§ 1. In my last lecture I passed from a consideration of the Sociological view of the divergent beliefs of different ages and stages of social evolution, which I distinguished as Relativism, to examine the other view, which I distinguished as Progressivism. As I explained, in distinguishing the two I have by no means intended to imply that the two views are necessarily opposed. In fact they are not only capable of being held together, but probably the commonest form of Relativism is combined with and modified by Progressivism: that is to say, it is the view that the fundamental beliefs of our ancestors, so far as divergent from our own—in such subjects as Ethics, Politics, and Sociology—were, speaking broadly, 'relatively' true; but yet less true, a more remote approximation to truth, than our own.

But I have thought it best, for clearness, to examine the two views separately: to conceive the Progressivists as holding the simple doctrine that the history of mankind shows us a more or less constant progress in knowledge: and to examine the exact
nature of the progress, and the epistemological inferences to be drawn from it. I conceive that the doctrine cannot be regarded as purely sociological nor as attained by a purely sociological method, but rather by a combination of Sociology with Philosophy: as it involves the assumption of a criterion to distinguish true knowledge from false, which Sociology alone cannot assume.

Further, it seemed to me desirable, before examining progress in knowledge, to consider the wider notion of Social Progress from a purely Sociological point of view. I began by pointing out that the general notion of Social progress does not necessarily imply an expected or even a possible arrival at a final condition of Society as a goal and termination of the progressive movement; but only increase in certain definite characteristics of the social organism now possessed in some degree. Now as the common conception of the social organism implies adaptation of its structure and the functioning of its different organs to preservation of the organism under its conditions of existence, it is natural to understand Progress as meaning progress in self-preservation quality. But an examination of the facts of history seemed to show that historically ascertained changes in human society have certainly no universal tendency to increase the efficiency of the organism for self-preservation: and, in particular, that the historically ascertained changes in beliefs have no such general tendency.

I then passed to observe that, in any case, the notion of 'increase in self-preservation quality' does
not correspond to the generally current notion of social progress, which involves the idea of improvement: i.e. increase in well-being and not merely of mere life and promise of further life, apart from any regard to the quality of the life.

§ 2. But if we introduce the notion of 'Improvement' and insist on thinking with method and precision, we require some definite criterion and measure of 'good.' And this, I conceive, it belongs to Practical Philosophy to establish: it is not a matter with which Sociology pure and simple has _prima facie_ any concern. So long as we confine ourselves to the system of notions which have been transferred from Biology to Sociology—and which seem, at present at least, to be an indispensable stock-in-trade of the latter science—the notions of organism, adaptation or adjustment, differentiation and correlation of parts, mutual dependence of co-ordinated functions, etc.—it seems to me that the end to which reference is made in all these notions is not Happiness but Preservation. Sociological writers sometimes veil this from their readers by the use of the ambiguous terms 'social health' and 'social welfare'; for these, in ordinary thought, carry with them, more or less distinctly, the implication of general happiness as an effect of the 'health' and at least an element of the 'welfare': but I conceive that, interpreted in a strict biological or sociological sense, 'health' or 'welfare' of organisms can only mean self-preservation conditions of structure and correlated functions tending to self-preservation. If we take 'social welfare' interpreted in any other
sense than that of preservative conditions as the end and standard by which progress is estimated, we do so on other than biological or sociological grounds.

At the same time, I think that Sociology itself ultimately forces us beyond what I have called the primary sociological conception of social progress; on account of the divergence—widening, as our examination proceeds—between progress of civilisation as commonly conceived and increase in qualities tending to the preservation of the particular social organism in which the progress occurs. A consideration of this divergence will lead us, I think, to two conclusions. First, even if we confine our attention, in considering social progress, to a particular political society, we must—if we would maintain harmony with Common Sense—find a wider conception of the criterion of progress than is afforded by the mere notion of conduciveness to social preservation. For we cannot but recognise that the development of sociality and polite order, of knowledge and the arts of peace—in particular of the fine arts and literature—is a good thing for a society, even though it does not render it more capable of preserving itself under the actual conditions of its environment, physical and social: it is a gain, so far as it goes, though the gain may in a particular case be outweighed by the loss of fighting quality. And secondly, we cannot, without doing violence to our deepest convictions, consider this gain only in relation to the particular society whose progress we are contemplating: we must also consider it in relation to humanity at large. For the gain of the
complex fact that we call civilisation is something that is not normally confined to the particular society in which it first takes place: it tends to spread by imitation and tradition to contemporary societies and to societies that are to live in later ages, so that its most striking achievements become possessions of a continually larger part of the human race. And thus, as we come down the stream of time, we are led irresistibly to pass from the point of view of Mr. Spencer's Sociology—which treats different human groups as separate organisms, like animals or plants—to the point of view of Comte's Sociology, which by preference conceives "the whole human race, past and future, as constituting a vast and eternal social unit."

Putting these two considerations together we cannot, I think, measure social progress by any narrower conception than that of conduciveness to the welfare of humanity at large.

