SOME UNEXAMINED ASSUMPTIONS THAT HINDER THE STUDY OF THE CONDITIONS OF SOCIAL WELL-BEING

I MUST dwell a little longer on the results we have reached. Some of them have important consequences.

There is no way of accounting for the advance of civilization except on the assumption that, in some way, human history is continuous. A single genuine break, one "incommunicable" gap, would abolish for all succeeding ages all that went before. The unity of mankind must not be regarded as a metaphor or figure of speech. It is real: possibly more real than the unity of the parts of a physical thing, or even of a living physical organism. We attribute a distinct individuality to men and nations, and uniqueness of character, as well as of function, to social institutions. We endow them in fact with the rights, and, therefore, with the privacy of persons. And we do rightly. But it must not be at the expense of their unity in one civilization. They are not individual in virtue of being isolated. Somehow or another, both of these two aspects of individuality and unity, opposite as they seem to be, belong to man and to society; and if we cannot reconcile them in theory as they co-exist in fact, so much the worse for our theory.

Now, this continuity is spiritual. No other is so deep and no other allows such play for the parts. The parts may be free, and free in virtue of their continuity! In saying that it is spiritual I do not wish to imply that it is not natural.
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No such negative holds. At least I have no evidence of what either spirit or nature can do, or be, entirely apart from the other. Taken as mutually exclusive, or solitary, which is the way we usually take them, I believe they are simply fictions. We are entitled to distinguish aspects of reality, but not to break it up. Nature and Spirit are such aspects. And, as we shall see, the most significant distinction between them is that the unity of the concrete whole, as well as its diversity, expresses itself more freely in spirit than in nature.

The most obvious means and symbol of the continuity of civilization is to be found in the borrowing of the ways of thinking and acting of the earlier generation by the later, which we call “tradition.” When we speak of tradition we usually seem to imply that “ideas” are handed down from one age to another. These “ideas,” we think, are communicated in speech, or they are passed on as printed in a book, or as somehow current in a society or institution. We regard them as a ready-made, and more or less valuable, mental coin, which can be handed down by one mind to another. But this is sheer nonsense; and it is not innocuous nonsense, for it leads to all sorts of mental puzzles and practical difficulties. In the region of mind and character we borrow nothing that is ready-made. We can no more transmit or borrow a true or false idea, than we can borrow or transmit a good or bad act. It must be of our own making. We must achieve the former as we do the latter, by the exercise of our own powers. In reality, an idea is an act, and beyond the activity of mind, or surviving it (except as a modification of the thinker), there is nothing. What is handed down in the way of tradition consists of provocatives or incentives, and guides to mental activity. Hence, our inheritance from previous ages consists first of modified
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capacities capable of being realized through action, and, secondly, of a more favourable environment for their exercise.

Our relations to the achievements of our ancestors are, at bottom, the same as our relations to the outer world, which presents us only with opportunities, that is to say, with the raw material of thought and action. The opportunities must be seized and used, and the raw material must be converted into instruments of our well-being. Use must be invented by man, and values, of whatever kind, must be created by him. And nothing has ultimate value for man until it is not only a factor in his activities but a part of his very structure. The rose, in order to be red, requires the help of the sun, the seeing eye and the perceiving mind. As isolated, the redness is not in the rose, nor is the perception in the mind. And the same holds of tradition. As long as a community is savage the writings of St. Paul or Sir Isaac Newton are neither true nor false. They have no meaning.

