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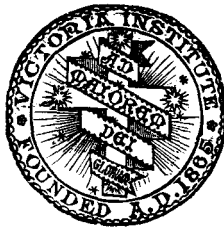
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863RD ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT 12, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, LONDON, S.W.1, AT 4.30 P.M.
ON FEBRUARY, 18TH, 1946.

THE REV. C. T. COOK IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed.

The CHAIRMAN then called on Mr. P. O. Ruoff (in the absence of the author who lives in America) to read Dr. Henry's paper entitled "The Relation between Conduct and Belief."

The following elections have been made: Rev. Professor Charles Ferguson Ball, M.A., Th.D., Fellow; Stephen S. Short, Esq., M.B., Ch.B., Life Member; D. R. Paterson Foot, Esq., Member; Ernest J. Duffield, Esq., Member; Rev. W. H. Beales, M.A., Associate; Rev. R. S. Roxburgh, L.Th., Associate.

THE RELATION BETWEEN CONDUCT AND BELIEF

(being the Langhorne Orchard Essay 1944)

C. F. H. HENRY, M.A., Th.D.

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IF one surveys the past, from which the 20th century mood has so delightfully cut loose, he soon is tempted to convert the inquiry, whether one's intellectual convictions superintend his behaviour, into the question, whether in the long run anything else so clearly influences it. The affirmation that conduct is not conditioned by belief rests, in the last analysis, on the *belief* that conduct is not conditioned by belief. The modern mind, for all its anti-intellectualism, is moulded at this point, as at others, by certain basic assumptions implicit in its approach to the problem of human conduct.

If it could be demonstrated from human experience that man invariably acts contrary to his beliefs, then modern experimentalism should define man as an irrational animal. But if one takes merely the ground that man's conduct affects his beliefs, the problem is not so easily dismissed. The present international slaughter is, even in most surprising quarters, driving thinkers to reassert the sinfulness of man. Yet even here it can be shown that the denial of man's sinfulness, a corollary of the denial of a personal God who is the precondition

of human sinfulness, actually made possible an age of human misconduct that would have been impossible in a believing generation. The most that can dogmatically be contended for, from the vantage point of any particular generation, is that beliefs and conduct act and react upon each other. Which has the primacy, however, can become apparent by appeal, not to a single generation only but to the whole history of human thought and activity. That basic ideas are determinative for behaviour is the contention of the writer ; to substantiate this, we propose to survey the effect of underlying beliefs upon morals, as the problem was attacked successively by the ancient, medieval and modern minds.

Additional emphasis on the significance of such reconnoitering may not be inappropriate. For no question has resident within its answer, consequences of further reach, practically as well as speculatively. More important than the relation of finite to infinite reality, of body to mind, of time to eternity, is this inquiry into the relatedness of conduct and belief. For, if they are not allied, then whatever we believe about anything *practically* makes no difference ; the only position, dialectically, which can justify a paper of this sort is that some relationship exists between them. And if, near the other extremity of the pendulum's swing, they are allied, one cannot escape raising a question vitally important for those who are seeking to *convert* "faith in a fiction" into a satisfactory basis for life : whether beliefs need to conform to truth, or whether a postulated ethics is sufficient ?

I

If the history of philosophy has pedagogic value, among its favourite lessons are these two theses :

(1) That one's beliefs are determinative for his conduct or, as German scholars of a more enlightened generation were prone to express it, one's *Weltanschauung* directly moulds one's *Lebensanschauung*.

(2) That ethics and religion are so related that the idea of the good appears everywhere the corollary of the idea of the holy. Nothing is clearer than that pre-Renaissance thinkers were not committed to the viewpoint that elimination of supernaturalism and metaphysics is the precondition for a sound individual and social morality.

The thesis of this paper is that a man's conduct will be shaped by his conviction about the space-time universe of which he is a part. The determinative question may be expressed : *Is there, or not, a reality beyond nature ?*

That nature alone is real—and that man, therefore, is only a complicated beast—was not first affirmed by the modern mind. For the early Greek naturalists contended that the universe alone is necessary to account for man and for all else, religion and morals included. The ground for this view was, simply, that the five senses reveal nothing of a world beyond nature.

