

# *The* OPEN COURT

Devoted to the Science of Religion,  
the Religion of Science, and the Extension  
of the Religious Parliament Idea

FOUNDED BY EDWARD C. HEGELER

APRIL, 1931

—◀————▶—  
VOLUME XLV      NUMBER 899

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Wieboldt Hall, 339 East Chicago Avenue  
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EDITED BY

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## Contents for March, 1931

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- II. *De Angelis* .....J. Loewenberg
- III. The Paradox of the Time-Retarding Journey (II).....  
.....Arthur O. Lovejoy
- IV. Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association, 1930.
- V. Reviews of Books.  
*John Elof Boodin's* Cosmic Evolution; by E. C. Wilm—*Paul Decoster's* *Acte et synthese*; by J. Loewenberg—*J. Harward's* *The Epinomis of Plato*; by Richard Robinson—*T. V. Smith's* *The American Philosophy of Equality*; by Carl Becker—*Bernard Bosanquet's* *Science and Philosophy* and other essays; by DeWitt H. Parker—*John Baillie's* *The Roots of Religion in the Human Soul*; by H. W. Wright—*W. Y. Elliott's* *The Pragmatic Revolt in Politics*; by George H. Sabine.
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| <i>Frontispiece.</i>  |      |
| <i>Nature and Social Destiny.</i> IRA WOODS HOWERTH.....                      | 193  |
| <i>Eugene O'Neill Contemplates Mortality.</i> BRYLLION FAGIN.....             | 208  |
| <i>Hindu Theories of Illusion.</i> RASVIHARY DAS.....                         | 220  |
| <i>The Soul.</i> T. B. STORK.....   | 232  |
| <i>A Psychological Study of the Growing Jesus.</i><br>WILLIAM H. ROBERTS..... | 243  |
| <i>Books Received</i> .....   | 256  |

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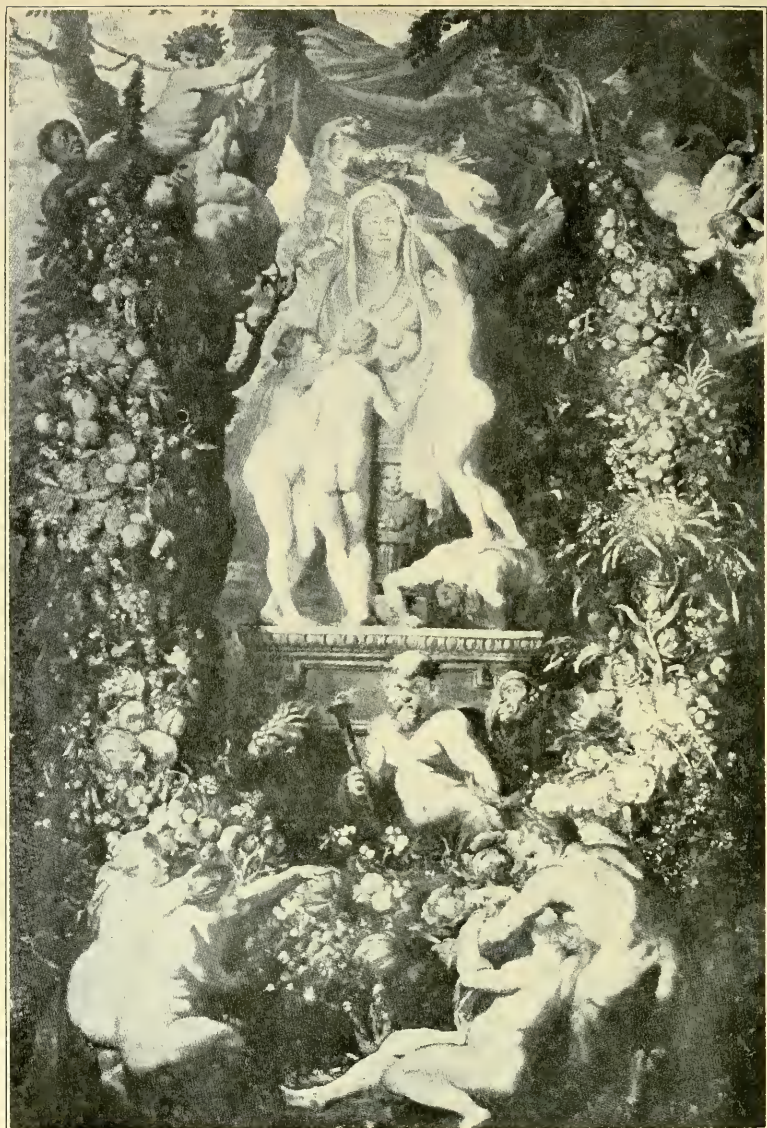
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## NATURE AND SOCIAL DESTINY