It follows that it is an error to attribute the advance of civilization either to Reason or to Tradition. Our attainments can be regarded neither simply as an inheritance, nor as achieved except in virtue of being a gift. We cannot even divide our possessions into two portions, and assign some of them to Reason and others to Tradition, some to previous ages and some to our own. In both the visible world of physical facts and the invisible world of social relations and powers, we both borrow everything we have and are, from that which went before us or is around us, and we also make it. Except an object be “given” to mind, and unless a meaning lies in it, as in spoken sounds or in a book, or a tool, or a social custom, or an institution, mind is helpless, whether for thinking or willing. Nevertheless that meaning cannot be discovered or received except as repro-
And the reproduction is, in truth, the repetition of a mental activity. *And life is this process.* The so-called "world of ideas" and "the moral world" are the process made manifest, like the light of a burning candle. Man is always self-made, and yet the self-made man is (fortunately) a myth—so is a self-made or self-sufficient people. We can no more point to an idea which is absolutely our own or a moral achievement exclusively due to ourselves than we can lay a finger on a part of our body which is not made up of material that has been lent to us for a little while by our mother—the earth, and which we must give up again. Our obligations as citizens are analogous. Our debt to human society and, in particular, to our own country is not measurable. It is as deep as our being: we have borrowed the stuff and structure of our souls.

But there is another aspect of civilization for which Tradition, as ordinarily understood, cannot account, namely, its "advance." Tradition seems to imply repetition and nothing more: but advance, and especially that advance which we call Growth, or Development, or Evolution, implies not only an unbroken identity, but also change, newness, acquisition. So that a Tradition which is alive is both an inheritance and a new creation. Neither man nor the world in which he lives can take a step from what is not to what is. He cannot bridge the gulf between nothing and something. He must start from "conditions" within and without him, and his conditions are not limitations only but also opportunities. The world, at any moment, is a system of possibilities. It exists midway between what is and what is not. It becomes, and its movement, its *only* movement, is from what is implicit to that which is explicit. Nothing begins, and nothing ends, in an absolute sense. A new force is an old force let loose: in every change of form it is "con-
served." The law of causation accounts not for beginnings but for transition. Adam looked out on the world as we see it to-day, and yet that world is not for two moments the same. Nor is the mind which garners its meaning. The past is preserved; and, at least in the mind of man, enriched. Evolution implies a victory over the flux of time. It will not let the past go, but carries it onward. If it is conscious evolution—the growth of a soul—then an ideal which is a forecast of the actualized possibilities of the past, moves in the present. The "Tradition" that is handed down must somehow share this kind of vitality. It must continue the same and yet achieve new meaning. Accepted as authoritative, an inherited truth or custom can retain its authority only at the cost of being reinterpreted. When we first adopt the traditions of our people and accept their usages, as we must do in order to live at all, we take it for granted that they are right. But in doing so we interpret them in a way of our own; and to live on them is to adapt them to our needs and ourselves to their conditions. And in this process of applying our assumptions to our circumstances and the needs of life, we discover whether, and how far, they are true or false.

Now, if we sum up these results and endeavour to ascertain their practical significance, we shall find that we are confronted with some of the most perplexing problems of good citizenship. We have stated, in the first place, that all human conditions, whether in the form of theories, or habits and customs, or social relations, are never free from error. And we have seen that even if they were valid in theory and good in practice when first formed, they turn into errors for the ages which come after unless they are changed to meet new exigencies. "Good customs," we are told, "corrupt the world."
Nevertheless, we have affirmed, in the second place, that these traditions, however untrustworthy, are the only available stuff out of which men or states can build their lives. The social world into which they are born and in which they grow, with its constant play of invisible character forces, is not less indispensable to their life as rational beings, than the outer world is to their bodily life.

Lastly, although the laws of nature are not more sure, nor their demands more rigorous, nor the breach of them more remorselessly punished, than the laws of the spiritual world which we call social; nevertheless it is only in the very process of putting our social views—that is, our traditions—into practice that we can discover what is true and what is false. In a word, to find out whether the stuff on which we live is food or poison we must swallow it. Or, to change the metaphor, light comes too late to lead. We see our path only when we look back.

