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JOURNAL OF
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ORDINARY MEETING, MARCH 1, 1869.

THE REV. WALTER MITCHELL, M.A., VICE-PRESIDENT, IN THE
CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed, and the
HON. SECRETARY announced the election of the following :—

ASSOCIATES, 2ND CLASS :—Rev. John Harvard, Sheffield ; S. Hill Smith,
Esq., Sheffield ; George Race, Esq., Darlington.

The REV. DR. IRONS then read the continuation of his Paper as follows :

*ANALYSIS OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY. (Part
Second.)*

CONSPICUOUS.

IX. The Supreme Governor of conscious beings has *Personality*.

(The opposite supposition involves a contradiction.)

There is a *correspondence of character* in all moral beings ;

(and therefore in the Moral Governor and those governed).

There is *reality* demanded in all dealings between them.

(Speculations concerning this reality do not disprove it.)

Pantheistic and Humanitarian speculations,
more apparently than truly antagonistic.

The former cannot deny the "true-always" ;

The latter cannot limit itself to the "phenomenal."

"Regulative-knowledge" and "anthropomorphism" are nearly the
same.

Both these speculative philosophies are prevalent :

Example of each in modern times.

We must not accept premisses without the conclusions.

We must examine the premisses.

(§ 52-59.)

X. Early speculations as to the relation of the Supreme Being to the Finite, admitted by the Christian schools.

Parmenides, and the Eleatics : (Logical tendency of Pantheism to Atheism).

Confusion in the premisses : inaccuracy also in the inference.

(The conscious being may not be confounded with the phenomena.)

The Eleatic philosophy was resisted—and modified.

The neo-Platonician view—semi-Eleatic.

View of the Christian ante-Nicene doctors—less Eleatic.

View of the Christian post-Nicene doctors—again more Eleatic.

(Progress of Eleatic thought in the West.)

Mediæval and modern schools—Eleatic.

The foundation-errors of this philosophy.

The Eleatic *premisses must be rejected* ;

and man must be in correspondence with the Supreme.

(§ 60-72.)

XI. DEPENDENCY of the finite.

The conscious agent should *approve what the Supreme approves*.

(Hence the largeness of the range of Responsibility.)

How *Relation of Dependence* on the Supreme here arises.

Certain acquired relations not unnatural :

But imply *diversity* in some respects—as well as *sameness*.

Beginnings of Goodness in the moral agent, compared with the Supreme Good.

The Highest Goodness is NECESSARY GOODNESS.

How it is also *voluntary* ?—(Voluntariness not injured by interior determination.)

Distinctions between the finite and the Supreme marked by the *Finitude*.

The idea of “the good,” distinct from that of *the limit*.

Relation of the Supreme, and of the finite, *to the true-always* ;
quoad naturam and *quoad actum*.

Relation of the Supreme, and of the finite, *to the phenomenal*.

(The bearing of this on moral contingency.)

Relation of the Supreme to the *continuous*.—He possesses all things.

Continuity of *being* and of *action* ; in the Supreme, and in the finite.

(§ 73-84.)

XII. Continuity of Goodness.

How essential goodness goes forth into the *actual* ;

Without increase, or diminishing, in the Supreme :

But finite goodness *grows*, by continuing ; and by intelligence.

An act may be voluntary without deliberation.

Deliberation does not increase with all action ;—

but may become less.

Yet moral goodness cannot be wholly passive.

(Practical summary thus far.)

(§ 85-88.)

XIII. Of HABIT ; and the theoretical objections to it.

The answers, from the philosophy of Responsibility.

Habit is *essential* to Responsible agents.

(This seen in all the moral history of mankind.)

Habit may be evil, as well as good.

Yet this hinders not the conclusion as to its ethical import.

The decay of good does not at once abolish Responsibility.

Habits of *Society*.

Why character is to be found in the Moral Agent :

Society is not the *τέλος*.

PROBATION—in what sense Responsibility is included in it.

Individuality of Probation. Its loftiness and scope.

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XIV. Of Definitions in Deontology.

The Attributes of the Supreme.

(Not of *à priori* definition, like the Eleatic.)

Their simple Ontology with us.

Grounds of Conscious Being re-stated.

Application to religious questions. Present conclusion.

(§ 98-102.)

IX.

52. A Moral Governing Power, in suitable relation with the responsible agents of the whole human community, and in harmony with the always-true, cannot (for the reasons alleged, § 48) be conceived of as Impersonal. The idea of the impersonal is, however, identical with the unconscious (§ 8); for we have seen that self-consciousness is the distinction between Person and Thing. A person acts, and knows it; and if the Supreme Governing Power acts towards us, and knows it, and knows the fitness of acts, that Governing Power is Personal, and has a character to which ours corresponds.

The Supreme Moral Governor has Personality.

We have already arrived very gradually at the inevitable conclusion, that (the nature of man being what it is, and the facts of that nature being the basis of its science) a Supreme Moral Governor is in such sense necessary, as to be only deniable by those who would reject from human life all that is regarded as moral: and further, we also perceive that it would involve a contradiction to deny Personal agency to this Supreme Moral Governor. But some more explicit statement is now needed.

The opposite supposition involves a contradiction.

as to the character of this Personal agency towards us.

53. We first must say, generally, that the Supreme Governor, who is ultimately the Judge and Regulator of the mutual agencies of the responsible world, will judge in reference to the true-always. If it were not so, there would, as we saw (§ 50), be no common ground of judgment, and we might find ourselves misjudged in detail, and the foundations also of Deontology subverted by the Power which was to vindicate responsible action, but which proved to have a different character altogether.

Let any one, indeed, suppose a Supreme Moral Governor without relation to the true-always; there would not only, in that case, be no ground for any appeal to our consciousness, or our sense of responsibility, but the *existence* of any such Supreme Governor would have to be first established on distinct grounds; and even then, a message from Him, armed with external authority, real or apparent, could only overawe, stupefy, or terrify; but could obtain no moral acquiescence. To separate fundamentally the character of the Governor and the governed, is no less than to render impossible all moral correspondence and terminate at once all possible responsibility.

There is correspondence of character in all moral beings.

54. To say this is by no means to assert equality in all moral respects among beings of a moral nature ; for we recognize, in fact, very wide differences among responsible beings ; in some a high degree of perfection, in others great imperfection ; but the higher are still in some correspondence with the lower, and they may take cognizance of each other, and each have relation to the ideal perfect (§ 29). And thus, though there can be no limit to the Perfection of the Supreme, there seems no reason why He Who is infinite should not use the forms of the finite, nor anything to hinder us, who are finite, from leaning on the infinite (§ 30). Our Deontology demands that the Supreme Governor should really deal with us, and we with Him : and Religion asks no more.

55. It is quite conceivable, it may be even probable, that the character and dealings of the Supreme Ruler of moral agents may be partly withdrawn from the scrutiny of some, if not of all who are governed. The reality of His relations with us is not overthrown, however, by any intellectual difficulty among us in apprehending them ; enough being known to sustain in us the conviction, that

The reality of the dealing of the Supreme Governor with the governed.

“the Judge of all the earth will do right.” But there is great ethical danger in allowing speculations, or illogical attempts to understand this subject, to pass unquestioned ; because every moral agent practically assumes for himself a philosophy of some kind, and is soon injured in his responsible action by taking an erroneous and plausible theory. And, indeed, speculations concerning the Supreme are also *facts* of our moral history, of too wide a kind to be left unexamined by us, who profess to be ascertaining “facts of human nature.”

They are not, as too often supposed, merely wilful efforts of wayward thinkers : these inquiries, and these resulting theories, remind us that a reasonable and responsible being aims to see both his reasonableness and his responsibility.

56. The speculations as to the character and dealings of the Supreme Governor, or God, with us whom He governs, naturally range themselves in two groups, according as they belong to our relations to the “true-always,” or to our relations with “phenomena.” The former are commonly

Two classes of such speculations,

spoken of as Pantheistic, the latter as Humanitarian, if we may take the description of either from the opponents.

On the one hand it has been doubted, whether we can have any real knowledge at all of the Supreme Governor,—knowledge not being predicable *univocè* of God and man. On the

other hand, it has been affirmed, that our knowledge of God may be limited to the phenomenal, and yet be true, and not merely adequate to present need. The antagonism of these views is superficial. The "Regulative knowledge," to which the former would confine us, could not of course be imagined to be out of relation with the "true-always:" and the Anthropomorphism, which would be content with the phenomenal, could not afford to give up all that lies beyond phenomena. There is little, then, to choose between the philosophy which denies us the real knowledge of God, while giving us a substitute for knowledge suitable to our present state; and the philosophy which would regard the Divine being as "altogether such an one as ourselves."

57. It is undeniable, however, that both these philosophies have possessed themselves of that ground which it is our business here to traverse. As an example of a development of the former, we may take a passage from an eloquent prelate of the last century:—

Both these speculative philosophies are prevalent.

