

DEVELOPMENTAL ETHICS¹

BY ANTONIO LLANO.

[CONCLUDED.]

V.

IF, passing from the general principles of the doctrine to its practical applications, we endeavor to harmonise our ordinary moral judgments (whose validity is accepted by Dr. Carus, as by every one else) with that law of evolution (whether of "soul" or other) from which alone all ethical conceptions can derive their authority and legitimacy, we again find ourselves in a labyrinth of perplexities, escape from which can only be secured by surrendering all morality. The evolution of man is not a simple process, a simple motion governed by one single force: it is a very complex process, a motion whose propelling force is the resultant of many different, although concurrent, forces, some acting in one direction, some in another, and many of them opposed to one another. From such combination human development in general, and "soul development" in particular, arise; nor could mankind move as it does if the combination were not what it is, or if any of the constituent components of the resultant force were lacking. Of these components some present themselves in the form of human actions accompanied by consciousness; and, since they all have their share in the general movement, they must all be regarded as necessary factors of development; i. e., all human actions must, whatever their nature, be considered, according to the developmental standard of goodness, morally good. And to this it will be no scientific or logical answer to say, that development would take place faster and follow a better path (whatever may be meant by "better"), if some modes of conduct were omitted, and replaced by opposite modes of conduct; for this is to abandon the position that evolu-

¹For the first part of Mr. Llano's article see *The Open Court* for March 1897.

tion, at every moment, can take place only in one direction and at one rate of speed, and that it must so take place; and to frame an imaginary, subjective standard of what *ought* to be, instead of preserving the scientific and objective standard of what *is* and *must* be. We cannot escape from the logical consequences of universal determinism: in whatever direction we turn, the austere and implacable monster of Necessity rises before us, proclaiming, with his very silence, that he is the eternal and, therefore, the irrevocable. He cannot be moved, for he has no heart; nor convinced, for he has no brain; he is an automaton made of inflexible material; and if we recognise him as our master, we must be satisfied to watch in submissive resignation the everlasting motions of the wonderful and awful mechanism.

The process of evolution itself presupposes the conflict between antagonistic forces and tendencies. In the moral world, as in the physical world, there is a struggle for existence, if not among individuals, at least among what have been termed moral ideals. The higher ideals have not been realised except through, and by the agency of, the lower ideals; the lower ideals are, therefore, indispensable, if there is to be any development at all. But by this I do not mean to repeat the truism that what was morally good yesterday is to-day morally bad: the idea I intend to convey is, that, *at any given period*, the morally good (I now use the word in its ordinary sense) cannot usually become better, that is, progress (either by gaining in intensity, or by being propagated), unless helped in its course by the morally bad; the consequence being that the morally bad, viewed now as a necessary factor of the morally good, ceases to be really bad: our judgment must be reversed, and we must say that in such cases every action is morally good. An illustration will, I hope, make my position perfectly clear.

The teachings of Jesus of Nazareth are by many, Dr. Carus among them, considered as the starting point and the root of all modern morality. After the legendary element has been strained in the capacious filter of "Christian scholarship," and the moral residue treated with the powerful chemicals of "interpretation," the New Testament is found to contain the highest truths and principles of ethics; and thus the revolution worked by Jesus in the whole life of mankind is likened, both for its legitimacy and its importance, to the astronomical revolution of Copernicus. But it is, I believe, allowed by all students of Christian morals that the bare precepts of Jesus would have made little impression upon the old Romans and their barbarian conquerors, had they not been accom-

panied by those narratives appealing to the imaginal and emotional parts of our nature,—the stories of his struggling life and his patiently borne passion, crowned by his awful death. The best credential of his moral code was the seal of martyrdom stamped upon it by the heroic sacrifice of Calvary; and had this tragedy never been related to the Western World, the precepts of Jesus might to-day be slumbering among the utopic vagaries of what the greatest of Roman historians described as a superstitious people, who distinguished themselves by the odious characteristic of being the enemies of human kind.