§ 3. But, it may be asked, how are we to obtain a true and adequately precise conception of social welfare and the means of realising it: since history shows us variation and diversity in this conception as well as in other fundamental conceptions and principles of Ethics and Politics? This question leads us back to the discussion of the claim of Sociology¹—not alone but with the help of a certain epistemological assumption, to establish a criterion of truth and error and, by the aid of this criterion, to present the series of changes in prevalent beliefs which history shows us as steps in a progress towards fuller and purer truth.

¹ Cf. above, Lect. X. § 2.
I will first again state this claim in what seems to me its most plausible form. It may be said:—Granting that a study of the history of beliefs cannot by itself furnish a criterion of their truth, still the comparative historical study of different departments of systematic thought may furnish a criterion of practical value, provided we accept the general validity of systems of thought which any instructed person can see to have finally emerged from the condition of fundamental controversy, and such are the established and recognised sciences. For whatever theoretical defects the subtlety of sceptical philosophers may detect in the fundamental assumptions and methods of modern Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, Physiology, no one—not even a philosopher—doubts that they really are sciences. They are not, of course, complete and perfect bodies of knowledge, probably not even quite free from error as far as they go. Still, they are established sufficiently for practical purposes by the decisive tests of (1) Agreement of Experts—the acceptance of the same principles, methods, and conclusions by the overwhelming majority of serious students throughout the civilised world, and (2) Continuity of Development—the manner in which the new truths continually discovered fit into and confirm the old. Accepting these sciences, then, as types of real knowledge and right method, we may use them as models by which to correct and improve the remaining parts of the aggregate of prevalent beliefs: by studying the development of these successfully organised bodies of thought, we may learn to develop rightly those other
parts of our thought that are still imperfectly organised, still struggling with fundamental doubts and controversies. This, then, it may be said, is what Sociology does: this is how it aids the philosopher to find a practical solution of the difficulties of his search for a criterion of truth.

It is in this way, as we saw, that Comte obtains his generalisation—of which I before spoke—as to the 'three stages' through which, in any department, the pursuit of knowledge has to pass. According to him, as I have said, the sciences now clearly established are so because they have arrived at the 'positive' stage, after passing through the theological and metaphysical stages; whereas politics is still partly in the metaphysical stage, and ethics even lingering in the theological. He therefore concludes that ethics and politics—following the course of development of the more advanced sciences—will eventually become 'positive' in their method, that is, become branches or applications of Sociology. Sociology thus allies itself with the pre-existing sciences, confirms their claims to be bodies of real knowledge, and taking them, as it were, under its wing, claims in unison with them an exclusive right of deciding as to truth and falsehood on all matters of interest to man: Theology and Metaphysics being relegated to the position of different stages of error, through which the human mind progresses in its advance towards truth.

Now I do not dispute the general reasonableness and utility of the kind of comparison which Comte indicates and exemplifies: I agree with him in the
importance he attaches to *consensus* (of different minds) and *coherence* (of beliefs of the same mind) as tests of truth. I do not say that they are infallible tests; but they are the best that I can find, in the case of a prevalent belief that does not present itself as self-evident to me: and as men have erred in apparently intuitive judgments, 'consensus' of experts and coherence with other beliefs are important supplementary securities, even for apparently self-evident beliefs. So far my methodology agrees with Comte's. I am even disposed to admit a large element of truth in his doctrine of three stages so far as it is positive: 'only instead of 'Theology' and 'Metaphysics' I should venture to substitute 'crude theology' and 'bad metaphysics.' To this I shall return presently.

The fundamental controversies in politics and ethics turn mainly on the definition of a single fundamental principle. They relate to the *ultimate end*, which gives the standard by which all particular rules and institutions are to be tested. Thus at present it is a subject of active philosophical controversy whether this end is Happiness, an aggregate of pleasures realised in successive parts of time in the lives of individuals; or whether it is some Universal Good which is the good of each because it is the good of all, and not the good of all by the summation of the goods of individuals. Our reasoning to particular conclusions, ethical or political, must be fundamentally different, according as we adopt one or other of these alternatives, but I cannot see how the subject of controversy can be treated at all by a 'positive' instead of a metaphysical
method. Ultimate ends are not 'phenomena' or laws or conditions of phenomena: to investigate them as if they were seems as futile as if one inquired whether they were square or round.

It may be replied that a study of the established sciences, as recognised by agreement of experts and continuity of development, will at any rate aid us in deciding general questions of method—e.g. whether the mind, to attain sound systematic knowledge, should begin with the universal and proceed downwards to the particular, or vice versa. Now if it were established, as some thinkers hold, that all sciences begin with and rest upon universal intuitious or postulates, or again, as others hold, that they all start from and are based upon cognitions of particular facts, or, thirdly, that they all combine universal and particular knowledge in the same manner and degree, we might infer with some probability that our reasonings as to what ought to be should be formed on the same type. But these points are notoriously subjects of controversy on which we cannot decide without entering deep into the metaphysics that Comte repudiates. If we take the established sciences simply so far as they are cognisable as a social fact—i.e. so far as their method is allowed to be beyond the range of controversy—we find in them diversity, not identity of methods: in some cases the premises, reasonings, and conclusions are all universal (mathematics): in others all the generalisations attained are admittedly based on particular experiences and tested by agreement with these. Thus a survey of the
sciences does not even provide us with a decided analogy to aid us in our discussion of ultimate practical ends: it gives no clear guidance beyond the general direction to aim at bringing our ethical and political judgments—so far as they relate to ultimate good and evil—into systematic harmony and agreement.