"Shall I affirm, O God, that Thou wast before my existence, even from everlasting? No: I must not place Thy being in such relation with mine. I must not say 'Thou wast,' for that would mark succession, and time past. Thou ART, and it is only an immovable present, indivisible and infinite, that I may ascribe to Thee. It must not be said that Thou hast always been, but that Thou art. For this term 'always' would not describe permanence, but continuity. And what I have said of the past, I may say of the future. It is not Thou shalt be, but Thou art. The stream glides along the bank, but the bank moves not. It has but a motionless relation to that which flows by."

Example of the Pantheistic pietism.

The entanglement of thought here will be found most extreme.

58. The following, however, taken from a well-known religious writer of our own day, while exhibiting the recoil in some minds from this Pantheism of the assertors of the "unknowableness" of God, equally confuses the phenomenal with the true-always:—

"He is not far from every one of us, for in Him we live, and move, and are' I conclude, then, that St. Paul regarded this statement as the one great protest against Pantheism. And here is a sentiment of Aratus, which may be turned to either account. It may justify the old Homeric notion of men having a Divine parentage. It may assert the proud notion of sages 'that men by wisdom can make themselves gods;' 'for we also are His offspring' The Apostle cannot urge the Athenians to abandon idolatry, he cannot urge them to make that change which involves such a convulsion in the whole moral being, which cuts asunder so many links of old affection, if

Example of the Humanitarian view.

the doctrine of their poet is not true, if they have not a right to claim God as related to them,—God is, in the strictest and fullest sense, their Father. I say again, in the *strictest and fullest sense*; not in some vague sense, which is, indeed, Pantheistical, a sense which represents Him as the Father of all cattle, and trees, and flowers, and therefore their Father. The argument would be utterly worthless and contemptible if that were his meaning," &c.

59. These two pious writers seem, no doubt, to be widely opposed to each other, though both "seeking after God." The one earnestly denying in terms all real correspondence between God and man; the other asserting paternity and sonship, "in the strictest and fullest sense."

We must not accept the premisses and deny the conclusions.

Other and familiar instances will occur to many, of a like fatal influence of the old ontologies on modern theology; but enough now appears, from the facts before us, to show the impossibility of avoiding in this inquiry a careful consideration of the relations between ourselves and the Supreme. It is not enough to give our emphatic refusal to the conclusions of Pantheism, or of Anthropomorphism, as to the Divine character, if we are holding to the premisses which may lead to the one or the other. We will look then at those premisses.

X.

60. The doctrine of the old Peripatetics, which had so exalted the perfection of the Divine nature, Τὸ δῖν, as to deny to it all

Early speculations as to the relation between God and man.

that we mean by the terms reason, intellect, or being, on the ground of their implying imperfections, was yet, to a great extent, adopted by the Christian schools. Not considering that to deny the Supreme Being all relation with the finite or phenomenal must be to deny Him all intelligent control of the world, if not to deny Creation itself as His act, the Christian schools were soon attracted by the apparent sublimity of such speculations as to the Perfection of God; and, unwarned by the heretical affinities which had once marked this as the philosophy of Arianism, they gradually resolved all our thoughts of Divine Perfection into a "simplicity" which nearly attenuated the Divine Being into nothing. The train of thought which terminated in this has, it will appear, a singular mixture of the materialistic and the abstract.

Admitted by the Christian schools.

61. It was the doctrine of Parmenides, transmitted and transmuted (as we shall see) by the Alexandrian scholastics, that

it would be a degradation of the Supreme to think of Him as simply being, or containing, the sum of the Perfections known to the mind of man; since He ^{Parmenides and the Eleatics.} must be far above them. This was the original error of the Philosophy; for thus it interpreted Perfection in relation *only* to the phenomenal, not distinguishing the true-always. To think thus of the perfection of the Supreme Being was to err still further, by depending on some artificial distinctions as to time and space; and regarding them physically. "Time and space" (it was said) "imply diversity, continuity, extension, division. Since God is One, and Perfect, He is above time and space, and exists apart. All movement and all action imply time and space, and these signify limitations," &c.—

(Here there is another confusion of thinking to be pointed out, because if space exists, it *co-exists* in all its infinity, and time does not, for time marks *sequence* only. Every phenomenon, of course, has relation to both time and space; but the true-always has no necessary relation, *à priori*, to either. Both time and space are conditions of the phenomenal, or of the abstract when in relation with the phenomenal.)

62. Proceeding, however, from this, the Eleatics would go on thus :—

"If the Supreme be Infinite, how can the Infinite have movement? And is not even Thought a kind of movement, having beginning, and progress,—priority, and subsequence? Then how can thought be attributed to God? If He thinks, He has but one thought; and if He acts, He is pure act, ever going forth and never changing. ^{The logical tendency of Pantheism to Atheism.} Then it would seem that His Act exists not apart from Him, for He is Infinite, as has been said. Can He, then, have any movement? Does it not imply change of Relation, if not more? A movement from better to worse is inconsistent with the nature of a Perfect Being; but movement from worse to better no less denies the original Perfection."

(Here the more than double sense of "movement," or *κίνησις*, vitiates all the reasoning—interior and exterior movement being confounded—the movement of consciousness and the movement of action—the ideal and the physical.)

63. In these speculations it would almost seem that there is no escape from a denial of Him whom we have to recognize as Supreme Moral Governor! Their Supreme has no past, no future, no retrospect, no prospect, no thought, no deed! Can He deliberate? That implies a waiting for phenomena, which is hesitation. Can He resolve? That implies previous indecision. Can He judge? Then must He not poise the pheno-

mena? In every mental movement some accompanying defect thus warns us that it cannot belong to this Perfect Supreme Eternal Being! There is even an essential contrast alleged between the finite Conscious Agent and the Supreme Being. For our consciousness is a present fact; and the past and the future would be blanks to us if we could remember nothing and expect nothing. But the Infinite Being ever is: unlimited, untouched by others. Being perfect, can He remember? can He expect? If not, once more, what correspondence is there between Him and us?

64. The fact, both on the surface and deep down in all these confused investigations, is that man cannot but "feel after" the Supreme, however blindly. The further fact also, which our previous analysis has taught us, no less appears, viz., that these uncouth conclusions result from a failing to distinguish the essential relation of all conscious agency to the true-always (§ 29). The Eleatic philosophy assumes (what nothing but an exhaustive analysis of such ideas as "Being," "Thought," and "Volition" would justify) that the *finite limitations of our ideas are essential to them*. Evidently, however, there always remains something beyond the ideas and phenomena which we explore, and therein would be a basis of correspondence between the Supreme and the finite conscious agent: so that the Eleatic analysis is not only defective in principle and method, but wrong in fact.

65. A consciousness transcending the phenomenal is a great fact on which our whole investigation here rests. If the conscious agent were even admitted to find himself always in juxtaposition with some phenomena (which is far from indisputable, as to the whole interior world of reflection and *à priori* assumption, § 26), yet he is not identified for a moment with the phenomena. If we are conscious at all, we know that we are not identical with anterior being, and that the phenomena and ourselves are not the same. The universe may (as has been said) be affirmed to consist of the "perceiving and the perceived"—the conscious agents and the phenomena.—Even the final dissatisfaction of the conscious agent with all that is merely phenomenal is itself a sufficient fact for the purposes of the present part of our argument.

66. The Eleatic philosophy could not, from its interior unsatisfactoriness, be transmitted without change. Its conclusions were such as the human mind in fact resisted. Among the Latins it was regarded as

The confusion is in the premises.

Inaccuracy also in the inference itself.

The conscious being is not to be confused with phenomena.

(On *Final Cause*, p. 41.)

The Eleatic Philosophy modified.

a literature; and might amuse them; but it had no influence on thought. After the Christian era, it was of necessity re-examined.

(Cicero's
Tusc. Qu.)

The Neo-Platonicians soon felt the impossibility of separating, as the Eleatics did, the Divine Being, or Supreme, from the universe of existence and thought, and for some relief resorted to the Platonic doctrine of a Trinity, though modifying Plato in a way we must not to explain. They attributed Energy, Intellect, and Creative Power to the Second Hypostasis of their Triad, the "Demiurge," as they said, who had Unity with the Supreme, essentially, but also had in common with us the attributes of intellectual existence. This, however, was but removing the difficulty a step further back; for if movement, thought, and action were inconsistent with the Supreme Perfection, how could this Demiurge have proceeded from the Infinite One, or Supreme? Would they suppose the Demiurge came into action or being without the knowledge and will of the Supreme? This they must have been reluctant to say, because it would destroy the Supreme Unity.

Neo-Plato-
nicians.

(C. Morgan
on the Trinity
of Plato.)

67. The early Christian doctors found the difficulty at this point. The field of speculation was occupied by the Heathen theologians, Plotinus and his friends, before the exacter Christian statements of the relation of man to the Supreme (through the Incarnation) had been formulated, and during the second and third centuries the struggle between the Church and the Philosophers was an earnest one.

The Christian
doctors before
the *Nicene age*:
comp. with the
Eneades.

These Christian doctors did not gain the mastery without accepting much of that philosophy of the old world. They appropriated, and tried to consecrate some of the terms of the Alexandrian School, and (at the frequent risk of Arianizing) they at length attained, though imperfectly, some philosophy of Dogma. The Greek language which they used became at a later day the medium of Athanasian thought, as no other language could be; and the Church thus effected the conquest of Pagan Philosophy, by the time of Justinian,* who closed the old schools for ever.

