

II.—A CRITIQUE OF KANT'S ETHICS.¹

BY FELIX ADLER.

IN the preface to the second edition of the *Kritik of Pure Reason* Kant says: "It behooved me to destroy knowledge (that is, the presumed knowledge of transcendental truths) in order to make way for belief". His moral belief was founded on his ethical theory. This theory it is the purpose of my paper to subject to criticism.

The task of honest criticism is difficult. The popular adage tells us that it is hard to see ourselves as others see us. It is no less hard to see another in the manner in which he sees himself, to enter into his mental world, to put one's self mentally in his place, to see the objects of his thought in the same illumination in which they present themselves to his inner eye. Yet, without thus stripping off one's own personality, as it were, without some such preliminary act of self-renunciation, without a willingness to learn from another, nay, almost, for the time being, to become that other, the business of the critic is hopeless from the first. Nor ought these remarks to appear superfluous to any one who remembers the fate encountered by the Kantian philosophy at the hands of many of his interpreters. The greatness of this extraordinary thinker has indeed been acknowledged by all. But, after some preliminary tributes to his genius, the attempt has often been made to overthrow his credit by triumphantly refuting opinions which he never held, and to expound his system, not in the light of doctrines which he himself taught, and for which he was willing to stand sponsor, but according to what, in the opinion of his expositors, he ought to have taught, or would have if he had as clearly known his own mind as they professed to know it, or if he had foreseen the implications of his thought which they, his successors, had succeeded in explicating. In this way it has come about that some of the most authoritative

¹ A Paper read before the Philosophical Club, New York, 28rd October, 1900.

accounts of the Kantian philosophy in the English language are so infiltrated with the elements of those later systems, which Kant himself did not know and which in their first beginnings he repudiated, that his actual teachings in the minds of many have become obscured, and a kind of bastard Kantianism has come into vogue, reminding one of the spurious Aristotelianism that was current in the schools of the middle ages.

I mention these facts at the outset as a warning intended not so much for my readers as for myself. I, too, am about to undertake the hazardous task of criticism. It is well to remind oneself of the pitfalls that beset such an undertaking.

To criticise, one must understand. To understand, one must sympathise, nay, one ought, in the first instance, to forget criticism and be willing to take the humble attitude of a learner. The entire ethical system of Kant depends on the idea of freedom—not on freedom itself, but on the idea of freedom. What meaning does he attach to this idea? How does it originate? How does he seek to legitimate it? How does he endeavour to reconcile it with the idea of necessity? These questions we shall now take up.

The passages which it concerns us to study and to keep before us in their *ensemble*, as each in some degree supplements the others, are: the chapter on Freedom in the *Kritik of the Pure Reason*, the corresponding chapter in the *Kritik of the Practical Reason*, a chapter on this subject in the *Prolegomena*, and, in addition, the observations contained in Kant's *Philosophical Diary*, edited by Erdmann, and published in 1884: "Observations on Freedom," numbers 1511 to 1552 inclusive. I shall make the attempt to state the main points of Kant's argument in a series of propositions.

First, a distinction is to be drawn between the fact of experience, the inference from this fact, and the argument designed to furnish a metaphysical basis for this inference. The fact of experience is the occurrence in us of judgments implying absolute obligation. I ought to act in such and such a way, irrespective of my inclinations, and even contrary to them, without regard to the force of obstructive habits, heredity, education, environment, etc.; something it is absolutely right for me to do. A merely hypothetical judgment affirms that certain means ought to be adopted in case I desire the end. A categorical judgment affirms the existence of an end which I am not at liberty to choose or reject at my good pleasure, but am under obligation to choose. In every other case the word "ought" refers to the means. In the case of moral obligation the word

"ought" refers to the end itself as well as to the means. This fact of experience constitutes the starting-point of the Kantian ethics. If we dispute this fact, we part company from him *ab initio*. Let us, however, hold in abeyance any objections that may arise in our minds and pursue the argument further.

The starting-point, then, is the fact, real or assumed, of unconditional obligation. The inference from the fact is what Kant calls practical freedom. Because "thou oughtest," therefore "thou canst". It is of the utmost moment to remember that the freedom of the will, according to Kant, is not a matter of experience. Moral freedom is not for an instant to be confounded with psychological freedom, the faculty of deliberation or suspended judgment, or the consciousness of self-determination. Freedom, according to Kant, cannot be proved to occur in consciousness at all. It is not itself a fact of experience, but an inference from such a fact. The fact itself is the judgment "thou oughtest". The inference is "thou canst," "thou art free".

In the next place, practical freedom requires for its speculative basis transcendental freedom. If we are, on moral grounds and for purely moral purposes, to regard ourselves as free agents we must be able to justify the idea of freedom in its own right; we must be able to show, at least, that no self-contradiction is involved in assuming it, and especially that it may be held without infringing upon the law of universal causality, which is the foundation of science. Moral liberty may imply affirmations which transcend the domain of science. It must not, however, come into conflict with science in its own field. If we are to accept the doctrine of freedom at all it must be possible to define freedom and necessity in such a way that both may be held conjointly.

It will be of assistance to us, at this point, to recall the decisive contrast in method which marks off from one another Kant and his idealistic successors. The latter started from the metaphysical side in order to construe the world of experience. Kant always sets out from the empirical side and his metaphysics consists of a series of fundamental principles intended to establish the laws of experience on a secure foundation. The whole of the *K. P. R.* is orientated toward the exact sciences. The phrase "the possibility of experience," of constant recurrence throughout the *Kritik*, means nothing but the possibility of exact scientific knowledge. What seem to the superficial reader mere metaphysical entities, leading an independent existence in the thin upper air of speculation—I mean the chorus of *a priors*, with the

unity of self-consciousness as their Apollo at their head, turn out on closer acquaintance to be the very Læres and Penates of the scientific household, the familiar genii to which every serious investigator pays homage on entering his study or his laboratory. It would doubtless tend to facilitate the understanding of Kant's thought and to strip it of the air of foreignness which is produced by a somewhat pedantic terminology, if the student would always bear in mind the concrete scientific problems, with reference to which the discussions in the *Kritik* are carried on, but which the author, as a rule, does not distinctly mention, in order that the purely abstract character of his argument may be preserved. Thus, for instance, the transcendental æsthetics deals with the T and S of mechanical physics, not with the psychological notions of time and space, nor with their genesis. The chapter on the Axioms of Intuition is concerned with the application of pure mathematics in its complete precision to the objects of experience. The Anticipation of Perception is concerned with the fundamental principle that underlies the conception and the measurement of force. In the discussion of Causality and of Reciprocity or Community it is Newton's laws of motion which the argument keeps in view.¹ In the chapter on the Postulates of Empirical Thinking we are invited to clarify our thought with respect to the scope and limitations of scientific hypotheses. Even when we pass beyond the borders of the Analytic and discuss the ideas of the reason, we have not escaped from the territory of the exact sciences. The idea of God, for instance, in the *K. P. R.* is justified on the ground of its *scientific usefulness*. It is intended, though capable of being charged later on with a richer meaning, to promote the process of induction so that it may confidently be pushed to its farthest possible limits. The ideas of the homogeneity, the specification and the affinity of nature are gathered together, as it were, in a kind of mental symbol, with the *ens realissimum*, or God, as their *substratum*. We are asked to look upon nature as if it were the work of a rational being, not because we have the right to affirm the existence of such a being, but that we may the better succeed in discovering such rational connexions in nature as actually subsist. We are asked to regard it as a coherent whole in order that we may make our interpretation of it as coherent as possible.

The T and S of mechanical physics, Newton's laws of motion, the scope of scientific hypotheses, the assumptions

¹ See Hermann Cohen's *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*.

that underlie the process of induction, these and such as these, and the problems which they involve are the subjects with which the *K. P. R.* is concerned. If Kant had entitled his book "A Philosophical Inquiry into the Fundamental Principles of the Exact Sciences," such a title would have covered the positive side of the *Kritik*, and possibly might have served to prevent much subsequent misinterpretation.