Leucippus and his student Democritus (c.460–357 B.C.) proclaimed this materialistic philosophy. Mind, like body, is reducible to mechanically determined atoms. Even the gods are composed of such particles and are dependent upon them. In this system of mathematical necessity there was no room for moral duty measured by a standard of good and bad, and since nature was regarded as ultimate reality, man was viewed only as a clever animal. Epicurus (341–270 B.C.) constructed his ethics within this naturalistic framework, but misconstrued its main difficulty. Epicurus thought materialism was embarrassed by its failure to answer the problem of death ; hence he taught that the dissolution of atoms takes the sting out of mortality. But the Sophists discerned that man, if limited to his perceptions, is swallowed up in a relativity which makes impossible a claim to absoluteness for anything whatever, philosophic naturalism included. Materialism's big failure was its inability to make room for intelligibility.

But Epicurus did detect an aspect of materialism that is fraught with meaning for ethics. Nature, the only reality, obeys specific laws to which man the creature is subject ; whoever constantly disregards them, breaks himself. Hence Epicurus urged man to seek only higher, long-term, mental pleasures. The way to get pleasure, he cautioned, is to outwit nature by overreaching her laws.

Later Cyrenaicism, admittedly, exegeted " tomorrow we die " into " eat, drink and be merry," but that was not as Epicurus wished it. These lovers of the lower, short-term, sensuous pleasures argued that, since man has no supernatural reference and since death holds no dread because it deprives him of feeling and existence, there is no obvious inducement to seek pleasure

by repression of pleasure. Pleasure that involved future pain might be every bit as pleasureable as the pleasure of bridling pleasure, if not more so. But Epicureanism, taking the higher road in its effort to retain meaning for human existence within a materialistic context, ran into a further difficulty. Because nature is ultimately real and man is wholly subject to his environment, Epicureanism came finally to mean *ataraxia*, or the refusal to get excited over anything—pleasure or pain. For it was inevitable that the humanly-indifferent causal necessity of nature would sooner or later jilt a fortunate man again into equilibrium; the way to avoid suffering when such a day of reckoning came, then, was to withhold oneself reservedly from delight of any sort. The dilemma of naturalistic ethics is that man, just because nature alone is real, is only an animal, and that man, just because he has cognitive insight into nature as a system with persistent laws, refuses to behave like an animal. His rationality, in other words, embarrasses the one-sided animality stressed by naturalism. If he surrenders to animality he outrages his reason; if he enthrones rationality, he goes beyond the bounds of a materialistic philosophy. Unable to find a home for his reason in a world of whirling atoms, from which all things come and to which they go, he is unable also to find either mental or physical pleasure and rather, his house divided against itself, comes to restlessness in *ataraxia*.

The gods of Greek thought were unable to help man out of this plight since they, too, were dependent in the long run upon the cosmos. And for precisely similar reasons some more modern thinkers find themselves enmeshed, despite the fact that their ethical theories make sentimental room for a phantom god of sorts, by a type of naturalism. Such thinkers have often unconsciously absorbed features of the medieval view, which is inserted historically between the ancient and modern minds. Christianity had taught the middle ages that nature is purposive, working to the final advantage of God's covenant people. Now this optimism about nature was retained even by British hedonists who cut loose from the main outlines of the supernaturalistic tradition: John Stuart Mill (1806-73) expresses confidence that his utilitarianism is but an exegesis of the golden rule. One reads Mill, however, suspicious that God is related to his theory of morals no more closely than a mother-in-law tolerated largely for sentimental reasons; yet Mill has pervading confidence that

natural law works together for good to them that trust altruistic hedonism.

It is not surprising, therefore, to recall that David Hume (1711–76) before Mill's day felt that morals, if not legislated by God, ought to be derived from public utility, and this sentiment is with us still. Whereas God decreed the fall of every sparrow in 30 A.D., by 1700 he was, in enlightened circles, somewhat of a vestigial remnant who had originally been the source of natural law. The modern scientific method cannot find Him at all, except as He is identified with some aspect of the space-time universe. But to-day, as in Mill's day, the Christian confidence in a "happy ending" carries over, and that is why modern science is enthusiastic about evolutionary process.

