

The result is the same, our censors allege, as regards moral education. In spite of the vigorous efforts made by the school to spread its influence beyond the sphere of understanding and really to reach the soul, feelings, and will of the children, what the syllabus calls moral education too frequently degenerates

into lessons just as abstract as the rest, and of which the pupil rids himself by learning them by heart ; obtaining, as the reward of his zeal and application, good marks or exemption from certain tasks.

Is all this, moreover, add these worried critics, the mere result of neglect on the part of the masters? Is it not rather a fault inherent in the school, as such? In a word, is not everything which the school takes in hand destined to become, in a greater or less degree, an imposition to be written out, or a lesson to be learned and repeated without a mistake? This is the meaning that a great number of parents give to the word : learn. They think that a good school is one in which the pupils have answers ready for any question they may be asked in an examination. The subject matter, in itself, is of little importance ; the official syllabus is everything. Contemporary history, for instance, now that it is one of the subjects of instruction, possesses, for many children, no more actuality than do the wars of Rameses II., no more reality than the rule governing the participles ; its sole interest consists in being rewarded by a mark expressed in figures varying from zero to ten, with a certain multiplier.

Such complaints are frequently heard, even in these days. Doubtless this criticism is anything but universal; there are numerous cases to which it applies but slightly, or not at all. Still, how can we affirm that language of this kind merely confuses the past with the present; that the evil in question need not be dreaded in the future; and that the school, as at present constituted, is certain to become increasingly linked and blended with real life as the years advance?

The matter is one which must be looked into; for it is not the master's fault alone that causes a tendency for the school to remain aloof from the facts of life. That is a natural tendency, which man may try to check, though he cannot suppress it altogether. Everywhere, and at all times, the school has produced what is called scholasticism, *i.e.* the transformation within abstract formulæ, shut in and regarded as absolute, of the living, untrammelled creations of the man of genius. The latter draws directly from nature herself, continually endeavouring to lay hold upon and interpret ever more faithfully some of her true characteristics. The scholastics lay hold of thought in the throes of labour, and fasten it down in the form of inflexible, imperative rules, which

they convert into substitutes for things. This phenomenon is a general one; it is seen alike in the history of art and law, of philosophy and literature, and actually constitutes a kind of law in itself. Every period of original activity is succeeded by one of scholasticism, of attachment to academic forms.

The reason is that, in order to maintain and spread some particular intellectual acquirement, we naturally set ourselves to teach it; that we do this by means of concepts; and that the concept—that marvellous invention of human understanding whereby the products of thought become capable of being apprehended and communicated—possesses a dangerous fascination. We look upon clarity as synonymous with truth: this is the snare into which the intellect would entrap us.

If man, in general, is so readily a dupe of the concepts and words into which he translates his intellectual creations, how would it be possible for the teacher, in particular, not to have a predilection for that which is pre-eminently the instrument of instruction?

Consequently, it is not simply a matter of chance, it is by virtue of the general laws of the human mind that the school, which ought to be a preparation for life, is con-

stantly in danger of becoming a substitute for it.

And yet there can be no doubt but that this tendency is an evil one. It is not only from the practical point of view that we look upon a system of instruction which eliminates all thought of reality as being defective ; it is also a serious defect for the intelligence itself, if it is unable to connect together idea and reality, science and life. This evil which, as though of necessity, threatens school life, is one that should be energetically fought. What is the best way to oppose it ?

## II

In their desire to eradicate the evil, many modern thinkers feel disposed to adopt the very contrary of all abstract, intellectual methods, and since our aim is to fashion children for practical life, in their opinion, life itself ought to be the sole foundation of education and instruction. Life by means of life, not of books and regulations : such appears to be their motto.

In accordance with this way of looking at things, moral education, in school, should consist essentially not in filling the child's

head with rules and precepts, but rather in developing habits of life.

Now, action and repetition of action are the main factors of habit ; consequently we are to eliminate such abstract reasonings and principles as claim to obtrude themselves on the mind before it has established their realization in facts. Moral experience and intuition must be the starting-point of every attempt to formulate moral rules ; even to these very rules we are to attach but little importance, since it is action, after all, that is the end ; and habits that have become like instincts are a far more sure and powerful motive than the most cunningly deduced abstract principles.