My general conclusion, then, is that Sociology cannot be accepted as a substitute for Philosophy, in the task of co-ordinating beliefs; nay, further, though the study of beliefs from a strictly sociological point of view must always be of great interest for philosophy, the aid given by Sociology in the special problem of establishing and applying valid criteria of truth and error must always be of a subordinate kind.

§ 4. Let us turn to consider Comte's Law of the three Stages. And here I have taken for granted that we are all prepared to assume broadly the validity of modern science and its methods, and surveying the past history of thought with this assumption, to recognise that the human mind, after many centuries of tentative and confused inquiry, after traversing many devious ways of thought, has found the right method of dealing with the physical world, the world of sensible experience, and has now, for some time, been making clear, steady, and continuous progress. The question is, what inference we are to draw from this conclusion as to the matters with which Theology and Metaphysics deal. The inference drawn not only by Comte, but also by Mr. Spencer, is, as we know, sweeping and negative. According to Comte Sociology, assuming the validity of the modern
sciences, and tracing their progressive history, establishes the generalisation of the three stages through which human thought has to pass, and thus effectually antiquates Theology and Metaphysics. And though Mr. Spencer's Philosophy, as well as his Sociology, differs most importantly from Comte's, he agrees with him, as we have seen, in affirming—as the outcome of the long process of human thought—that the Reality which it has been for thousands of years the central aim of Theology and Metaphysics to know is totally and for ever unknownable, and that the only positive work of Philosophy is to systematise the sciences and to comprehend their generalisations in a higher generalisation.

Let us examine first the claim to antiquate Theology. As Mill says, what Comte calls the Theological explanation of the facts of nature might perhaps be more clearly designated the Personal or Volitional explanation of them. It regards the facts of the universe as determined by the volitions of unseen beings, with quasi-human wills. It is therefore in Comte's view opposed to science, whose progressive work has consisted in exhibiting these facts as governed by invariable laws of existence and sequence: and, as we trace the growth of human knowledge, we find the Theological explanation continually receding and fading in successive departments of inquiry, as the scientific explanation establishes itself.

We need not trace the process in detail: the broad truth of this historical generalisation is, I conceive, undeniable. The Theological view has thus opposed
the scientific, in modern no less than in ancient times, and has had continually to give way and retire before the triumphant onward march of science. But when we look closer at the opposition, we find that the conflict arises in one of two ways; and in neither case is it fundamental and inevitable. Theology has been opposed to science, so far as it has conceived its divinities as beings with capricious, irregular volitions, moved by anger and favour, and—when the divinities are conceived as many—liable to conflict: and it has also been opposed to science so far as it conceives the divine volitions to be inscrutable. In the former case it has come into conflict with the conclusions of scientific inquiry, the system of invariable laws which this inquiry, so far as successful, has steadily unfolded: in the latter case it has come into conflict with the freedom of inquiry which the progress of science demands. But it is obvious that the one opposition vanishes as soon as the Divine Will is conceived as a Will in which there is no caprice or irregularity, ‘no variableness, neither shadow of turning’; and the other vanishes as soon as the Divine Will is conceived as a Will whose order may without limit be investigated by human minds: and both these conceptions are now almost, if not quite, established in the minds of most educated persons.

It may be said, however, that the removal of these oppositions only reveals a deeper opposition between the universal order that Science presents, and the universal order that Theology claims to present. For the order that science presents to us, the system of
invariable laws that it discovers in the process of continual change, is, when we apply to it our human conceptions of good and evil, not a perfectly good order. *Prima facie*, indeed, these categories appear irrelevant to it: and accordingly, leading men of science have declared that nature as known by science is non-ethical, and that the whole moral effort of mankind to modify nature must be recognised as an effort to which Nature—if I may so say—is indifferent. But I need not now dwell on this view, since (1) it is not obviously supported by history, and (2) it is certainly not the practical view of our leading Sociologists: their forecast of the future of society is always a forecast of social life growing better through the operation of sociological laws. Indeed in Mr. Spencer’s view it is a future so bright that I am obliged regretfully to point out that its roscate hues are palpably not warranted by the knowledge we possess of past biological and sociological evolution. But in any case the world of science remains, from an ethical point of view, an imperfect world. The result worked out by its invariable laws is a chequered result of good mixed with evil; and therefore though it may present no obstacle to the conception of an orderly will as the cause and ground of the process that it has partially come to understand, it still does profoundly oppose the conception of a perfectly good will.

But this is not all. There is a deeper opposition than that arising from the imperfection with which good is realised in the world as made known to us by
science. It is said that the system of laws which the sciences show us is a system which, though it may not be strictly incompatible with the theological conception of an orderly will, still in no way supports this conception and tends to its exclusion: since it gives us an order intelligible indeed, and so in a sense rational, but one from which the conceptions of the Practical Reason—the conceptions of End, Design, Adaptation of Means to End—are excluded.

