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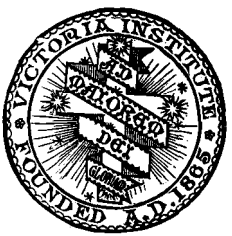

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509TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.

MONDAY, JUNE 6TH, 1910. 4.30 P.M.

D. HOWARD, ESQ., D.L., F.C.S., F.I.C. (VICE-PRESIDENT), IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read and confirmed.

The Chairman announced that this was the last Meeting of the Session, and congratulated the Institute on the success that had attended the Meetings of the year, and the admirable quality of the papers which had been read thereat.

The following paper was then read by the author:—

DETERMINISM AND FREE-WILL.

By Archdeacon B. POTTER, M.A.

ONE cannot help feeling, notwithstanding the contrary view of some German philosophers, that purely speculative questions cannot boast of the same claim on our time and thought as those which concern conduct. Conduct is the all-important thing in life, and a man's life is so short that it seems wise to confine, as far as possible, our intellectual investigations to questions which bear on its guidance. Now the question of Determinism or Non-Determinism of the Will on which I am asked to read this paper, is essentially a practical one. On our view of it largely depends the line we shall adopt in the conduct of our lives. If we have no power over our wills, they being determined independently of us by circumstances, by heredity, character and desire—then the natural conclusion is to sit down and acquiesce in the inevitable. If on the other hand the will is entirely uncontrolled, it becomes unnecessary to take any steps to influence supposed controlling powers. So if we look round us and observe the lives and actions of men who think, we shall find that the goodness or badness of their ideals and conduct depend to a very considerable extent on the intellectual view

they have formed for themselves on the question: "Is the will free, or is it controlled?" You will find religious and anti-religious literature much concerned with the subject. You will find men excusing license or urging control of desires in accordance with their view as to whether or not we possess freedom.

But the second thought which arises in view of this subject is whether the question is soluble. There is much that might lead us to consider it not so. Because it concerns human personality in the depths of its mystery; and there is no doubt that here we are face to face with a problem which eludes us almost as constantly and rapidly as problems concerning the Divine Nature, or the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mystery dwells not only in the infinitely great, but in the apparently comprehensible. Still we have always this comforting reflection that even in the most abstruse questions, where the intellect finds itself, as Kant described it, attempting to fly in a medium of pure space, where for lack of atmosphere, it cannot make any way with its wings; even here, there are practical solutions of all the problems. And the practical solution is usually arrived at by an admission of the incomprehensibility of the question in all its bearings. The human mind naturally seeks to unify—to bring every phenomenon into a mathematical system, which it can thoroughly comprehend. It is this tendency which has led, in philosophy and theology, to so many errors, so much bitterness, so much strife. In the free-will problem, men start with the assumption that all the phenomena must come under one law, just as in theology they have tried to reconcile Love, Mercy and Omnipotence in the Creator. But the effort fails; the solution lies in the admission that we must accept contrary facts which we cannot reconcile; and yet which we know must both be true.

Now what I propose to do to-day is to place before you as clearly and honestly as I can, the various arguments, so far as I understand them, which have been and are being used, on the two sides of this question. I shall then ask you to consider whether these opposing theories can be reconciled; and if so, what is the true method of reconciliation, and lastly, ask you to bear in mind the practical results which are deducible from the conclusion at which we arrive.

First then to take the arguments for Determinism, *i.e.*, for the doctrine that men's wills are ruled by character, desire, circumstances, and outside influences.

The matter may best be dealt with by looking at it to

begin with from an *à priori* point of view, and then coming more closely to the problem, and examining our consciousness, and seeing what we find there in favour of this hypothesis.

The *à priori* arguments may be divided into four—education, religion, the science of government, and history.

There are few, if any, serious-minded persons who do not believe in the importance of moral and religious education. The battle has been raging in this country as to the form which that education should take, whether it should be abstract and undenominational, or definite and denominational. But few have denied the value and the importance of some kind of moral training. The reason is not far to seek. It is because we believe that the life of the man is influenced by the training of the boy. True education aims above all things at forming character. We know there is innate character in every child. But we also know this can be influenced and moulded. By wise and careful teaching, combined with correction and reward, a child may develop noble sentiments, high aspirations, affection, conscientiousness, truthfulness, honour. As these principles grow and become exercised, they become more strong. The character is moulded by them, and the will responds to them. There doubtless are exceptions where the desired results are not attained, where the boy surrounded with moral and religious advantages grows up a worse man than others less advantageously placed. But this is because the lessons given have not been assimilated. The character has not improved, and so the life has not improved. But where the education is effective—the result seems invariably to follow. Where principles are instilled and imbibed, the daily conduct answers to the helm; and you can feel assured that the man will act as the boy has grown to be. On the theory of free-will this would not be so. If a man is free to act independently of character and influences, he probably will so act: and if he did, our anticipations based upon the principles we have instilled into him, would be disappointed.