What judgment, then, are we to pass upon the persecutors, the betrayers, and the executioners of Jesus? He was not an independent, self-existing, extra-cosmical personality: but for his surroundings and the state of the world at the time of his advent, his work would have been impossible. His work was not a simple nor an isolated event: it was, scientifically considered, a complex phenomenon, of which his moral teachings were only a factor, some of the other factors being the actions of his enemies, his denunciators, and his crucifiers. From a naturalistic point of view, Pontius Pilate, and Judas Iscariot himself, were component elements of the great compound whole, which, operating upon the minds of men, was to revolutionise the moral world; their actions were really not *theirs*: they were, so to speak, the instruments of nature, even as Jesus himself was the instrument of nature; and in those actions we must see, not the acts of free and independent wills, but the necessary operations of the eternal laws of the cosmos, which, for the carrying on of the evolutionary process, *must* make use of the martyr and the assassin alike, each being as indispensable as the other; they both conform to the laws of the cosmos,—they are the laws of the cosmos themselves; they both further the evolution of the race,—they are but terms of the sum total of progress; given the actual constitution of the universe, progress would be as impossible without the one or the other, as the existence of a whole without its parts. Judged, then, by the standard of development, are they not both equally moral, both equally good? It will, perhaps, be argued that Jesus himself had reached a higher stage of development, while his enemies were yet in a state of relative undevelopment. But in this case the question is only one of degree; Jesus, we may grant, was *better*, but they also were *good*. By what criterion can we trace the line of demarcation between the good and the bad? Nor can the question be evaded by taking into consideration the feelings, the *intentions* of the actors that took part in the momentous

tragedy ; for, apart from the fact that the persecutors of Jesus were probably acting in good faith and in obedience to the dictates of their "categorical imperative," it must be remembered that our criterion is entirely objective ; or, if we take account of the subjective element, it must be from an objective point of view ; from the point of view, namely, of what the consequences of that subjective element must be upon the development of the race. Nor, again, can it be said that the objectiveness of our criterion consists, not in judging actions by their consequences, but in taking in the objective world the necessary data for the direction of *our* conduct ; for this would be an ethics of egoism, not of development : the ethics of development is an "ethics of eternity," embracing the past, the present, and the future of the race.¹ The immediate causes of voluntary human actions are human feelings ; and feelings from which the evolution of the race results cannot, according to the "ethics of eternity," be declared bad or immoral. The feelings of Judas Iscariot, from which resulted the sacrifice of Calvary, from which resulted the adoption of Christianity, from which resulted the elevation of mankind, have to be accepted as necessary antecedents of the alleged redemption, i. e., as necessary factors of moral evolution ; or, to place the subject on its true bearings, as necessary factors of cosmical evolution in general ; and, as such, those feelings must be declared good.

It may, perhaps, be thought that the foregoing remarks are too far-fetched, and that they come from a misapprehension, or even a perversion, of the theory I am criticising ; for it is repeatedly stated by Dr. Carus that the elevation of the soul is the test of progress, and he says very distinctly that the "nature of moral goodness" "must be sought in the quality of our ideas and motives."² I shall, therefore, endeavor to present with all candor the reply that can be made, from his point of view, to the objections I have just adduced.

Human conduct, it will be said, consists in voluntary movements made in response to impressions received, directly or indirectly, from the outer world, and aiming at an adaptation of the organism to his environment, especially the social environment. The interpretation of those impressions and of the necessary conditions of adaptation are forms of consciousness we term judgments. Judgments, then, are the subjective regulators of conduct ; and it is therefore obvious that our actions will be better adapted to their ends in proportion as our judgments are more correct, or, as Dr. Carus

¹ *Ethical Problem*, p. 42.

² *The Monist*, I., 4, p. 564.