For another group of modern naturalists, it is scientific optimism rather than religious optimism which begets their overestimation of nature. Though the order of nature is inviolable, modern science is the key that will enable man to gain the advantage over the materialistic universe that gave him birth. But here, again, the Epicurean problem is revived; the precondition for discerning the system in nature is a human rationality which inevitably takes the pleasure out of a pleasure ethics.

Both the religious and scientific optimism combined to yield a philosophic optimism—the evolutionary view that reality is somehow constructed as to make progress inevitable.

What these naturalistic optimists failed to discern was that, once Christian supernaturalism is intercut, there is no adequate ground for the belief that nature subserves final causes. There is nothing startling, therefore, in the fact that naturalism gave rise, over against the optimistic, soft-wing altruists, to a hard-wing power ethics, convinced that the laws of nature are not put together for man's good.

Just as for Epicurus man compromises pleasure to outwit nature, so for Hobbes (1588–1679) man sacrifices his power to a ruler, so that a moral code will guarantee his survival in a bloodthirsty world. In both cases, the *ought* is man-made; both tendencies, assuming materialism, do not escape self-preservation as the ultimate drive in man; moral authority is rooted in man's recognition that only by a specific conduct is self-preservation possible. There is no distinction between right and wrong beyond that derived from this context. Hence Nietzsche (1844–1900) is quick to see that right and wrong are

artificial inventions of the weaker class, who seek thereby to hold down the superman; nature reveals only the will to power, and the ideal man gives full expression to this will. Contemporary totalitarianism concurs with Nietzsche.

The modern mood, in the shadow of history's most bloody slaughter, is losing the optimism that had been retained for a number of generations even after the medieval mind had lost its hold. Just as ancient Greek naturalism did not regard an evolving universe as an antidote to pessimism, so the moderns are coming at last to see that nature might unravel without human good as its goal. More recent thought is returning, within its naturalistic context, to the pessimism of the Greek materialists. The tender-minded, middle-of-the-road hedonists, had they discerningly read the outcome of ancient naturalistic ethics in *ataraxia*, would more quickly have yielded place to Bertrand Russell and Joseph Wood Krutch. It was non-materialistic teleology that charged man with optimism about nature, and delayed the descent to pessimism.

“ . . . if human conceit was staggered for a moment by its kinship with the ape, it soon found a way to reassert itself, and that way is the ‘philosophy’ of evolution. A process which led from the amoeba to man appeared to the philosophers to be obviously a progress—though whether the amoeba would agree with this opinion is not known. Hence the cycle of changes which science had shown to be the probable history of the past was welcomed as revealing a law of development towards good in the universe—an evolution or unfolding of an ideal slowly embodying itself in the actual. But such a view, though it might satisfy Spencer and those whom we may call Hegelian evolutionists, could not be accepted as adequate by the more whole-hearted votaries of change. An ideal to which the world continuously approaches is, to these minds, too dead and static to be inspiring. Not only the aspirations, but the ideal too, must change and develop with the course of evolution; there must be no fixed goal, but a continual fashioning of fresh needs by the impulse which is life and which alone gives unity to the process.”*

* Russell, Bertrand. *Selected Papers*, p. 323f. New York: The Modern Library.

Increasingly, modern writers are merely assuming, and not even bothering to argue, a non-theistic position. Walter Lippman's *A Preface to Morals* and Krutch's *The Modern Temper* provide examples. Having broken the ties with traditional teleology, Lippman affirms that nobody has maturely looked at the heavens until he "feels the vast indifference of the universe to his own fate."* Krutch avers that "scepticism has entered too deeply into our souls ever to be replaced by faith."† Yet, he adds, though "ours is a lost cause and there is no place for us in the natural universe," we are not therefore sorry to be human, rather than mere animals. Here again, modern thought and conduct is caught in Epicurean *ataraxia*; having cut loose from supernatural revelation, we know nothing from nature that would disclose that we are more than animals, yet the mere fact that we alone of the creation raise the question confirms us in the conviction that man is not an animal only—in this dilemma modern man stands, unable to make up his mind. Now and then, however, there comes a foreboding voice from the wilderness, as that of George Jean Nathan, from whose words, as one commentator has neatly remarked, "even the *humanism* seems to have completely evaporated":