Let us next take the question of religion. The main idea in the minds of that large class of people who believe in religion is that through its forms and ceremonies, and more especially through prayer, and in the sacraments, an influence or influences come from the spiritual world into the inmost being of the person who prays, or who is prayed for, and that this influence affects his will and actions. This is certainly the main thought in Christianity. Our Lord promises absolutely an answer to prayer which is directed towards the

gift of the Holy Spirit. Some Christians believe that Jesus Christ lives in them, others that it is the Third Person of the Trinity sent by the Father, and by him, others in the influence of angels, others in the influence of departed saints. But all persons who believe at all in religion believe in some kind of influence which, in response to prayer, enters the heart of a man, acts on his feelings, desires, and principles, and so constrains his will to act according to certain defined principles approved by conscience, and in accordance with the will of God. It is the belief in this influence which leads people to use the ordinances of religion, and which comforts them, and gives them hope regarding their future and the future of those they pray for. Although they may feel an innate evil nature ready to burst out at any moment, still they feel confidence in this grace as a preservative of their will and conduct.

But on the hypothesis of free-will, no such influence could convey any certainty. Man's will at any time might and would rebel against these influences, and the holy, pure, truthful man find himself under punishment for vice, for lies, or crime.

The third *à priori* argument is from the science of government.

There is no doubt that a large factor in the success of rulers and directors of the world's affairs is a clear perception of the characters of men. The diplomatist must know the men with whom he comes in contact. He must know their ambitions, their ideals, their desires. His art is so to arrange affairs that the persons, or groups or persons, from whom he desires to obtain some concession receive in return for it something which to them is valuable; and he is not disappointed.

The same principle applies to the statesman, or general, or organizer in any department of life. Men succeed not so much by what they do themselves, as by what they can make other men do. He who can pick his men, place the brave man where courage is required, the honest where integrity is important, the wise where judgment comes into play, such a man is invariably successful; he rides to the attainment of his ambitions on the shoulders of the agents he has selected to do his work. But all this would be impossible if the will were free. You could not depend from one hour to another that the person selected for a particular duty would perform that duty. At any moment the most carefully laid plans might be defeated by the exercise of the ungoverned will of a subordinate.

In fact, in every department of life we assume without argument that men's actions are determined by their character. The man who is good at knowing character is a perfect prophet in predicting action. The wise and shrewd man gets help or money or sympathy with his aims, largely by playing on the strings of human character, which he is clever enough to understand.

If I am not wearying you, I will add one more argument for determinism from the law pervading history. Every historian traces law in the development of nations; so manifest, that from the history of one nation you can predict that of another, *e.g.*, the Romans rose to greatness when surrounded by difficulties; but when they attained luxury and power they began to lose their energy, and to sink down to the position of a decadent race. The reason is obvious: poverty and difficulty are a stimulus to energy. When attainment comes, the stimulus disappears. This law is universal, and from it we can predict the fate of existing nations. But the law shows that nations, like men, are determined in their actions by the conditions amid which they are placed. And the historian writes on this assumption.

Having endeavoured to show that men act on the assumption that the will is determined, I will now try to grapple with the question as to what the verdict of our intellect is when we come to examine into our own nature. We may, I think, divide all our actions into two divisions—first, unconscious actions, secondly, conscious. But the conscious consist of two kinds, impulsive and deliberate. As regards unconscious actions, they seem to take place without any movement of the will. One does not resolve to breathe or to blink with one's eyelids. But there are conscious acts which constantly pass into the region of the unconscious. When a child begins to play the piano, it consciously places each finger on a certain note; but later on the action becomes instinctive; that is unconscious. So that we may class both these kinds of action as determined.

With regard to impulsive actions, these seem directly caused by passion or feeling. The man who commits murder under strong excitement which clouds his judgment and moral sense is not usually considered so responsible as the one who plans beforehand to commit the crime. There are instances of temptation which seems too strong to resist. I have known a prisoner say that if a certain temptation were before him, and the gallows staring him in the face, he would be compelled

to yield. No other theory than that which allows that the will is ruled by passion seems able to account for the fact that after months and years of imprisonment men will immediately return on release to the crime for which they were punished.

But, lastly, to take the case of deliberate action, here at any rate we may say consciousness proclaims us free. I know I can choose. I feel myself free, this is the verdict of self-consciousness.

Let us take the case in which freedom seems most apparent. A man resists inclination, conquers impulse, does something he does not like to do. Surely this proves him free, and yet, if he reflects, after his action, on the cause of his action, he will find that a motive determined his will. We say a man has a strong will who decides for duty against inclination. But we must not forget that the action was due to a higher motive being brought into prominence. There were in the man's personality feelings of honour, of duty, of affection. Passion clouded these, and the will was giving way. But some influence came to bear—a friend's advice—a thought—a memory—a suggestion from the spiritual world; and the higher motive came out into prominence, and overcame the passion. If we could recall any decision, which had not behind it a motive, a reason—then we might deny determinism. But this is not so in any single action of our life. Some philosophers have ascribed this choice between lower and higher motives to reason. But reason does not act immediately on the will. Reason is simply the intellectual faculty which penetrates into the meaning and results of actions, and makes it clear to the self what will follow them. The self then decides. But in its decision, it is determined by its character.