* A. D. 529.

68. But during the preceding century the Latin Church and the Latin language had further predominated in the West, after the transfer of the Greek to the East in the time of Constantine. The Latin fathers necessarily accepted the Ecclesiastical philosophy of the Greek doctors in a somewhat hard and mechanical way. Even the genius of St. Jerome or St. Augustine availed nothing to avert the conse-

The post-
Nicene Chris-

quences. They yielded like the rest. The Eleatic ontology was indeed too closely allied to Predestinarianism to fail to fascinate the Doctor of Grace, and a great modification ensued in all the Latin world, of the Christian idea of the relation of man to the Supreme. The Eleatic and Christian elements, which had coalesced before the Nicene era, with a predominance of that which was Christian, united from the time of St. Augustine, with a supremacy of that which was Eleatic.

69. It would be a greatly interesting pursuit to trace onwards from St. Augustine's time and the great Council of Orange to our own days the influence of that old heathen philosophy, its tyranny in such minds as Prosper's, and Bradwardine's, and Calvin's; its milder but not less real influence in Anselm, Bernard, or Jansenius. We should see the same forgetfulness of the true-always, the same domineering of the phenomenal. But it would be beside our present object. The Church (divinely guided, we believe) always resisted any development of the Eleatic spirit when it threatened to be formally heretical; yet the Church never exorcised it. And among the philosophers, as yet, the relation of "knowledge" primarily to the true-always, and secondarily to the phenomenal, was critically undistinguished.

70. Aquinas among the Scholastics, and Calvin among the moderns, give us perhaps the fullest view of the hold of the Eleatic system on the Christian theology. The former, of course, is more complete and exact—(indeed, the latter declines to think it out). From the old notion of the immoveableness of God, Aquinas deduces His eternity, His unchangeableness, His simplicity. This "simplicity" nominally differs from the Eleatic, by asserting that it includes Being, Thought, and even Act, instead of excluding them. But while thus asserting the Being and Intelligence of God, Aquinas is obliged to maintain that "Power" is not strictly to be ascribed to Him. In any compound Being, he says, Act stands related to Power: but God is a Simple Being; and His Act is to be regarded as Pure Act, one with, rather than a result of, Power.

One philosophic error at the foundation of all this distressing verbiage is that Conscious Being may be subjected to analysis or definition, as if composite. It is forgotten that every Conscious Being has essentiality beyond the range of phenomena, and is in relation with the true-always. He is not a phenomenon, *quoad essentiam*, even to other conscious beings; except in some sense to the Supreme, Who is Governor of all, and, by the necessity

Progress of
Eleatic thought
in the West.

Medieval
and modern
schools.

The founda-
tion errors of
this philosophy.

of the case, understands the beings and phenomena of the Universe which He governs.

71. We thus finally perceive that the philosophy which supports alike the Mediæval Pantheism and the modern Anthropomorphism is unwittingly but wholly based on the denial of the grounds of conscious moral agency,—its twofold relation to the true-always, and to the phenomenal.

The Responsible Conscious Agent, we again see, ever demands a correspondence between himself and his Supreme Governor, and cannot be deterred from demanding it by any unreal speculations. His own connections with phenomenal existences he must have, of the same kind as those which are discerned by the Supreme; otherwise the Supreme would be judging one thing while the Finite agent had been acting another. If his relation with the true-always is not the same as that of the Supreme (though it differ in degree and intensity); he would be judged (we repeat) on ground different from that on which he had acted: which is absurd, if the Supreme be a Moral Governor (§ 54). And supposing the Eleatic ontology, proceeding from the Divine immoveableness, had a kind of truth in relation to the true-always, it had none in relation to the phenomenal. The Eleatic premises must be rejected. It may be that the true-always has no change of "past, present, or future"; but this cannot be with the phenomenal which is the sphere of the contingent. We have no reasonable alternative but the rejection of the Eleatic principle.

72. All that we have seen as to Contingency must here be borne in mind. It must not be admitted *pro formâ*, and then laid aside (§ 23). It is irrational to say that in contingent and phenomenal matter there is "no past, or future" with God. The Divine immutability, and co-existence, is in the relation of the Supreme Conscious Being to the true-always; which is doubtless essential. We cannot, on the one hand, deny the relation of the Supreme to the phenomenal without denying Him to be the Moral Governor Whom we need. We cannot, on the other, deny His relation to the true-always, without denying Him that which pertains to the essence of consciousness, whether in the Supreme, or in man, His finite "image."

XI.

73. To proceed:—

We have found that whether in the schools of old Athens, or in the museum of Alexandria, or in the cloisters of

Christendom, or in the halls of modern opinion, the conscience of man refuses to be kept from the idea of Duty. It only reasonably seeks for the development of Duty in dependence on the facts of our being, and (we must repeat) beneath the Government of a Supreme Ruler, whose Character, like our own, is in relation with the true-always, and who is able to deal with contingencies of the phenomenal world.

The range of conscientiousness must thus, it appears, extend to all action of which the Supreme Governor will take cognizance—that is, all action which may touch the condition of other moral agents around us, or may personally re-act on ourselves. There is no narrow limit here. The conscious moral agent must recognize the same ends, aim at the same objects, as the Supreme Governor will ultimately approve. If we assert accountability at all, we can exclude nothing of which the conscious being takes cognizance. Even Religious Accountability—which we must reserve for consideration—must be founded in the reason of things, and not be merely authoritative; fundamentally it is of the same kind as what is commonly called moral—(ὁπίεῦθρον).

74. The relation once established between the Moral Agent and the Moral Governor, abundantly suffices for the final solution of all the difficulties which we first confessed to lie in the idea of Responsibility (§ 10, &c.). It elicits the fact that we really depend at last on the Supreme, for a complete issue of our *de facto* responsibility. And this “dependence” on our part would seem to correspond with Providence, Guidance, Help, Protection, as far as morally necessary, on the part of the Supreme Governor: in connection with which would arise various phenomena of the religious life, referred to in a future page.

Higher and specific relations between the moral agent and the Moral Governor cannot be set aside in consequence of any collateral difficulties or objections. How far some more refined or developed moral conditions, such as Devotion, Gratitude, Reverence, Dependence in detail, are natural, and how far acquired, may be matter of just inquiry; but it must be remembered that our capacity of acquiring them is a generic fact of nature; and they are incorporated with our responsibility, whenever conscience really adopts them.—Of course mere opinions floating on the surface of the mind are not here referred to; they are not convictions: but faith or principle touching the inner life, or conscience, cannot be ignored.

Finite dependency and its sphere of action.

The conscious agent must recognize the same ends as God approves.

Hence the largeness of the range of responsibility.

What relation of dependence on the Supreme implies.

Acquired relations not unnatural.

75. It is evident, however, that this fact of Dependency on the Moral Governor (as well as those specific relations referred to), must imply some *diversity*, as well as a *sameness* of moral nature. The relations between the superior and the inferior must needs be regarded from two points of view—something being always implied on the one side which could not be on the other.

We must, therefore, in our attempt to apprehend the moral goodness which man is to aim at and which the Supreme will approve, mark these diversities or distinctions, as well as the acknowledged sameness: and for this we must go back to what has been already premised (§ 29) as to the beginnings of good in the moral agent.

76. We said: "In the power or capacity to fall back on his own relation to the always-true, and to decide from his own resources,—in this, and in this alone, can we uniformly trace the beginnings of that good which, in action, we call moral, and which is distinct from the agent."—We must analyze this next.

Some finite beings are capable of moral goodness; and some are not. Inferior ranks of beings may have excellence of their own, *i.e.* fitness to their end; but it is not moral, if unconscious. They are excellent as Things. When, however, we speak of a conscious responsible agent as "capable" of determining good action, and so beginning it, we, at once, suppose that he can also determine evil. A finite being capable of goodness which is to be praised as voluntary, discovers that he is capable of some limited action of his own: he falls back on his own powers. In this capacity lies an alternative. There is "may be" or "may not be." He is not an agent *necessarily* good. His capacity for goodness is itself a good, but that is in another sense; that is not a good for which *he* is to be applauded.

77. But how, on the other hand, can we estimate the goodness of the Supreme? We cannot even think of it as other than essential to Him. It would be impossible to attribute to Him a *capacity* for goodness, in our alternative sense; for that would be finite: but He must be no less than Supreme Conscious Good in essential and eternal relation with the abstract, the true-always. If He were not such, we reiterate, He would not be that Supreme Governor which true moral responsibility demands (§ 48).

Here then we have an original distinction between the Supreme and ourselves; and it results from His being Supreme. In Him there is no beginning to be good; as being Supreme, He ever exists, and is ever good. His fitness of Being is eternal.

The opposite thought—that He ever had been evil,—a being with no fitness to be,—were a contradiction as well as a blasphemy. He is thus Governor of all: His mind being in essential relation with the true-always. His action towards finite conscious beings and towards the phenomenal universe, must accord with His own nature as good; it must ever be so, for He is perfect, and not affected by habit (§ 48). We conclude, then, that the highest goodness is NECESSARY GOODNESS.