"To me pleasure and my own personal happiness are all I deem worth a hoot. The happiness and welfare of mankind are not my profession; I am perfectly willing to leave them to the care of the professional missionaries of one sort or another; I have all that I can do to look out for my own happiness and welfare . . . I am against all reform and all reformers . . . The world, as I see it, is defective only to those who are themselves defective."‡

Modern scientific naturalism, of course, is more cautious than were the Greek naturalists, in asserting grounds for non-supernaturalistic morals. For sense experience is not the limit of contemporary belief. It is by rational inference, admittedly, that modern science contends for the cell as the ultimate unit in biology, or for the electron in physics. The modern scientific world is not seen but rather is *thought*. And just so, the naturalistic moralist cannot *see* that the space-time universe is the *only*

* Lippman, Walter, *A Preface to Morals*, p. 187. New York: Macmillan, 1929.

† Krutch, Joseph Wood, *The Modern Temper*, p. 247ff. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929.

‡ *Living Philosophies*, pp. 222f, 227. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931.

reality, but rather, he *thinks* it is ; he is not coerced, by his " five windows " on the cosmos, into believing that nature alone is real and that man is an animal only. His moralistic pessimism, ultimately, is tied up with his assumption that nothing is more ultimate than nature. Since he permits only the phenomenal world to write upon his mind, every idea must be explained by him wholly in terms of a phenomenal context.

II

The classic Greek mind, recognising that a view which involved the unintelligibility of the universe made impossible fruitful discussion of any subject, was convinced that nature is intelligible. For the greatest Greek thinkers there was no way to find meaning in the realm of change and flux other than the assertion of *an eternal, unchanging moral order*, participation in which made the finite sphere intelligible. Plato, in the *Republic*, becomes explicit about this objective *ought* without which, he reminds the Greek materialists, nature and man alike lose significance.

What made possible a science of morals, for the classic Greek mind, is the fact that man is not only an animal, subject to the laws of nature, but that he also partakes of rationality, which gives him a reference to a world of supernature with its unchanging absolutes, its eternal ideas and forms. Although the realm of nature and that of supernature were regarded as having co-ordinate existence—non-revelational thought having nowhere risen to a clear creation concept—it was the moral rather than the physical order that was logically prior for Greek classicism. Deep down, the abiding spiritual realm was the real order, and nature only participates in it or manifests it ; cut loose from the sphere of objective truth, goodness and beauty, the world of particulars—man included—loses meaning. Affirm that nature alone is real, the Greek mind seemed to say, and you are doomed to lose the significance not only of man's rationality but of his whole moral quest, for you will end up only with his animality.

Whereas for Plato and Aristotle the existence of the spiritual realm was a reasoned conviction, for Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) it was a faith to which he clung. Kant declared that the moral order is postulational ; that is, it must be accepted if man is to

live above the animal level. The moral life is not logically provable, but man must choose it, unless he is ready to surrender to animality. The moral law is a categorical imperative which man must obey lest he lose his manhood ; either man accepts it, or he denies his self-consciousness that he is more than a beast.

That Kant's moral law is cut loose from God objectively and from reason subjectively, is a necessary consequence of his view that the categories of human thought have no relevancy to supersensible entities ; spiritual realities, while not knowable, are necessary demands upon our faith. Admittedly, for Kant, it is the absence of knowledge about spiritual entities that permits full faith in their reality. This appeal to a postulated moral law, to ignore which is to betray one's true self, has run through the ethics of a great majority of writers on morals within the last century, and it is preached contemporarily in religious circles which affirm that the divine in man can be nurtured only by striving to fulfil this postulated moral ought. It involves, on the one hand, man's refusal to admit that he is only a beast and, on the other, a refusal to admit that the eternal spiritual moral reality, confessedly demanded by man's moral nature, is knowable. The former concession Kant refuses, for it would rob all reality, phenomena included, of intelligibility and significance ; the latter he cannot concede because he has committed himself in advance to a non-Christian epistemology.