§ 5. On this I may first remark that if the scientific view of the Universe is thus opposed to current Theology, it is equally opposed to Metaphysics, so far as Metaphysics deals with what I called the central and fundamental problem of reconciling Theoretical and Practical Philosophy. And this leads me to say a few words on Comte’s conception—substantially accepted by Mill—of the Metaphysical view of nature which he supposes to oust the Theological view, and to intervene between that and the scientific view. According to Comte (I give a brief summary in Mill’s words): “In this [the metaphysical] stage it is no longer a god that causes and directs the various agencies of nature: it is a power, or a force, or an occult quality, considered as real existences, inherent in but distinct from the concrete bodies in which they reside. . . . Instead of Dryads presiding over trees, . . . every plant or animal has now a Vegetative Soul, the ὑπερτυκή ψυχή of Aristotle. At a later period the Vegetative Soul has become a Plastic Force, and still later, a Vital Principle. Objects now do all that they do because it is their Essence to do so, or by
reason of an inherent Virtue.” Again, “phenomena are accounted for by supposed tendencies and propensities of the abstraction Nature. . . . The rise of water in a pump is attributed to Nature’s horror of a vacuum. The fall of heavy bodies, and the ascent of flame and smoke are construed as attempts of each to get to its natural place. Many important consequences are deduced from the doctrine that Nature has no leaps or breaks of continuity: and ‘in medicine’ reparative processes in the organism are referred to the vis medicatrix of Nature.”

Now no doubt this kind of illusory explanation of physical facts, by referring them to occult essences, qualities, forces, and natural tendencies, has occupied an important place in the historic efforts of the human mind to understand the physical world. And so far as it is derived, as it largely is derived, from Aristotle, there is a sense in which it may be called metaphysical: i.e. it may be attributed to the influence exercised by Aristotle’s metaphysical system on his study of the physical world; and in part at least to a want of clear separation between metaphysical and physical problems. At the same time Comte and Mill overlook the fact that these conceptions are not, in Aristotle’s view, strictly metaphysical but physical: that is, they do not belong to that part of his philosophy—‘First Philosophy’ or Philosophy of Divine things—which relates to the eternal and unchanged, the Ground and End of the process of change and movement in the physical world. When we make

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this distinction, it seems to me that Comte's conception of Metaphysics as a manner of thought that takes the place of the theological is superficial and inadequate; since a main aim and main effort of metaphysical speculation, in the post-Socratic Schools of Greece, was not to eliminate the theistic view of the universe as a whole, but to elevate and purify it. It thus served—especially no doubt in the Platonic and Stoic lines of thought, rather than the Aristotelian—as a positive preparation for Christian Monotheism: its importance did not lie merely in its negative and critical action in enfeebling Polytheism.

I should like to dwell further on this point, and especially to show the singular one-sidedness of Comte's historical judgment in regarding the change from Polytheism to Monotheism as importing a decline in the influence of religion upon human life. It is in a sense true that the presence of Divinity is withdrawn somewhat from the surface of human life, by the transition from Polytheism to Monotheism; but it is because it is withdrawn into the moral depths of life, not because its influence on life is weakened. But time presses, and I must return to the topic from which I digressed:—the alleged antiteleological tendency of modern science, which brings it into conflict, as I said, not only with current Theology, but with any form of Metaphysical Philosophy that retains the notion of End or Good as a fundamental conception in its system of the Universe—even though divorced from the conception of Personality.

In the first place, it seems to me that there is in
any case no collision between the inquiry, or body of
systematic thought, which Theology has come to be,
and any positive science or even the aggregate or
system of such sciences. For a science, as Comte and
his followers say, deals only with the existences and
sequences of some department of the phenomena, of
which the complex stream in time constitutes what
we call the process of the world. And Science as a
system does not profess to tell us anything of the
First Cause of this whole process, its final end or
significance, its underlying reality, and the relation
to this of the human spirit, not as a mere series of
phenomena or consciousnesses, but as the conscious,
thinking, aspiring, self-determining subject of such a
series. These, however, are the greater matters on
which Theology or Metaphysics seeks or professes to
give knowledge: their inquiries therefore move in a
different region from that of positive Science, and no
collision between the two is possible. They may even
be regarded as mutually supplementary.

No doubt Theology or Constructive Metaphysics
comes into collision with the Positive Philosophy:
but then it comes into collision not with its system-
atisation of the sciences, but with its negative assertion
that nothing can be known about the Universe except
the laws of the existences and sequences of phenomena.
And this negative assertion is just not a scientific
conclusion: it is, in fact, a metaphysical dogma.

But, secondly, granting the antiteleological ten-
dency of modern science, so far as it relates to the
inorganic world, and even admitting this tendency
as defensible in the sciences that deal with organic
life, yet it cannot be admitted as such in the study
of mind.