BY IRA WOODS HOWERTH

“NATURE! We are surrounded and embraced by her; powerless to separate ourselves from her, and powerless to penetrate beyond her.” So says Goethe. In using the word “Nature,” it is difficult to avoid the appearance of personification. One of the earliest objections to the term “Natural Selection” was that it made of Nature an active power or Deity. But Darwin who coined the expression explained that he used it metaphorically, and contended that it was no more objectionable than “elective affinity” as used to express the seeming preferences of chemical elements in entering into their various combinations.

We shall here employ the word Nature merely as a blanket term to cover the world of matter and energy conceived as undetermined by human intelligence, that is, without the modifications occasioned by conscious human interference and direction. We spell it with a capital because in this discussion it is of capital importance.

So when in the course of this discussion, it is said, or implied, that Nature does thus and so, that it has produced this or that, that it is creative, that it moves toward this or that end, and the like, we mean only to assert that such and such are the results or outcome of the operation of the totality of forces men generally agree in calling natural. We have no disposition to discuss, or even to raise, the question of the origin or ultimate character of these forces. We are concerned only with their functional aspects; we do not go behind the returns. If it is asserted that back of Nature, or within it, there is an Intelligent Power guiding all its operations, we enter no denial. Indeed, if called upon we might subscribe, as to an article of faith, to the assertion that “all things were made

by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." But ultimate origins are a metaphysical question with which science has nothing directly to do, and we wish to confine ourselves strictly within the pale of science. We wish to show clearly a truth about Nature that is plainly before our eyes, and the social significance of that truth—not to befog the reader with the mist of speculation.

It is now quite generally believed by all who are entitled to an opinion on the subject, that our planetary system, the earth and all it contains, have come into existence by a gradual and orderly process commonly known as Evolution. This doctrine of Evolution, implying as it does that all the phenomena of Nature are strictly genetic, that is, pushed from behind into their present infinite variety of adjustments, is obviously fatal to the old and cruder doctrine of design or teleology, that is, that everything in Nature is perfectly adapted to the end it serves. But, as Huxley long ago said, "There is a wider Teleology, which is not touched by the doctrine of Evolution, but is actually based upon the fundamental proposition of Evolution. That proposition is, that the whole world, living and not living, is the result of the mutual interaction, according to definite laws, of the forces possessed by the molecules of which the primitive nebulousity of the universe was composed. If this be true, it is no less certain that the existing world lay, potentially, in the cosmic vapour; and that a sufficient intelligence could, from a knowledge of the properties of the molecules of that vapour, have predicted, say the state of the Fauna of Britain in 1869, with as much certainty as one can say what will happen to the vapour of the breath in a cold winter's day.<sup>1</sup> Thus Huxley asserted, and rightly we think, that "the teleological and mechanical views of nature are not, necessarily, mutually exclusive."

Nature, conceived as a domain of mutually interacting forces, or as a field of creative energy, has brought into existence our cosmic system, the world with all its infinite variety of sensible objects,—“all the choir of heaven and furniture of earth”—and from the beginning there has been apparently a gradual process of development from star-dust to planet; and since the appearance of life upon the earth a gradual rise from lower to higher forms. *Natura naturans* has produced *natura naturata*.

<sup>1</sup> Essays, Darwiniana, New York, 1898, P. 110. Later Professor Huxley said with regard to this statement, "I should now like to substitute powers for 'forces.'" See "Life and Letters of Charles Darwin," by F. Darwin, vol. I, page 555.