I will now notice two objections usually brought against this doctrine. One is that responsibility implies freedom. But as Riehl says, "a being whose actions do not depend on anything, and therefore do not depend on the consciousness of responsibility, cannot be responsible. A free unmotived choice is purely accidental, and no one is responsible for an accidental occurrence. A free being can have no definite character—the essential mark of character is persistence." Again, "how can determinism contradict responsibility, if responsibility is one of the determining causes of the will?" Fowler says, "I have said nothing of reward or punishment or responsibility, which may be explained as liable to punishment, because I think that all these facts are equally explicable on the Determinist hypothesis."

Again it is objected, morality is inconsistent with determinism. Here I must quote Riehl again. He says "morality stands, and determinism is a scientific truth. As the result of a will acting under law, morality is only possible in connection with determinism. Morality is the *ratio cognoscendi* of determinism—determinism the *ratio essendi* of morals."

Let us now look at the other side of the question, and see what can be said in favour of Free-Will. And the one great argument, whose force is felt by every thinker, is the universal fact of Consciousness of Freedom. As Illingworth puts it, "Free-Will is a fact of immediate and universal consciousness, *i.e.*, of my own consciousness, corroborated by the like experience of all other men." Fowler says, "we seem to be free, to have the power of shaping our own acts." Why should we praise or blame others, or approve or disapprove our own actions, if we regard others and ourselves as determined. Spinoza admits that "men must regard themselves as free, because they are conscious of will and of desire," though he explains away the meaning of this by the theory that it is ignorance of the causes behind the will which makes men think themselves free. Riehl admits our consciousness of Freedom, and explains the reason of it as Spinoza does, only he advances a step further and claims to show why men are ignorant of the causes which move their will. He thinks that the causes of our actions precede self-consciousness, and thus do not enter into it. That is to say, we do not become conscious of self till the cause has passed into an act of will. So the latter only is perceived—and the former not. So he says: "It is easy to see why the necessary ignorance of the proper causes of our actions must produce the illusion that they are not caused." Ladd says, "They who urge the speculative tenet that all conduct is strictly determined, practise as though they were, what they really are, as free as the gods themselves." He speaks of the consciousness of freedom as, first, consciousness of ability—that is of the self as active: and secondly, a consciousness of imputability, that is of the self as responsible. Sedgwick says, "against the formidable array of cumulative evidence offered for determinism, there is to be set the immediate affirmation of consciousness in the moment of deliberate action." However strong may be the rush of appetite or anger, it does not present itself to me as irresistible.

And if we deny the reality of this belief of consciousness, that I can choose between two alternatives, it would seem as though we reduced the whole universe to subjection to material

law. If man is not free, God is not free. Consequently there is no difference between mind and matter. All are under necessity. In fact the great argument for belief in God disappears. The world is not subject to a mind and heart. It is under universal self-caused law. It is of no use for me to exercise my will, or to try to do anything, for every action is predetermined by a force which cannot be resisted. I cannot make my character, because in making it I am ruled by motives, and these motives if not there, I cannot place there. Is this then the result at which we are to arrive as a result of deep-thinking on this mysterious problem ?

There are also strong feelings in man which imply freedom, *e.g.*, remorse. How can a man be tortured by remorse if in sinning he had no power over his actions? Why should he be condemned to punishment for sins he was bound to commit? Why should we feel angry with a person who has wronged us, if in doing so he was the slave of character; and if in the formation of that character he could have had no part ?

Let me now endeavour to place before you some of the ways in which different thinkers have tried to reconcile our consciousness of freedom with the apparent law that every act is determined by character, or motive, or circumstance.

We may divide these classes of explanation into two heads. First, those which try to explain away free-will and make it an illusion; secondly, the opposite line of thought which tries to reconcile a real freedom in the will with the facts making for Determinism. My own belief is, as I have said, that both efforts fail; and that the real fact is that these apparently totally opposed phenomena of human personality are both true, and yet both irreconcilable by the human intellect.

Riehl claims to have solved the problem. His words are: "Modern philosophy may claim to have discovered the laws of motive for the will, and to have reached the true conception of mind." One agrees with Riehl in saying that "morality stands and determinism is a scientific truth." But one differs from him in thinking that the combination is comprehensible to us. If it be true, as he and Spinoza say, that the will only appears free because the causes which move it do not come into consciousness, can we understand the use of appealing to the will, and of a person trying to exert will? If the will is determined by character, how can the will influence character ? In its motives to improve itself it is ruled by a pre-existing condition. If that condition had not existed, it could not act so as to improve its character. Riehl distinguished between

fatalism, determinism, and free-will. He says, "Fatalism is a motive not to act—determinism the strongest motive of action —indeterminism, a source of foolish complaint against oneself. He says again, "the obedience to law which determinism ascribes to action is not a blind, but a discriminating obedience."

I confess I cannot realize this distinction between fatalism and determinism. If the will is really ruled by motives—then the whole man seems the slave of the history which has evolved his character.

Another objection to this explanation is that it makes nature a deceiver. It is desirable that man should believe himself free, because if he did not he would not exercise his will, and so would relapse into idleness and uselessness. It is the belief that he is free that rouses him to action. If this belief is a delusion, then nature deceives us, and the ignorant man is a better member of society than the educated thinker. The latter is aware of the deception, while the former is ignorant of it. "Ignorance" in this case is truly "bliss," as it is essential to action. Riehl's argument regarding freedom resembles Comte's regarding prayer. The latter did not believe in answers to prayer, and yet strangely was so alive to its good effect on the subject praying that he advised his followers to observe the practice. But such a theory is open to the same objection as Riehl's, that if this is so, nature deceives, and ignorance of the reality of things is better than knowledge.