I think it noteworthy that the very development
of thought which is supposed by Comte and his
followers effectually to antiquate Theology—the
development of Sociology as the culmination of
positive science—should, according to Comte's own
treatment of the method of Sociology, involve in a
striking manner a kind of teleology: because he
assumes that a real comprehension of earlier stages in
development is only possible by viewing them in the
light of later stages. For Comte insists on conceiving
the society whose laws of development he traces as
being humanity as a whole, a single social organism of
which the different nations are organs. But we can
only apply this conception to the earlier stages of
social development by viewing them in the light
thrown back on them by later stages. We can see
on looking back that the Egyptians, the Greeks, the
Romans were destined to be special organs of human
progress; but even the sociologist could not have got
this conception out of the facts some two or three
thousand years ago. Similarly, in contemplating the
fact on which Comtian Sociology lays most stress,
in contemplating the most remarkable product of
mind—scientific knowledge—in its latest stage, we
find our thoughts carried forward rather than back-
ward by the endeavour to comprehend its significance.
We find ourselves irresistibly led to assume as real
a completer knowledge, comprehending and going
indeed indefinitely beyond the imperfect and fragmentary knowledge possessed by human minds; and this inference is not—as in the case of arguments for Divine Design in the merely physical world—the introduction of a hypothesis *prima facie* alien to the matter that we are studying. For these reasons, I think any admission of the antitheological tendency of modern science, in the way of discarding the ‘celebrated argument from design,’ should stop at the world of mind (including the world of animate life viewed on its mental side): and that when we concentrate attention on this world of mind, the tendency is rather the other way.

To sum up, I reject the claim of Sociology—or, as it is sometimes phrased, of the Historical method—to dominate our study of the problems of Philosophy, while fully admitting that the history of the laws of development of human society, and especially of human thought and belief, constitutes an important part of the knowledge that it is the business of Philosophy to systematise. I reject this claim in the form in which I admit it to be most plausible, namely, in that view of the history of thought which I have called Progressivism, which takes its stand on the admitted social fact of progress in knowledge, and especially points to the sciences which relate to the physical world as examples of right method attained after a long struggle through erroneous and confused methods. I reject it, partly on account of the diversity of methods which the different sciences, impartially viewed, are found to require and use:—the method of
mathematics is most importantly different from that of abstract physics, the method of abstract physics different from that of the concrete study of the inorganic world, and this again different from that of the history of the world of life, while the methods of the studies of human life and thought, individual and social, are still tentative and beset with difficulties in which the analogy of the physical sciences can only give very limited assistance. I reject it, again, on account of the fundamental difference between the task of special sciences dealing with partial and limited aspects of the Universe and the task of Philosophy dealing with the Universe as a whole. In view of all these differences and difficulties, I conceive the one important lesson that Philosophy and Theology have to learn from the progress of Science is the vague lesson of patience and hope. Science sets before us an ideal of a consensus of experts and continuity of development which we may hope to attain in our larger and more difficult work.
LECTURE XII

RELATION OF THEORETICAL TO PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

§ 1. In this concluding lecture I have to attempt the consideration of the relation of Theoretical to Practical Philosophy, of our systematic knowledge—or what purports to be knowledge—of what is, has been, or will be—so far as we can forecast what will be—to our systematic knowledge, our system of reasoned judgments, as to what ought to be. In attempting this difficult problem, I think it best to simplify our task, by abstracting from any controversy or disagreement that exists within the range of Practical Philosophy. I assume, therefore, that we are agreed as to our methods of reasoning to practical conclusions, and that we have harmonised, in a manner that satisfies us, our judgments as to what ought to be. I do not assume our knowledge to be complete: there is no need of that, any more than there is any need of assuming completeness in our knowledge of the physical Universe. But I assume that it is coherent as far as it goes, that fundamental conflicts have been somehow settled.

1 Cf. Prefatory Note.
I shall accordingly take what 'ought to be' to include what is commonly judged to be 'good,' so far as attainable by human action, as well as what is commonly judged to be 'right' or the duty of any human being. Of course 'Good' and 'Evil' as commonly used are wider and less stringent terms than 'Right' and 'Wrong'; since (1) the former are applicable to results out of reach of human attainment, e.g. an abundant harvest next autumn, or influenza in the winter; also (2) 'Goods' may be incompatible: to attain a greater we may have to sacrifice a less. But even when unattainable, or not preferable in the circumstances, what is judged to be 'good' would appear to have the same quality as the term imports within the range of its practical application: 'good' is the kind of thing that we 'ought' to seek to produce or maintain pro tanto and so far as it is in our power.

For simplicity I shall, at first, mean by 'good' in this discussion 'ultimate good on the whole'; good on the whole for human society, the world of living things, or the cosmos—whichever we take to be the larger whole of which the individual is a part, and which is conceived to have an ultimate good capable of being increased or diminished, promoted or retarded, by human action. In ethical discussion the notion of 'right' or 'duty' is, however, more familiar to the common moral consciousness of modern men than the notion of 'ultimate good.' But I shall assume it to be admitted by Common Sense that from the point of view of complete knowledge, the
performance of a duty or a right act must be conceived to be either a part of ultimate good or a means to it.