Here, of course, an objection may be interposed. It has not yet been proved experimentally that life and mind have been produced by the unaided forces of Nature. There are those who hold to the doctrine of divine intervention at these two points. But the whole history of science has been the history of the elimination of creative or other interferences with the natural order of the phenomena of Nature.<sup>2</sup> The miraculous creation of the world in a period of six days, for instance, has been supplanted by the nebular hypothesis and its modifications; the cataclysmic theory of the earth's crust by the doctrine of uniformitarianism; the doctrine of special creations of animal and plant forms by the doctrine of descent with modifications, and the doctrine of divine intervention in the case of man's origin by the theory of his kinship to the lower and humbler forms of life. So it may well be held as a tenet of evolutionary science that nature is one and indivisible, and that natural causes are all that need to be taken into account for the production of natural phenomena, not only of the inorganic world, but of the biological, psychic, and social worlds, as well. At all events science admits no divine interference with the orderly procedure of Nature at any time or anywhere. "Life," said Lamarck, "is a purely physical phenomenon. All its phenomena depend on mechanical, physical, and chemical causes which are inherent in the nature of matter itself." Spencer believed that the formation of living matter took place naturally "at a time when the heat of the Earth's surface was falling through those ranges of temperature at which the higher organic compounds are unstable." "When we see," he says, "that the general laws of evolution, as they are exemplified in known organisms, have been unconsciously conformed to by chemists in the artificial evolution of organic matter; we can scarcely doubt that these laws were conformed to in the natural evolution of organic matter."<sup>3</sup> Naegeli declared that "the origin of the organic from the inorganic is . . . not a question of experience and experiment, but a fact deduced from the law of the constancy of matter and force. If all things in the material world are causally related, if all the phenomena proceed on natural principles, organisms, which are formed of and decay into the same matter, must have been derived originally from inorganic compounds." Said Huxley, "If it were given to me to look beyond the abyss of geologically recorded time

<sup>2</sup> *Op. Cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> *Biology*, revised ed., New York, 1898, pp. 698, 700.

to the still more remote period when the earth was passing through physical and chemical conditions which it can no more see again than a man can recall his infancy, I should expect to be a witness of the evolution of living protoplasm from non-living matter."<sup>4</sup> Finally, to quote a more recently expressed opinion, "Although far from being able to give a complete scientific explanation of all the phenomena of life, we have made so much progress towards that final goal of the evolutionist that we seem fully justified in believing that the transition from the non-living to the living has indeed occurred, and even in hoping that some day the very origin of life will be explained."<sup>5</sup>

These excerpts are sufficient to show the faith of science with respect to the continuity of the natural process from the non-living to the living.

As to the origin of mind, the consensus of scientific opinion is fairly expressed by a recent writer who, in discussing the relationship of mind and body, says, "whatever one may conceive the ultimate relationship to be, this much is sure: *they both develop concomitantly out of the egg. Both are the products of natural processes and there is no more reason for supposing a miraculous origin in the one case than in the other.*"<sup>6</sup>

Accepting, then, the doctrine that Nature, unaided by creative intervention, or by man, has produced such marvelous results as we see in the inorganic, organic, psychic, and social worlds; and seeing that the creative tendency has been, on the whole, progressive, it is natural to ask, what is the aim or objective toward which the current of Nature is flowing? Upon the answer to that question depends, we think, the whole philosophy of life. For, if there is "a far off divine event" toward which the whole natural creation moves, the implication is that there is nothing that man is called upon to do, so far as its ultimate realization is concerned, but to swim or drift with the current. He may retard or accelerate the movement, he cannot determine it, or prevent its fulfillment. "*Laissez-faire, laissez-passer,*" under this view is an inviting philosophy. If, on the other hand, we conclude that nature's objective bears no relation, or only an accidental relation, to the fulfillment of human hopes, we are as naturally led to the doctrine of intel-

<sup>4</sup> Discourses Biological and Social, New York, 1898, p. 256.