78. In what sense, then, we next ask, is the Divine Goodness voluntary, and not fatalistic? In what sense, *i.e.*, is there any moral correspondence here between the goodness of the Supreme and the goodness of the finite responsible agent? In this, as in all analysis, we must proceed from facts near and easily known to those which are more remote—from the γνώριμα ἡμῖν to the γνώριμα ἀπλῶς.

In examining our own voluntary action we found (§ 16) that the interior essentiality or power of any being is not a hindrance to the fact that he may act freely according to his own nature. The freedom which is essential to goodness is only interfered with when there is external compulsion. But this is inconceivable in the case of Him who is Supreme. Therefore His goodness is voluntary in act, though His nature is necessarily good. The conclusion is not to be avoided.

We may even, with all reverence, add, in reference to the Supreme, what we said of the finite conscious agent, that the doer of any act has himself placed a limit, so that, as the old poet says,

μόνον γὰρ αὐτοῦ καὶ θεὸς στερίσκειται
(Eth. vi. 2.) ἀγένητα ποιεῖν ὕσ' ἂν ἢ πεπραγμένα.—Athallo.

79. But the point now arrived at is far too important to be thus passed from. In comparing the Goodness of the finite agent with the Goodness of the Supreme we distinguish that which is *quoad naturam* from that which is *quoad actum*, and we find throughout, what has just been intimated, that the difference lies, fundamentally, in the Finitude which characterizes us. We personally have had a Beginning: goodness, thought, will, action, all have had beginning in us. The Supreme, the ever-perfect, has ever been, ever thought, ever willed, ever acted, *quoad naturam suam*, even prior to and apart from phenomena. Of course it would be impossible to predicate of any one act of the Supreme that it "has ever been," if we speak of acts in relation to phenomena—which might be

Distinctions of the finite from the Supreme marked by the Finitude *quoad naturam* and *quoad actum*.

creative acts—for that would be to regard creation as co-eternal with the Supreme agent, which is a contradiction; but some act of the interior being of the Supreme would needs be “as with Him.” Any other conclusion seems a negation of His existence (*Prov.* viii. 30). The confusion of the conscious agent and the phenomena is atheistic.

80. Now a finite agent sooner or later reaches the limit of his capacity. “My goodness reaches not to Thee,” is his natural language towards the Infinite, or the Supreme. First our consciousness is limited; and next all our relations with the phenomenal are limited. Hence we are soon conscious of what we call “imperfection.” (But imperfection attaches in this case to the limit, and not necessarily to the quality of the act so limited, which may be conceived as entirely good as far as it goes.) (§ 63.) Finitude suggests imperfection.

If it be said that we cannot conceive of any finite goodness, apart from its limitations, still we can mark the limitations, and perceive that they are no integral part of the *idea of good*. The goodness of character, or of action, is *not the same as the circumstances* in which we find it. Indeed, the same character of good may be found in different circumstances; the same relation of good may exist with diversity of particulars; and like acts of good may proceed from various agents. The particulars of action elucidate the goodness, but the goodness has a reality of its own. But the idea of the good is distinct from that of the limit (p. 36).

81. And from this it again follows, that to attribute the same moral nature to the Supreme as to the finite conscious agent, is not to attribute imperfections found co-existing with finite goodness or powers. And also, on the other hand, our finite power may even be exerted in imitating a goodness higher than our own; and the Supreme may reasonably direct us to be “perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect,” — “holy, as He is holy,” — “righteous, as He is righteous,” — “merciful, as as He is merciful.” He deals with us as conscious beings in relation, more or less perfectly, with the ever-good—the true-always—and having to take cognizance of it in all our dealings with the phenomenal. The relation of the Supreme and of the finite to the true-always, untouched by the differences.

The Divine relation to the true-always, we have said, is *essential*, and never began to be. But our relation to the true-always is also essential, pertaining to consciousness, but with this difference, that it *began to be*; it is limited also, and not perfect. But the relation of the Supreme to the phenomenal must not be confounded with His relation to the true-always: for that would be Relation of the Supreme to the phenomenal.

to make the universe eternal, the phenomenal absolute, which is a contradiction.

82. Now the relation of the Supreme to the phenomenal involves the question of the continuous knowledge and goodness, as well as action, of the Supreme. We cannot question that God knows, perfectly, the phenomenal world; and we know it imperfectly. He knows it as it is; we aim to know it as it is. It has not ever been; it exists in succession, and God knows its phenomena as they are. To say of the true-always that "there is no before or after with God," may be intelligible: but to say of the phenomenal world, that "there is no before or after with God," is equivalent to saying that the Supreme does not know the world as it is. His knowledge of the phenomenal is co-extensive with the phenomenal and possible. Our knowledge of it is so limited that, at times, it with difficulty reaches even to the probable (§ 29).

The bearing of this conclusion on any theory of the pre-science of the Supreme will depend on our accepting the fact of contingency in the phenomenal world. This subject also must be deferred to the definitely religious part of our Analysis. We are here ascertaining principles. To think correctly as to the phenomenal, we must, however, here call to mind that contingency, as we dealt with it, lying among the foundations of our responsibility, was not an abstract contingency merely, which would amount to no more than that an action, or event, might be conceived *à priori* as not to happen: but what we said had reference to action of conscious *agents*. The contingency spoken of plainly meant that we are previously certain, that an act may never *de facto* come to pass, or that it *really* may come to pass; and that it is the moral agent who *ex seipso* determines which it shall be, and is responsible accordingly.

83. But in examining the relation of the Supreme to the *phenomenal in finite action*, we must fully confront this fact of *continuousness*; for Christian Eleatics still deny continuousness to the Supreme, to His Being, His Goodness, and His Acts. It is supposed in their philosophy, that as continuity implies infirmity in us, so we may not attribute it to the Supreme. We must repeat our answers. To deny, as they do, continuity to God is to separate Him from the phenomenal universe, and affirm that He may be an Eternal Conscious Being, in lone relation with the true-always,—a Deity inaccessible to man and ignorant of us—and therefore not Perfect, *i. e.* not Supreme—which is a contradiction. But in asserting continuity as to the Divine Being,

The bearing of this on moral contingency.

The relation of the Supreme to the continuous.

and His acts towards the phenomenal, we can exclude, of course, all the defects which may in us accompany continuity, but cannot in Him, because He is Perfect. It is to believe, that the Supreme in His own sublime way possesses all things. "Thou remainest ever!" (*Heb. i. 11*); "Thou continuest holy" (*Ps. l. 3*).

It is surely also reasonable to affirm of the Supreme Himself everything good in the finite (whom He has to govern), without defects and limitations; for otherwise we deny Him everything we know, lest we should impute to Him our "infirmity," and thus in such denial we should deny the Moral Governor altogether.

84. Our nature, as men, is such, that we can never be persuaded to accept a philosophical sublimity, indistinguishable from a denial of the Supreme, when there lies before us a reasonable conclusion from the facts of our responsibility that there is a Supreme Governor, Who has continuous existence, while in essential relation both with the true-always and with the phenomenal; Who has continuity in action, without division of energy,—Who continually wills His actions, with no infirmity akin to human deliberation: in a word, Who is "from everlasting to everlasting," "Who was, and is, and is to come," lives in the past, upholds the present, and rules the future, according to the proper nature of each.

Here, at least, is a sufficient conclusion as to the Continuous Being, Knowledge and Action of the Supreme; but we must attempt a closer consideration of Continuousness of Goodness.

XII.

85. The Goodness of the Nature of the Supreme we saw to be necessary Goodness; yet it was voluntary (§ 78). But the Supreme acts; and He wills before and while He acts. His Goodness, as Supreme, never began to be, His nature being ever in perfect relation with the true-always. But *His outgoing acts begin to be* as He directs, in succession, or simultaneously, according to His purpose or good pleasure. There is no incongruity in speaking of out-going acts of the Supreme, unless we mingle with our notions of infinity the physical idea of extension, which, if not a contradiction of all we know of conscious being is, as yet, quite gratuitous.

That fitness, or harmony of being, which, whenever known, would fill each pure Intelligence with satisfaction, each conscious

being with joy, is what the word "Goodness" may express. All feel that they have, more or less perfectly, essential relation to it. The nature of God has changeless possession of all that is true and beautiful to our consciousness; and the action of any being—so also of God—flows from his nature. That goodness of the Divine Nature is a perpetual complacency of Being, and in all its manifestations in phenomena it is "very good," as He is Highest Good. But these manifestations must be continuings of good. The phenomenal world is full of the out-going goodness of the Supreme, who is an ever-manifesting, never diminished, sun in the moral firmament. Being Supreme, and Perfect, His Goodness can know no increase essentially; but it is ever fresh in manifestation with the ever-advancing phenomena of the universe; though it is, in His consciousness, without addition.

How essential goes forth into the actual,

without increase or diminishing in the Supreme.