Taking then the notion of Duty or Right act, I may assume it to be a continually recurrent element in the thought of an ordinary well-behaved person about his own life and that of others. In the thoughts of such men about duties, taken together and compared, there is doubtless more conflict and disagreement than in their thoughts about facts; but agreement much preponderates. Apart from such conflict, there is recognised a variation of duties from man to man; but it is commonly assumed that this variation rests on rational grounds, so that the duties of A, truly conceived, form one rationally coherent system with the duties of B. Such a system we may call a ‘world of human duty,’ of which each man conceives the duties he assigns to himself and his immediate neighbours to be a part indefinitely better known to him than the rest. But he conceives the whole world of duty to be a subject of human knowledge, no less than the world of fact; though the former is lamentably divergent from the latter, in consequence of the general failure of men, in a greater or less degree, to do their duty. The divergence is equally palpable if we consider the ‘good’ results that might be brought about by the performance of duty, as compared with what actually takes place. From either point of view we judge that ‘what ought to be’ to a great extent ‘is not’: and we commonly conceive that its character as
'what ought to be' is entirely independent of whether it comes into actual being or not.

§ 2. The question then is raised whether this distinction between what is and what ought to be is ultimate and irreducible? I think it rash to affirm irreducibility. Just as I would never say that anything is unknowable, but merely that it is unknown—for when we cannot answer a question it seems usually unwarrantable to assume that we understand the matter enough to prove the question unanswerable—so here I do not say that the difference of these notions is ultimately irreducible; but only that I am certainly not satisfied with any proposed reduction proceeding on the lines of scientific thought on which such reduction is commonly attempted. I do not think the desired result can be attained by considering moral judgments from a psychological or sociological point of view, as elements in the conscious life of individuals, or communities, or races. My grounds for this view I have already given in speaking of the relations of philosophy and sociology.¹ No doubt moral judgments and their accompanying sentiments are a department of psychical fact, and we may analyse and classify them as such, and investigate their causes, just as we should do in the case of any other psychical fact. But as long as they are regarded solely from this point of view, it seems impossible to explain or justify the fundamental assumption on which they all proceed, that some such judgments are true and others false, and that when any two

¹ Cf. Lecture IX.
such judgments conflict one or both must be erroneous. As before said, one fact cannot be inconsistent with another fact; accordingly, regarded from a psychological or sociological point of view, A’s judgment, e.g. that all gambling is wrong, does not conflict with B’s judgment that some gambling is right. The question, Which is true? does not arise and would have no meaning. The reduction therefore of Duty to Fact, on this line of thought, if strictly pursued, simply eviscerates ethical thought of its essential import and interest. The history of opinion is a most interesting branch of Sociology, but it has not in itself any criterion of the truth of opinion.

It may be replied, perhaps, that in this argument I have not taken into account the notions of life and development, and their place in psychology and sociology; that possessing these notions science, in this department, does not merely ascertain resemblances and general laws of co-existence and change, but in so doing brings out the notion of an end to which psychical and social changes are related as means, and in relation to which alone they are really intelligible; and that this end supplies the requisite reduction of ‘what ought to be’ to ‘what is.’ For in this end—variously conceived as vital or social ‘health,’ or ‘equilibrium,’ or ‘life measured in breadth as well as length,’—we have, it is thought, a criterion of truth and error in moral judgments; if the acts men approve are conducive to this end they may be counted true or normal, if not false or abnormal.
To this I answer that End as a biological or sociological notion may, no doubt, be held convertible for practical purposes with ethical end, but that this can only be by an ethical judgment affirming the coincidence of the two: the two notions remain essentially distinct, though when affirmed to be coincident they are doubtless liable to be confused. From the mere knowledge that a certain result is what will be or preponderantly tends to be, it is impossible to infer that it ought to be. So far as it is inevitable, I obviously can have no duty with regard to it; so far as its coming may be promoted or retarded, it is my duty to promote it if I judge it good in comparison with that for which it would be substituted, and to retard it if I judge it to be comparatively bad. Perhaps I may suggest that this distinction between the two is often not clearly recognised, because in the terms, such as ‘social welfare’ or ‘social health,’ used to denote the sociological end, the ethical notion is surreptitiously introduced; they are states which have been implicitly judged to be good. And similarly we shall judge institutions and practices that cause misery now as bad on that ground, and not merely because they are not in the shortest line of progress to the future of humanity in which there will be—as Mr. Spencer seems to be convinced—“pleasure unalloyed by pain anywhere.”¹

§ 3. This leads me to another mode of establishing coherence between systematic thought about ‘what

¹ [Cf. above, p. 189.]
is,' and systematic thought about what 'ought to be,' which belongs to a very different manner of thought, and yet is not without affinity with that just discussed —I mean the theological mode. It may, I think, be truly said that the problem which we are now discussing is the fundamental problem of Rational Theology. The task of Rational Theology is to bring our knowledge of what is into coherent relation to our systematic thought as to what ought to be, through the conception of God as a Being in whose righteous will what ought to be actually is. On this view the physical world is an effect and manifestation of Divine Power: the laws of phenomena, partially known by science, are a manifestation of Divine ordering intellect, while, on the other hand, what is thought to be good—provided it is truly thought—is the Divine End so far as revealed to us, and the fulfilment of the rules of Duty is the realisation of the Divine Will.