Green in his *Prolegomena to Ethics* sums up his view in this way:—"Will, then, is equally desire and thought, as they are involved in the direction of a self-distinguishing and self-seeking subject to the realization of an idea." It must be a mistake to regard the will as a faculty which man possesses along with other faculties. The will is simply the man; any act of will is the expression of the man as he at the time is. The motive issuing in his act, the object of his will, the idea which for the time he sets himself to realize, are but the same thing in different words. Each is the reflex of what for the time the man is; in willing he carries with him his whole self to the realization of the given idea.

This certainly is a good description of what takes place in the act of willing. But we can hardly say that it makes the process less a mystery to us.

Ladd thus explains the phenomena: "That man is in some sort the creature of circumstances, and that many men are

largely so, who would venture to deny. But that man is by deeds of will also in some sort the creator of his own character and the moulder of society and of nature who would venture to refuse to admit." Again he says, "the character of a self always includes choices and the results of the choices, in exercising which it has been self-determining. On a basis of inherited potentialities, and under a variety of influences from the total constantly changing environment and in a certain subjection to the principle of habit the self nevertheless progressively determines its own character. Habit is strong, and its bonds often difficult to be broken; but habit itself is itself very largely a record of self-determining choices, a child of moral freedom." This all seems true, but is it comprehensible, for the original acts which produced habit were themselves the result of habits and character then existing.

Illingworth puts it thus: "The freedom of the will does not mean the ability to act without a motive. But it does mean the ability to create, or co-operate in creating, our own motives, or to choose our motive, or to transform a weaker motive into a stronger by adding weights to the scale of our own accord, and thus to determine our conduct by our reason." Again, "I can present to my mind appetite, pleasure, utility, as objects to be attained, and choose between them, nor is it to the point to say I am determined by my character, for my character is only the momentum which I have gained by a number of past acts of choice." Here this writer seems to forget that these past acts of choice were influenced by previously existing character and motive. Consequently, he is as far as ever from a definite conception of real free-will.

Must we not then accept the position as the result of our deliberation, that the will is in some mysterious way both free and determined; able to take part in shaping its own character, and yet in a sense the slave of previously existing character, and that although the truth of these apparently opposite facts is incomprehensible to the human intellect, it must nevertheless be accepted as a guide to human life.

Professor Fowler seems to fall in with some such conclusion as this, when he says: "Here then we seem to be on the confines of human knowledge, and to be compelled to recognize that in the sphere of human action, as well as in that of metaphysical speculation, there are apparent contradictions which we cannot reconcile. However unwillingly, we must perforce acquiesce in the limitation of our faculties." Malebranche says: "La liberté est un mystère."

Kant can only explain the problem by a distinction which Schopenhauer calls "the most beautiful and profound which humanity has produced," between the empirical character, and the intelligible character, which Schopenhauer compares with his great philosophic distinction between phenomena, and things *per se*. Man is transcendentically free, empirically, or phenomenally determined. But this distinction amounts to admitting our incapacity to understand the combination.

It may, however, be objected that this is a poor solution of a great subject—simply to point out our ignorance of it. May I ask you therefore to consider some reasons why it should be the right, and only solution. Human personality resembles the Divine, in its incomprehensibility. Our Lord constantly reminded men that they were Sons of God. The ancient philosophies of the East, equally with the writing of our best moderns, have held that a belief in the pre-existence of the soul is the greatest proof of future immortality. To live for ever *à parte post*, and not to have done so *à parte ante*, they pronounce to be inconceivable. "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting; the soul that rises with us, our life's star, hath had elsewhere its setting, and cometh from afar." Our birth and personality then are mysteries; who will say he understands either? Does it not follow that the problems connected with them must contain mystery? We cannot reconcile evil and good, or understand how one omnipotent Creator can rule in a world where both seem eternally existent, yet we accept the incompatible facts. So with free will and determinism, the two seem irreconcilable, yet both must be believed. In fact, if we could unify our conceptions of personality and make these two opposite principles in us clearly apprehensible to our minds, then we might assume that, as there was no mystery in our human nature, we did not partake of the Divine.

What then are the practical conclusions to be drawn for our daily life from the solution I ask you to adopt? There are first the conclusions to be drawn from the fact of freedom, and secondly, those deducible from the fact of determinism.

We must always act as if absolutely free. We do so in many affairs in life. If we did not, the world would come to an end. Men and women would sit still and do nothing; it is surely inconsistent to act as if free in certain relationships of life; and to make belief in determinism an excuse for not acting in other relationships; and this is what the practical necessitarian does. If the house in which a man was living were on fire, would he

sit still and excuse himself from moving by saying his will was determined, even if he called himself a determinist?

Secondly, we must remember the lessons of determinism:—

(*a*) To cultivate character in ourselves and others, that it may influence life. The very fact of doing this involves both freedom and determinism. We must believe ourselves free when making the effort to improve. We must believe ourselves determined when we aim at character as a necessary goal.