The master's rôle is to consist in utilizing all the conditions of school life, and even, if need be, in calling forth appropriate incidents, so as to bring into being and develop in the children the very habits he purposes to impress upon their minds.

And we find the same revolution in matters of instruction, strictly so-called. The exclusively concrete method which is here contrasted with the scholastic may be called the pragmatistic method.

It consists in eliminating didactic books and formulæ, theories and rules, as far as



possible, and bringing the pupil directly face to face with facts. To demand a knowledge of facts from intuition alone, to acquire practice by means of practice, to bring to the mind no other rules or laws than those we have ourselves been able to elicit from phenomena: such is the ideal. Is it the pupil's object to learn a foreign language, for instance? Then, according to this method, the language already known should be altogether left out of account, and the pupil should revert to the state of a child who is learning to speak for the first time. No dictionaries, grammars, or translations are to be used. The master speaks to the pupil in the language he purposes to teach him, and, at the same time, gets him to perceive, by means of the senses, the objects whose names he mentions. Or again, he explains, in the foreign language, complex ideas which have no corresponding sensible image. In this way one's ingenuity is taxed in enabling the pupil to grasp the realities of each subject of study direct, not through the medium of notions and abstractions, which, it is considered, can be nothing else than distorting media.

A clear, plausible, and all the more seductive method in that it is the very opposite of the

bookish system, that primitive vice of school instruction.

Still, is such a contrast, in itself alone, a guarantee? A witty writer was wont to say: "Beware of opposing a fool with the same exaggeration he himself shows, or you run the danger of being as great a fool as he is himself."

In a word, the pragmatistic method is the very one that Socrates denounced in the sophists of his own day, and which he regarded it as his mission to refute, viz., practice by means of practice, all theory having to be looked upon as an ineffectual shift or subterfuge. Now, are we quite sure that Socrates was engaged in a useless task, and that it is the sophists who were right?

I remember a phrase often used by my friend M. Chantepie du Désert, the librarian of the Sorbonne: "It is only in geometry that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points." In the concrete world of reality, the shortest distance is the one which most speedily leads to the goal, and this is what the straight line, speaking generally, does not do.

So far as moral education is concerned, the idea of getting life itself to contribute towards

the formation of youth is assuredly a most fruitful one. It must be borne in mind, however, that, in school, this idea can be applied but imperfectly. The master's very presence prevents the children from being under the ordinary conditions of real life. Life implies man left to himself, in his relations with his equals and with the rest of mankind. Is this the system adopted in school?

Sports organized and carried out by the pupils themselves, apart from extraneous control, as in England and the United States more particularly, constitute with tolerable accuracy the conditions of education by means of life.

And indeed, this apprenticeship to real life, as distinct from the school, is a very genuine and useful one. The school neither can nor should absorb the entire human being. Children and young people, when left to themselves, give one another lessons in dignity, courage and co-operation, loyalty and obedience both to traditional rules and to the common will, that could not be replaced by the intervention of any master, however clever he might be.

Still, this education of children by the children themselves is assuredly insufficient.

However real it be, it is empirical in its nature, nor is there any guarantee that it will conform in all respects with the moral ideas and the requirements of society. Every particular community or caste is liable to foster prejudices. Children and young people, when isolated, as it were, from society as a whole, may form a very erroneous conception of life.

Besides, the more children live with one another and suffice unto themselves, the more they risk losing connexion with preceding generations and taking no interest in the tasks which these generations have handed down to them. If we want a bond of continuity to be maintained between successive generations, they must, to a certain extent, come in contact with and know each other, as well as live together.

Free, open-air games are excellent and necessary, though insufficient. The school—without speaking of the family—has also a part to play in moral education.

If the master, simply because he is a master, finds it impossible for him to place children under conditions of actual life, at all events, he is able to give them moral instruction of the utmost value, such as they could not

acquire of themselves; now, what he is able to do, that he ought to do.