I have no intention or desire to dispute the truth of these momentous propositions, which, indeed, I regard as necessary assumptions for the religious consciousness. But I hold that they do not really solve the problem that we have now in view: they do not really enable us to bring our conceptions of 'what ought to be' and 'what is' into an intelligible relation of coherence. In considering this it will, I think, conduce to clearness to separate the conception of the Rules of Duty or Divine Commands, from the conception of Universal Good—i.e. what is truly thought to be such—as the Divine End.
Let us begin then with the theological assumption that the true rules of duty are Divine Commands—whether made known by external revelation or through the conscience of the individual. Such commands, it is said, may be imperfectly known to any particular moral agent, either without his own fault—in which case their non-fulfilment will be pardoned—or through wilful neglect of known duty in the past, which has had the effect of impairing his moral insight: but in any case such commands have been uttered, and must be regarded as a part of universal fact. Thus, it may be said, the conception of what ought to be may be brought under the general conception of what is. I think, however, that this reduction fails when we work it out. Firstly, we cannot define a Divine Command—like a human command—as wish plus threat, since we cannot attribute to God an ungratified wish. Shall we then conceive it as simply a threat? This would clearly offend Common Sense, which conceives God as not merely an Omnipotent Ruler, but also a Righteous Ruler, commanding in accordance with a Rule of Right. But thus the difference we are considering emerges again in the form of a distinction between the Rule of Right in the Divine Mind, and the Divine Power as manifested in the world of fact; and, emerging, it brings with it the formidable problem of the existence of evil; since we inevitably ask why God's power does not cause the complete realisation of ideal Right.

The answer of one section of theologians is that
God's purpose cannot be carried out without the creation of beings such as men endowed with Free Will; and that thus the endowment of Free Will renders the admission of wrong-doing inevitable. And so we are brought to the question of Free Will, which in the view of some is fundamentally important, not only in dealing with the relation of Practical to Theoretical Philosophy, but also in constructing Practical Philosophy itself.¹ My view of Free Will is nearly similar to Kant's—with the very important difference that he thinks that the antinomy or dilemma which we both recognise can be properly explained by taking the critical view of knowledge, whereas I hold that no satisfactory explanation has been found of it. I think the presumptive argument for regarding any particular human mind as an effect completely determined by pre-existing mundane causes is very strong, confirmed as it is by even the very imperfect success that we actually have in reducing its volitions to laws and foreseeing the particular volitions that will occur under particular circumstances. On the other hand, when I take the ethical view of action, I find it impossible to regard the volition, when wrong or imperfect, as completely determined in the moment of deliberate action by the causes to which, contemplating it after the event, I should refer to explain its wrongness or imperfection. To put it otherwise: I cannot regard absence of adequate

¹ I think its importance from the latter point of view has been exaggerated. Cf. Methods of Ethics, bk. I. ch. v. [where the subject of Free Will is more fully discussed].
motive as an obstacle to doing what I judge to be reasonable.\(^1\)

But even granting the unqualified validity of this cognition of Freedom, the reconciliation is incomplete; as we see when we pass from considering Duty as Divine command to consider universal good as Divine End. For moral evil—wrong free choice—is in any case only a part of the world’s evil. Physical Evil—not due to free choice—still remains in the world of living things. To deny its existence is violently paradoxical, and if it is admitted, I see no way of reconciling its existence with the goodness of God except by assuming that the Divine Will and Purpose work—like human will and purpose—under conditions. But in that case these conditions must be conceived as having some other source than the Divine Will—and then the theological synthesis of ‘what ought to be’ with ‘what is’ seems to fail, and the problem of bringing the two conceptions into coherent relation still awaits solution.

§ 4. This is not, however, the only important relation of Theology to Practical Philosophy. So far, for the sake of simplicity, I have assumed the task of Practical Philosophy—the reduction of our notions of what ought to be to a coherent system—to have been adequately accomplished. But what I have said elsewhere\(^2\) of the conflict of self-interest and duty shows that this is not my view. Historically

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\(^1\) I introduce moral judgment because otherwise I feel no equally distinct impulse to reject determinism.

\(^2\) *Methods of Ethics*, concluding chapter.
a fundamentally important result of Theism—and religion based on it—is the solution of this conflict. [But this presupposes the theoretic validity of Theism.]¹

I do not mean to imply that Theism is not self-evident or demonstrable. It clearly has been so regarded by very superior minds. When any one says, after Descartes, that finite being presupposes infinite being—not merely the idea of the infinite, but its actual existence, and, in particular, that in finite mental being, in finite intelligence and will, Infinite Intelligence and Will are presupposed, I think I understand, to some extent, the process of thought by which this affirmation is reached; and though I do not agree with it—holding rather that the finite only presupposes the infinite in idea—I do not see how the momentous difference between these two conclusions is to be settled by any argument.

I myself regard Theism as a belief which, though borne in upon the living mind through life, and essential to normal life, is not self-evident or capable of being cogently demonstrated. It belongs, therefore, to a class of beliefs which I do not dispute the general reasonableness of accepting, but which I think have to be considered carefully and apart in estimating the grounds of their acceptance—assumptions for which we cannot but demand further proof, though we may see no means of obtaining it. For there can be no doubt that one of the most important sources of human error lies in the accept-

¹ See Methods of Ethics, concluding chapter.
ance of traditions and suggestions incapable of being supported on adequate evidence.