Now, what judgment must be passed on a scheme which imposes on mankind such conditions of life as these? Is it not the invention of an ironical Destiny? How can moral behaviour be demanded of a being the very premises of whose thought and practice are insecure—not only insecure but both tainted with and tending towards falsehood? Surely, it may be urged, without knowledge of the good (which is the standard of action) it is not possible to distinguish between right and wrong. No doubt all human science is tentative. In all departments of knowledge progress comes only through reconstruction. Nevertheless the physical sciences, in the degree in which knowledge grows, become predictive, and thereby guide man's action more and more securely. But the laws of the physical world are stable. Man does not build them up in the process of living as he builds up his social world. Hence the science of man's life
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as a moral and social being would seem to be doubly difficult. Moral Philosophy, as even some of its votaries have said, seems to stand solitary in its helplessness. Mankind always at first disbelieves, and it not seldom crucifies its moral prophets. And has it not a right to do so, seeing that, at best, they are but erring interpreters of ever-changing phenomena—expounders of a perpetual flux? Nay, it has been argued that such a knowledge of moral consequences as is certain and unerring would make morality itself impossible. If the moral laws were as clear and as promptly punitive when disobeyed as are the laws of nature, virtue, it is said, would vanish. Obedience would have no merit, and deliberate disobedience would be impossible.

These difficulties are all too familiar to our times. It was not during the war that men found it easy to say:

"God's in his Heaven—
All's right with the world."

Good citizens were, and still are, profoundly perplexed.

At this stage I can hardly do more than suggest considerations that point towards a solution. To answer them completely we must expose the unconscious and false presupposition from which the perplexities arise.

In the first place, it is obvious that if man never needed to revise the premises of his conduct, his life would become a tame thing. Morality would lose much of its splendour and all its adventurousness and consist simply of following out plain and inevitable consequences. But the great moment in the life of the thinker is that in which an old hypothesis breaks down and a new one dawns upon his mind. Then do all his facts stand ranked in a new order, as did those of the world of plants and animals for Darwin, and the stars and planets for Copernicus. In like manner, the
great day in a good man’s life is that on which, on his road to some Damascus, a new light shines round about him, and on gaining his feet, he asks for work and enters into the service of a better cause. Moral progress demands more than a surface change. What is made to hand falls outside the boundaries of the moral world. Man is responsible for himself through and through.

In the second place, if principles, in their application to circumstances, must suffer change on pain of becoming errors, it does not follow that the change must mean that they are refuted and deleted. It may mean their transmutation, and their persistence in a richer and fuller form. In that case the necessity for change is a benign necessity, and lapful of rewards. Indeed, Evolution verily is the most optimistic regulative conception that science and philosophy have ever entertained. Applied to morals, this conception shows us how spiritual principles, in the course of being embodied in tangible ways of a life led in a world of space and time and of physical needs and gains and losses, grow in significance and power by that which they overcome and convert. And, at the same time, they raise the material to which they are “applied” to a higher plane of being. The application of moral principles to natural or physical circumstances injects new values into them—beauty, truth and worth. They are made working partners in the evolution of man.

In the third place, it were well in facing these perplexities that we should reconsider our standard of values. For it is at least possible that “fixity,” “changelessness,” “eternal immobility” is not the true measure of perfection. Were that the case, every change would be a blunder—the bursting of the bud into flower, the red dawn of a new day, the gradual blossoming of the spiritual powers of the human race. That
which cannot become better *may* not be the best. The perfect may be that which breaks endlessly into new perfections. An exhaustless well of possibilities may be richer than any stagnant lake of fact. In any case the capacity and necessity of growth must not be assumed to be a misfortune. And probably no growth can compare in extent and adventurousness and wonder to the growth, throughout the æons, of the soul of humanity. The glory of the world of spirit *is* that it is always in the making. It is the transparent raiment of a living Will.

In the next place, it is also time to renounce the habit of regarding principles and their consequences, whether in the region of theory or of practice, as separate things. They are not entities existing apart. We do not bring forth and then apply the former to the latter, as one foreign thing to another. The scientific hypothesis, even when it first dawns on the mind of its inventor, is not a thing-in-general, or in the air. It appears to him as the inner meaning and ultimate reality of actual facts he has been striving to comprehend. Even as a guess it is not a disembodied universal. In the same way a moral principle is a volition and no mere "idea." It is an active personal force, operating on circumstance. An otiose moral principle is a figment. Principles too high to be applied are vain conceits. They are not moral till they are at work. The love which loves no one in particular, the citizenship that is loyal to no particular community, or is willing to serve only when circumstances are different,—in one word, the duty that is *not* "next to hand"—these are meaningless phrases and nothing more.