It is a mistake to believe that a human being's actions are never determined by anything else than his instincts, passions, or habits; and that ideas and theories can have no effect upon him. Indeed, every man possesses, stored away in his mind, maxims, principles, and reasonings which he is constantly saying over and over again to himself and to others, and which, at any given moment, influence his actions. Doubtless, the mind, like a cunning sophist, is ever finding reasons for attributing honest motives to base or violent actions—*after the event*. But even sophistry is an act of homage that passion pays to reason. Not only is it in conformity with human dignity, it is also beneficial to morality that a man be treated, not as a well-trained animal, but as an intelligent being, amenable to instruction and persuasion.

The master, by virtue of his position, is rather a teacher than a trainer. Let him beware lest he despise his special province: it is devoid neither of beauty nor of efficacy. Instead of confining himself to working out the various incidents of school life, or artificially arousing so-called natural reactions, let

him not be afraid of teaching clearly, methodically, and rationally. Definite, well-connected ideas still constitute what the mind retains with the greatest fidelity; it is they that are best calculated to direct a man's judgment throughout life.

Similar remarks may be made regarding instruction, strictly so-called. The pragmatic method is not the shortest, as one might imagine, even for the man who aims only at practical results. It consists in doing without rules, formulæ, and theories. Formulæ, however, are nothing but past experiences generalized, *i.e.* the means of learning, once for all, what is taking place or what it is prudent or fitting to do in a multitude of different instances. The rule, when thoroughly understood, dispenses with an endless series of observations, comparisons, and tentative methods; it is the experience of centuries, condensed and placed at our disposal. The rule, then, is a short cut, not a roundabout way. Leibnitz said that all mathematical theorems are nothing else than tachyographies, or abbreviatory methods of thinking.

Not only is the rule the shortest way, it is also the one that leads farthest and highest. To regard abstractions as merely *impedimenta*,

cumbersome objects to be brushed aside, is to deprive oneself of the opportunity of conceiving the reasons of things, as well as of the means of rationalizing and mentally assimilating them. Man wishes not only to have power, or even knowledge; he wishes to have understanding. This latter ambition, indeed, can never meet with full satisfaction; it may be satisfied, however, to some extent, and it is concept, abhorred by pragmatists; that is the means by which this satisfaction may be obtained.

And so no good purpose would be served by proscribing or denouncing the printed word, the book,—as we see a tendency to do in certain directions,—that treasure store from which men like Rabelais, Montaigne, Rousseau, of whose names we are so proud, have drawn so abundantly. Naturally, it is the master's province to direct the pupil along this line of development. But the book, in itself, is nothing less than the best of acquired science, expressed in the clearest, the most logical and exact way. It is by meditating on the book, with the master's help, that the child learns to fit the various details in the whole, to acquire knowledge of things with the utmost exactness, link them to one another, trace their

profound, philosophical meaning, and engrave them forcibly and intelligently upon his memory.

After all, what object have we, as teachers, in view, except to enable our pupils to do without our assistance, and to instruct themselves, when they come to be deprived of the ordinary school teaching? Is it not the greatest advantage that can be gained from study, to have the consciousness that what one knows is but a beginning, an initiation, and to be capable of undertaking and carrying through, alone and at any age, such supplementary or fresh studies as are deemed either necessary or desirable? Now, it is by teaching men to make use of the book, that this independence, this possibility of being sufficient unto themselves, is assured. The book represents their true enfranchisement.

To sum up, we may say that, even as applied to modern times, it is Socrates who is right and the sophists who are in the wrong. Practice by means of practice alone, the end converted into the means, the suppression of idea as the medium between impression and reaction: all this represents animal routine substituted for human thought and action.



Now, quite apart from the distinctive worth of science and intelligence, the practice which is at once prudent and expeditious, certain and productive is that which is illumined by theory.

### III

Is this equivalent to saying that we must take no account of the ever-recurring objections to bookish instruction, to the substitution of words for things, and of the school for life itself?

Far from being worthless, these objections are of the utmost importance; but they are directed against the abuse of theory, against an erroneous interpretation of the rôle which theory has to play, not against an intelligent use of abstract knowledge and rules.

The human mind has two ways of interpreting the meaning and the rôle of concepts. One may suppose—in fact, one is inclined to acknowledge—that certain concepts are so well established, so clear and comprehensive, that they may legitimately be set up as substitutes for reality. In that case, instead of beginning over again to make slow and painful observations of facts, we think we are entitled to start with some of these concepts and, by means of that infallible instrument called

logic, deduce therefrom the consequences they involve, purely and simply.