<sup>5</sup> "The Evolution of Living Organisms, by E. S. Goodrich, pp. 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> H. H. Lane, Evolution and Christian Faith, p. 128-29. Italics his.

ligent effort as the sole hope of individual and social salvation. The one view leads to optimism or to pessimism, the other to meliorism.

What then is Nature's Aim?

The word aim as commonly employed implies purpose. It means the thing intended to be hit, the object intended to be affected, or the act of aiming or directing. To say, then, that Nature has an aim is to imply that it is conscious, for only a conscious being can have an aim. But, as we have said, Nature is not a corporate entity; it is merely the sum of natural phenomena. Now if we take any one of these phenomena, we find that absence of aim is its characteristic feature. A river does not aim to reach the sea; an earthquake does not aim to shake down buildings; a cloud does not aim to condense into rain, nor does the rain aim to fall upon the just or the unjust; a plant does not aim to bring forth seed; nor an animal to produce and rear its offspring. If no aim can be found in any single phenomenon of Nature, it is an obvious conclusion that there can be no aim in the totality of phenomena included under the term Nature.

Nature, then, has no aim. All natural phenomena are unintended.

Still, in Nature we have a domain of change, and change cannot take place except in some direction. May it not be that this direction, say a uniform and universal tendency in Nature, has been divinely predetermined with respect to man's good? Even if it has no aim, Nature may be "aimed." Here, however, we are brought face to face with a metaphysical question which science cannot undertake to answer. And so the scientist is at a disadvantage in a discussion with the teleologist. To quote Huxley once more, "the more purely a mechanist the speculator is, the more firmly does he assume a primordial molecular arrangement of which all the phenomena of the universe are the consequences, and the more completely is he thereby at the mercy of the teleologist, who can always defy him to disprove that this primordial molecular arrangement was not intended to evolve the phenomena of the universe."<sup>7</sup>

But turning away from the question, as beyond our reach, whether Nature is "the result of trains of mechanical dispositions fixed beforehand by intelligent appointment and kept in action by a power at the centre," let us confine ourselves to the mechanism of

<sup>7</sup> *Darwiniana*, p. 112.

Nature as it reveals itself to scientific investigation, and ask whether there is a single goal or end towards which Nature is continuously moving.

According to the generally accepted view of the universe, there must have been a time when the earth was "without form," and when, with form, it was "void"; it contained nothing but inorganic matter. Later life appeared in lowly creatures, and then, through incalculable eons,—“the worm mounts through all the spires of form.” Finally man appears, then society and at least the beginnings of certain social institutions. On the whole, then, and in general Nature seems to present a moving picture of progress. Apart from man's work or will, it appears to be progressive. Hence a natural law of progress has been inferred, with a perfected type of man and society as the goal of Nature. This was indeed the “scientific” conclusion drawn from the first reading of the doctrine of evolution. Spencer declared that “progress is not an accident, not a thing within human control, but a beneficent necessity.” Tennyson, “the poet of Evolution,” echoed the same idea when he said,—“Yet, I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs.” Matthew Arnold asserted that “there is a Power outside ourselves that makes for righteousness.” “The world, since the beginning,” says another writer, “has grown toward Good. . . . From incandescent vapor the world was formed, life appeared, with its various forms, mind, man, the Universal Mind—all a progress toward the Benign.”<sup>8</sup> Even Alfred Russel Wallace, the codiscoverer of the principle of Evolution, that is, Natural Selection, concluded that all Nature has been working “toward a single end, the development of intellectual, moral and spiritual beings.”<sup>9</sup> “This earth,” he says, “with its infinitude of life and beauty and mystery, and the universe in the midst of which we are placed, with its overwhelming immensities of suns and nebulae, of light and motion, are as they are, firstly, for the development of life culminating in man; secondly, as a vast school house for the higher education of the human race in preparation for the enduring, spiritual life to which it is destined.”<sup>10</sup> Life then, as the spirit of Edgar Allen Poe is said

<sup>8</sup> Stackpoole, H. deVere, *The New Optimism*, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> *The World of Life*, p. 341.

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 421. Emerson also asserts that “a cultivated man, wise to know and bold to perform, is the end to which nature works.”—*Complete works*, vol. VI, p. 53.

to have declared, is "one eternal progress, with man's good as its goal."