(*b*) We must conquer habit.

(*c*) We must seek Divine grace.

In each case the two beliefs must influence us.

Thirdly, I think the question of punishment is largely affected by our view of this question. We should not punish for vengeance. Many a criminal is really insane, others have such inborn and developed proclivities that they cannot resist acting as they do. When we punish a dog, we do it to teach him to do some things and not do others. He learns by punishment carefully administered. Vengeance and anger do not enter into our feelings—nor should they when we punish human beings.

The growing improvement in men's notions on this subject, and consequent alleviation of the hard lot of many half-insane criminals may be looked on as a happy result of the deeper study of the subject we have been considering.

Fourthly, we should avoid remorse. Repentance is useful. Remorse is worse than valueless. As regards the past, we may remind ourselves more of the results of determinist philosophy than of the free-will doctrine. It is over. What has happened must have happened. Now at any rate it has passed into the region of consequences resulting on antecedent circumstances. As regards the future, free-will is the important thing to remember. On *us*, depends our future. That is, we can, at any rate, use circumstances to mould character, which will secure future action.

"Thou seemest Human and Divine,
The highest, holiest manhood Thou,
Our wills are ours, *we know not how*,
Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

Discussion.

On the conclusion of the paper the Chairman called on the Rev. Gregory Smith, M.A., LL.D., to open the discussion.

Dr. Gregory Smith, after thanking the lecturer for his very able address, demurred to the opinion expressed, that it is "impossible" on this vital question (because we have to accept two propositions, each true, but the one diametrically opposed to the other) to arrive at any logical conclusion. This would be so, if we had to reconcile Free Will with Divine Omniscience. But our question is narrower; how to reconcile Free Will with Determinism—an ambiguous word, used to mean, that people, who may seem to be very "determined" in the ordinary sense, are merely creatures of circumstance. To affirm that man is free to choose one motive or another, when they clash, is not to deny that he is always influenced by a motive.

There is no need now and here,* to comment in detail on the arguments quoted by the Archdeacon against the freedom of the will, "Solvitur ambulando." For instance, in any misfortune the sharpest pang is invariably if we have to blame ourselves. Determinism is right, for instance, that heredity, environment, etc., etc., may put an almost overwhelming pressure on the will, but the solid fact remains that, normally, one has to choose and to decide. It is by this reiterated act, which begins with the beginning of intelligence, of choosing the good or evil, that the will makes itself, what it becomes, and forms the character. Ἔθος grows into ἦθος.

It is a question of psychology, on which subject our thoughts are rather hazy. We must go back to "il Maestro di tutti chi sanno," keenest and closest of ethical philosophers. The advance of physical science may demonstrate more and more positively, that our mental and emotional faculties are mechanical; but the "spirit in man," the will, the self has to control these operations. The

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* See *What is Truth?* (Murray) and *Characteristics of Christian Morality* (Bampton Lectures, Parker and Co.), etc.

motor-car has its driver. It is noteworthy that Aristotle assumes, not proves, the Freedom of the Will. It is assumed in the teaching of our Lord.

The Rev. F. D. MORICE alluded briefly to the difficulty of combining a belief in an omniscience to which nothing further is unknown, with a belief that will can ever be absolutely free, which implies that it is an open question—a question not yet decided—which of two alternative choices is in fact going to be made.

Rev. R. V. FAITHFULL DAVIES.—The subject is eminently one on which clear definition of the terms used is essential. Do any supporters of Free Will claim that the will is entirely uncontrolled? or that Heredity and Environment have no influence over its decisions? Do many Determinists assert that man is entirely a machine? Even Mr. Blatchford says, "I know that I can make myself better or worse if I try."

Substitute the word "influenced" for "ruled" or "determined" in the arguments which the Archdeacon, with characteristically scrupulous fairness, brings forward on the Determinist side, and you would have a large body of doctrines which would probably be accepted by both sides in the perennial controversy.

The Archdeacon says (page 299), "If a man is free to act independently of character and influences, he probably will so act." But why? Surely the probabilities are all the other way. It is indeed possible that a man of high character may act, on a given occasion, in a manner entirely contrary to his usual habits. But the probability of his doing so is so slight that the possibility may safely be ignored. May it not be the case that the whole subject suffers from attempts at over-analysis? To quote the words of John Caird (*Philosophy of Religion*, p. 115), "In every part of consciousness the whole is present; in all the phenomena of mind, the ego or self is the universal and constant factor. You may attempt, as has often been done, to apply material analogies to mental phenomena, as when moral action is represented as the result of the force of motives acting on the will. But the analysis here is a purely fallacious one. . . . It is the mind that is moved which constitutes or gives their constraining power to the motives that are conceived to move it."

The freedom then that we claim is not specifically the freedom of the will, in isolation, but the freedom of the whole personality to

choose between the various motives, whether suggested from without or self-supplied, to add to, or subtract from, the weight of each, and then to follow the strongest.

Sir Oliver Lodge claims it as the distinctive character of man that "he has a sense of responsibility for his acts, having acquired the power of choosing between good and evil, with freedom to obey one motive rather than another." (*Catechism*, p. 24.)

I heartily join in thanking the Archdeacon for his careful and instructive paper.