A moral duty is an obligation to put *present* circumstances to the highest use. A service which can be postponed is not a duty, as yet. Man is not good because he *was* good yesterday, nor because he is *going* to be virtuous to-morrow. A
moral action is always the application of what is timeless to the fleeting moment—what is eternal flowing into deeds in time.

Finally, the emphasis thrown upon the value of practice by Carlyle and the modern Pragmatist is altogether good. It is undoubtedly true that the practical faith of an individual and, in like manner, the assumption upon which an age or a nation rests its life, are never thoroughly tested, never finally broken, or confirmed, except through being applied in practice. But practice is valuable for precisely the opposite of the reasons which they give. They would make it a substitute for enquiry. By means of it they would arrest the endless questioning of the intellect. As a matter of fact, practice has value only when and because it compels and guides enquiry. Whether in the experimenting laboratory of the chemist or physicist, or in the stress and strain of the inter-human relations of citizenships, so far from making reasoning unnecessary, it summons reason to its task and contributes the main conditions of its successful performance.

Let us follow this matter out a little way, for thereby we may remove one of the misleading notions that block the way of social enquiry. What is it that takes place when, as we say, we apply a hypothesis to facts? Or put a moral, social, or religious conviction into practice? We observe what takes place; we watch the consequences, as we say. That means that we gather new truths by the use of our intelligence. We correct our previous notions of the facts, and we acquire new ones. But all this simply means that we are providing Reason with fuller and more accurate premises from which to draw its conclusions.

There are few errors more common or egregious or mischievous than that of setting up an antithesis between theory
and practice, or reason and experience. No man ever theorized except by the help of facts, nor ever learned from facts except by using his reason, not even when his theory is wrong. As he can neither stumble and fall, nor walk except by the help of the forces of the outer world, so he can not create absurdities without borrowing his data from his environment. Thought no less than action is reaction and response. The reference to the outer object is constant, for from it has been derived all the content of thought. In other words, thought is never pure *a priori* nor pure *a posteriori*. Reason must borrow its content, however wildly it may connect or relate its elements: and to him who leaves his intelligence behind, or ceases to draw conclusions from premises, experience teaches nothing. The most devoted Pragmatist must bring his ears with him if he wishes to hear; and his ears must not be too long.

Men may reason ill or well. They may violate, or honour, or even "transcend" the laws of the logical textbook. In any case they are *always* reasoning. The process of reasoning enters vitally into every intelligent act that they perform. Every judgment, that is to say, every proposition, or intelligent statement, or grammatical sentence containing a subject and predicate is an instance of the use of reason. And all reasoning is an example of the process of evolution: whereby what is indistinct, a mere "something," becomes distinguishable and an articulated whole, a unity of distinct parts, a "system." Except by the use of the distinguishing and connecting powers of reason we cannot name anything or even point to it as a "This" or "That." As the child's whole body participates in digesting its mother's milk, so does his whole rational nature play its part when the child recognizes its mother. And the abstract philosopher or inventive physicist, or the pragmatist who
finds so little use for reason, is no better off than the child. He has no other apparatus at his call. We cannot too often remind ourselves that the distinctions which the psychologist draws become misleading errors whenever they break up the unity of mind, as if only portions of it were rational, or as if reason reasoned only now and then. We reason when we perceive, imagine, conceive, judge, will and even "feel"! Distinctions are degrees and stages—not "isolations." Man never acts in bits. Every cell and fibre of the body enters into every movement: and, much more extensively, the whole rational mind participates in every activity of the spirit.