86. Now here is a new point of difference between the Supreme and the finite conscious agent. The Supreme cannot be *more* good; the finite *can*. Our character is affected, as God's is not, by the fact of *continuance*, both of being and of action. However good a finite nature may be in its beginning, however truly responding to the always-true, it acquires power by *continuing* good. And continuing acts of good are ever increasing developments of the power of the conscious finite agent. Continuing in goodness is, for us, advancing in goodness. It is *better* known the *longer* it is known.

Our advance in goodness is intelligent. If each act towards the phenomena be intelligently done, it often has more strength than the preceding act. Wavering between good and evil is found to be no part of the perfection of choice. It would not commonly, or ultimately, be so, with any good agent. Deliberation, as it often with us accompanies choice (that is, we pause while we choose), arises from our not knowing details. But the Supreme always knows. He wills without a doubt; He chooses the best ends, for He knows all.

87. Not that deliberation essentially accompanies choice in the finite agent. The continuation of choice may generally be prompt and immediate. Voluntariness in action at length implies simply satisfaction in, or love of, that which was originally chosen. And herein some additional light is thrown on the inner nature of voluntariness. The act of either the Supreme or the finite agent is truly voluntary, if it be that which he is freely pleased to do. But the act of the finite agent is in fact ultimately

An act may be voluntary without deliberation.

affected by Habit; and that cannot be with the Supreme, who is already Perfect. The finite may advance in goodness towards the infinite; and, as our actions flow from our nature, the character which we have becomes ultimately modified, and finally fixed to a great extent by our own course of action. It is evident too that our responsibility is thus thrown, to a larger extent, into our own hands for its results. It is only, then, of the Supremely Perfect that it could be said that His nature is not intensified by His acting. As a fact, however, there is less and less of deliberation in the volitions of advancing moral agency, whether for good or evil; and the highest kind of finite goodness in action becomes more and more like to "necessary goodness." Habitual goodness tends to rise towards the Supreme Goodness, being more pleasing, and less and less liable to change, in every successive course of existence. The goodness of the best conscious agents would seem to begin from deliberating voluntariness, and terminate in perfect habit.

88. We may be reminded that a finite conscious agent being originally good, as nature is good, his continuing in goodness might be conceived to result wholly from new gifts of a sustaining kind, not acquired by him, but in some way coming to him. But, we reply, his goodness would then be passive, and subside to the non-intelligent. For finite moral goodness cannot be conceived as wholly inactive. Also the moral agent, having a capacity for action, must not decline to go forth into action, since so declining he would violate his nature. So then his continuing in goodness is *his own advance* towards the Perfect Good.

And here, to fix the conclusions arrived at in any one's thoughts, after his reconsidering all the moral foundations of the present analysis, it may be well that for himself he should ascertain whether (as a believer in goodness) he can possibly arrive at any other result? Especially as to this last section of the Analysis, let him settle:—

¹ What he means by moral goodness? ² Its nature in the Supreme, both as to its sameness with, and difference from, the finite? ³ Its beginning in any being? ⁴ Its Continuance? ⁵ Its Voluntariness? and ⁶ Habit?

XIII.

89. And now once more:—

We have marked the effect which is produced on the finite conscious agent by continuity of action. We find that goodness may acquire gradually a higher character in him.

But then, its relation to volition still may need examination: for it has been represented by some, that by the acquisition of habit, the agent gradually *withdrawing some voluntariness* recedes from virtue. This objection, however, arises from forgetting, that though deliberation is an ideal condition of finite goodness aiming at higher goodness, yet (as has been seen) the higher goodness is the "good-and-true-always," concerning which deliberation has no place, though there is the choice of satisfaction. Deliberation at all times is in the sphere of the phenomenal.

But the most effectual answer to this objection to habitual virtue will be found in the facts of Responsibility. Ask any one to try to conceive the opposite thought, viz., a moral system in which repeated action had *no effect* on character; in other words, *formed no habits*. In this case, our characters would always remain the same as they were at the beginning of our existence. A good man would mean, a man formed at first with a good conscious nature, which would act mechanically (if that be not a contradiction). A bad man might mean, one who in some unknown way lost his original nature.

90. Nor would it seem, in the latter case, that lost goodness would ever be recoverable. No series of acts in a prolonged career would form character. The joy of finite goodness would be sterile, the loss of it hopeless; the finite conscious agent a mutilated and objectless being, in no approving relation with the true-always, and powerless or mechanical among phenomena.

There is no escape from the conclusion that habit—whatever limitations of freedom, or voluntariness it may seem to introduce—is an absolutely essential part of Responsibility, among finite conscious agents. To take the very simplest illustration, it is from this that, in fact, we rely on one who has long continued in goodness, more than we ordinarily can on the neophyte in virtue; and though we do not exclude, even in the best, the abstract possibility of a fall from goodness, we recognize with profound satisfaction the ever-increasing improbability of a perseveringly good man's failure.

If, by continuing in goodness we may acquire, as experience assures us, stability, perpetuity, and even a kind of perfectibility of character, then some moral history of mankind seems to be not hopeless. Habit is its very life. Not unfrequently the attempt has been cheerlessly made to treat all morals as matters of opinion, in consequence of the varieties of individual thought, and diverging civilizations;

Of habit and the theoretical objections to it.

The answer from the philosophy of Responsibility.

Habit is essential to responsible agents.

This seen in all the moral

but experience has shown that the relation to the history of man-kind. true-always survives all the eccentricities of social and individual life. The whole race further secures by habit a permanence of moral sentiment. The phenomenal cannot ultimately change the true-always.

91. Not that we should overlook, that habit is strong for evil as well as good: that is, if men go on in wrong-doing they injure their own better nature. If a departure from good in action takes place, there follows a deterioration of character, or even a destruction of it; and then to the self-ruined individual the connection with the true-always would be well-nigh obliterated, and "right and wrong be mere matters of opinion" indeed. But this does not refute the broad facts of human nature on which its science must stand. Of course, in looking among the details of the whole history of free agency, we must not wonder if we meet with departures from its best nature. But we judge of that nature itself from its best attained perfection.

Habit may be evil as well as good.

Yet this hinders not the conclusion as to its ethical import.

In Ethics, as in Science or Art, we properly take the best idea,—the most disinterested Justice attained by humanity, the most fearless Truthfulness, the severest Purity, the sweetest Benignity, the noblest Generosity; let us seek for these in the moral history of our race, and we shall best find (far above the region of isolated opinion) that Moral Nature which is the reflection of the image of the Supreme, and the perceptible ground of the Responsibility of the finite agent.

92. It is important to bear in mind at this point, that there is an accelerated ratio in the formation of character in the finite agent. And thus it is impossible to over-estimate the value of the earlier stages of a moral career. Habits may, however, grow, so as to injure our voluntary goodness, for a long time before extinguishing it. Responsibility, even when enfeebled, will remain, and in some degree perhaps to the very last. Question after question for his own practical decision will still inexorably present itself to the most deteriorated moral agent, though every new decision, if wrong, leaves him less free to virtue.

The decay of good does not at once abolish responsibility.

But while he who advances in evil finds each new act is a new chain fettering and crippling his moral agency, so that there needs little foresight to predict his coming ruin; yet the man who is growing in goodness becomes also more and more confirmed in it. As he becomes habituated to good, evil actually becomes more difficult to him, and his consciousness and love of the Supreme Good, and his relation to the always-true more intense.

93. We have, thus far, in speaking of habit, regarded it as telling on the individual only; but obviously, in a community of conscious agents, all so constituted, the moral agency of every member of the entire society would have to be considered in the same light. A whole people may indeed acquire a *general* character by continuous mutual action, either of a right or wrong kind. "What is usual" is regarded by inferior agents as practically the same to them as "what is right." When the relation of the individual to the true-always has been weakened by personal defects, or ill education, or when any baseness, custom and fashion tyrannize without check, and are taken as law, the whole social condition of a community may thus be so lowered that it no longer affords a possible sphere for a justly responsible agency. In this case, it seems reasonable to think that, under the government of the Supreme Moral Ruler, such a society would soon be broken up: especially as the habits of a community would go on augmenting in fearful proportions.

In the same way, however, the habits of a highly virtuous society would be of increasing value to the individual (§ 156). The relation of the individual to a Polity has already been noted (§ 43); but the reflex action of the polity on the individual could not be sufficiently considered without inquiring as to the sort of polity in which moral agency would best be developed for its best ends.

94. For the fact more and more distinctly stands out, that the *formation of the character of each responsible agent* is the work ever going on in this world. No doubt the man is intended to act on his fellow-man;—but for *what end*? So far as society is concerned, it might seem sufficient if the man satisfied the general requirements of the community, as to present and mutual well-doing. The responsibility of each member to the whole body, in this respect, is intelligible, and adequate. But viewed relatively to the individual himself, this will not suffice. He is to himself more than a fragment of a political whole. His ethical convictions are in fact inexplicable to him on a political hypothesis only. The perception of this has led some inaccurate moralists, like Hartley, to represent self-complacency, or approval, as the motive of virtue. But this is shallow. It overlooks the fact, that it is a virtue higher than our own which our satisfaction aspires to. To say that a man must satisfy *himself* is not to say that he rests in his own merits; but that he shrinks from self-condemnation as a pain.

95. We are obliged then to contemplate the moral agent

Habits of
Society.