Rev. W. TEMPLETON KING, B.D., said that previous speakers did not seem to realize the difficulty of the question.

He put forth as a possible solution the thought that the will might have power not to act against overwhelming influences, but to choose among contrary motives which it will yield to.

Professor H. LANGHORNE ORCHARD.—I wish to join in thanking the learned author of this paper for a thoughtful and suggestive inquiry into a problem of such subtlety that leaders in philosophy have taken views which have issued in contradictory solutions.

On some points in this valuable paper I find myself unable to concur with the author as, *e.g.*, in the statement (or belief) that the will is at one and the same time both free and not free (see p. 304, par. 4); and he seeks to justify this idea by asserting that, if it were not so, "we might assume that, as there was no mystery in our human nature, we did not partake of the Divine" (p. 307). Surely there is enough "mystery" in human nature, without adding to it the insoluble complication that contradictory propositions are simultaneously true. The paper omits what appears to me to be an important argument in favour of Free Will, drawn from our intuition of Causality. We may state the argument as follows:—Every effect has a cause, *i.e.*, the power producing the effect. But power is incompatible with the presence of constraint. Power implies absence of constraint, implies, therefore, freedom. Cause, then, is free. Consciousness gives the idea of cause in will; therefore, will is free.

Perhaps the strongest of all the arguments for Free Will is the testimony of consciousness, held by Sir Wm. Hamilton to be decisive. We know *intuitively* that we are free to will for or against, and to choose this or that. To assume that our intuitions deceive us would be to suppose God a deceiver. Further, since, in the last analysis,

the validity of all reasoning rests upon premises intuitively admitted, an argument which denied the truth of the intuition would *ipso facto* fail to establish its own validity. The testimony of consciousness is in itself adequate to establish the freedom of the will.

Every argument adduced for "Determinism," or Necessitarianism, is vitiated by the logical fallacy of "begging the question." The most plausible, drawn from government and history, tells us that "in every department of life we assume without argument that men's actions are determined by their character." To which the obvious reply is that the fact that, in a given set of circumstances, men *usually** act in a particular way, does not prove them obliged to act in this way. The fact that they sometimes do not, proves there is no compulsion. And it is to be remarked that the will frequently alters the circumstances.

May I again thank the author for the intellectual treat which he has afforded us in this admirable paper.

Rev. C. L. DRAWBRIDGE said: The question is, are we merely the creatures of heredity and environment, or has the self some power of self-determination? Every human action has a cause, but the question is what is the nature of that causation. I maintain that when alternative actions are presented to the mind, and rival motives are present, we are partially free, not only to select between those that are present but also to create our own motives. The determinist, on the contrary, maintains that we have no alternative but to follow the strongest motive, and that circumstances over which we have no control decide which motive is the strongest. He therefore contends that praise or blame are utterly out of place, and that the word "ought" should be excluded from the vocabulary of philosophy.

One or two speakers confused (God's) foreknowledge with predestination. The two are not identical. I may foresee a street accident without causing it. My contention is that God has given us a measure of free will—self-determination—and we are, and feel ourselves to be, responsible for our use, or abuse, of our power of initiative. God is responsible only for the gift, we, for our employment of it.

We have to consider the evidence of consciousness as compared

* See, on this subject, the Discussion on Professor Caldecott's Paper, "Heredity and Eugenics," read before this Society on May 23rd.

with the conflicting conclusions of abstract thought. The former is the truer guide. All of us are conscious of some measure of freedom of will, and we invariably act upon that consciousness in the affairs of daily life. When we find an irresponsible person, we place him in an asylum. A strong-willed man, who was arguing with me in favour of determinism, suddenly beat his dog for its misbehaviour, so I asked him why he acted on the assumption that his dog was responsible for its action, if its master was irresponsible? Of course, heredity and environment are factors which do much to determine the actions of the will, but the will also determines its response and reaction to circumstances. The terms *moral* and *immoral* are meaningless, unless the words *can* and *ought* are applicable to human conduct, and according to Determinist philosophy our will is the mere slave of circumstances. This applies to the community as a whole—which is made up of individuals. All human achievement is born of the conviction that we are justified in saying "I ought, I can, I will."

Rev. JOHN TUCKWELL, M.R.A.S.—At this late hour I will not do more than add briefly one or two thoughts to this discussion. First of all I fear we are too apt to confuse our wills with our personality. Surely the will is the power of self-determination possessed by the ego. All language recognizes this fact. We consider the course of conduct we propose to ourselves and then we say, "I will." We must admit also, I think, that we have the power to choose from what motives we will act, and that our character is formed by the frequency of our choice from one set of motives. But it is impossible to get back to the beginning of the formation of character. How it is that a child in the first dawn of its intelligence is prompted to act from one motive rather than another we cannot tell. It tells a lie, perhaps, and finds that it gains some advantage thereby. The first success may become a motive for repeating the act until it grows to be a liar.