There are difficulties, nevertheless, in these views which insist upon an objective moral order, whether rationally knowable or postulational. What Plato and Aristotle lacked, for all the superiority of their moral codes over most pagan ethics, was, on the supersensible side, a clear assurance that the gods were speaking, and on the human side a dynamic that would permit achievement of the enunciated standards. Plato never did settle the question whether the supreme deity is subject to the idea of the good, or vice versa. Moreover, throughout the *Republic* he seems to grapple for something momentous in the heavenlies to which to fasten the moral order of which he writes ; lacking a personal God and any concept of revelation, he rests content that his moral order be instilled in a rising generation by deception, as though it were mediated by the gods. But for Kant the difficulty is even worse. Those who accepted his premise, that faith in God and an eternal moral order rests upon

the absence of knowledge, pressed this same ignorance to justify full doubt as to the existence of such an order. Kant's position did not safeguard itself against the scepticism of David Hume, whom he sought to refute, and who had pared man's knowledge to a mere animal awareness and to scepticism about the moral and spiritual order.

The religious modernism of the contemporary pulpit, which emphasizes the necessity of a harmonious, unified self, but which is doctrinally indifferent as to the theological context within which that unification may be promulgated, has some of its roots in Kant, through Schleiermacher and Ritschl. For liberalism, Christ is regarded, in his life and teaching, as the exemplar of the fullest possible religious experience. Such dogmatism, however, is inconsistent with the sympathy which theological liberalism professes for scientific methodology, and the religious humanists, with good reason, have insisted that modernistic thinkers, if sincere in their empirical approach, must regard Christ as only tentatively the perfect wayshower. Since man's moral values are relative to his changing experiences, on the viewpoint of the humanists who, obviously, have fallen to the naturalistic context previously considered, such values cannot be identified with the life and experiences of someone many centuries remote.

The significance of the period 1914-1945 for philosophy, we are told,* is that we can no longer accept the presuppositions of the inherent goodness of man, and of the inevitability of progress. Whether the future is bright or dark will turn inevitably upon whether the assumptions which displace these are grounded in objective reality.

III

When one approaches the question whether Christian metaphysics is significant for ethics, one already has the proclamation of secular philosophy that, everywhere, ideas and conduct stand related. The attempt of theological liberalism to produce a Christian ethic without a Christian ideological framework has scarcely succeeded; the waywardness of the so-called Christian nations is only an enlargement of individual inability to live on a revelational plane without a revelational regeneration.

* Trueblood, D. Elton, *The Predicament of Modern Man*, p. 8. New York: Harper, 1944.

One is not surprised, therefore, that while the late Dr. Shailer Mathews was lecturing on Christian ethics, a student should have interrupted with the question whether Jesus' deity significantly bore on the subject at hand. Dr. Mathews replied that, when a person summons a dentist or a plumber, he does not inquire into the technique of dentistry or plumbing. "True," assented the pupil, "but if I am the man with the toothache I want to know whether it is a plumber or a dentist that is working at my teeth."

Christianity has its own answer—and that not merely experiential, not philosophical, but confessedly revelational—to the questions which are most determinative for conduct. It assumes, with other theories, that nature is real, but it denies that nature is ultimate reality. It admits, as some other theories also, that there is beyond nature some kind of moral order, but it goes further. It grants to that moral order a chronological priority, and not merely a logical priority as did the classic Greek mind. For, in the Christian view, the space-time universe is a creation *ex nihilo*, and everything not identifiable with deity is contingent, finite and unoriginal. The destruction of nature, which has a dependent reality, would not in any way impair the essential glory of God as ultimate reality, on Christian premises. Furthermore, whereas Greek classicism spoke of a moral order within the setting of an impersonal ultimate reality, the Christian insistence on a providential order is possible only in a theistic setting, for it implies a God who provides. Thus, for the Christian the divine moral demand involves also a divine enablement and a divine judgment.

More specifically, within this creation context, man is viewed peculiarly from this revelational vantage point. He is surely an animal*, as the Greek classic mind insisted, being subject to the laws of nature. Moreover, he is destined never to transcend his animality, for by creation he is a compound being, comprised of body and soul. The violent disruption involved in physical death, viewed as a punishment for sin, is swallowed up in the work of the Redeemer, extending "far as the curse is found"; hence even in eternity man will not deny his bodily nature, as the doctrine of resurrection attests.

* Prior to modern evolutionism, man's *animality* did not suggest a brute ancestry.