Kant—let us hold fast to this one thought—intends by his entire system to account for the element of *certainty* in experience. He distinguishes between knowledge, loosely so called, and knowledge in the strict sense, between perceptive judgments and judgments of experience or scientific judgments. He asks, Whence the difference? Or, to put it in another way, it is the distinction between the expectation of future happenings, founded on previous association, and the prediction of future happenings, founded on scientific certainty, that constitutes the pivot on which the *Kritik of Pure Reason* hinges. Does scientific prediction merely differ in degree from that expectation which is encouraged by habitual sequence? Is the difference one merely of degree? Kant asserts that it is a difference in kind. There are *a priori*s in a certain part of our knowledge, and this part he calls experience. And what are these *a priori*s? They are the factors of certainty. The substitution of the term 'factors of certainty' for the term *a priori* might be a gain. The term *a priori* suggests independent existence which Kant, far from asserting, constantly and strenuously denies. It suggests a pretended insight into the aboriginal constitution of the mind, into the germinal principles out of which intelligence has developed. And this claim of pretended insight, I take it, was equally foreign to Kant's conception. At any rate, the validity of his theory of knowledge does not depend on the admittance of any such claim. The term *a priori* suggests chronological antecedence and, in this respect, it is particularly misleading. The Kantian *a priori* is discovered not in its origin, but in its operation. The *a priori* in the Kantian sense may be synchronous with its product, may be born at the very moment when it yields its first effect. If a new science were to arise, containing some new element of certainty heretofore unmanifested, we should be compelled to formulate a new variety of the so-called *a priori*, and we should be justified by the spirit, if not by the letter, of Kant's teachings in so doing. The doctrine of the *a priori*, often confused as it is with the doctrine of innate ideas and of intuition, is really as unlike these doctrines as it is possible to be. The thinker of the Kantian type does

not attempt to discover a mental content which is common to the Fiji Islander and to Lord Kelvin, does not attempt to acquaint us with an *a priori* which consoled the cave man in his moments of meditation. Nor does he speak of truths which are apprehended in a flash of intuition, apart from experience. The thinker who follows along the Kantian lines lies in wait, watching how the human mind behaves when it exercises its powers. He observes how the mind reveals itself in the exercise of its powers, and these moments of self-revelation he fixes on his philosophic camera. He watches to see what harvest of assured knowledge the soil of the human mind produces under the rarest and most favourable conditions, and from this crop he makes his inference as to the seed. But as to the origin of the seed itself, as to how it came to be planted in the human mind,—into such questions as these he forbears to inquire, and the whole question of genetic development he leaves to the psychologist to deal with it as he may see fit.

I have said that Kant traverses the field of experience and that wherever he finds an element of certainty he raises the question as to the factor which produces it. And this brings us back, after a somewhat lengthy but, I trust, not irrelevant digression, to the subject in hand. In the realm of ethics, too, he lights upon an element of certainty, namely, that which is implied in the Categorical Imperative, in the idea that there are lines of conduct which ought to be followed at all times and by all persons. There is, indeed, a capital difference between the certainties of science and those of ethics. The former are verified in experience while the latter are not capable of such verification. It cannot be proved, Kant tells us, that a single human being has ever obeyed the Categorical Imperative, that a single human being has ever pursued the line of conduct which yet he must admit to be universally binding. There is a gap between assent and performance of which it cannot be shown that it has been filled, even in a single instance. In ethics, therefore, we do not deal with any demonstrable lawfulness or certainty of conduct, but with the idea of such certainty, of such lawfulness, and it is the task of ethical philosophy, according to Kant, to account for this idea.

To repeat what was said above—"thou oughtest, therefore thou canst," is the starting-point. To say 'thou canst' is to assert practical freedom; but practical freedom presupposes transcendental freedom. To an examination of the latter we shall now pass on. Transcendental freedom is, putting the gist of Kant's thought into a single sentence,

the timeless origination of effects that appear in time. In Observation 1533 (Kant's *Reflexionen*) we read: "Transcendental freedom (of any substance whatsoever) is absolute spontaneity in action. Practical freedom is the faculty of acting on the sole impetus of reason." Observation 1541: "Freedom is the independence of causality from the conditions of space and time". The causality of a thing regarded as a thing *per se*. Observation 1533: "Freedom is the faculty of a cause to determine itself to action, untrammelled by sense conditions". Observation 1545: "We cannot demonstrate freedom *a posteriori*. . . . We cannot cognise the possibility of freedom *a priori*, for the possibility of an original ground of action, which is not determined by some other, is wholly inconceivable. Hence, we cannot theoretically prove freedom at all, but only demonstrate it as a necessary practical hypothesis." The gist of these quotations may be put as follows: Transcendental freedom is the pure self-activity of reason, or the application to one substance of a general notion which, in the case of transcendental freedom, embraces all substances. Freedom is inexplicable and inconceivable. We cannot prove its actuality nor even its possibility. For, what is meant by an act of spontaneous volition or by a substance which, without any determining influence from beyond its sphere, produces the motives upon which it acts we are incapable of understanding. The idea of freedom takes us outside the phenomenal world into the region of things *per se*, or of noumena. Freedom, be it distinctly noted, is vested in the noumena. What is called psychological freedom is a transparent piece of self-deception. Self-determinism, which has sometimes been presented as a substitute for freedom,—namely, the fact that, after our character has been formed by heredity, education, environment, in short, by the confluence of innumerable extraneous influences, we then act along the lines of this, our character—such self-determinism Kant dismisses with a single word of infinite contempt. "The freedom of a mechanical turn-spit" he calls it. No; genuine freedom, he demands, self-activity of the reason—a very different thing from self-determinism—the rational substance in us, acting on its own motion, causing to emerge of its own accord the commanding motives that ought to sway our will. But this freedom, he tells us, occurs behind the scenes. We have no consciousness of it, at least, not any that we can build on. There is an actor in us who never takes off his mask, who never appears on the stage, and of whom, nevertheless, we are to assume that he exists because of certain effects which he produces, from behind, or from

within ; in short, from the region of the unseen. This actor is our noumenon. Freedom is vested in the noumenon ; our freedom is in our noumenon.

But, in this connexion, it becomes indispensable to pause and to consider to what we should be committing ourselves if we were to go along with Kant in assuming noumena in general and the noumenon of man in particular, more especially as the degree of reality which belongs to freedom depends on the reality ascribed to the noumenon of which freedom is a function. Now does Kant say that things *per se* exist? Not at all. He says they must be assumed to exist. The distinction is sharp. At first blush, it looks as if, in contrast to phenomena, which convey merely the appearance of reality, the things *per se* were designed to satisfy our craving for the ultimately real. The world of phenomena is the world of seeming ; that of noumena the world of truth. But, in a certain sense, the direct opposite is unquestionably Kant's meaning. The world of phenomena is for us—and, of course, only for us—the world of objective reality. By no other means, according to Kant, can we attain to the knowledge of reality except by subjecting the data of sensation to the synthetic processes of the understanding. Sense data, thus synthesised, he calls objects. They exist. The solar system exists. The fall of a stone is an actual occurrence. The things *per se* do not exist. They are only assumed to exist. According to Kant, the separate rings in the chain of experience and the interconnexion of link with link, are real. But the whole chain is not a reality. The notion that the chain can be carried back endlessly, or that it is suspended somewhere, from an aboriginal pier or support, does not correspond to reality. Such a thing as a universe does not exist, except only in idea.

If this be the case, if noumena do not exist, but are only assumed to exist, what profit is there in assuming them? They have such value as belongs to concepts of limit. Negatively, they serve to warn us that our interpretation of things is not the only possible one, not the final one. We, indeed, can know no other ; but we can know that there may be, must be, others. With the sort of material to which we are restricted, namely, the data of sensation, with the sort of mental tools with which we must work, namely, the synthetic processes of the understanding, Kant tells us we may never hope to complete the chain of knowledge. Not only have we not succeeded thus far, but, in the nature of the case, the prospect of complete success is excluded. But in addition, the noumena have certain positive values.

They are "dukes of the marches," stationed on the frontier of the kingdom of science to defend it against the incursions of supernaturalism and to extend it without assignable limit, under the stimulus of the idea of totality which, though incapable of realisation, is indispensable as a provocative of effort. And, in addition, there are two noumena, the noumenon of God and the noumenon of man which, in the field of morality and religion, acquire the highest kind of positive, practical value, this value consisting in their being the assumed centres of self-activity, the assumed fountain-heads of that freedom which, in virtue of the Categorical Imperative, according to Kant, we are compelled to postulate. Does this ethical value make them any the more real? If we keep within the bounds of Kant's thought, I think we must answer in the negative. We must assume that the noumenon of man, for instance, the centre of his self-activity, exists. We are bound to act as if it existed, but we do not know that it exists, and we cannot say that it does exist, as we say that light exists; we cannot say that self-activity operates, as we say that the forces of nature operate.

So far off, so impalpable, so, in a certain sense, unreal is this rational noumenon, so little does it enter into competition with the things whereof we know. A high, subtle, abstract, inconceivable, though not therefore unthinkable, somewhat! We are bound to act as if it existed. This is the whole outcome. Whatever certainty belongs to it is in the nature of moral certainty. Whatever life-blood of reality it possesses it borrows from its uses. It is not the ultimate reality. It is an X that stands for the ultimately real. Yet, even to go as far as this, even to admit the noumenon into our scheme of thought at all, as an indispensable auxiliary of moral effort, we are obliged to show, unless our mental household is to be hopelessly divided against itself, that self-activity and mechanical causality can subsist together, that they do not clash, that the order of nature and the order of freedom may obtain in the self-same act.