If, however, we accept the view of the Archdeacon and believe in the pre-existence of the soul, then it seems to me we are floundering in a Serbonian bog. How can we tell with what impact from that previous state we come into the world? And how can we tell to what extent we are to be held responsible for our actions? The Archdeacon says, "our Lord constantly reminded men that they were the sons of God." But He told certain of the Jews who

rejected Him, "Ye are of your father, the devil." Are we to suppose then that some men have had a devilish pre-existence, and others a divine? These expressions surely were used to indicate character and not pre-existence; and the proof of our immortality lies in our nature and not in any such hypothetical pre-existence.

Referring to the subject of punishment, he says that many criminals "cannot resist acting as they do." I remember my old theological tutor dealing with that plea said that any man brought before a magistrate who should plead it might with equal force be answered by the magistrate, "I cannot resist punishing you, take six weeks' imprisonment." It is answering a fool according to his folly.

Then with regard to the advice given at the close of the paper to "avoid remorse," if he had said "avoid the occasion for remorse," the advice would have been sound. But remorse is the penalty inflicted by the Moral Governor of the Universe upon wilful and irremediable wrong doing, and to tell us to avoid remorse is advising us to do what is impossible, and to fly in the face of our Creator.

COMMUNICATIONS.

Professor J. KIRKPATRICK (Edinburgh University) writes:—

Although an old student of philosophy, I fear I am not at all competent to grapple with the old problem of Determinism *versus* Free Will. I shall therefore not presume to criticise Archdeacon Potter's very able address, except in a few very slight particulars.

On p. 299. "He will probably so act" does not seem to me very clear. "Free will" in this case appears to be used synonymously with animal propensities or evil passions—the free will of an animal, but surely not the free will of a *man*, however savage?

A somewhat similar remark applies to a passage at the foot of p. 300. An absolutely ungoverned will is surely not to be found in human beings, except where a taint of hereditary insanity, or preternatural craving for drink, or abnormal animal passions, reduces them to the level or below the level of the lower animals. There is therefore little probability of trust being reposed in such persons by the statesman or the general.

I venture to think that a first step toward a solution of the problem (if problem it be) would be to define "Determinism" and "Free will."

Does not Determinism, in the usual and narrow sense, mean the sum total of those influences and impulses which are absolutely irresistible? In such cases freedom of will is *nil*, and the ego is either an insane person, or an incorrigible drunkard, or a man-animal. But in the higher and wider sense which you, I think, most rightly adopt, does it not rather mean the sum total of all influences, including religion, education, art, science, taste, etc.? In this case, too, one's freedom of will, though by no means *nil*, is morally reduced to a *minimum*, one's conduct being morally *determined*.

These are, of course, extreme cases, conduct in the one case being physically, on the other morally determined. But the intermediate cases seem to be those where the conflict between determining influences and will really arises—the conflict of the will with *all* influences, both good and bad, both physical and moral.

Professor H. WHITE (King's College, London) writes:—

One of the chief points with which I was struck was that almost all the writers quoted seemed to confuse between *moral* freedom and what I may call *philosophical* freedom of the will.

We must all agree that action is the result of motives, and that when we do anything it is because the motives which urged us to do it were stronger than those which urged us not to do it. We must all be deterministsin this sense: we are all slaves to motives.

But this is something in a quite different category from the question of a man feeling within his better self that he ought to act one way, and then being driven by passion to act another: he is here a slave in a new sense, because he is not free to do what conscience tells him he ought to do.

Then moral freedom does not mean uncertainty: if a man is absolutely upright and has his feelings thoroughly under control, he has freedom of the will in the moral sense; and yet you can calculate, sometimes with almost mathematical accuracy, and a long way ahead, how he will act in certain given sets of circumstances.

Mr. A. C. CHAMPNEYS writes:—

It appears to me:

(1) That whatever arguments may be used in favour of Determinism, the underlying presupposition almost always is that the will must follow the analogy of material things, which appear (at all events) to follow an unchanging sequence or "law."

If, however, the human will is something different from these, this is merely false analogy.

(2) It is constantly assumed that if a motive is to be a cause at all it must be an *irresistible* one. This is "begging the question." [This fallacy seems to be present on p. 299, and in other places in the paper.]

(3) The immediate consciousness of freedom (especially when it is supported by the whole practical experience of the human race, as shown in praise, blame, repentance or remorse) must be infinitely less liable to error than any roundabout calculations of probability.

(4) As to some details:

(*a*) On p. 299. "But where the education is effective," etc., appears to be obscurely thought out. There is no mark of a thing being effective except that it acts. So that the sentence appears to me equivalent to "When the result follows, the result does follow."

I do not think that those who have had much to do with boys will feel that there is any certainty as to the effect on them of their (moral) education. This uncertainty is thought by ordinary persons to depend on their choosing or not choosing to go the best way. And this really does not seem an unreasonable explanation.

(*b*) Judgment of character (p. 301) is not really an exact science at all. I know *no one* who has not made or does not make mistakes in judging it. [There is here, one would think, an indication of the presence of an incalculable element.]

The argument from history is not really sound at all. If one person chooses energy and another one slackness, the choice of one neutralises the choice of the other, and thus the choice is eliminated, leaving the balance of other causes to act in the nation as a whole. But in any case prediction in history has been so often wrong, and is so uncertain that it appears quite too unsound to contribute to the argument.