Hence Reason is coextensive with experience. It does not go before experience, for it must have premises: it does not come after experience, for its premises must be reasonable and in some measure known. They go hand in hand always. Indeed, the functions attributed to experience by those who set it over against reasoning are the most vital parts of reasoning. The most difficult part of reasoning, and, if not the most important, certainly the most unteachable, is that of selecting the premises that are relevant to our interest or purpose. Or to put the same truth in the more usual way, the errors of observation, or of the irresponsible vagaries of an erratic judgment, are both more common and more fatal than those which spring up during "the transit" from the premises to the conclusion. Prejudice, especially as regards matters of high value, is more perverse than "bad logic." Given the true premises, then the arrival at the true conclusion is tolerably easy. Both our reasoning and our practice are in the power of assumptions, and especially of the assumptions we make unconsciously and never think of examining—till we must do so. As we have seen, we "apply" these assumptions in our ex-
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experience as a matter of course. We are as much in their power as the mathematician is in the power of his axioms and postulates, or the scientific man of his regulative conceptions, or "colligating hypotheses." They are the cornerstones and supporting beams of our house of life. When they prove false, as they do at times, then "the Palace of music we reared" is gone. We are helpless till we find, once more, the dominant C. Even as the scientific man has to reconstruct his "science" through and through, when one of his ruling conceptions proves to be false, so does the bitterness and bankruptcy of wrong-doing send a man or a people searching for better life purposes.

The pragmatic test, provided it is employed by reason and far-reaching enough, is the old test of every moral optimist the world has ever known. He regards the very entrance of the truth upon the scene as already its triumph: "Be ye of good cheer, I have overcome the world." As against error on the other hand, the nature of things proves obdurate. And, possibly, it is in this respect that the use of "experience" and its contribution to right reasoning are most obvious. As an "application" of a presupposition it puts it in relation to a world of facts; and facts "are stubborn chiels that winna' ding." Its inadequacy, if it is false, is exposed. It won't work, or rather it generally works in ways that were not expected. Moreover, it must be observed that experience is the application of facts to facts, not of mere ideas to mere facts. On both sides there is an apprehended content. In acting on circumstances we introduce a new circumstance into their context. Interaction takes place and reveals to him who observes the qualities or nature of the facts. It is only in acting and reacting that qualities of objects emerge. It is what a thing or a man does, or fails to do, which shows its nature, use and value.
In these ways, "experience" ever provides fuller opportunities for reason. It corrects our tendency to accept face values and one-sided evidence. It saves us from thinking abstractly, and committing ourselves to the risky guidance of partial truths. For experience is always concrete: it is the meeting point of the spirit of man and his world. Such is its province and virtue that I am tempted to think that we learn nothing thoroughly except in its school—in life's laboratory, which man's history is from beginning to end.

Germany, for instance—its religious leaders and philosophers, no less than its legal guides and practical politicians—much as it theorized about the nature of the state, trusted a half truth, until its conception of a super-state of supermen was put to a practical test. It put its conceit and its theory of political egoism which was to be tempered in the long run by a loitering benevolence and to endow the conquered world with German Kultur—(Bless the mark!)—to the test of experiment. A new light was struck. It has come to seem possible that the old rule of individual well-being may apply to nations also. The nation that would "overcome" the world must "save" the world. The way to Sovereignty is through service. The salvation must go before the victory, not after; and the service before the sovereignty.

Morality, we have been taught, now, is not the concern of individuals only: nor are there two moralities or endurable ways of life, the one for states and the other for their citizens. On the contrary, men and nations have the same history. They begin at the same time and travel in the same direction. On the threshold of the good life of both alike—just outside the wicket gate, "There is strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." And, in this region of ultimate values, there is only one
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way of settling this strife—the way indicated by the greatest
of all practical Idealists: "Whosoever shall be great
among you shall be your minister."

Human experience has always been murmuring this truth
in our ears. But the noisy concerns of nations, which con-
tend for superiority even in times of peace, and the urgency
of our physical needs and passions, have dulled our hearing.
The men in authority, the spokesmen of the political
powers, have been peculiarly unwilling to listen. They can
be unselfish in their own affairs and, up to the limits of their
power, be at the same time aggressive in the affairs of their
state. To them the maxim, "Whosoever of you will be
chiefest, shall be servant of all," has seemed preposterous
in statecraft. They have known better!