But it is not upon this aspect of man's existence that Christian emphasis falls. For man, as revelationally depicted, is not an animal only, nor does he merely possess a unique dignity of the Platonic-Aristotelian type by virtue of his rationality, but rather he is distinct from all other animals because of his creation in the image of God. Hence man not only has physical being, but has spiritual being also, and his rationality is but one aspect of the latter, yet of tremendous import. The modern definitions of man, which differentiate him from the beasts mainly by his upright walk, the paucity of hair upon his body, or some other such cosmic excellence, all issue from a scaffolding which, if it were to become explicit, would involve a denial not only that man is a spiritual being, but also that he is more than a crafty animal.

What Christianity insists, therefore, is that God legislate^s morals for man. It denies on the one hand that there is no trans-subjective moral order, and on the other it denies that the moral order is ultimate with nothing beyond it. Christianity roots the moral order in God. But, lest some higher idealists contend that this position fully satisfies them, the Christian metaphysics at the heart of Christian ethics demands a narrower explication. For the Christian, God is not only immanent, but also transcendent; the destruction of the space-time universe, man included, would not involve elimination of the Absolute. It is as transcendent that the Christian God is creator. Not only so, but it is as tri-personal that He projects the creation. Not that this personalism is dependent upon the multitude of finite selves in the universe, but rather the opposite, that the finite selves are personal because they are creatures imaging forth the divine. Thus God is personally interested in His creation; even the entrance of sin into the universe cannot beget in Him the indifference characteristic of Aristotle's prime mover, who neither created the world, nor loved it, nor revealed himself to it. Of neither Plato's "idea of the good" nor Aristotle's "self-thinking thought" could revelation be predicted, since they were not persons. The belief in revelation immediately lifts the moral obligation to a different setting; it overrides the limits of human reason or the postulations of an unenlightened faith; it disputes the fluctuating demands of relativistic naturalism and of shallow scepticism.

It is only on revelational ground that a world life view so noble and lofty has confronted man. For only on revelational ground has a clear monotheism appeared in the history of religions ; Christianity finds its outlines in Judaism, and Mohammedanism is an illegitimate offshoot. Only on revelational territory did the early Christians find the regenerative power to attain the high moral standard to which Christ called them. It was in a revelational context that, for 1,500 years, Christianity succeeded in overreaching the pagan mind and the pagan walk.

The modern attacks on Christian metaphysics, without exception, are the outgrowth of assumptions which preclude an open hearing for this great tradition. The attempt to divorce Christian ethics from Christian metaphysics, and to salvage the former while discarding the latter, is only a deceptive, transition movement to open anti-supernaturalism. The spirit that collapsed with the fall of Rome has risen again. Having ruled out the Christian world view, and unable in the modern context to retain the Christian life view, the modern mind is ready to relegate to mythological unreality that which most reflects ultimate reality. This is the cardinal sin of contemporary thought ; this it is which, more than anything else, reflects the contemporary blindness. For it cannot thus treat Christianity without doing violence to history. The lessons of paganism, and the answers of redemptionism, are written too large on the pages of time. The pagan gods entered only into the minds of men, but they never controlled the destinies of nations nor guided history, which has a way of revealing the impotency of dreams. But the God of the Jewish-Christian tradition entered into history ; indeed, human history is possible because of Him, and has significance through Him. At its beginning, center and consummation, He stands. A single generation may lose itself because it severs itself from Christ for a season, but it is impossible for eternity to lose God, or for God to lose that generation, since He is the context for both.

That is what makes the Christian world-life view so compelling. Even the modern man, when he is not first indoctrinated with distinctively anti-theistic assumptions, finds his sense of dependence paralleled by the doctrines of creation and providence ; his guilt alleviated only by the recognition of the substitutionary atonement of Christ for sinners ; his moral sense lifted to its highest level only when he stands, redeemed, before Christ as