Why is character to be formed in the moral agent?

Society is not the *τέλος*.

still, as he exists in and for himself; for, otherwise, we should imagine every man to exist for others, and no man for himself—which would be impossible: for if the well-being of a thousand men be worth attaining, so also is the well-being of each. Indeed the laws of a community, and the community itself, might have no reason for existence except the *individual*, while his responsibility can in no other way be developed and protected than in a polity.

The perfecting of the individual character being thus the end to be attained, we find that the fact of responsibility, on which we have thus far rested, is not all that is meant by moral agency. The perfecting of a moral being for his own sake is *something more*. The fact that the conscious agent may deteriorate, or may, on the other hand, attain a higher personal relation with the always-true, opens to us another train of reflections. The events of each man's career make proof of him, and we may see at last what he will become. He is, as it is commonly expressed, "in a state of probation." Probation includes responsibility, but is evidently another idea. The probation or trial of individual character has for its ultimate object not the present adjustment of the mutual relations of finite beings, but of the position to be held at last by the conscious being himself in the system of the universe.

Probation includes responsibility; but is more.

96. No doubt many and widely varied considerations may be found comprehended in individual Probation, which as yet we have scarcely glanced at: but the fundamental fact must be, that each conscious being aims, if rightly directed, at a true subordination to the eternal Reason of the Supreme. The finite good must for its perfection ever tend to the true-always.

There is a sublimity and loneliness in the fact of each Individual Probation having thus to proceed towards its end, which wonderfully corresponds with the further fact, that every man in his reflecting moments feels that he is a kind of centre, a secret fountain of being, to which all the phenomenal is but relative. Responsibility to others, praise or blame from others, are just as nothing when compared with his own conscious responsibility to the true-always, his *own* acquittal and his *own* blame within,—all unknown perhaps to every other finite observer. This solitary probation of each conscious being, in the midst of the social system around him, finds alleviation, however, in the protection, and guidance, and ultimate justice, of the Supreme and unfailing Moral Governor.

Lonely in individuality of probation.

97. This, indeed, is the satisfaction which is so needed by the moral agent, that, without it, all would be enigma and

unjust. The fact that as a conscious being he is already in relation with the true-always, corrects unworthy desire of inferior approval,—as the poet well expresses it :—

Upbraids that little heart's inglorious aim
That stoops to court a character from man,
While o'er us in tremendous judgment sits
Far more than man, with endless praise,—or blame.

But if this sense of individual probation adds dignity to the sense of responsibility, does it not bring close to us at the same time the fact, that there is nothing in all our present life from which responsibility can be shut out? For though we may not be required to answer to our fellow-man for every opinion, thought, occupation, or aim that we may cherish or pursue among things phenomenal, we have such ineffaceable relation as conscious beings to the true-always, as we can never escape: we are responsible to ourselves, and responsible to the Supreme.

And as the thought of our responsibility first brought us, in our analysis, into the august presence of the Supreme; so finding ourselves before Him now, our most searching thoughts are again irresistibly cast back on ourselves,—for “we also are His offspring.”

XIV.

98. It will no doubt be observed, at this stage of our subject, that having approached the consideration of the character of the Supreme from our ethical point of view, we have attempted little definition in detail of what have been commonly termed the “attributes of God.” To which, it may be at once replied, that such definitions might be apt to assume more than we know, and would not seem based on those “facts of human nature” which we take as the practical foundations of our Deontology. The contemplation of the perfections of God is indeed elevating and instructive—(even as the examination of special duties between men is of advantage in common ethics). But they would as yet be out of place, since we here sufficiently conclude “that HE is not far from every one of us.”

Let us see, however, how much has been done in our analysis towards understanding the character of HIM “with Whom we have to do.” The fact that there must be such a Supreme Ruler of moral agents; that He is a Conscious and

Loftiness of individual probation and scope.

Of definitions in Deontology.

(As in the *Secunda 2^æ* of Aquinas.)

not impersonal Being, that His nature corresponds with the true-always, and has real relation with all phenomena also; that His nature and ours therefore correspond, with that difference only which belongs to our Finitude and His Supremacy;—all these conclusions are far more substantial than any abstract descriptions beforehand of what men might call “His Attributes.” But we have done more than this. We have examined what we mean by Goodness, and distinguished the goodness of the Supreme and the goodness of the Finite, *quoad naturam* and *quoad actum*, both as to the beginnings of good and its continuance.

Of the attributes of the Supreme.

99. We have found, too, that our method has enabled us to expose and reject the old Eleatic and Humanitarian philosophies so inextricably mixed up with all the ordinary disquisitions on the Divine attributes. If we persevere in this method, we shall find that we escape many of those difficulties with which theorists, forgetful of all that Personality involves, have burdened the higher Christian Deontology. Any who would dispute our ultimate and most advanced conclusions must dispute them in the first instance; for we cannot change our premisses, or take that for true in an argument for Responsibility, which is not to be maintained also in Religion, and throughout. Religion and the essential “facts of human nature” cannot be put asunder. Those facts are fundamental.

They are not of *à priori* definition as the Eleatic.

Let any one look into himself, and decide whether the foundations of our argument are even disputable by a rational being? Beginning, of course, from the simplest assumption, viz., that there never was universal Nothing (for if there had been, this present universe could not have arisen), we see, further, there never was Universal Unconsciousness, for the same reason, viz., that if there had been, Consciousness could never have arisen. (§ 9, 29.) It seems, therefore, that the “true-always” is the ground both of being, and of consciousness. No sooner is any being conscious of himself than he is conscious of *being*. Let any one consider therefore whether consciousness does not imply in its essence relation of some kind to the *præcedentia*, the true-always (§ 65).

Their simple Ontology with us.

100. When once we perceive that there must be a Supreme Conscious Being, we find it impossible to question that His relation to the true-always must be perfect. A finite conscious being, on the other hand, directly he knows himself as a conscious being, knows that he has not always been, and that his relation to the true-always is limited, though real and essential. The relation of any

Grounds of conscious being restated.

conscious being to the phenomenal of course is not essential, *à priori*.

(According to Plato, and even to the later Eleatics and Plotinus, and his followers, the ideal of every phenomenon also has relation to the true-always. This question, however, is not practical; even allowing the case to be as said by them, it would not alter the fact, that the phenomenon, as such, is not essential to the conscious being. And it is indisputable that the ideal of phenomena may pertain to the conscious agent as such; and if so, its relation to the true-always might be remote. But this need not be here pursued.)

101. In fine, the more we know essentially of *ourselves*, the more we shall learn of the character of the Supreme conscious agent; marking as we must the Finitude in every act of our own. It may assist us towards apprehending even the relation of the Perfect Being towards the phenomenal, to observe the moveableness of limits even in our own actions. Every act imposes limits for the time on finite consciousness; we cannot attend to many things at once; but not so with the Perfect Being. We are conscious of needing Assistance.

Admitting these foundations at all, we must not hesitate to treat all Religious questions in the same way as the Moral; that is to say, they must be regarded as pertaining either to the true-always, or to the phenomenal. How large a number of critical inquiries belong only to the phenomenal, and not to the true-always, it will be no little relief hereafter to find. And how deep and satisfactory an assurance may arise from finding the highest truths of our Christianity in the region of the true-always, must remain to be perceived in our later analysis.

102. Our practical responsibilities, whether moral or religious, doubtless now lie in the sphere of the phenomenal; but our characters, as conscious beings, become elevated by having clearer and clearer relation with the true-always. And we may fitly conclude all that has thus far been demonstrated, by saying to every one who has thoughtfully followed what has here been adduced:—If you would be honest and practical, aim to use rightly the phenomenal, remembering that it is transitory; but aim also, as men, to perfect your conscious relation with the “true-always.” This, in other words, is—If you would be worthy of your Rationality and Responsibility, aim at the Religious life, as the only abiding Reality.—But we must not anticipate.

Positivism denies what we mean by Religion, as well as all Causation. We must deal briefly with that hereafter.

The CHAIRMAN.—I am sure you will cordially return your thanks to Dr. Irons for this second profound and important paper. We must all feel indebted to him for giving us the result of such deep thought and such vast learning, as well as for such an amount of original matter. I shall now be very happy to hear any remarks which any gentleman may think fit to make on this paper; but I must remind the meeting that we are not a mere debating society; that our discussions are intended for use; and that we do what few other societies do,—publish reports of our discussions in full. It is only fair to the Society that gentlemen should bear this in mind, and keep as much and as closely as possible to the paper which has been read in any remarks they may have to offer.