Let us review, for a moment, the steps we have taken. Unconditional obligation, the one sure fact and the starting-point. Practical freedom the inference. Transcendental freedom, the presupposition of the latter. Freedom, wholly ruled out as a matter of experience, lodged in the noumenon. This noumenon, this, our transcendental substance, the timeless originator of effects in time, incapable of being proved to exist, but only assumed to do so. Yet the freedom which is thus assumed, inconceivable and inexplicable as it may be, must, at least, be shown to be not incompatible

with natural causality. To the task of showing this Kant addresses himself in the famous chapter of the *K. R. V.*, which, as has been said, should be taken in conjunction with his statements in the *Prolegomena*, in the *K. P. R.* and in the *Reflexions*. He is aware of the difficulties of his task and wrestles painfully both with his thought and with the expression of it. I myself do not believe that he has succeeded in solving his problem; but I have been chiefly concerned, thus far, in my interpretation, to make clear the auxiliary nature of his metaphysical concepts, and I trust I have shown that they are quite devoid of that transcendent or mystical meaning with which some believe them to be fraught. In commenting on the subject which we now take up, my principal concern, before I attempt to criticise at all, will still be the same, to arrive at Kant's exact meaning as far as possible, and to demonstrate that it is far less charged with positive metaphysical affirmation than a cursory reading might suggest.

Others have said: determinism or freedom. Kant says: determinism and freedom. The line of his argument is a straight and narrow way, as narrow as a razor's edge. It is easy to miss his drift, as the example of famous expounders sufficiently attests. And yet, we have here reached the critical point of Kant's ethics, and should we fail to obtain light here, we shall have to grope in darkness through all the remainder of our journey. The key-thoughts which express the terms on which the reconciliation between freedom and necessity is attempted to be effected are the following:—

(a) If the objects of nature were things *per se* there could only be a single law applicable to them. Since they are appearances there is room for a double law, the law of natural causality applying to the appearances, and the law of causality through freedom applying to the things to which these appearances correspond.

(b) Freedom is the timeless origination of effects in time. The cause is noumenal; the effect phenomenal. This relation is possible because causality is a dynamic relation, and the cause may therefore *differ in kind* from the effect.

(c) The law of freedom is compatible with the law of mechanical causality because freedom is a "cosmological idea," that is to say, because the notion underlying it is the same as that which underlies mechanical causality, only in the former case expanded, magnified, raised to the power of the infinite. The common notion is that of constancy and necessity. In the case of phenomena, that which happens constantly and necessarily—namely, the invariable occurrence

of certain consequents after certain antecedents—is conditioned upon similar dependable relations existing between a series of preceding antecedents and consequents. The mind, however, unable to pursue this chase to the finish, fashions for itself the idea of an unconditioned necessity and constancy, that is, of something which happens always and necessarily, just as it does happen, without respect to what precedes or follows. And this is the notion of freedom as Kant entertains it. The point of his argument on behalf of reconciliation is that the idea of constancy and universality in general does not contradict that of constancy and universality in a particular instance. Farther than this he does not attempt to go. He warns us repeatedly that he does not undertake to show how freedom and natural causation may be harmonised, that he does not attempt to show that freedom is actual nor yet to show how it is possible, but only that it is possible, namely, in the sense that the notion of freedom, as of unconditioned necessity and constancy, does not contradict the notion of conditioned necessity and constancy, but rather is an extension of the latter, the latter raised in idea to the power of the infinite. To put the thought in different language, the idea of freedom, while leaving the empirical nexus untouched, superadds the missing *logical link* between antecedent and consequent. The empirical nexus is a foot-bridge that spans a river. Causality, through freedom, is the steel cable that connects the banks and supports the frail structure that hangs suspended from it. The idea of freedom is that of the complete conditioning of what, in experience, is always incompletely conditioned, and this idea is reached, not by a perfect regressus from which we are precluded, but by our going outside of the time series, being warranted in so doing by the dissimilarity in kind that may subsist between a cause and its effect. (I ought here to say, by way of caution, that Kant does not attempt to efface the distinction between the order of nature and the order of freedom, when he urges upon our attention what is common to both, namely, the notion of constancy and necessity in happenings. Unconditioned self-activity and activity determined by antecedent conditions remain as widely apart as ever. The two have not really been reconciled. Still, if we admit the argument, they are shown to be not irreconcilable. The same act which we know to be determined, when we regard it as lying in the empirical series, we may regard as free, when we consider it as the effect of a deeper, under-working cause. And at this point, it may be well to observe the closeness of connexion between the *Kritik of Practical Reason* and the *Kritik of Pure Reason*.)

The formula of the Categorical Imperative is but the application to conduct of the idea of necessity and universality, that is, of freedom regarded as a cosmological idea.)

Let us now proceed to consider how these key-thoughts are applied to the problem of the freedom of the human will. First, a distinction is drawn between the empirical character and the noumenal character. The former is wholly subject to the law of natural necessity; the latter is free. Every act of ours, Kant tells us, is to be referred back for explanation to antecedent conditions. All that part of any human act which is explicable is thus to be explained. If we could completely know the empirical character of a man at any given moment, we should be able to predict all his future actions with as much certainty as we predict an eclipse. Language could not be more explicit than this. The law of natural causality tolerates no exception, and our empirical self, the only self we know, lies wholly within the province of that law. Wherein, then, does freedom consist? In the fact that our empirical self is but the phenomenon of the noumenal self, in the fact that the whole series of our acts is but the manifestation in time of a timeless choice. The noumenon does not enter as an interloper between any antecedent and its consequent. It is the profounder reality of which the whole string of antecedents and consequents are the external apparition.

Further amplification and elucidation, however, are needed. What, we may ask, does Kant mean when he says that a man's empirical character is the phenomenon of his particular noumenon? Empirically, the influences that contribute to form us stretch back far beyond the limits of our individuality. Sixteen grandparents, if we go back only a few generations, and hosts of ancestors back of these, have helped to mould us. Our origins are so ramified as speedily to be lost to view in the general mass of humanity; and humanity itself, in its beginnings, extends backward into the animal world. What, then, does Kant mean when he says that my empirical character is the appearance of my noumenon? The word 'character,' it seems to me, is to be taken strictly. Only the character is the phenomenon of the noumenon. And what is the character? Briefly, the degree of intensity with which the reason in me resists all those influences upon me that are uncongenial with itself, the degree of effort which the reason puts forth in affirming itself. When Kant, therefore, declares that, if we knew a man's empirical character at any moment, we could predict all his future acts, he includes in the term 'character' this

aboriginal set of the will. But, if this be so, why does he assert that, nevertheless, every act of ours can be explained in terms of its antecedents, seeing that the set of our will, the degree of intensity with which the reason resists counter influences and affirms itself is the operation in us of freedom and cannot be explained in terms of antecedent conditions. The answer to this question is that the set of our will, the degree to which we are estranged from or conform to reason, is a wholly unknown quantity, is hidden even from ourselves. Yes, indeed, we should be able to predict a man's future acts if we knew his empirical character. But we never can know his empirical character, at least, not that element in it which stamps it as a character, which is the imprint on it of the rational cause. What we know about other people and even about ourselves is only the objective, outward side of morality, the act, but never, with any degree of certainty, the motive. Self-interest, concern for our reputation, the desire for internal peace may account even for those acts which seem the most virtuous; such as charity to the poor, self-sacrifice, truthfulness, etc. Briefly, the morality of an act does not lie within the range of experience. We may give ourselves and others the benefit of the doubt and assume that they or we have acted from a purely rational motive; but we can never be sure of the fact that they have or that we have. Still less can we be sure of the degree of merit to which we are entitled to lay claim. Our worth is proportional to the degree of effort which the rational nature in us puts forth in the attempt to affirm itself. But it is obvious that if the counter influences, as in the case of the offspring of a dipsomaniac, are great, even a sturdy effort of the rational nature may produce but meagre objective results; while, on the other hand, if the influences from without are propitious, as in the case of the gently born, even a feeble effort may produce outwardly fair results. The degree of merit, however, is proportioned, not to the result, but to the effort, and this, even in our own case, we cannot estimate.