But while it is true that here in our small corner of the universe Nature has been, on the whole, progressive, is it also true that it is so always and everywhere? The slightest reflection shows that it is not. The telescope reveals heavenly bodies in the process of dissolution as well as of integration. The moon, for instance, is a dead world. Mars has apparently reached the apogee of her development. So with numberless stars, they are falling into chaos. In the world itself natural phenomena reveal the same fact, namely, that regress is as much a part of Nature as progress. This puzzled Tennyson.

"Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature lends such evil dreams?  
So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life;  
.....

"So careful of the type?" but no,  
From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone  
She cries, 'A thousand types are gone:  
I care for nothing, all shall go.  
.....

'Thou makest thine appeal to me:  
I bring to life, I bring to death';"

What assurance have we, then, that in our own little corner of the universe eternal progress is guaranteed to us by Nature? None whatever. She brings to life, she brings to death. "Suppose, for example," said Huxley, "a return of the glacial epoch, and a spread of polar climatal conditions over the globe. The operation of natural selection under these circumstances would tend on the whole, to the weeding out of the higher organisms, and the cherishing of the lower forms of life. Cryptogamic vegetation would have the advantage over Phanerogamic; Hydrozoa over Corals; Crustacea over Insects, and Amphipoda and Isopoda over the higher Crustacea; Cetaceans and Seals over the Primates: the civilization of the Esquimaux over that of the European."<sup>11</sup> Nothing is plainer to even ordinary observation than the fact that Nature involves regressive as well as progressive phenomena, that Evolution and Progress are not identical terms. Nature creates the parasite as well as the

<sup>11</sup> Darwiniana, p. 91.



paragon. Many of her darlings are deformed. The doctrine of evolution is consistent with gradual progress, with indefinite persistence in one state, or with a gradual retrogression. If we should look down from an aeroplane upon the ocean, we should see all sorts of tide and wave movements, movements in every direction, all dependent upon the set or direction of the incident forces. Nature on the whole presents exactly the same aspect, a multiplicity of directions and a multiplicity of goals.

But how are we to account for the long natural progress culminating in man? We may as well ask, "How are we to account for the long natural regress apparent in Mars or the Moon. Since Nature is a congeries of universal and, from our viewpoint, blind forces operating in every possible direction, progressive phenomena in one part of the universe are as necessary, and no more to be wondered at than regressive phenomena in another part of the universe. As a matter of fact Nature knows nothing of progress or regress; they are human concepts. Man, however, naturally regards as progressive the cosmic movement that has resulted in himself. But what about all the sentient creatures, in this world or in others, that may have happened to be in the backwash of Nature, so to speak, and have been eliminated? Ephemera in a current of air, if intelligent enough to do so, might, probably would, interpret their general movement as a continuous progress that should awaken wonder, but the succeeding generation might find the wind blowing in another direction. From the viewpoint of infinite time, the existence of mankind is ephemeral.

All that we need to ask, then, is what is the direction and objective of Nature in this infinitesimal part of the universe known as the world? Lester F. Ward in concluding a discussion of this question, says, "We may therefore probably say with some approach toward the truth that the object of nature, as the phrase has been explained, is to convert as large an amount as possible of inorganic into organic and organized matter. This may be a somewhat unpoetical conclusion, and if we could have things as we want them a more delicate and respectable end might be imagined for nature to pursue. But we are only trying to ascertain what the end really is toward which things tend, and this formula comes nearer to expressing it than any other that has been offered."<sup>12</sup> Ward thus describes "the end toward which matters seem to be moving in an

<sup>12</sup> "Ward, Lester F., *Pure Sociology*, p. 114.



ascending series of creative acts such as we observe in our part of the universe at the present stage of cosmic evolution." But while it may be possible to discover some single and general objective in Nature "in our part of the universe at the present stage of cosmic evolution," there are also numerous specific objectives, and in another part and at another stage there will be other objectives. An appreciation of this fact led Gabriel Tarde to remark, "there is no single end in nature—no end in relation to which all others are means; but there is an infinite number of ends."<sup>13</sup> This must be true for the reasons we have given. Nature presents, and must present, the aspect of moving toward innumerable ends, for it involves a multiplicity of forces and an infinite variety of movements. Each of these movements, however, has an end or goal and a very prosaic one. It is rest, cessation of motion,—equilibrium or balance of forces, as it is expressed in the physical world,—adjustment or adaptation to the environment, as it is called in the biological and social world. The goal of Nature, then, whether taken as a whole or with respect to any specific natural phenomenon is balance or equilibrium.