Now, it is concept, when understood and employed in this fashion, that renders instruction abstract and alien to life, dogmatic and frequently barren of results.

But this way of interpreting the meaning of the abstract, this way of looking upon rules, is not the only conceivable one. In reality, it is erroneous and should be rejected. Formula and concept, science itself in its totality, is never anything but an inadequate and perfectible expression of the real. It is the store or supply, in a workable, communicable form, of such observations as we have been enabled to make on the recent past of our world. Of this past itself we know but little; whereas we can form nothing but conjectures about the future.

Rules, therefore, should be regarded not as perfect, inviolable types of being, but rather as instruments of orientation and research. When thus understood, it is evident that they are by no means opposed to—but rather invite—a consideration of concrete realities, and a broad, frank introduction of life into the school.

Nor is this everything, for clearly the word,

life, implies not only the exercise of activity, strictly so-called, of sensibility and will, but also that of intellect. To neglect thought and attribute value to impulsive action only is not living as a man. Now, ideas and words, when regarded in their true nature as imperfect, living, and flexible symbols of real things, are, strictly speaking, both the expression and the stimulus of the life of the intellect.

In practice, the means to be employed in order to enable concepts and rules to play the part which really belongs to them is constantly to set them face to face with realities. We must bring it to pass that there are established and retained in the mind associations of ideas which carry it at once from the sign to the thing signified, and *vice versa*. Concept should always suggest intuition, just as intuition should call for concept.

Thus one of the most necessary practices of instruction, the indispensable condition of its efficacy, is what is strictly called exercise, or the concrete use of rules, whereby the mind actually acquires a very lively, and, as it were, instinctive, sense of the connexion between abstractions and realities.

Finally, what is of supreme importance is not that such or such a process or method be used, but that it be used in a manner really active and instinct with life. It is easy to reduce into scholastic, mechanical routines the very methods that are designated as active and direct; just as, on the other hand, the most abstract and uninteresting book may be made a thing of life by the comments and explanations of a master animated by a love of childhood and of science.

Whilst condemning the use of purely pragmatic methods, we can and we ought to insist upon the necessity of introducing into the school the utmost possible amount of life and activity.

There arises one question, however, of the greatest moment: what is this life, strictly speaking, with which we are here dealing?

The expression, "Life in school," has really two significations.

The phrase may mean that anxious thought or preoccupation regarding real life, the social life which awaits the child on leaving school, should be ever present in the master's mind; that the school, in the case of the child, should take the future human being into consideration and help him to mould himself.

And assuredly this meaning is a perfectly correct one. To educate children is to endeavour to make men of them, to cultivate and develop those faculties which they will find necessary in adult practical life.

There is another way, however, quite as interesting, of regarding the life which ought to prevail in school.

Childhood is not merely the preface of mature age; it has its own value and beauty, its right of existence *per se*. Why live always in the future and never in the present? Let children enjoy their childhood, let them manifest the qualities of their age, for their own sake, and delight in the pure joys that nature showers on them.

Nor let it be imagined, either, that in living their own lives, children are neglecting to prepare themselves for adult life. Of a certainty, the child ought to fit himself for man's estate, which he will subsequently be called upon to take up. But then, has man, on his side, nothing to learn from the child? Would it not be to the advantage of the former if he were to be influenced by the latter? Childhood stands for idealism; it stands for faith, artlessness, spontaneity, rectitude, freedom from reserve, confidence, optimism, mental

sprightliness and curiosity, flexibility, infinite aspirations and ambitions. It is good for the child to be put in a position to realize and develop these precious qualities and virtues of his age, so that adults, when brought in contact with him, may quicken into renewed life somewhat of these virtues within themselves, and that the child also may subsequently have the opportunity of retaining some traces of them, amid the disillusionments of the life of this world.

Let the school, then, be a living one in this second signification also. Let it live the life that is fitting to childhood and youth! Let it be a charming, a privileged spot, where children may have the joy of learning for the sake of learning, of studying in quiet and faith, of seeing justice and goodwill all around, of working and playing in common, the while they are linked to one another by the precious bonds of comradeship. It will fill their imagination and memory with dear and charming recollections which, some day, they will discover to be a source of strength and blessing.