Of the Imperative alone "thou oughtest" are we sure, and of the idea of freedom involved in it. Actual freedom is an inference, a postulate. But if the freely operating cause be thus inaccessible and if, at the same time, unlike the noumena of phenomena in general, it is represented as a cause which has intercourse with the phenomenal world, and which injects its influence into the latter, how are we to represent to ourselves this connexion between two orders of existence so entirely disparate? I think we shall best comprehend Kant's language if we assume that what he

says on this subject is to be understood symbolically. A symbol, in the sense in which Kant employs the term, is a noumenon represented for the nonce as if it were clothed with phenomenal attributes. We know that the garments do not fit. We do not assert that any such being as we have dressed up actually exists. But we require the help of such a figment because it stands for or symbolises an ultimate truth, which we need to keep before the mind, and of which we cannot in any other way lay hold. Thus, for instance, the conception of God, as Kant employs it, is symbolic. He does not say that God exists. On the contrary, he has taken the utmost pains to destroy the proofs of his existence. Nor is his re-introduction of the idea of God a glaring self-contradiction, as it is often represented to be. He does not say that God exists. He tells us that we are to think and to act as if such a being existed, for practical purposes. He has draped the noumenon in phenomenal attributes. And in the same way, I believe, in the chief passages that relate to the subject which we are now considering, he has invested the noumenon of freedom with phenomenal attributes, with garments that do not fit, with attributes that really contradict its nature. He asks us to pass over the contradiction, to look upon the thing as if it were what he describes it to be, to treat it as the symbol of what we cannot, in its own essence, grasp, in order that we may be able to keep before our minds the fact that there is such a noumenon. Thus, for instance, he represents a rational, timeless cause as acting. But how can we speak of action at all which does not occur in time? What sense can we connect with the words "timeless action"? Never mind, says Kant, we are dealing with a symbol. A noumenon is treated *ad hoc* as if it were a phenomenon. Again, a rational cause, one which is determined solely from within, nevertheless elects in a timeless choice to assert its rational nature imperfectly. The lapses of our empirical character are represented as due to a noumenal flaw. But how can there be such a flaw? Since reason, *ex hypothesi* is not determined by anything outside itself but solely by itself, how can it give effect to its nature otherwise than in a perfectly adequate manner? Once more, "Never mind". We are investing a noumenon with phenomenal attributes. We speak of it with a *proviso* "as if". It is only on the assumption of the symbolic significance of those statements of Kant which relate to the commerce of the noumenon of freedom with the phenomenon that his theory can be properly articulated, and the various parts of it so disposed as to avoid clashing with each other.

I have devoted so much of my time to exposition as to leave little room for criticism. But as, in that part of this paper which is devoted to the theory of freedom, my main object has been exposition, I shall not regret this circumstance and shall state my points of criticism very briefly. They are of two kinds: practical and metaphysical. The attempt to formulate at all or to represent, even in symbolic fashion, the relation of the supersensible to the sensible world is ever fraught with grave moral perils. There are two alternative positions between which those who undertake such attempts are sure to oscillate, two horns of a dilemma on either one or the other of which they are certain to be impaled. Either the phenomenal is noumenalised, or the noumenal is phenomenalised; either the relative, the human, is invested with an absolute character and thus acquires a degree of rigidity which deprives it of life, or the absolute is degraded to the level of the relative and thus loses its absolute character. A result of this nature has attended Kant's undertaking. He tells us that the empirical character is but the unfolding in time of a noumenal choice, taken outside the realm of time. If this be so, then it follows that the hope of moral regeneration is cut off and on the most obvious grounds of practical morality we must protest. To say that the empirical character is merely the apparition of the noumenal is tantamount to saying that we cannot really become different than we have been, that we can only, as circumstances favour or inhibit, bring to light that moral self in us which has been and is and will ever be the same. But this is to deny our dearest moral hope. From the standpoint of practical morality, we are bound, on the contrary, to say that we can always transcend our former selves, that we can really become different beings, that our choice is not beyond recall, that a new choice is open to us every day and every hour. The following alternative, it seems to me, so far as Kant is concerned, is not to be evaded. Either he must make the character a rigid thing and introduce noumenal inflexibility into the empirical will; or, if he were to admit the possibility of genuine moral change, he would be constrained to introduce change into the noumenon itself and thus abolish its noumenal character.

The other class of objections are metaphysical.

In the first place, let us state the objections that lie against the Kantian deduction of the possibility of freedom. Admitting that natural causality applies only to phenomena, it follows that another kind of causality, operating over and above or outside of the time series, is thinkable. Thus far we must, I

think, assent to Kant's argument. We are bound to remember that the temporal series of antecedents and consequents is a fragment incapable of being extended so as to touch a starting-point or to merge into a final end. Natural and libertarian causality are contradictory only on the assumption that a past eternity has actually elapsed, that the whole series of natural causes exists objectively, independently of our subjective ability to survey it, that it lies like some silent world which has never been visited, like the Pole which has not been reached, but of which we know, all the same, that it is objectively existent. If the whole series of antecedents be supposed to exist in this fashion, ready to appear to an intelligence capable of winging its flight so far, then, indeed, natural causality precludes any other kind of causality, then determinism swallows up liberty, and the problem of freedom cannot even be raised. But if we distinguish between the infinite expansion of possible experience and the possibility of an infinite experience, as Kant does, then the law of natural causality is merely a provisional device for the arrangement of phenomena with a view to our subjective mastery of them, a device which does not yield final truth and does not exclude recourse to other modes of interpretation, if, for valid reasons, we find ourselves called upon to resort to them.

To this extent, then, I should agree with Kant. But he takes a further step, and here my agreement with him ceases. We may think of the noumenon, he says, as that unknown X which lies behind the screen of phenomena, a mere ideal point to which attaches our logical demand for totality. We may also think of it, he goes on to say, as a cause which produces effects in the time series, and which has relations to and commerce with a certain particular class of phenomena. The noumenon in the first sense is the noumenon of the world in general. The noumenon in the second sense is our human noumenon, that which corresponds to and serves as a point of attachment for the idea of a unified or moral personality. It is this notion of intercourse between two wholly disparate orders of existence that creates all the difficulties, the insuperable difficulties, with which his doctrine of freedom is embarrassed.

The metaphysical objections are these. There are two factors to the combined use of which the human mind is unalterably committed by its very constitution. The one a manifold of some kind, as a datum; the other the synthetic process in some one of its various modes. Within the field of experience Kant realises that these two factors are inseparable, that unity is meaningless unless it be the unity of

a manifold of some sort. Outside of the field of experience he seeks to cut the cord which connects these Siamese twins, to break the contract by which these two mutually dependent correlatives, these everlasting partners are associated, and to establish a synthesis *in vacuo*, to treat the rational factor which contributes the element of unity to experience as if it were capable not only of existing by itself, but of becoming the cause of effects. This attempt to set off by itself one of a brace of correlatives, to cut with one of a pair of shears, seems to me the capital metaphysical error.

A second error seems to lie in the assumption, which is fundamental to Kant's argument, that effect and cause need not be the same in kind, causality merely implying dependence, and not involving an intrinsic connexion. Now it is true that the effect is never wholly identical with the cause but, in some respects, differs from it, else it would be impossible, even in thought, to hold the two apart. And yet, not only is there, despite the difference, a fundamental identity, a common substance necessarily presumed to underlie all changes, but the changes themselves must be reducible to a common denominator, as when the physicist attempts to explain all the manifestations of energy in Nature as modes of motion. Nor can we establish a firm connexion between effects and causes until we have satisfied both requirements ; until we have found or assumed an unchanging somewhat that underlies the change, and have discovered a common process of which all the changes may be explained as variations. Now, it is evident that, while Kant may be admitted to have proved the possible identity of substance, as between noumenon and phenomenon, he has not shown the common process of which the phenomenal and noumenal happenings are the modes, and, in default of such a demonstration, it is not legitimate to refer phenomenal effects to noumenal causes. Such differences as may properly be allowed to exist between effect and cause are differences within the same order, not differences between one order and a wholly different order. Moreover, the statement of Kant that causality implies merely dependence and not intrinsic connexion, shows that he transfers what is only true of phenomena to noumena. In the case of the former, precisely because they are only phenomena, we must rest content with a merely extrinsic nexus. But a noumenal cause is one the very assumption of which implies an attempt to satisfy our logical demand for a complete account of the relation between cause and effect, and a complete account must show the intrinsic bond between the two.