Rev. C. A. Row.—As I have read this paper with considerable care, I will make a few remarks upon it, being fully aware that, unless one has read it carefully, he will not readily perceive all its importance. And first let me point out that its real importance lies in this,—that the opposite principles to those contained in Dr. Irons's paper are those by which Christianity is attacked in Germany, France, and England. Those opposite principles form the foundation of all the attacks which are made on the authenticity of the Gospel. The paper is exceedingly close in its reasoning, and the principles which it lays down, if we consider them attentively, will go a long way towards reforming the theology of the present day. I only wish Dr. Irons would publish the series of papers, of which this is one, in a very much enlarged form, pointing out most distinctly the position he takes up, and get them translated into French and German. I think they would do a great deal of good, as showing the grounds upon which we can argue against the infidel philosophy of the day. The metaphysical philosophy of the present day tends to attack revelation; the principle of that philosophy is in opposition to certain facts of revelation, and tends to the direct subversion of the Gospel of our Lord. I should like to call the attention of Dr. Irons for a moment to one thing, which I believe he has omitted in this paper, and which I believe properly belongs to this, and not to the next division of the subject; that is, that our responsibility is largely affected by the conditions of our birth, and by the society in which we are born and brought up. It is obvious to any one who reflects upon it, that the conditions under which we are born do produce a most prodigious influence upon our subsequent life. You and I have been born English men and women, and, as a natural consequence, we grow up with a certain character and style. Had we been born in Bengal, most of us would have grown up much like the Bengalese; and this runs through all life,—so that the conditions of our birth, the society in which we are placed, and the tone of thought to which we are exposed, produce an immense effect on our whole moral and spiritual being. In the same way the learning of a language influences us to a very considerable extent. Language is a complete storehouse of all the previous thought of men; and when I learn a language, I learn at once certain moral principles, which get deeply impressed on my being. In fact, the whole previous experience of a race lies embedded in a

particular language, and that does largely affect our responsibility. I think I see the position which Dr. Irons assigns to this point in his paper, but I should have liked him to have been a little more distinct upon it. There are several passages in the paper of which I strongly approve, and which I think are exceedingly important. For instance, Dr. Irons says :—

“To separate fundamentally the character of the governor and the governed is no less than to render impossible all moral correspondence, and terminate at once all possible responsibility.”

That is most important, and I endeavoured to lay down the same point in a paper which I read to this Institute on a former occasion. It seems to me of the highest possible importance that we should perceive clearly that, unless we can conceive clearly of the Governor of the universe as having certain moral principles similar to those in man, all responsibility must end. The next passage to which I will refer is the extract from Fénelon, and that is worthy of our deepest and most attentive consideration, as embodying the assertions both of theology and philosophy that the only conception of the Deity is a present existence, and nothing beyond it relating either to the past or to the future. Dr. Irons, I am glad to say, has virtually attacked many prevalent opinions and errors in theology as well as in philosophy. I think it is only fair to Dean Mansel to say that he has brought this same point out in some degree in his Bampton Lectures, and has shown that if we go on cutting off from the Deity first this and then that human affection, we shall not at last come down to an abstract reality, but we shall leave the Deity minus His perfections, plus something else, viz. the residuum of human affections, without getting one single atom nearer the truth by those unhallowed proceedings. The common mode of reasoning pursued in philosophy is that certain human affections, because they are not perfect and are limited, cannot be predicated of the Creator, and we must therefore take them away, leaving only the residuum. The question is, what is that residuum? Dr. Irons has begun his first attack on that theory with great propriety, and he attacks the whole of that unfortunate system of theology, as well as of philosophy, which ends, if fairly and logically carried out, in depriving the Creator of all conceivable attributes whatever, and reducing Him to a nullity, or involves the plain and unquestionable principles of Pantheism. I attach great importance to the attack on those principles, and am glad to see it carried to a considerable length in this paper. Then Dr. Irons well describes the principles of the Eleatics, saying they would argue—

“If the Supreme be Infinite, how can the Infinite have movement?”

Now a great many of the errors of the present day proceed from the introduction of ideas taken from mere dead physical nature and applying them to the moral nature of man. This is a great point, which should be strongly brought out, for it really is the foundation of all the attacks I know of upon Revelation. If that original assumption be strongly and plainly resisted, as it can be upon the soundest principles of reason, the whole of the philosophy and theology founded upon it falls to the ground. You see the Eleatic philosophy speaks here of movement—

“If the Supreme be Infinite, how can the Infinite have movement?”

But there are two conceptions of movement, physical and moral. The movements of the physical universe differ *toto cælo* from those of my mind. It is misleading and a misapplication of terms to apply the word “movement” to mental and, above all, to moral phenomena. It is bringing down the mind of man to the level of the pure physical creation; but it does not need argument to show that the movements of the mind of man differ *toto cælo* from the movements of the physical creation. The third paragraph in the same page is exceedingly admirable. Dr. Irons says:—

“In these speculations it would almost seem that there is no escape from a denial of Him whom we have to recognize as Supreme moral Governor! The Supreme has no past, no future, no retrospect, no prospect, no thought, no deed!”

The result is inevitable, assuming the principles stated in the paper. If you once lay down that there is nothing but an eternal “am” of the Creator, these things follow as a matter of course, and you arrive at a false philosophy based upon false principles. But the real thing to be done is to get out of these false principles. It is evident that it is impossible to conceive of the Creator without assigning to Him a personality; and if we assign to Him a personality, that personality must be imaged by the human personality, and must involve the application to Him, freed from their imperfections, of our various human moral attributes. That does not involve any contradiction at all. In the latter part of the same paragraph Dr. Irons says:—

“The Eleatic philosophy assumes (what nothing but an exhaustive analysis of such ideas as ‘being,’ ‘thought,’ and ‘volition’ would justify) that the finite limitations of those ideas are essential to them.”

Of course the whole of these conceptions have an essential existence quite apart from their finite character, and are capable of being applied to the Creator Himself. Again, Dr. Irons says:—

“A consciousness transcending the phenomenal is the great fact on which our whole investigation rests.”

Now it is in this that I think the paper is so very valuable, because it persists in going back to the facts of our inward spiritual consciousness, of which we are more certain, perhaps, than of any other species of knowledge whatever. I feel that I have a firmer ground of knowing certain facts of my inner consciousness than I can have of any facts of external nature, and Dr. Irons is worthy of much commendation on this point for persisting in going back to these, in spite of all metaphysical theorizing. In the same paragraph of the same page he says:—

“If we are conscious at all, we are as conscious that the phenomena and ourselves are not the same, as we are of our own being.”

That is a most important assertion: in fact, when I reflect upon it, it affords

me a guarantee of unquestionable certainty that I know that the phenomena by which I am surrounded and myself are two different things, differing *toto celo* ; and that I have a voluntary nature which is capable of being an originating cause of action, in which it stands related to the Supreme as being His distinct image. The Creator, unbounded by conditions, is the originating cause of action ; and I am an originating cause of action, bounded by conditions. I cordially agree with Dr. Irons in the necessity for bringing these points to bear upon theology, and I am satisfied that if we get rid of the whole class of Eleatic thought from our moral philosophy, we shall be able to see our way to get rid of a vast number of differences which harass and trouble the Christian Church in the shape of theology. I have given much consideration to the subject, but I cannot enter upon it at any length to-night. I wish, however, to give my most cordial thanks to Dr. Irons for the way in which he has dealt with it, and I would strongly recommend to every one's attention those portions of the paper where he has pointed out distinctly how it is that a great deal of what is called modern theology is nothing more nor less than a mischievous dishing up of the old Eleatic philosophy, which is most injurious to the cause of Christianity.

Rev. Dr. IRONS.—It might assist discussion if I were to suggest that if any gentleman has any questions to put to me I shall be most willing to undergo cross-examination. There are an immense class of questions dealt with in the paper, about which some gentlemen may desire to question me.

Mr. REDDIE.—Allow me to take advantage of that suggestion by making a few remarks and asking a few questions with especial reference to that part of the paper which Mr. Row has already referred to. Dr. Irons speaks of the distinction between the conception of morality in the Supreme and in ourselves. He says :—

“In Him there is no beginning to be good ; for the Supreme ever exists and is ever good. The opposite thought were a contradiction as well as a blasphemy.”

Now I should be glad if Dr. Irons would work that out in some detail. I should like him to demonstrate, either in his reply or his next paper, how it is that an eternal evil is a contradiction in itself and not conceivable. If that were worked out, it would enable Dr. Irons, in summing up, to add to those two important deductions at which he arrives,—namely, that universal unconsciousness is an absurdity, and that universal nothingness is an absurdity,—the further deduction that universal or eternal evil (for the word “universal” is used in the sense of “eternal”) is also an absurdity and inconceivable. In all these things we have to judge by our reason ; and we may arrive at the conclusion rationally, that universal or original evil is impossible, just as we may argue that something could not come from nothing. And as regards the existence of consciousness, also ; for instance : if you can conceive such a condition of the world as an utter absence of consciousness and of pre-existing conscious mind, then there could have been no such things as conscious beings. Now reasonable beings being

the judges, they can only judge in accordance with the being which has been given to them ; and if we could conceive such a thing as human beings constituted with an original evil nature instead of with an original good nature, it is quite clear that they would not consider that which was in accordance with their own nature to be evil, but would come to the conclusion that it was good. But there cannot even be a rational conception of eternal evil. For you cannot understand the word evil except in the sense of its being a contradiction to something good, which therefore must have preceded it. Evil means that which is not good. It is possible, I think, to work that out in a logical manner in these papers, and to demonstrate with the most rigid accuracy and strictness that an eternal evil is an impossibility. I should be glad to see that part of the paper more fully made out, and to have the three deductions, instead of these two, at the end. It is perhaps scarcely fair, however, seeing that we have not yet heard Dr. Irons's third paper, to assume that he probably may not do this ; but it seems to belong more to this part of the subject than to that which has still to come. Dr. Irons has been hitherto destroying much false philosophy passing current (I am sorry to say) as orthodoxy, and I presume his next paper will be more constructive, and therefore perhaps more interesting to us all. We shall then have the positive truths stated, and especially the truth *par excellence*, as it comes to us in Christianity.