But, to-day, while the echoes of the war are still rumbling
in our souls, the principle of mutual service among nations
is being reconsidered. It is no longer beneath notice. It
may be a creed to be adopted—bye and bye, in a negative
way, by some one else first, perhaps, as a possible means of
averting another war or at least of postponing it.

Never did a great principle make a more modest appear-
ance and timid entry into human life. But though it is as
yet only on our lips, "experience" tends to show that it is
valid, and that it will ultimately, as valid things do, become
a practical belief. It may break out into the behaviour of
states. There are some men already, and some of these
are mankind's seers, who are inclined to think that the
world may fare better in the power of this principle than
in that of its much-tried opposite. The new maxim of
international conduct may prove valid, and the Nazarene
may prove, after all, to have considerable insight as a prac-
tical reformer. "Experience" is enlightening even in poli-
tics, given time enough. It compels reflexion, and very
earnest reflexion, whenever our world has gone to pieces in our hands. But it is only reason that can reflect and draw the lesson of experience.

Two main considerations have led me thus to dwell upon the assumed opposition of reason and experience: both of them directly applicable to the civic enterprise which has brought us together to-day. In the first place, this assumption has hindered enquiry in the matters which concern the non-material well-being of states and citizens. In the second place, it has stultified that enquiry, where it has been undertaken. Its mischievous results are due to the fact that it arises from, and represents an attitude of mind which renders enquiry everywhere in the domain of spirit, or as regards all the concerns of man's intellectual, moral, social and religious life, almost fruitless.

The attitude of mind to which I refer is that of regarding all the differences which cannot be resolved into sameness as inconsistent with each other, and mutually destructive. All opposites on this view are contradictory opposites, and all agreement is sameness. The choice of one of the opposites makes the rejection of the other obligatory and absolute. It is an attitude of mind which forecloses the possibility, first, that neither of the opposing conceptions may be true; second, that neither can have meaning except in relation to its opposite; and third, that the opposition implies, or carries within it, the possibility and necessity of a fuller truth in which the opposites find their place as elements within a more or less complex system.

It is a very natural attitude, and as easy as blundering generally is. It seems self-evident that what is convex cannot be concave, that the same motion cannot have opposite directions, that attraction is inconsistent with repulsion, that what is identical cannot change, or that what is the
same cannot be different. But the circle is both convex and concave: it is made by a fixed point and a moving line, and it moves within a plane in every direction. Physics and biology will disprove the other assumptions. And what is evolution except the movement of identity through successive changes, changes whose very differences bring to light the nature of that identity which is the same throughout?

Moral and political questions, and, indeed, all the problems of mind or spirit, are *insoluble* if treated by the methods of final antithesis. If we approach the facts of social life insisting that they shall declare themselves “Either—Or,” as ultimate opposites, the answer they will always give is “Neither!” Reason is simply frustrated when it makes such a demand. Its way is blocked, not by the facts, for facts are there to suggest and guide. It is blocked by what it brings with it to the facts: it looks at them through the distorting medium of a false logic. Reason can be stultified only by itself. We blame the nature of things unjustly when we call it unintelligible, and we wrong reason when we call it incompetent. We err through the inadequate use of reason, and especially through our reluctance to examine our assumptions.

But we are living in the midst of such antithetical assumptions. The History of Philosophy, which is a true mirror of man’s attempt at valid and systematic thinking, shows him to be on every side entangled amongst antitheses. Turn in whatever direction he will, he is confronted with opposites, which, while standing over against each other, call for each other, and need each other as the condition for having any truth. The One and the Many embarrassed Plato; the Universal and the Particular, Aristotle and the Schools which came after; Substance and Quality, Spinoza; Thought and Reality, the Ideal and the Real, Nature and
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Spirit, the whole of modern thought. In *Ethics* and *Political Philosophy* we have been tossed to and fro between Freedom and Necessity, Law and Liberty, Egoism and Altruism, Hedonism and Rigorism, Individualism and Socialism, Rights and Duties. Theories of knowing have given a seesaw emphasis on Analysis and Synthesis, Intuition and Ratiocination, Mediate and Immediate, *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Knowledge, Reason and Experience, Logic and Faith, the Intellect and Feeling, Theory and Practice, Form and Matter, Idealism and Pragmatism—and so forth. The *same* antithesis takes all these forms.