At this point, and before passing to other parts of my subject, I may perhaps attempt to indicate succinctly my own attitude toward the question of freedom, as I have been requested to do. The problem of moral spontaneity or free will seems to me to be only a special case of the problem of mental spontaneity. Is it true that the mind can act spontaneously? Is it true that it can react in an original way *on* the data of sensation presented to it? When the key of sensation is thrust into our mental lock is there a bolt shot that holds fast experience and prevents the treasures we gather from being scattered to the winds? Does there occur an act of unification? If so, then this act of unification is an act of mental spontaneity strictly speaking, itself not explicable in terms of that manifold, of the coherence of which it is the prior condition. Thus, in a certain sense, we are justified, instead of narrowing the territory of freedom, rather to extend it, instead of wondering and doubting whether we can vindicate the existence of freedom in one aspect of our mental life, rather to wonder at the suggestion that there should *not* be freedom in the mental life as seen from one particular point of view, since freedom, spontaneity, is the characteristic of our mental life from every point of view. I do not say, of course, that we can explain this fundamental act of unity in any of its manifestations. I only claim that it is not more inexplicable in that aspect of the mental life which we call volition than in any other. The fundamental question is: how the one and the many can embrace, how it comes to pass that all that is highest in us, our science, our art, our ethics, should be the offspring of this marriage of two such alien opposites as the one and the manifold. And to this question there is no answer. We are so constituted. As a matter of fact, truth, beauty, and goodness are the children of this pair who are for ever fleeing and for ever seeking each other, for ever clamoring to be divorced on the ground of radical incompatibility, and for ever unable to endure the absence of each other's society. How there can be mental spontaneity is the insoluble problem, soluble only in a practical way, namely, by the assurance that there is. Every time a mathematician conceives the notion of uniform space, or a physicist the notion of uniform time, he performs an act of mental freedom. Every time we mark off a set of relatively constant processes and regard them collectively, *i.e.* from the point of view of unity, as an object or a thing, we are performing an act of mental freedom. The chain of causes and effects, of antecedents and consequents, a chain which hangs loose in air at both ends,

nevertheless, so far as link is interlocked with link, is a product of our mental freedom. Natural causation itself, which seems to fetter us as if we were slaves, is a fetter which we ourselves have forged in the workshop of mental freedom. The world, so far as we can speak of a world—and we can only speak of it by a species of poetic licence; Nature, or this fragment of Nature of which we have knowledge, which we have made in our own mental image, or, at least, stamped with our mental image, which, in this sense, we have not merely reproduced but created, Nature, I say, with all the causality that obtains in it, is the evidence and the witness of our mental freedom.

And yet, of course, there is a distinction between moral and mental freedom. Though the fetter be forged by our own hands, it binds us none the less securely. And the problem, as it seems to me, is really this: not how freedom is possible, for the answer to that question simply is, it is possible inasmuch as it is actual, but how is one kind of freedom consistent with another kind, the kind of spontaneity which we mean when we think of volition, with that kind of freedom which operates in constructive science? And what is the distinction between these two? Briefly, to my mind, the distinction is this. The act of unification, which is involved in science, is a synthesis of causes. The act of unification, involved in ethics, is a synthesis of ends. The face of science is turned backward. It seeks to explain the present in terms of the past. The face of ethics is turned forward. It seeks to determine the present with reference to results to be attained in the future. Or, to go a step farther, the ultimate distinction between science and ethics is it not this? The manifold with which science deals, which it is its business to unify, is given in sensation, in experience. The manifold with which ethics deals is not given, not supplied at all from without, but is a purely ideal manifold. Granted that, being so made as we are, the union of the one and the many is the burden of every song we sing, is the theme of that intellectual music in obedience to the strains of which our world, the little world we inhabit, is built up,—granted that this is so, we find that in the field of science our liberty is restricted by the circumstance that the manifold, which it is of the essence of our intelligence to seek to unify, is forced upon us, as an unalterable datum, to which we must accommodate ourselves in order to master it, and which yet we can never wholly master because of the irrational residuum which remains in it, despite our utmost efforts to rationalise it, because it is, in the ultimate analysis, intractable and

uncongenial to our intelligences. And therefore, aiming at a highest manifestation of our constructive liberty, seeking an utterly free field for the achievement of rational synthesis, we figure to ourselves the idea of a manifold which shall be wholly tractable, of such *differentia* in which shall wholly be expressed the underlying unity, of such unity as shall wholly embrace and absorb in itself the opposing plurality. And it is by this means, by freeing the notion of the manifold from the restricting conditions to which as a datum *ab extra* it is subjected, by transcending the bounds of experience and taking the notion of the manifold in an unlimited sense, as 'manifold in general,' by conceiving the two antipodal poles between which our intellectual life plays, as ideally harmonised, it is by such means that we arrive at the organic ideal, or the ethical ideal. For the two are identical. The organic ideal is that of an infinite system of correlated parts, each of which is necessary to express the meaning of the whole, and in each of which the whole is present as an abiding and controlling force. The ethical ideal is produced by applying this purely spiritual conception of an infinite organism to human society. To act as if my fellow-beings and as if I myself were members of such an infinite system in which the manifold and the one are wholly reconciled is to act morally. So act, not as if the rule of thy action were to become a universal law for all rational beings (for I shall presently endeavour to show that this is impossible) but so act that through thine action the ideal of an infinite spiritual organism may become more and more potent and real, in thine own life and in that of all thy fellow-beings.

And how is this ethical kind of freedom compatible with the other kind which expresses itself in forging the chain of natural causality? The two are compatible only, because they refer to totally different sides of the same act. Natural causality deals with the manifold that is given. It seeks to piece together the parts of it as they appear in the time series, to relate each successor to its predecessor. Moral causality deals with a manifold that is not given. It signifies the force in us of an idea, namely, of the idea of a final reconciliation of Unity and Plurality, whereof experience presents no example, and which, nevertheless, in consequence of the inborn desire to harmonise the two conflicting tendencies of our nature, we are compelled to propose to ourselves as our highest end. Moral causality leaves natural causality intact in its own sphere and uses it. Natural causality may be compared to the shuttle that runs backward and forward weaving, according to unalterable mechanical laws,

the web and woof of existence. Moral causality, our 'best card' in more senses than one, may be compared to the pattern in accord with which the web is to be woven. (Technically speaking, the fatal error that vitiates Kant's transcendental dialectic is to be found in the proposition that the idea of the unconditioned arises solely *a tergo*. Any existing thing whatsoever being conditioned, he says, necessarily presupposes the idea of a preceding sum of conditions adequate to account for its existence, or the idea of an unconditioned. But we are not equally constrained, he maintains, to look beyond the present and to think of the multitudinous consequences of that which now is as converging toward a future unconditioned. So far as we are mere spectators of the show, inquisitive of causes, this is true. But, inasmuch as we are also actors, and since each end of action that we propose to ourselves has only relative significance, we are forced, would we satisfy the demand for unity in the choice of ends, to push forward in anticipation toward some ultimate end to which all our minor ends may be related as means. The unconditioned of the future, therefore, necessarily arises for us in the field of conduct or of ethics, and the idea of the complete merging into one another of the manifold and the one appears to me, if not the absolute end, the highest and clearest representative symbol of it to which we are capable of attaining.)

Having thus, in bare outline, indicated my acceptance of the doctrine of freedom on other than Kantian grounds and with a meaning assigned to it different from his, let me now pass on to other points of criticism. The connexion between the *Kritik of Pure Reason* and that of the *Practical Reason* is close and must ever be borne in mind. Kant is the philosophical exponent and champion of the universal reign of law. Throughout the *Kritik* it is his aim to fortify our confidence in the validity of natural laws. To this end, he demonstrates the existence in the mind itself of the types of which these laws are the replicas. He discovers in the mind itself the philosopher's stone which transmutes associations into laws. By what right do we speak of physical laws at all? he asks. What is the law-creating element which gives to these so-called laws their lawful character? These are the questions which in the *Kritik* he puts. And the various forms of the synthetic process furnish the answers to them. Kant is the philosopher of physical law. His metaphysical concepts are intended to buttress and support the throne of physical law. And as to his fundamental ethical principle, this again turns out to be nothing more than the disem-