the personal Saviour and Lord of life. The modern mind, in its most recent turn, has resisted the descent along the humanism-pessimism route, and is seeking to offset its departure from history and an authoritative revelation by a neo-supernaturalistic ideology which emphasizes direct confrontation of every individual by the Divine Invader. But, once again, this solution is not sufficiently high to prevent modification or relapse. It is only as the God of eternity, of creation, of incarnation, of regeneration, and of ultimate consummation, is rightly seen and related, that human behaviour will cease to be a dwarfed, miserable and inconsistent thing. The early Gnostics introduced violence into their world-life view, because they denied Christ's true relation to the cosmos while seeking to emphasize the incarnation; it matters little how the modern Gnostics juggle and reconstruct the component parts of the revelational structure; if there be revelation, it must stand as an organism, and if not, it must be denied as an organism. An animalistic amorality will always be appropriate to animals, but a godly ethic always appropriate only to those created in the divine image.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN, the Rev. C. T. Cook said: In his *Modern Essays* F. W. H. Myers relates how at Cambridge he was walking one evening with George Eliot in the Fellows' Garden of Trinity. Taking as her text "the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet calls of men—the words *God*, *Immortality*, *Duty*—(she) pronounced with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable was the *first*, how unbelievable the *second*, and yet how peremptory and absolute the *third*. Never, perhaps, have sterner accents affirmed the sovereignty of impersonal and uncompromising Law." Describing the impression her words made upon him, Myers says: "It was as though she withdrew from my grasp one by one the two scrolls of promise, and left me the third scroll only, awful with inevitable fates. And when we stood at length and parted, amid that columnar circuit of the forest trees, beneath the last twilight of starless skies, I seemed to be gazing, like Titus at Jerusalem, on vacant seats and empty halls, on a sanctuary with no presence to hallow it, and heaven left lonely of a God."

There, in words, of course much more vivid and rhetorical, Myers states the age-long problem which Dr. Henry has discussed with such scholarly ability in the Essay now before us. How can men and women maintain what the Victorian novelist called "the sovereignty of that impersonal and uncompromising (Moral) Law," when they no longer believe in a world of reality beyond the phenomenal universe? The author has no difficulty in showing that the dilemma of the modern Scientific Humanist is almost precisely that of the ancient Greek naturalist.

May I remind you of Dr. Henry's words (at the foot of page 4)—
"Having cut loose from supernatural revelation, we know nothing from nature that would disclose that we are more than animals, yet the mere fact that we alone of the creation raise the question confirms us in the conviction that man is not an animal only—in this dilemma modern man stands, unable to make up his mind."

That dilemma is apparent in the answers given by philosophic materialists to the question What sure basis is there for belief in an eternal, unchanging moral order? The school of thought represented by Dr. Julian Huxley—the naively optimistic school—holds that the universe is constructed to make progress inevitable.

In a recent broadcast Huxley affirmed "that man's burning ideals are both a product of past evolution and an agency for its further advance; and supported by the long vista of life's progress in the past, he can soberly and reverently accept the fact that on man's shoulders, and still more on his brains, lies the responsibility for seeing that that progress shall be continued into the future."

There can be little question, however, that modern rationalism, as Dr. Henry demonstrates, is tending more and more to revert to the pessimism of the Greek materialists. What could be more revealing of this tendency than the candid confession of Bertrand Russell in his essay, *The Free Man's Worship*? Here he speaks of man as "the product of causes which had no prevision of the end which they were achieving," and he goes on to say of man that "his origin, his growth, his hopes and his fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocation of atoms, that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; but that all the labours of

all the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievements must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruin—all these things if not quite beyond dispute are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand." (As you see, dogmatism is not all on one side!) Then Russell draws what he regards as the inevitable practical conclusion: "Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation be safely built." Right well does Dr. W. R. Inge characterize *The Free Man's Worship* as "a religion of hopeless rebellion." Bertrand Russell presents his imaginary "free man" with the choice, "Shall we worship force or shall we worship goodness?" He himself and a few others, who owe more to Christian tradition than they are prepared to admit, may cling, with pathetic earnestness, to an abstract "goodness" that is really an importation into their philosophy from the revealed religion which they reject, but we fear that the ordinary man, once he has been persuaded that he is no more than "a helpless atom" in an unmoral universe, will have little incentive to the self-discipline and self-denial that virtue entails. Why should he worship goodness when to do so cannot make a particle of difference to his destiny?