There are many reasons why this antithetical attitude comes so easy to us and is so universally invasive. Let me indicate one or two of them.

In the first place, we *must* distinguish in order to make anything of anything—to point to a "this" or "that." For we are placed in a world which is always, so long as we are awake, pressing upon all our senses. Sounds, sights, touches, possible meanings, confusedly wash over us, as if they were seaweed tossed within the waves of an ocean. We must select, separate, exclude; the Sensations which bring even the promise of meaning and use must be singled out. They occupy our minds one by one, serially. And the elementary intelligence is necessarily very discrete. It has to break up its world into very small and simple elements to make anything of them. In the primitive man's soul, sensations, impulses, desires, passions, feelings, volitions pursue one another. There is at first little continuity of either thought or purpose. The range of interest is confined pretty much to the pressing animal want of the moment: vision and aim are alike narrow. Rudimentary man lives in the moment, a life of transient moods, and he is a very thorough Egoist. Universal truths, permanent purposes, practical
ends which are generous and comprehensive and which can give systematic strength and splendour to a whole life, may be there as possibilities but they are far below the horizon. Each particular appearance, as it stands, looks true; for it is corrected by no wide context; and each passion has there and then to be satisfied. Nor is it easy to emerge from beneath the tyranny of the particular, momentary and exclusive. Man is slow to doubt and question his "impressions." It is notorious that the greater the ignorance the stronger the prejudice. The empty mind is by no means the open mind. It has no rival in the sturdy resistance it offers to an invitation to recognize "another side to the case" or another aspect of a fact, or any "rights" which conflict with its own, or sanity in him who urges them.

In the next place, man finds his hands very full at first, owing to the difficulties of meeting the necessities which arise from his physical structure, and which cannot be easily postponed. The body is impatient and its needs are urgent. And, for primitive man, there exists no store either of goods or of social traditions and inventions upon which he can draw. It is with "sides unfed and a houseless head" that the naked wretch abides the pelting of the pitiless storm of nature's forces. What wonder is it that to live at all takes up all the mind that he has, or that he can meet his necessities only one by one? Both his inner world of sensations, wants, desires, impulses, and passions of rage and cruelty and tenderness and pity, and his outer world of facts that interest, seem but a lawless succession of disconnected particulars. His universe is made of contingencies, with too little order in it for any incident to seem miraculous! Its only universal is the need to live, and even that is not a formulated and sustained conscious purpose.

No doubt, in the last resort, the discontinuity is a surface
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matter. From a "pure manifold" there could issue neither an orderly world nor a sane intelligence. The most primitive life has some stable methods of finding food and shelter: things do have the same meaning and the same use, and the little world of the crudest of men is not altogether topsy-turvy. Absolute absence of continuity there cannot be. Even moments of time and parts of space, though they have never happened together or coincided, are not merely exclusive. They are distinctions within a unity.

But the outstanding characteristic of the physical world and the life of physical wants and satisfactions is that the unity is in the background, implicit and utterly unobtrusive—"Subconscious," if you will: while the differences are urgent, aggressive, outspoken. Hence, when we come to interpret the things which are not purely physical, but vital, sensitive, conscious, intelligent, purposive, volitional, moral, social, we bring with us the ways of knowing with which we are already familiar. We assume without question and quite unconsciously that the phenomena of this more complex region have the same disconnected particularity. We not only distinguish, but disconnect; and in this case to disconnect is to misinterpret and distort the facts.