bodied ghost of physical law, just the sheer idea of absolute lawfulness applied to conduct, just the bare notion of necessity and universality in action, without regard to the content of the act. There is no sunlight in Kant's moral world. All moral acts in themselves considered are as dead and cold as the satellite that revolves around our earth, and the light of universality and necessity, with which they shine, is reflected and comes to them from an unseen luminary lying beyond our horizon. Now, in replying to this view, let it be remembered that the notion of necessity and universality, in the *Kritik of Pure Reason*, is always presented as the concomitant of the synthetic processes. Something occurs in consciousness, namely, the synthetic process in one of its various forms, and, in virtue of the constitution of our minds, we realise that this process, this act of unification, is necessary and universally valid for ourselves and for all rational beings like ourselves. Something happens which we recognise as necessary. But in the *Kritik of the Practical Reason* necessity and universality, these concomitants of something else, are represented as if an independent authority belonged to them, as if they were cogent in their own right. This is not and cannot be the case. And here we light upon the flaw in Kant's ethical principle. Here we see why his ethics is so unconvincing. It is, I repeat, because that which is cogent only as the concomitant of something else is represented by him as if it were cogent on its own account. I do not admit, as is often asserted, that it is the formal character of Kant's ethical principle that makes it unsatisfying. The principle of causality, too, is a purely formal one, and yet it is fruitful and convincing enough. Rather is it the failure of Kant to point out, as underlying ethics, some specific, synthetic process capable of being apprehended by us as necessary and universal that makes his ethics sterile. It is a ghost, the ghost of natural law, which we are asked to accept as the oracle of conduct. Kant's Categorical Imperative comes to us with the impact of a blow on the head. "Thou shalt." Why? We are forbidden even to ask that question. One is sometimes tempted to think that the spirit of the Prussian Army, as it was handled in the days of Frederick the Great, Kant's contemporary, has entered, in the shape of the Categorical Imperative, into the domain of philosophy, that the Imperative of the metaphysician is a kind of echo of the commands of the corporal. But, if we take heart, nevertheless, and reflect upon the way we are thus bidden to act, if we imagine a state of human society in which every man would be a perfect moral agent, accord-

ing to Kant's formula, i.e., a state of society in which every act of every human being would have the character of necessity and universality, and then ask ourselves whether such a state of society would really represent to us the perfect moral order; whether we should be able to dwell upon it with satisfaction, I think the answer would be in the negative. Suppose the goal, as Kant conceives of it, to have been reached; but what has been gained? Suppose that every word spoken and every deed done is determined by this abstract idea of universality and necessity. Suppose that men act with the precision of conscious automata. But in what respect would the moral order thus painfully established—if ever it could be—be superior to the physical order? The inhalation and exhalation of breath, the discharge of the basest animal functions, the fall of a stone, are marked by the same universality and necessity. Consciousness, indeed, would be superadded. The machine would be aware of the turning of its wheels. But this, considered as the net outcome of "the travailing and the groaning," is hardly an inspiring outlook. And moreover, even this result, the perfect automatism plus consciousness, could only be attained in the last days, at the end of evolution, in the far distant future. While, in the long interval, the consciousness which is superadded would be distinctly a disturbing factor inhibiting instincts which might have been surer guides, confusing and often baffling our decisions. Kant's ethics is a species of physica. His moral law is natural law dipped in the bath of consciousness. The fundamental flaw is that he represents the joint notion of necessity and of universality, which is cogent only as the accompaniment of the synthetic process, as if cogent on its own account.

The next point of criticism is that Kant's conception of morality is projected so far into the empyrean that there seems to be no bridge by which it can be connected with the actual sublunary world. According to Kant, a moral act is one which is performed exclusively out of respect for the idea of necessity and universality. Now, as he admits, it cannot be proved that such an act has ever been performed, and hence it follows that the existence anywhere of moral beings becomes doubtful. For what is a moral being? Shall we say a being *capable* of moral acts, capable only, without our having adequate reason to think that this capacity has ever expressed itself? Kant doubtless would say that a moral being is one who acknowledges the obligation to act morally, whether he does so or not, one who recognises in himself the sort of constraint which is due to the working,

as he would explain, of the idea of universality and necessity. But have we any ground for supposing that the preponderant majority of men are even faintly moved by this idea of universality and necessity, that they stand inwardly in awe and reverence before it, or that they feel the obligation of purging the springs of their conduct of every other motive except that of respect for necessity and universality? And if we have no ground for supposing this, then, also, have we no ground for regarding the preponderant majority of mankind as moral beings. We cannot even be sure that we ourselves, who walk on the upper levels of abstract thinking, are moral beings! And hence the moral law falls to the ground because there is no one of whom we can be sure that he applies it, and no one to whom with certainty it can be applied. Plainly, we are bound to act morally only toward other moral beings. If, nevertheless, it is urged once more that though freedom be absent the idea of freedom is present in every human being, even in the most humble and the most debased, I must again reply that the idea of freedom, as Kant interprets it, is surely not present in the minds of the ignorant or of the vicious. And, if we are to continue to regard every one who wears the human form as a moral being, and as one toward whom we are bound to behave morally, it must be on other grounds than those with which Kant supplies us.

The next objection is that the practical moral commands are incapable of being derived from the Kantian formula. It is a matter of surprise that this difficulty has not more clearly forced itself on the attention of the many thinkers who have trodden in Kant's footsteps. The duties which all recognise as moral cannot be derived from the bare idea of lawfulness. There is a fallacy involved in Kant's reasoning, there is a false assumption underlying it. To show what this is, let us take up his own examples of the moral commands or duties and observe the method by which he endeavours to deduce them from his formula. All that is requisite, he tells us, in order to decide in a given case whether a contemplated act is moral or not, is in thought to universalise it, that is, to suppose that all men should act in the same way. If, on this hypothesis, it is still consistent to act in this manner, then the act is moral. Self-consistency, on the basis of universality, is the test. For instance, in the case of veracity. A man hesitates whether it is morally right or wrong to tell a lie. Let him assume that all men should make it their rule in their communications with their fellows to speak, not the truth, but the opposite of it. Under such circumstances, would not the entire advantage of lying dis-

appear? Would it be consistent for a man, that is, consistent with the object which he hopes to gain, to prevaricate? A man lies, says Kant, on the assumption that others, that the world at large will stick to the truth. If every one else should lie, what profit would there be for him in doing so? The same holds good, he tells us, with regard to theft. A man may fail to respect the property of others so long as he expects that they will be good-natured enough to respect his own. If stealing were to become general what would it profit any one to steal? The same, again, applies to the duty of charity. A man may refuse to aid a fellow-being in distress, but he cannot desire that it shall become the accepted rule to leave the sick, the starving, the indigent to their fate. He can easily enough realise that a time may come when he will be dependent on the good offices of others, and that the rule which he had sanctioned in the day of his strength would seem wicked enough to him in the day of his weakness. It is hardly necessary to observe that it is not the gospel of enlightened self-interest that Kant teaches. He uses self-interest not as a motive but as a criterion. That which would be to our interest, if one and the same rule of action were adopted by all, whether actually it be adopted by them or not,—that is moral. But what an absurdly short cut is this toward solving the most intricate and complex of all practical questions,—the question, what is right? what is obligatory? what is my duty? Contrasted with the sublime flight which he takes into the region of the noumenal in order to obtain his first principle, this device to which he resorts for obtaining the laws of the noumenal as they reflect themselves in the world of phenomena, I must say, seems to me a veritable anticlimax. We can explain it perhaps by calling to mind that Kant devoted the major part of his life to the investigation of physical laws and of the fundamental principles that underlie them, and that he gave to ethics, not intentionally but actually, the crumbs that fell from the table of physics, the remnant of the strength of his declining years. But let us see wherein consists the false assumption implied in his method.

To take up first the case of theft. If stealing were to become general, Kant says, it would be absurd to steal. The one who despoils another does so in the hope of keeping as his property what he seizes. If property rights were not respected at all, the thief might as well dip his hand into the sea, with a view of grasping and keeping a part of it, as into his neighbour's pocket. The fallacy underlying this reasoning is the assumption that, if all men were minded to

take away the possessions of others, they would all be equally able to do so, the assumption that all men are equal, if not completely, yet to all practical intents and purposes. And this assumption he shares with the leading thinkers of the latter part of the eighteenth century. It was the same undemonstrable hypothesis that underlay the doctrines of the *Laissez-faire* School in economics; the same hypothesis, blindly accepted, that inspired the political reasonings of Rousseau, that expressed itself in the French declaration of the rights of man, and in the American Declaration of Independence, the assumption, namely, that all men are born equal. Strange as this view appears to us, we can very well understand how it arose as a reaction against the artificial inequalities which the feudal system had introduced in European society. It was natural for those who rebelled against those artificial inequalities to go to the opposite extreme of supposing that all inequalities between man and man are artificial in their origin, and that if the prevalent hierarchical system of caste could be swept away and men be revealed in their true nature, as they come from the hands of the Creator, it would be found that no inequalities existed between them, at least, none that might not be regarded as negligible. It is this doctrinaire assumption of eighteenth century speculation that we find involved in Kant's attempted deduction of the practical moral commands from the idea of abstract lawfulness. If all men were really equal, then their intent to rob each other of their possessions would mean their ability to do so. But, supposing merely the intent without the ability, then the general acceptance of the rule of stealing would not make it inconsistent for the strong and unscrupulous to defy the weak, and to rest securely in their unhallowed gains, in the midst of universal lawlessness.