Over against the blind groping of philosophic materialism, we have the self-revelation of God in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. As Luthardt says: "What history proves, and the nature of man requires, Christianity teaches." God is revealed as the Creator of all things in heaven and on earth. Man is not animal only, but made in the divine image and likeness, related not merely to time but to eternity, alone of all God's creatures endowed with a capacity for worship. History is not a succession of changes without meaning or purpose, but the unfolding of a moral order and a providential order. For the individual, religion and morals are seen to be two vitally related aspects of one developing spiritual life. Lastly, and this is the culminating point, the Gospel is a revelation of redemption. God, who in His essential nature is love, was in Christ His Son reconciling a lost world unto Himself

by way of the Cross and the Resurrection. The Gospel of salvation issues in a life of holiness and love. We rebut therefore, the pessimism of Russell with the sublime confidence of Paul: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

MR. W. E. LESLIE wrote: Instead of discussing The Relation between Conduct and Belief, the author considers one kind of conduct (good and bad actions) and a particular group of beliefs—ethical and theological.

The relation between conduct, actions, behaviour and belief in general, is wider and deeper than the particular relation discussed in the paper.

Perhaps a very simple illustration of the kind of psychological issues involved might be given. A man in a burning building says, in all good faith, that he believes the fire escape would bear his weight: but he refuses to use it. Should we infer either that he was insane, or wished to commit suicide, or that he did not really believe what he honestly thought he believed?

MR. ARTHUR CONSTANCE wrote at length but only a part of his communication can be produced.

One can only be grateful for this paper, which strikes at the root of what is surely the main cause of the weakness of Christian witness in the world to-day: that incongruity of spiritual and social life which, when apparent in any professing Christian, is seized upon by observing unbelievers as a justification of their own unbelief—their preliminary requirement towards conviction being sincerity, and (by implication) the absence of hypocrisy in the testimony of any Christian.

But although this paper strikes at the root of the problem, it surely does not strike deeply enough—in fact it merely stirs the surface soil, and leaves the harder ground undisturbed. This is seen in the writer's presentation of his own problem, as he says: "The thesis of this paper is that a man's conduct will be shaped

by his conviction about the space-time universe of which he is a part. The determinative question may be expressed: *Is there, or not, a reality beyond nature?*” For there is one obvious fault in this form of presentation—the *determinative question, as stated, is not (and cannot be) determinative.*

Surely—if the question is to be applied most efficiently and crucially towards *the relation of conduct and belief* it must go further than this? Surely our concern is not with the mere *existence* of a reality beyond nature, but with the relationship of that Reality to ourselves—and this in no ambiguous or philosophic sense, but in an intimate and personal category. I respectfully suggest that the determinative question might well have been determinative had it been worded: *In what way can the individual come into harmony of life with the Reality beyond nature?* This re-expression, of course, implies belief in the Reality before the question is posited—but surely such belief is imperative to any discussion of the relation of conduct and belief: in fact if it is not assumed there can be no logical discussion between rational creatures. . . . But belief, in the Christian sense, cannot be proven or defined historically—it has to be experienced by every believer, who begins with the ABC of it and learns it for himself as if he were the only individual in the universe. This is the true relationship between God and each human soul. Belief involves a “leap” which is illogical—a leap beyond the confines of human reason. But once the “leap” of faith in Christ is taken, new problems of conduct must necessarily arise. For the believer finds himself at war with the world. He is born again—and as a new creature has nothing in common with the fallen creation. His desire to do the Will of God—which simply means that he wants to come into harmony with God—implies that he fixes a standard of conduct, and that standard is a Personal one: His Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But the clearer his vision of that standard the more conscious he becomes of his own shortcomings in the flesh. This continual realization is a continual challenge—if he, as a believer, fails to meet that challenge then his belief fades into complacency, loses its life and power, and his last state may well be worse than his first. He has put his hand to the plough and gone back. The major mistake of modern

Christendom is its failure to recognize the vital fact that adherence to Christ involves this continual challenge to conduct. The power of the early Church lay in its acceptance of the challenge, by the grace of God, as a heart-searching acid test of Christian belief. Only when this truth is realized and put into daily practice is there any hope that the relation of conduct and belief in any individual life can become subject to the Will of God, so that the two may become increasingly identified in progressive sanctification of life.