In this way it will fill the rôle—which it is so well calculated to fill—of acting as a medium between the past and the present generations ;

it will enable the latter to share in the virtues of the former, and *vice versa*; and it will procure, between successive generations, that continuity in change which constitutes the condition of the existence, might, and greatness of a human community.

A society that is sane and youthful, justly confident in the future: such is the offspring of a school that is truly living.

# INDEX

- Æschylus, 117.  
Æsop, xiv.  
Agrippina, 18.  
Alceste, 95, 157.  
Anabaptists, 49.  
Apostles' creed, 43.  
Apostolic Fathers, 43.  
Aristotle, xx, xxvi, 1, 6, 8,  
9, 13, 14, 45, 62, 182.  
Athens, 143.  
Atomistic, 3.
- Bach, 51.  
Bacon, 126.  
Barbarian, 21.  
Basedow, xxxvi, xxxvii.  
Basil, 43.  
Bentham, 62, 66.  
*Bildung*, 118.  
Boileau, 154, 174.  
Bossuet, 51.  
Botticelli, 51.  
Bourdaloue, 51.
- Cæsar, 41.  
Catholic Church, 46.  
Cecrops, 14.  
Chimène, 155.
- Christianity, xxix, 26, 27,  
57, 76, 77.  
Christians, 144.  
Cicero, 117.  
Cineas, 154.  
"City-state," xxv, 5, 8, 14,  
20, 21.  
Cleanthes, 1, 18.  
Clement of Alexandria, 43.  
Cohen, 30.  
Copernicus, 55.  
Corinthians, 25, 47.  
Corneille, xxix, 51, 127, 131,  
132, 154, 155.  
*Cratylus*, 178.  
*Critique of Practical Reason*,  
xxiii, 54.  
*Critique of Pure Reason*, xxiii.  
*Crito*, 16.
- Dædalus, 185.  
Dante, 51.  
Darwin, 66, 68, 69.  
*Data of Ethics*, 54.  
Delphi, 178.  
Democritus, 129.  
Descartes, xxi, 51, 54, 56,  
126, 197.



- Dessau, xxxvi.  
 Deuteronomy, 32.  
 Diderot, 152.  
  
*École normale*, 204.  
 Eleatic, 3.  
 Émile, xxxv, xxxvi, xxxviii,  
 179.  
*e* mute, 159.  
 England, 220.  
 English, 186.  
 Epictetus, 19.  
 Epicureans, xxix, 15.  
 Epicurus, 129.  
 Euripides, 117.  
  
 Faust, 147, 175, 176, 177.  
 Fontenay, xi, xii.  
 France, 45, 144.  
 French, 158, 159, 166, 167,  
 170, 171, 173, 174.  
*Fundamental Principles of the  
 Metaphysic of Ethics*, 54.  
 Fustel de Coulanges, 204.  
  
*Galatians*, 25, 42.  
 Galileo, 55.  
 German, 158, 159, 169.  
 Germany, 45, 144, 180, 203,  
 204.  
 God, 14, 24, 28-42, 45-49,  
 75, 100, 124.  
*Gorgias*, 1.  
 Gospel, 31, 35.  
 Got, 162, 165.  
 Greeks, 140.  
 Gregory of Nazianzus, 43.  
  
 Handel, 51.  
 Hellenes, 12.  
 Hellenic, 14, 15, 22, 24, 26,  
 43, 54, 57, 58, 73, 74.  
 Heraclitus, 77.  
 Hesiod, 3, 144.  
 Homer, 3, 121, 131, 132,  
 144.  
 Hugo, Victor, 86, 87.  
*Hymn to Jupiter*, 1.  
  
 Ilion, 121.  
*Imitation of Christ*, 25.  
*Institution des Enfants*, 178.  
 Ionian, 3.  
 Isaiah, 28, 36.  
 Italian, 158.  
 Italy, 45.  
  
 Jacotot, 194.  
 Jeddo, 156.  
 Jehovah, 27.  
 Jesus, 27-36, 40-42, 46, 47.  
 Jews, 27-29, 32, 42.  
 John, 40.  
 Jupiter, 14, 15, 18, 20.  
 Justin, 43.  
  