The derivation of the rule of charity is open to precisely the same criticism. Kant, in this connexion, goes into some details. The duty of assisting the needy is not based on the egotistic expectation of a possible *quid pro quo*. It is not a rule of *do ut des*. We are not advised to throw our bread upon the waters in the hope that it may return to us after many days. "For a man, conceivably," says Kant, "may be so misanthropic and sour in temper as to be quite willing to enter into a contract that no one shall ever help him if he can but have the satisfaction of withholding assistance from those who importune him for it." "But," he continues, "even such a misanthropist, pleased as he might be for his own part to escape from the claims of benevolence, could not as an impartial observer contemplate with approbation a state

of society in which the rule were general, that no one shall act benevolently toward another." It would be against reason to approve of such a rule. The argument of Kant derives its force from the supposition that all men are equally dependent on one another, but it quite misses its fire if, as is actually the case, this dependence obtains in highly unequal degrees. It would not be inconsistent, *e.g.*, for the miser who has purchased a large annuity, or has invested in safe securities, to refuse to give alms, trusting to the extreme improbability that he himself shall ever be in want.

The next example is that of truthfulness and falsehood. And here, again, I can see no reason why the rule of prevarication should be self-defeating, in case falsehood were to become general. Let us consider for a moment how such a plan would work. In the first place, there would be one element of certainty upon which we could always rely. Everything that a man said to us would be sure not to be true. There is a sphere in which this state of things is said to a considerable extent to have prevailed, until recent times, —the sphere of diplomacy. Was it, then, inconsistent for a diplomatist to follow Talleyrand's maxim that language is given us for the purpose of concealing our thoughts, because he knew that his fellow-diplomatists would treat him in like fashion? By no means, for the obvious reason that not all men are equally skilled in concealing their thoughts. And even if this were not so, the difference in psychological penetration and in ability to interpret the signs, apart from language, by which facts may be ascertained would still make it possible for the crafty liar to attain his end at the expense of his more bungling competitor. I do not, of course, imply that the spectacle afforded by human society, if lying, theft, etc., were to become the general practice, would be a pleasant one to contemplate. Nor do I gainsay that even the partial acceptance of the moral rules greatly enhances the commodity of human existence. What I deny is that it would not be consistent for the stronger and the more crafty to pursue their selfish ends without scruple if all others tried to do the same.

Finally, a word in this connexion in regard to the grounds on which Kant bases the prohibition of suicide. Self-love, or the desire for happiness, he says, is a means to an end, namely, the preservation and enhancement of life. It would be inconsistent, he thinks, if the same principle which is designed for the enhancement of life should lead to the destruction of it. This argument is so far-fetched and so unreal that one is at first at a loss to decide in what sense

Kant wishes it to be understood. Does he mean that Nature has implanted in man self-love, or the desire for pleasure, for the ulterior purpose of preserving and enhancing life, pleasure being the bait, and life the end, and that the act of suicide would therefore exhibit Nature to the extent that she is manifested in man, as at variance with herself, the desire for pleasure producing the very opposite effect of that which it was intended to subserve? If this be Kant's meaning, then we must say that the inconsistency, if any such there be, is Nature's and not man's; that, like a bungling workman, she has failed properly to adjust her means to her ends; that, as a matter of fact, the bait is not seductive enough to produce the desired result. And why should man be held responsible for Nature's failure? But if Kant means that it is inconsistent for man, from motives of self-love, to end his life, since self-love is the force which prompts him to support life, then the answer is that this may be true of self-love in the instinctive stage, but that it is not true when self-love has reached the stage of reflexion. The latter (reflective self-love) does not seek pleasure in order that there may be life, but desires life in order that there may be the experience of pleasure. Life is the means, and pleasure the end, and not conversely. And, when the means cease to be adequate to the end, when life, instead of yielding a harvest of joy, produces only an evil crop of pain, it is not inconsistent, but highly consistent, on grounds of mere self-love to terminate life.

Let us now briefly summarise the outcome of the preceding discussion. Kant's position is this. Would you know what is a moral act? Take any action whatsoever. Ideally universalise it. That is to say, imagine that all men acted in such a manner. Then if, under this hypothesis, the act is self-consistent, i.e., if it does not defeat its own purpose, it is a moral act. The reason why this deduction breaks down is because it is based on the error that the same rule of action, adopted by all men, would lead in each case to the same result. In consequence of the innumerable gradations of strength and intelligence that subsist among men, this is not the case. And hence the test of self-consistency fails.

There are two functions which remain to be performed by the critic if he would grasp the root from which the Kantian ethics springs, and comprehend the fruit it bears. One of these is an examination of the Kantian teleology, of the meaning he attaches to the notion of an 'end,' and of the illegitimate use, as I think, which he makes of this notion. This inquiry is of the utmost importance because Kant, while vigorously

excluding the pursuit of our own personal happiness as a moral end, enjoins it upon us as a moral duty to promote the happiness of others. It is evident that he is compelled to take this step if his moral system is to be relieved of its aspect of frowning austerity, and is to acquire warmth of colour and richness of content. We must, according to him, repress the desire for happiness in ourselves. We must take our cue from the voice that echoes through empty infinities. Not even the Decalogue, as a set of specific commands, but, as it were, the tone of thunder in which it was promulgated is to be the incentive of our personal morality, and yet we must be permitted to take an interest in the happiness of others, if our philanthropic impulses are not to be wholly thwarted. A merely negative morality, one which respects and forbears to infringe upon the precincts of the personality of others, is not enough. We must be enabled to positively further their development, and to assist them in the attainment of their ends. Philanthropy demands as much. And Kant was a thorough-going philanthropist. Strangely enough, his extreme rationalism seems to have been but the obverse side of a profound susceptibility to feeling, so profound, indeed, that perhaps he felt all the more the need of curbing it, a susceptibility which helps to explain the sympathy he felt for a sentimentalist like Rousseau, despite the metaphysical differences that separated them. Kant felt the necessity of introducing the happiness of others as an aim in order to people the moral edifice which otherwise might have remained bare and almost untenanted. But was he justified in so doing? Was it allowable for him, on the basis of his system, to do so? For my own part, I submit that it was not, and for the following reasons. There are, as Kant maintains in the *Kritik of Pure Reason* and elsewhere, strictly speaking, no such things as natural ends. The notion of *telos* or end is applied to natural objects only *per viam analogiæ*. The *telos* is a provisional concept intended to cover the gap in knowledge due to our ignorance of causes. It is an index finger pointing to the existence of unknown causes, a prod intended to stimulate our search for such causes. A true *telos* does not exist in nature. We are only advised, or, if you will, enjoined, so to regard nature as if it were the product of a purposeful intelligence, as if it represented a concatenation of ends, in order that we may the better succeed in unravelling the chain of causes. A *telos*, strictly speaking, exists only in the moral realm. There is only a single example of it of which we have any knowledge—the act which expresses absolute univer-

salinity and necessity. Now, so far as our fellow-men are moral beings they must work out their salvation without our assistance. A moral act is an act of pure spontaneity which no one can suggest to or elicit in another. A man's morality is wholly his own creation. We cannot enter into another's soul. We cannot either infect or purify his motives. The degree of effort which he makes to lift the rational motive into consciousness and keep it there constitutes his moral desert. And that effort, in the nature of the case, must be his own. On the other hand, when we regard man as part and parcel of the order of nature, we find that the notion of end applied to him from this point of view is altogether illusory. Our desires, our volitions, are to be regarded as the effects of causes, quite as much as the melting of wax under the effect of heat. The fact that, in ordinary parlance, we use the term 'end' whenever the representation of the outcome of an act precedes the act does not really justify the use of that term. The process of volition is not really teleological if the representation that precedes the act is itself the inevitable consequence of a string of previous representations. From the standpoint of the Kantian *Kritik*, therefore, it seems to me forbidden to speak of the natural ends of man. As a natural being, he has no ends. The notion of end applies to natural objects only by way of analogy. It is intended to be used as a kind of wishing-rod to help us in locating the spot where we must dig for the gold of causes. It is only a device designed to facilitate investigation. There are no ends in nature. We merely conduct our investigations "as if" there were ends. Now my criticism of Kant is that the proviso "as if," which he couples with the notion of end in the *Kritik of the Pure Reason*, is omitted by him when he speaks of man as a natural object in the *Kritik of the Practical Reason*. And thus, without justification, abruptly, he confronts us with the notion of the natural ends of our fellow-beings as the basis for a scheme of positive altruistic duties.