Rev. C. A. Row.—There is one other passage which I ought to have pointed out as well worth our attention. Dr. Irons says :—

“Now here is a new point of difference between the Supreme and the finite conscious agent. The Supreme cannot be more good ; the finite can. Our character is affected, as God's is not, by the fact of continuance, both of being and of action. However good a finite nature may be in its beginning, however truly responding to the always-true, it acquires power by continuing good. And continuing acts of good are ever-increasing developments of the power of the conscious finite agent. Continuing in goodness is advancing in goodness. It is better known the longer it is known.”

I apprehend Dr. Irons has written this paper on the grounds of human reason, and what I wish to point out is, that although this passage is founded upon human reason, it throws light upon and confirms the assertion of the Evangelist,—“Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

The CHAIRMAN.—It would be very presumptuous in me to make any observations on this admirable paper. I can only say that I most heartily and thoroughly go with it ; but I feel that any discussion upon it would be almost out of place, as we have not yet got the final portion of the paper, which I think may throw the greatest possible light on all that has gone before. We shall perhaps discuss the subject more advantageously, therefore, when we have the whole of Dr. Irons's views set before us. I cannot help expressing my great gratification that this Society has had the privilege of putting before the world such an amount of profound thought on the most

important subjects of the present day. Certainly the Victoria Institute is fulfilling the purposes of its founders in the fullest degree in bringing before the public such papers as these, which are full of profound thought, calculated to meet perfectly all the distressing Sadducean objections of the present age. If men could only think and deliberate in such a style as this, we should find that the extremely superficial metaphysical thought which has been manifesting itself hitherto, and producing such a Sadducean leaven on the literature of the country, would soon be obliterated; and I cannot help thinking that Dr. Irons is doing the same good in this generation, in such a paper as this, as Bishop Butler did in his generation. I only hope that hereafter Dr. Irons will respond to the suggestion of Mr. Row by giving his paper a more popular character, better suited for general appreciation. He has confined himself here to stating his thoughts in the closest possible manner; and I cannot help thinking that each sentence might well be elaborated into a page, with the greatest possible advantage to those whose habits of thought have not fitted them to follow this close style of reasoning. The paper before us manifests the results of a lifetime of study of the most difficult writers upon the most difficult subjects that perhaps the human intellect has ever exercised itself upon. We cannot therefore but feel indebted to Dr. Irons for putting before us the main principles of heathen philosophy, manifesting what were the thoughts of men when they were earnestly striving after a knowledge of God; and for putting that before us in a comprehensive shape, condensing into a short space that which in point of fact can only be found in the largest folios of our libraries. I can only again express my extreme gratification at having had the pleasure of presiding in the Victoria Institute when such elaborate papers have been brought before us. The paper is manifestly an answer to the superficial thought of the present day, which would bring before people the idea that everything which is purely philosophical or scientific must be opposed to the doctrines of revelation. I think Dr. Irons has shown us how the highest thoughts that the human intellect can reach, not only confirm all that has been taught us by God's own book—the book of revelation—but also that those thoughts can be elaborated according to the purest systems of science and of the most refined philosophy; and that we, as Christians, need not be afraid to meet the men of the world on their own ground, in order to show that pure and true science and sound philosophy never can be at variance with those truths which God has revealed to man. (Hear, hear.)

Dr. IRONS.—I have to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your appreciation of my paper, which I quite agree should have been five times as long as it is. With regard to the discussion which has taken place on the paper, Mr. Row has asked me to consider the circumstances of human probation, which arise out of the fact that we are so differently conditioned and circumstanced from our birth. I would point out to Mr. Row that in the present paper I have referred back to these very difficulties which I specified in my former paper. He will find this passage:—

“The relation once established between the Moral Agent and the Moral

Governor abundantly suffices for the final solution of all the difficulties which we first confessed do lie in the idea of Responsibility."

Now, I put forward six different special difficulties, comprehending, as I thought, every point that could possibly be raised on principle against what I was about to teach, and to that part of my former paper I must refer Mr. Row. What he has said about the importance of language as affecting our responsibility is of course included in that reply, which will be found in my former paper. The Supreme Moral Governor, while adjudicating upon our probation, takes *all our circumstances* into consideration, whether they be of language, birth, colour, education,—whatever they be. Everything is provided for; and the more we reflect upon this, the more we feel that there is no necessity for a deeper examination, which must fail, because we cannot know all the circumstances of all our fellow-men; while God does know them, and He will be their ultimate Judge. It is far better to meet the difficulty by a broad and comprehensive solution of that kind. Mr. Reddie has asked me to prove a contradiction. I think I have said in my paper some half a dozen times, "this is a contradiction;" and I have meant by that, that the opposite conclusions to what I have advanced are inconceivable. Every demonstration carried to its furthest extent ultimately becomes an *argumentum ad absurdum*, and shows that the opposite conclusion is a contradiction. Every problem in Euclid is, in point of fact, an appeal to our sense that we cannot say the opposite to what is set before us without committing an absurdity. If you will fairly weigh the proposition which Mr. Reddie has selected for you, I think you will find that you cannot conceive the opposite. In my paper I have never said that anything is a contradiction, until I have fairly weighed it in my own mind and put the opposite thought before myself to see if it could be maintained at all. When I have found that that opposite thought could not be put into words,—that it was alike intangible and inconceivable,—I thought I was justified in saying that it involved a contradiction. Mr. Reddie seems to think that I should have done better if I had spoken in detail of the impossibility of evil being eternal; but the same thing may be said of that as of universal nothing, or of universal unconsciousness. If there had ever been eternal nothing, there never would have been this universe. If there had ever been no consciousness, thought never could have sprung up, nor any thinking being. It is inconceivable. So if there ever had been an eternal, universal evil, all that is good in our hearts and consciences and in our lives could never have existed. There could have been no good thing to stimulate affection, or to give complacency or joy to any human being. Every one who is conscious, who knows what good is, who can feel joy and love, must feel that the notion of eternal evil is a contradiction. It is upset by a single fact: one good thing in the whole universe is enough to give the lie to the theory of eternal evil: it would never have come into existence if evil had always been from eternity. Mr. Mitchell supposes that I may supply, in my third paper, any defects in the two papers I have already read. But I shall have my hands far too full to do that. The

two papers which I have already written must stand on their own footing, I assure you ; and I can do nothing but challenge those who may dispute the conclusions of my third paper to fall back on numbers one and two, and destroy them if they can ; but I do not believe they can be destroyed, without entirely denying human responsibility and everything we think respectable and decent and loveable in human nature. "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," says that profound thinker St. Paul (and I would say the same), these principles, and these alone, must be true. With regard to paper number three, it will contain a brief discussion of the fundamental principles of Comte's philosophy, with the manner in which that philosophy is repudiated by all the deepest thinkers in America, Germany, and France. It seems to have had its round, and now it is rejected, even by persons not so very profound as Professor Huxley. That philosophy is now entirely discarded by all ripe thinkers, and I shall deal with it in about four pages at the beginning of my next paper ; after which, I shall open the subject of our religion, by falling back on those principles which I shall shortly state, as I have already laid them down for my foundation. Now you are aware that a great deal of this paper, as Mr. Row has said, is directed, to speak plainly, against the semi-fatalism of the Anglo-Saxon mind. It has so deeply penetrated our nature that we might almost despair of rooting it out, but for the certainty that truth must prevail. And we begin now to see that Calvinism is coming to its end. I should not have been wise if I had done on this occasion what some of our friends seemed to wish—mentioned the names of all those whose opinions I am endeavouring to destroy. I should have detained you a much longer time, and I should have wounded some of your hearts most deeply. (Laughter.) As it is, you are called on to see a particular error exposed ; but if I had said, "Why, that is the very error of your dear friend so-and-so," you would hardly have forgiven me, and I should have had no chance of taking you with me. (Laughter.) I did not mention the Dean of St. Paul's nor his opponent : Mr. Row has done that. But I believe those two gentlemen, when they were writing so desperately about the philosophy of the absolute, really meant the same thing, and did not know it. (Laughter.) I have endeavoured to avoid the mention of all names even in the history of our own English ethics, because we saw here the other night a gentleman who felt a deep interest in one particular philosopher, and I should have had very little toleration from him if I had named that philosopher without doing full justice to him. Now I have not tried to do justice to any philosopher at all : I have only tried to do justice to my subject to the best of my power, and to keep clear of everything that could prejudice it. Considering the great difficulty of the subject, and the kind way in which you have come, notwithstanding the great inclemency of the weather, to hear my paper, I can only thank you very much for your attention. I hope to have my third and last paper on the subject ready for reading in June.

The meeting was then adjourned.