Even in explaining nature we cannot go far, so long as we regard its facts one by one. Succession and change are taken to have a cause which connects the before and after, and causality implies continuity and permanence. It suggests the conservation as well as the transmutation of energy, and therefore reciprocity and ultimately a closed system within which the changes take place, and without which nothing happens. Even Physics drives the enquirer on and on towards fuller and more dominant unity. But when we come to vital phenomena, and, still more, to the phenomena of mind and spirit, the discrete view is arrested
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on the very threshold, as an impostor. The independence of the elements does not disappear, but it cannot be for a moment forgotten that it is only relative. Mathematics, by counting and measuring the parts of a living organism, will not carry us far. It might help us to know how many cells and fibres there are in each of our organs, theoretical mechanics might help us still more, and chemistry more still. But a surgeon or physician, knowing these matters only, and ignoring the interaction of the interrelated parts of a living one, would be a risky practitioner. We treat no animal rightly if we forget that he is living and may be sensitive, and no man rightly if we forget that he is a personality, carrying rights and duties, and intensely one with himself.

As we ascend the scale of existence—or of knowledge—the mutual implication of phenomena becomes always more evident and imperative. The abstractness of merely physical methods, justifiable within broad limits in natural science, becomes more and more intolerable. The "colligating conceptions," as Mill (the Individualist) called the principles that constitute particulars, play a more and more significant part. The universals are no longer otiose samenesses but powers that break out into and work in the different parts and elements; and always in a greater diversity and variety of them. The activities of the organs in a living body are those of the living being as one and whole. The body breathes only by means of the lungs, and the lungs act only by means of the organism; and there is the same borrowing and lending between the organism as a whole and the minutest cell.

The errors of the Physiologist or Physician who, like an occasional Surgeon, forgets this active interrelation of whole and parts, and how the well-being of the system is at
stake in every one of its elements, are soon exposed and arranged. But the analogous error on the part of the Psychologist, or Economist, or Moralist, or Sociologist may be long hidden. And the mills of the spirit seem to grind slowly. The moral effects of moral wrong are immediate; deterioration of character does not delay, pollution takes place at once. But the outbreak of the moral cause into the region of natural facts is often enough slow and obscure, and it seems uncertain. “The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly,” says Job. And, too often, it is the natural evils consequent upon wrong-doing that first arrest attention, and induce reflexion and regret and possibly a change of ways. Provided the dubious virtues of prudence and moderation be in control, Individualism in theory and Egotism in practice will carry a man a long way; and they will carry a State still further, if it is large and strong. For Individualism and Egotism are not sheer error—not nothing is, except madness. They are half-truths. They are elements which cannot be left out in a theory of moral and social life. They are constituents of the principles which are essential to right conduct. “Humanity” must be reverenced in our own person as well as in that of others. After all, a moral duty is always an individual’s duty, a personal obligation. The doing of it is his highest good, and he can postpone it for nothing else in heaven or earth. And he must do it alone. It must be his own action, the expression of his own will, and it must be done because he himself recognizes it as good and is moved only by that conviction. This “private” and unique and independent good cannot be eliminated from morality. But it is an error to assume that privacy, uniqueness and independence imply seclusion!
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On the contrary, the Good to do which is my own duty and therefore my highest and only ultimate good, is a *universal* Good. Moral good is like truth in this respect. It is capable of becoming a *common* possession: because it is valuable in itself, as it stands, and its own complete justification. And it is as good in itself, and not as subservient to his own welfare, that a moral agent performs his duty. In that sense the moral law is impersonal and must be obeyed as such. What comes of the agent through obeying it does not count and is not considered. The good that follows, the benefits that accrue, are an unsought addendum, secured by the world-scheme for the agent: its concern and not his. The *moral* reward of right action is just a deeper spirit of obedience, a willingness that passes into *love* of the law. And this reward is beyond the reach of even the most prudent form of self-seeking. It comes only when the agent, be he an individual or a nation, is merged though not lost in a cause that is universal.

Herein, I believe, lies the clue to the solution of the graver difficulties of citizenship, whether they be theoretical or practical. Individualism and Socialism, Nationalism and Internationalism, Egotism and Altruism in all forms, must be recognized as false and futile when apart. They become true only when they are found to be not merely inextricably intertwined but as impossible when sundered as the convex and concave sides of a circle.

We take up this matter in our next lecture.