I must content myself with barely mentioning, in passing, that the illicit notion of end, as applied to man in his natural character, is also the unstable foundation whereon rests Kant's moral theology. A God is needed in order to harmonise the moral end and the so-called natural ends, to distribute happiness in exact proportions to moral desert. But if the basis of natural ends goes to pieces, the superstructure of moral belief, which has been erected upon it, likewise crumbles, and new foundations will have to be supplied if it, or anything like it, is to be maintained.

The nobility, the force and the fire of the Kantian ethics

is contained in the proposition that no human being may be treated merely as the tool of another, merely as a means to another's end, but shall ever be regarded as an end in himself. This statement, to my mind, is the Alpha if not, as orthodox Kantians have claimed, also the Omega of morality. Unfortunately, I am compelled to think that in putting forth this statement Kant's ethical perception far outran his ethical theory, that the theoretic underpinning which he offers does not really support this great practical pronouncement. We hear much nowadays of the necessity of a return to Kant. And I, too, believe that a return to Kant is necessary, at least for those who maintain that there is an absolute element in morality, despite the admitted relativity and changeableness of the specific moral commands. Yes, a return to Kant, but in the sense of taking up anew the problem which he attempted, but failed to solve, in the sense of trying by a new path to reach the goal which he had in view, and which, it has become evident, cannot be reached by the path which he pursued. He has not justified the conception of an end in itself, as applied to man. He could not do so because he missed the organic idea from which alone the conception of end or purpose can be derived.¹

¹ We hear the crash of a tree as it falls in the primeval forest. We see the snow disengage itself from the brink of a precipice and tumble in powdery cascades into the abyss below. The notion of purpose does not arise in connexion with such occurrences. We say 'this thing has happened'; that is all. If we wish to go further, we ask 'Why has this thing happened?' What are the causes that have produced this effect? We see an erratic boulder in the midst of a green field. We do not ask, 'What end does it serve by being here?' but 'What are the forces that have brought it hither?' Its being there is the effect of a cause or causes. An effect is that which happens because something else has previously happened. Shall we now define, per contrast, that a means to an end is something which happens in order that something else may happen thereafter? Kant takes this view of the relation of means to ends, and hence infers that the notion of an end is essentially an anthropomorphic conception founded on the analogy of the purposeful action of human beings. And this view is shared by the majority of those who have written on the subject. Watch-making and house-building are the typical examples of the adjustment of means to ends. The objects of nature, to which the teleological view applies, says Kant, are to be regarded as if they were the products of an intelligence like that of man, an intelligence in which the idea of the resulting whole, present in a mind operating from the outside, precedes and controls the arrangement and the specification of the parts. But a more thorough-going inquiry will make it manifest that this explanation is, in reality, a case of putting the cart before the horse, that, instead of the organic idea being an anthropomorphic analogy based on the purposeful action of man, the reverse is true, namely, that the purposeful action of man is dependent on, springs from and derives its meaning from the fact that

And, lastly, the ethical system of Kant is individualistic because intellectualistic and rationalistic. What he calls the rational nature is the element of unity separated from its correlative, and man, so far as he is a rational being, is considered as an embodiment of this unity, a unit or atom, while the rational commonwealth is an aggregate of such atoms. Individualism was the keynote of eighteenth century speculation, and the individualistic tendency of the age found its most authoritative expression in the Kantian philosophy. If additional proof, after what has been said, were required, it would only be necessary to cast a glance at the *Tugend Lehre*, or "The Doctrine of Virtue," in which Kant outlines the scheme of practical morality which springs from his theory. In this practical exposition of the chief duties of life, we find that the self-regarding duties receive minute attention, that the general, altruistic duties are also carefully

he is an organic being, or at least that he is controlled in his conduct by the organic idea. The organic idea takes precedence. Our separate purposes are secondary to it, subservient to it, corollaries from it. Our simplest planful acts,—the eating of food to satisfy hunger, the quenching of thirst, the kindling of fuel to sustain the warmth of the body, the erection of dwellings for the sake of shelter,—all have reference to the functions of our body, *i.e.*, of a system of parts which are, at least to some extent, organically related. These volitional acts of ours are purposeful because the functions which they subserve are purposeful, that is, because the functions subserved are members of a system of correlated functions. And of the highest examples of human purpose in the realm of science, of art and social conduct the same is still more palpably true. The reciprocal dependence of intellect, feeling and will in the individual, the organic connexion between each individual and all others in the social union is the background from which all these purposes stand out, the underlying reference which they imply. Thus the Kantian definition that the idea of the outcome of an act precedes the act is not adequate to characterise purpose. If it were, then such idle doings as the deliberate pouring of water through a sieve, or the heaping of sand on the beach in a vacant moment would be properly termed purposeful conduct, which they are not. The notion of purpose involves not only that the idea of the outcome of what happens shall precede the happening, but that that outcome, whatever it be, shall fit into a scheme of interdependent happenings.

Thus the organic idea, and it alone, enables us to substantiate Kant's fundamental ethical thought that man shall be regarded not only as a means but also as an end. In an organic system every means is at the same time an end. Every part subserves the others, and is served by them. The whole not only presides over the arrangement of the parts, but is present in each part. For the organic idea is nothing else than that complete fusion of the idea of the one and the many, the source of which in the very constitution of the human mind we have indicated above. The one is in each member of the manifold because the plurality is but the explication of the unity, and each of the separate members is indissolubly related to every other because every other is as necessary to that complete explication as itself.

considered, while the specific duties of the family, of the professions, of the various social classes toward each other, etc.,—in brief, those duties which most obviously imply an organic relation, a correlation of dissimilars rather than a co-ordination of similars, are either scantily treated or wholly omitted. The conjugal duties, for instance, do not appear at all in this scheme of practical morality. The personal duties are accentuated. The social duties, in the strictest sense, are left out. And therefore the Kantian system—and this is perhaps the weightiest objection that can be urged against it at the present day—cannot adequately help us in developing the social conscience, cannot satisfy that need which to-day is felt more keenly than any other, the need of a social ethics, the need of a clearer statement of the principles which shall determine social morality. In his private life, too, Kant displayed his individualism. He not only never married, but he did not recognise, in a finer sense, the ties of consanguinity. He discharged punctually his external obligations toward his kinsmen, but even his nearest, his brother and his sister, he kept at a distance, as his biographer tells us, in the belief that association should be a matter of free choice, and not subject to the constraint of natural bonds. Friendship, however, he celebrated in terms almost as eulogistic as those of Aristotle, friendship, the one social tie which is most congenial to the spirit of individualists, because it can be knit at pleasure and dissolved at pleasure.

These, then, are the objections or the points of criticism which I have desired to submit.

In defining freedom, Kant tries to set off by itself one of a brace of inseparable correlatives, to cut with one of a pair of shears.

In positing mere empty necessity and universality as the essential characteristics of moral action, he offers us the ghost or echo of natural law as the motive of conduct and represents the cogency which accompanies the synthetic process as if it could exist with the synthetic process left out.

His scheme of morality, founded on pure rationality, is in the air and has no footing upon earth. There is no one to whom we can be certain that we owe moral duty because there is no one of whom we are certain that he is a rational being, in the Kantian sense.

The moral rules cannot be deduced from the Categorical Imperative, and the deduction which Kant undertakes is based on the false assumption of an equality between human beings, which does not exist.

The conception of man as an end in himself, which is the most inspiring of his pronouncements, is at variance with the *Kritik of the Pure Reason*, and is not established by the *Kritik of the Practical Reason*. It cannot be justified in his system.

Finally, his ethics is individualistic and cannot serve us in our most pressing need at the present day. And yet, despite these shortcomings, Kant's ethics has sounded through the world with a clear, clarion note, has had a mighty awakening influence, and something like the flashes of the lightning that played on Sinai have played about it. It has had this influence because it emphasises the fundamental fact that the moral law is imperative, not subject to the peradventure of inclination, of temperament, or circumstance, an emphasis to which every moral being, at least in his higher moments, responds. It has had this influence because of the sublimity of the origin which he assigns to the moral law, because he translates it from the sphere of ephemeral utilities, whether individualistic or racial, into the region of eternal being, comparable with nothing in the physical universe except only the starry firmament. And last, and not least, because his own lofty personality shines through his written words. A man may be bigger than his creed, and, in the same way, he may tower above his philosophy. I think it is true to say that Kant's personality produces this effect upon his readers, that when we study his ethical writings we obtain the impression of one who was fallible, indeed, and shared in many ways the limitations of his time, but who, at the same time, was a man morally high-bred, a man in whom a certain chastity of the intellect communicated itself to every faculty, producing a purity of the entire nature, incomparable of its kind, a man to whom may be applied the words which Aristotle used of Plato, *ὃν οὐδ' αἰνεῖν τοῖσι κακοῖσι θέμει* ("whom the bad have not even the right to praise").