This conception is, of course, a commonplace in the physical and biological sciences. The natural physical world consists of a practically infinite number of phenomena, of which the movements of the winds and waves and tides are typical examples. In the case of any such movements it is plain that the end or goal is equilibrium, that is, rest and cessation of movement. The primitive man interpreted all such natural phenomena in terms of his own welfare. But modern science sees only the operation of unchanging forces under invariable laws. So also with natural biological phenomena, the phenomena of life apart from purposive acts; the end is adjustment. Life itself is only "a continuous adjustment of internal to external relations." An organism lives only so long as the adjustment is maintained, that is, only so long as there is an approximate equilibrium of the forces acting upon and within the organism. If we consider the phenomena of species creation and development, the same thing is true. In general, with respect to the fauna and flora of the various parts of the world, this end is approximately reached. Man, however, being himself a force, disturbs the balance, without, as a rule, foreseeing the consequences. But when the balance is disturbed a movement at once takes place which is

<sup>13</sup> "Tarde, G., *Social Laws*, English translation. New York, 1898.

identical in principle to the restoration of balance in a pair of scales when its equilibrium is disturbed. When the organism or the species affected becomes once more adapted to its environment, the movement ceases. The end or goal of Nature in the biological world, also, is adjustment, adaptation, equilibrium.

It is so with the natural phenomena of mind. The most orthodox theologian would perhaps find no fault with the declaration that the mind craves rest, and he would perhaps be ready to prescribe the particular set of beliefs that will assure that desirable condition. But whether the mind craves rest or not, it is plain that the natural phenomena of mind are just the same with respect to their tendency as other natural phenomena; they move toward equilibration. That is their goal.

Natural social phenomena are no exception. And here let it be remembered that natural social phenomena include not merely the accidental in society, as it is ordinarily conceived, but also all social phenomena that are not intelligently directed toward a social end. From the highest viewpoint, that is the viewpoint of world order and world progress, almost the whole realm of social phenomena are in the natural sphere. Just as the phenomena of individual life, no matter how consciously directed in the interest of the individual himself, are often wholly undirected as viewed from the standpoint of the life of the group, so group life, say national life, is often directed with not the slightest conscious reference to the life of the race. From that viewpoint, that is, the general social viewpoint, such phenomena are without direction; they are purely natural. In all this wide realm, social movements are in the direction of social equilibrium and are as indifferent to the well-being of the race as the movements of the clouds or the roll of the sea. This goal, or rather these goals, in themselves have no more reference to, or respect for, man's well-being than the end of motion in a falling stone or a spouting geyser. In all natural phenomena, hence in Nature itself, the goal is the same. It is rest, balance, equilibrium, adjustment.

This may at first sight be regarded as a discouraging situation, but now let us look closely at the real significance of this fact with respect to man and society.

The characteristic distinction between living and inert matter is that, roughly speaking, the former acts, while the latter is acted

upon. "Tendency to equilibrium of force and to permanence of form," said Huxley, "are the characters of that portion of the universe which does not live—the domain of the chemist and physicist. Tendency to disturb existing equilibrium, to take on forms which succeed one another in definite cycles—is the character of the living world."<sup>14</sup> Disturbance of Nature, then, is an inevitable though not an exclusive function of everything that lives. Any disturbance without a conscious purpose belongs in the realm of the natural. Natural disturbances must affect for good or ill the well-being of the organism. Obviously disturbances whose effects are calculated in advance, and are thus intelligently predetermined, are most likely to affect the organism advantageously. Such disturbances, however, imply and require mind. The function of mind, then, is to direct in the interest of the organism all changes in the environment, that is, in Nature. In man mind reaches its highest level. It is the special prerogative of man, therefore, to disturb natural equilibria most effectively in his own interest, individually and collectively, and to determine by changing the environment their restoration at a higher level. The absence of purpose in Nature makes Nature wholly subservient to man.