Accordingly I think that our acceptance of such propositions must have a provisional character, as compared with those that are self-evident or demonstrated. I do not mean that in ordinary thought we are conscious of any material difference of certainty: at all events there is none in my own case, since the principle, e.g. of causality is in my view such a proposition. If any such assumption is confirmed by the test of consistency with other assumptions and cognitions of my own mind or of other minds, its certainty to me becomes, I think, practically indistinguishable from other certainty, though I recognise philosophically the provisional character of the structure of thought to which it belongs. The serious difficulty begins when such assumptions are divergent and conflicting. So far as this is the case, we must infer error in some or all of them, though we may believe the error to be useful, i.e. better adapted than truth would be for the life of certain minds. But the postulates of A can have no validity for B, who does not feel the need of them; on the other hand, B's recognition of their necessity for A must lead him to philosophic doubt of the objective validity of similar postulates in his own case.

§ 5. I do not say this as a mere spectator: as I am conscious of requiring for rational conduct such a postulate, namely, Moral order. This leads me to the connexion of Theism and Optimism (so far as Moral order goes). Neither, in my view
involves the other. We may believe in Moral order—‘the power not ourselves that makes for righteousness’—without connecting it with Personality. This is generally admitted. Perhaps it is less generally admitted that we may believe in Theism—in a Personal First Cause or ground of the finite universe—without believing in Moral order. But I go so far as to say that the chief abstract arguments (except one) used to prove Theism do not tend to prove Moral order.

Suppose it proved, in the Berkeleian or some other way, that Intelligent Will is the only real Cause, how is it proved that it has caused or will cause any other than the imperfect world that we know through experience? Supposing that we may legitimately infer a Designing Mind from the apparently designed result which the complex adjustments of living things present, what do we gain? When I infer human design from an effect, what I imagine and conceive to have pre-existed is a representation in idea in a certain mind, approximately similar in important points to the result produced. There is now in fact (say) a watch, there was therefore in idea a represented adjustment of matter more or less definitely like a watch in the important relations. The imperfection of resemblance may vary indefinitely in degree in human minds, but I cannot attribute any such indefiniteness to the Divine Design. If I infer Divine Design from the adjustments of a watch or of a living plant or animal, I must suppose the pre-existing idea—or let us omit pre-existing if the
relations of time are denied of the Divine Thought — I must suppose the idea to be in every respect similar to the designed result; for the Divine Mind cannot be conceived to work, like the human mind, among material conditions and laws only partially comprehended. But then just in proportion to this perfection of resemblance is the absence of any explanatory efficacy in the reference of designed effect to designing cause. The design being in every particular and detail exactly like the effect, whatever difficulties we have in understanding how the latter came to be must recur with regard to the former; if I cannot prove moral order from the actual existence of the complexly adjusted world without referring it to a designing Mind, I do not see how it is any more to be proved, after the reference has been made, from the ideal existence of an exactly similar world. We have merely duplicated the actual world; we have a world in idea, existing previously to, or apart from, the actual, but presenting exactly the same difficulties from its apparent imperfections. The inferred design affords no more evidence of Moral order than the designed effect from which it is inferred.

§ 6. But, finally, I think that Philosophy can reduce somewhat the difference between ‘what is,’ and what ‘ought to be,’ since the difference between two things compared is reduced by discovering previously unknown resemblances between them, although the notions still remain essentially distinct. E.g. we may compare the circle and the parabola without
knowing that they are both sections of the cone. Surely we should say that the difference between them ascertained by this comparison is reduced by discovering their common relation to the cone? If so, I think it must be admitted that this kind of 'reduction' takes place when we contemplate the difference between 'what is' and 'what ought to be' from a philosophical or epistemological point of view. For from this point of view we regard the world of Duty and the world of Fact as objects of thought and—real or supposed—knowledge, and discover similar relations of thought in both, relations of universal to particular and individual notions and judgments, of inductive to deductive method, etc. Whatever differences may appear between the two from this point of view are of a subordinate kind, and not greater than the differences between different departments of Fact regarded as objects of thought and scientific method. True, if we adhere to Common Sense, the fundamental difference remains that the distinction between 'truth' and 'error,' in our thought about 'what is,' is held to depend essentially on the correspondence or want of correspondence between Thought and Fact; whereas in the case of 'what ought to be,' truth and error cannot be conceived to depend on any similar relation. Still even this difference is at least reduced if we take the philosophical point of view, because from this point of view the supposed correspondence between Thought and what is not Thought is no longer so simple and intelligible as it seems to Common Sense;
though it must be admitted to be a difficult problem, whatever solution of it we may ultimately accept. Further, we must recognise that even in the case of our thought about 'what is,' though error may lie in want of correspondence between Thought and Fact, it can only be ascertained and exposed by showing inconsistency between Thought and Thought, *i.e.* precisely as error is disclosed in the case of our Thought about 'what ought to be.'

1 [Cf. above Lecture II. pp. 33 f.]