(*c*) I do not think that the criticism of Illingworth on p. 306 is sound. It would only be necessary for Illingworth to go back a step or steps further. It is quite possible to contend that the man's character is formed at various points, by

acts of choice, though of course the character, so far as it is formed at each stage, *predisposes* the child or boy or young man to particular lines of conduct and makes the opposite choice increasingly difficult.

If the proofs of Determinism were stronger and *sounder*, I should agree with the Archdeacon's conclusions.

The Lecturer's Reply.

Aristotle doubtless, as Dr. Gregory Smith states, assumed that the will is practically free. But Dr. Gregory Smith in his *Ethics of Aristotle*, p. 16, states the latter's view in the following terms:—"Will," he says, "with all its arbitrary changefulness may indeed be subject to laws as unvarying as those which govern a chess board. But so long as these laws lie beyond his cognisance, man is practically free."

Dr. Gregory Smith admits "an almost overwhelming pressure as the will," but claims still for the will the power to decide. Mr. Faithfull Davies says much the same thing, "Substitute the word influenced for ruled or determined," and it would be accepted by both sides. But when, under strong passion, the will is overborne, the word "ruled" seems more applicable than "influenced." Take the case of the man who constantly goes to prison for the same offence. When his will is debilitated by yielding to passion is he free to resist the passion? If so why does he not do so, when he knows the inevitable consequence. A man's best chance is to get into his nature other and higher influences, which may serve to conquer the force of the temptation which his will is unable to resist. Moreover, in my paper I showed, that even if the will succeed in resisting the passion, it is ruled in this resistance by higher principles, such as a sense of duty, love, honour, so that even when we prove the will to have been victorious over passion, we have not got rid of Determinism.

The Rev. W. Templeton King seems to have got as near the solution as it is possible for us to reach, when he says:—"Possibly the solution of the mystery lies in a power in the will to choose between motives which are both seeking to influence it." Possibly there the solution lies, but it is still a mystery, because when the will makes its choice as to which influence shall rule it, in making that choice, it is influenced by inherited and created character

The mystery resembles the old problem: Which existed first, the hen or the egg? or again: Did the soil formed from decayed vegetation or the vegetation which produces it, first exist? The point of my paper was that a mystery exists—not that the will is not free. I believe it to be free. I also believe it to be determined, but I cannot reconcile the two things. They *seem* entirely incompatible. Professor Orchard objects to a solution which "adds the insoluble complication that contradictory propositions are simultaneously true." But that is the very position we are forced into as regards many problems in philosophy, *e.g.*, the love, power, and justice of God.

If God be all powerful and all just, is not even momentary injustice inconsistent with these attributes? The apparently contradictory may not be contradictory, owing to our limited knowledge, just as real miracles—I mean those that actually happened —only *seem* at variance with law, because our knowledge of law is limited.

Professor Kirkpatrick finds a difficulty in my saying that if the will is absolutely free, a man will probably sometimes act in opposition to his training and character. But absolute freedom implies this. If you toss a penny a hundred times, it will at least once fall head downwards. So that if the will is not in any sense ruled by motives or character, it *must* sometimes act contrary to character. But it never does: because when it apparently does, there is at work some ruling principle which hitherto unseen is now at work.

Professor White agrees with my view. We are practically free. But clearly as he puts it, this freedom still remains incomprehensible. I do not think Mr. Champneys realizes the difficulty of the question. He says Illingworth need only have gone back a step or two further. But he did not, and if he had, he would have come to law, cause, determinism. Illingworth in the passage I referred to distinctly overlooks the crux of the whole question, viz., that the "acts of will," so called, which go to build up character, are themselves determined by pre-existing character.

Mr. Champneys does not seem to understand what I mean by "education being effective." I mean that when a boy is really influenced by moral education, so that it forms and improves his character, then in his after life the result *invariably* follows, viz., his conduct responds to the character so formed.

It may be open to argument whether or not the boy in imbibing moral teaching so as to improve his character is exercising free will, or being influenced by pre-existing character. But I did not refer to this in the passage referred to, my point was that when the character is formed the after conduct answers to the helm.

Mr. Champneys states that arguments in favour of determinism almost always presuppose that the will must follow the analogy of material things; but in my paper there was no such assumption, and no reference to material law, nor was there any assumption that a motive to be a cause must be irresistible—only the bare statement proved by examples that motives do influence the actions. At the same time it must be remembered that although history and judgment of character may not be exact sciences, the reason of this may be the infinite number of causes, many unknown to the actor, behind the human will. Mathematics is an exact science, because its scope is limited.

Professor Kirkpatrick seems to put the matter very clearly. He sees that I do not use the word determinism in its narrower sense: but in its "higher and wider sense," in which as he says it means: "the sum total of all influences including religion, education, art, science, taste, etc.," and in this case he admits that "our conduct is morally determined."

Mr. Tuckwell thinks we are in a "Serbonian bog" if we believe in the pre-existence of the soul. Has he noted that the great mass of the arguments in the Phædo for immortality depend on the belief in pre-existence? If we came into existence at birth, does it not seem probable that we pass out of existence at death? How can there be an immortality *à parte post*, if not *à parte ante*?

As regards punishment, even if a man could not resist temptation, he still should be punished, because the fear of further penalties will act as a deterrent, by bringing the motive of fear into play.