Suppose, however, that Nature were relatively active not passive? Is it not obvious that man's power to improve his condition would be limited if not destroyed? His peculiar power lies just in the fact that he can disturb the equilibria of nature, and determine by his intelligence the conditions in which, when re-established, the new equilibria may be, from the viewpoint of his well-being, at higher levels. So it would appear that Nature, blind, unconscious, indifferent to the fare and the fate of man, is just what man would wish it to be from the standpoint of his well-being. The sooner he perceives this, the sooner may he devote himself wholeheartedly to the study of natural phenomena in order to control them in his own interest and thus improve his condition.

As with man so also with society, which is collective man. Man has been slow to perceive that natural law prevails without exception in the realm of the unintended phenomena in society exactly as it prevails in all the other phenomena of Nature. "The conception of natural law," says Spencer, "which does not exist in the savage, is as yet but rudimentary in the civilized." But most civilized men are ready to acknowledge that the whole physical world is a domain

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit. p. 43.

of natural law. Many will agree that natural law prevails also in the field of natural biological and psychic phenomena. But few as yet perceive, and are ready to acknowledge, that society itself to the extent that it is not brought under human direction is also a domain of law. Law is as rigid and as universal in the undirected phenomena of human society as it is in the field of natural psychic, biological, and physical phenomena. The scope of the field of natural social phenomena will not be appreciated, or the full significance of the truth about Nature that we have been emphasizing be apprehended, unless it is seen that social evolution has thus far been almost wholly without direction. "It is true," said Spencer, "that much social evolution is achieved without any intention on the part of the citizens to achieve it, and even without the consciousness that they are achieving it, the entire industrial organization in all its marvelous complexity, has arisen from the pursuit by each person of his own interests, subject to certain restraints imposed by corporate society; and by this same spontaneous action have arisen also the multitudinous appliances of industry, science and art, from flint knives up to automatic printing machines, from sledges up to locomotives—a fact which might teach politicians that there are at work far more potent social agencies than those which they control."<sup>15</sup> Now, since all social evolution achieved without intention belong in the realm of Nature, this passage from Spencer may help the reader to perceive the fact just pointed out that society and social evolution are yet almost wholly without direction. "Civilized man," says Lester F. Ward, "although he has learned not only to avert the dangers of the physical forces but even to subjugate and utilize them has made no progress with social forces, and looks upon the passions precisely as the savage looks upon the tornado. Man is only civilized in relation to the lower and simpler phenomena. Toward the higher and more complex phenomena he is still a savage. He has no more thought of controlling, much less utilizing, the social forces than the savage has of controlling or utilizing the thunderbolt. Just as pestilences were formerly regarded as scourges of God, so the so-called evil propensities of man, which are nothing but manifestations of social energy, are still looked upon as necessary inflictions which may be preached against but must be endured. This difference is wholly due to the fact that while we now have sciences of physics,

<sup>15</sup> Various Fragments, New York, 1897, p. 132.

chemistry, geology, and bacteriology, which teach the true nature of storms, electricity, gases, earthquakes, and disease germs, we have no science of social psychology or sociology that teaches the true nature of human motives, desires, and passions or of social wants and needs and the psychic energy working for their satisfaction. The sociologist who has a proper conception of his science as similar in all essential respects to these other sciences, and as having, like them, a practical purpose and use for man, looks upon the social forces as everybody looks upon the physical and vital forces, and sees in them powers of nature now doing injury, or at least running to waste, and perceives that, as in the other case, they may, by being first studied and understood, be rendered harmless and ultimately converted into the servants of man, and harnessed, as the lightning has been harnessed, to the on-going chariot of civilization."<sup>16</sup>

Natural phenomena, then, including natural changes in society, may be typified by the ocean, society by the crew and passengers on a ship. If these, each in pursuit of his own ends, allow the ship to drift with the natural forces of wind and tide, they may by chance reach the harbor. But they are more likely to be caught in an adverse current and swept on the rocks. If, perceiving their danger, they rely upon the natural aim and tendency of nature to save them from destruction, their reliance is likely to be in vain. Prayer will not save them, Providence will not interfere. They may cry aloud and the only echo will be their wailing cry. Their only certain hope of salvation is an accurate knowledge of the sea and of navigation, and steady hands upon the wheel. The only boon, aside from the materials and forces of nature, that man should ask is the power he now has, namely, the power of self-direction and the direction of social evolution.