 Kant, xx, xxiii, 51, 54, 59-  
 61, 63, 179, 180, 206.  
 Kepler, 55.  
 Klopstock, 51.  
  
 La Fontaine, 154, 163.  
 Lamartine, 86, 87, 154, 175.  
 La Rochefoucauld, 62.  
*Le Cid*, 155.  
 Legouv e, 166.  
 Leibnitz, xxix, 51, 115, 223.

- Le Lac*, 86, 87.  
 Leonardo da Vinci, 51.  
 Leopardi, 80, 82.  
 Leviti $\acute{e}$ us, 32.  
 Locke, xxxiii.  
 Lucretius, 91, 130.  
 Luke, 29, 32, 36, 47.  
 Luther, 25, 48, 49.
- Macedonia, 14.  
 Maieutics, 187.  
 Malebranche, 51.  
*Manual of Epictetus*, 1.  
 Marcus Aurelius, xxvi, 1, 19, 20, 35.  
 Mark, 36, 37, 40.  
 Massillon, 51.  
 Matthew, 34, 36-38, 40, 47.  
*Memorabilia*, 1.  
*Meno*, 184, 185.  
 Messiah, 29.  
 Middle Ages, 44, 46, 47, 55.  
 Mill, Stuart, 54, 62, 63, 66.  
 Milton, 51.  
 Molière, 154, 155, 162, 164.  
 Montaigne, 178, 200, 211, 224.  
*Moral Works*, 1.
- Newton, 55.  
*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1, 13, 26.  
 Nuremberg, 134.
- Old Testament, 32.  
 Olympian games, 116.  
*Operette morali*, 80.  
 Orientals, 43.
- Palestrina, 51.  
*Paradoxe sur le comédien*, 152.  
 Pascal, viii-x, xxvi, 89.  
 Paul, 25, 42, 47-49, 144.  
*Pentateuch*, 27.  
 Peripatetic, 45.  
*Phædo*, 1.  
*Phædrus*, 145.  
 Pharisees, 30, 31, 40.  
 Phèdre, 159.  
 Philante, 95.  
*Philanthropinum*, xxxvi.  
*Philosophy of the Unconscious*, 80.  
 Pindar, 116.  
 Pinloche, xxxvii.  
 Plato, 1, 9, 10, 16, 22, 145, 178, 179.  
 Plutarch, 1.  
 Pope, 45.  
*Principles of Education*, xxxiii.  
 Prophets, 27, 28, 36.  
 Protestant, 50.  
 Pyrrhus, 154.  
 Pythagorean, 3.
- Quintilian, 117.
- Rabelais, 211, 224.  
 Racine, 51, 173.  
 Raphael, 51.  
 Renaissance, 50, 54, 93, 117, 126.  
*Republic*, 1, 10.  
*Rime riche*, 171.  
 Romans, 25, 47, 49, 140.  
 Rome, 14, 18, 21, 40, 44.

- Rousseau, xiv, xvii, xxxv,  
xxxvi, 179, 188, 208, 211,  
224.
- Satan, 36.
- Schopenhauer, 80.
- Sganarelle, 99.
- Shakespeare, 156.
- Smith, Adam, 62.
- Socrates, xix, xxvi, 4, 5, 7,  
15, 16, 18, 21, 145, 178,  
184, 185, 187, 192, 219,  
225.
- Solomon, 40.
- Sophists, 4.
- Sophocles, 117.
- Spencer, 54, 66, 67.
- Spinoza, 56.
- State, xv, 8, 16.
- Stoicism, 15.
- Stoics, xxix, 15, 18, 24, 34,  
37.
- Terence, xxxii.
- Thoughts*, 1.
- Thraseas, 18.
- Tolstoi, 103.
- Treatise on Christian Liberty*,  
25.
- Tristesse d'Olympio*, 86.
- Trojans, 121.
- Ulysses, 121.
- United States, 220.
- Utilitarianism*, 54.
- Vigny, 169.
- Voltaire, 156, 160.
- Von Hartmann, Ed., 80.
- World as Will and Idea*, 80.
- Xantippe, 7.
- Xenophanes, 3.
- Xenophon, 1.
- Zeno, 18.
- Zeus, 3.