The secret and assurance of continuous human progress, then, is not any fixed aim or goal in Nature. It is not in Nature at all, but in Mind. The beneficence of Nature lies not in some inevitable destiny inherent in its operations, some far off divine event to which it moves by virtue of its resident forces, but in its marvelous and abundant materials and forms of energy, all of which are at the service of man's intelligence, enabling him to realize the divine event formulated by him as his own objective. When man fails, it is because of ignorance or want of knowledge, not because of fate or

<sup>16</sup> *Pure Sociology*, p. 110.



miracle. The only assurance of material success is scientific knowledge of the materials and forces of Nature. The only assurance of moral success is the same, coupled with the emotional stimulus of a moral ideal. Man, individually and collectively, must think out and work out his own destiny. Collectively he has hardly begun this process. Men are intelligent but Mankind is a fool—and nations are little better. They spend money for battleships instead of education and in schemes for the promotion of international goodwill, which would make protection unnecessary. They send ineffective punitive expeditions into neighboring countries that cost more than enough to establish colleges in all their cities of considerable size. They go to war and destroy enough lives and property to make all the waste places of the earth to blossom as the rose. They turn the knowledge and instruments of individual achievements in science to their own destruction, and then call upon God to save them from their own folly. Without any intelligent concerted effort to direct their own evolution toward a worthy end, they talk of "manifest destiny," and imagine they display superior piety by depending upon a divine Providence that rules and overrules in the affairs of nations, instead of depending upon themselves. Nations, like individuals, make their own beds; they must lie in them. They may and should determine their own destiny. There may be a Divinity, but there is no divinity that "shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will." There is no power outside of ourselves that unerringly makes for righteousness. Now and then the accidental operation of natural forces do so. But man, and man alone, equipped with scientific knowledge of society, and inspired by a scientific social ideal, can determine social destiny. Man, if he did but realize it, is himself a god.

The prevalent conception, then, of social progress through an inevitable movement and aim in Nature, or through divine determination of natural phenomena, or divine interference with natural laws, is poor science. May we not say also that it is poor theology. It has not the religious value it has been supposed to have. The theologian turned historian, or the historian turned theologian, has often pictured the whole stream of natural phenomena, particularly the natural social phenomena of recorded history, as converging toward his own cult or his own nation. Occasional and dramatic events, and these alone, are pointed to as evi-



dences of divine interference. The doctrine of such interferences he calls, "God in history." Such a doctrine, however, is a conception suited only to the philosophy of primitive man. The expression has generally conveyed the idea of special providence, that is divine interference as manifested in some particular act. But may not Providence be regarded as general not special? May it not be that the beneficence of the Creator is manifested in the unchanging character of natural laws, the inevitable tendency of all natural phenomena to a state of equilibrium by which alone Nature, all Nature, is made subservient to man's intelligence?

Such at least is a reasonable tenet of the religion of science. Religion is not fuddling with the mysterious. It does not necessarily involve concern about "the other world." One world at a time! True religion, practical religion, is at least a provisional acceptance of the scientific view of Nature and of Mind, a love for the highest ethical ideal that the mind of man has been able to conceive and formulate, and consecration to the task of realizing that ideal here in this world through the utilization of the materials and forces of Nature in intelligent human effort. Prayer from this view, is concentration, conservation and consecration.

In conclusion we may say, it is disloyalty to science as well as to art to set any limit to man's potential control of Nature, and it is a reflection upon the Divine Beneficence to declare, as many do, that there are forces operating in society which man may not control and direct. What a vista that opens for future human achievement!

"So many worlds, so much to do,  
So little done, such things to be!"