says, in proportion as we approach nearer to truth. It follows that the first condition, for a scientific direction of conduct is knowledge of the objective laws of nature ; and the first thing to be inquired into, when a line of conduct is proposed, is, how it will tally with those laws, or what its consequences will be, according to those laws, as they have been revealed to us by the attentive examination of natural phenomena. In this sense, then, it may be said that the standard of ethics must be objective : it must be, and cannot but be, found in the immutable order of the outer world. The law of evolution being a well ascertained fact, we may take it as an ethical guide : of conduct which is moulded so as to conform to that law, we may say that it is moral ; and of the man whose motives correspond with that law, we may say that he is good. By doing this we have not exchanged our objective criterion for a subjective criterion ; for, although we judge a man by his motives, those motives themselves are judged by the higher standard—the law of evolution, which, when applied to man, and viewed on its “spiritual” side, may with propriety be called the moral law. The consideration of motives is an indispensable element of moral judgments, for the simple reason that morality is only predicable of thinking beings, the causes of whose actions are motives : were we to judge merely by consequences, we should have to speak of brutes, trees, and stones, as of moral creatures. Nor is it sufficient that a man’s motive should be what is ordinarily called a “good intention” ; for herein comes our objective criterion to inquire whether that intention, when carried out, will further the evolution of the race ; and, unless his intention comply with this condition, it cannot be called good. Such examples, then, as that of Jesus’s persecutors, cannot be justified ; for, although these men may have acted in good faith, they were ignorant of the true course of human development ; they were immoral through their ignorance, or at least they were not good men ; they may be excusable, but this does not make them moral. Furthermore, it has to be admitted that we ourselves are liable to form erroneous judgments as to the laws of nature, and that some of our actions may be viewed by our descendants as we now view the proceedings of the Inquisitors ; but this is a necessary, although unfortunate, consequence of the limitations of human knowledge : all we can say is that, *for us*, those actions are morally good to which we are prompted by motives that, according to the facts known to us, and to the interpretation we can give them, we believe to be faithful responses to the requirements of the law of human progress.

The main objection to this reasoning is the same general objection I conceive to be applicable to the whole system—inconsistency. Development is here presented as the end, the ideal, of ethics; as an object whose realisation must be the purpose of moral conduct. It must, then, be accepted as the most desirable condition, or, in the language of other moralists, the *summum bonum*. If we ask why this is a desirable good, we are answered that “we *have to* be pleased with the development of our race according to the laws of nature,” and that “those who are displeased might just as well commit suicide at once, for they will go to the wall, they will disappear from the stage of life. Those alone will survive who are pleased with what the laws of nature demand.” Ethics, it is added, formulates general rules, based on facts, to “assist us in doing what we shall after all *have to* do.”¹

Leaving aside the hedonistic spirit of these statements, we find them inadequate to explain what they are intended to explain; for, while it is true that science teaches us what we “*have to*” do under certain circumstances, this “*have to*” refers to an end determined in advance; it is what we “*have to*” do *in order to attain an object in view*. The ethical *ought* is a conditional *must*; the *if* is the *sine qua non* of ethics, and for this reason all ethical structures have to be erected on an assumption of some kind—on an *if*. The foregoing propositions, therefore, are to be understood in the sense that we must adapt our means to human development, considered *beforehand* as a desirable end: *beforehand*, for experience teaches us that we can follow a different line, whether we “go to the wall” or not; and, consequently, we *have to* follow the line of development *if* we have accepted the idea of development as our guide. As the choice between the two apparently possible modes of conduct is a subjective operation—a matter of desire—our objective criterion only applies, as I have said above, *in the hypothesis that we have already chosen one form of conduct or the other*. This criterion, then, does not tell us why one conduct is more desirable than the other; for, although it assures us that by following the wrong line we shall “go to the wall,” this is simply the statement of a possible fact, which leaves us in absolute ignorance as to what is meant by “going to the wall,” seeing that in many cases the immoral man attains *his* end. As to the highly praised and so oft repeated criterion of facts and laws of nature and the development of the soul in the direction of truth, it may be said that it amounts to but a useful and necessary tool, as use-

¹ *The Monist*, I., 4, pp. 553, 554, and VI., 4, p. 589.

ful to the malefactor as to the saint—indeed, more useful to the malefactor.

Development, then, is to be accepted as an end in and by itself, to be striven after for its own sake, and for its sake alone. Its desirability cannot be established (even if this were logical) by an absolute *must*, for experience shows that we can, and often do, move counter to development; nor justified by reference to any other end or standard, for, in this case, that other end would be *the* standard. Such efforts at justification as that immoral conduct “will lead to certain ruin,”¹ and the like, are either a begging of the question or a surrender of the criterion. We arrive thus at an ultimate postulate, which must be assumed as a fact not susceptible of demonstration; the postulate, namely, that development is the most desirable object, and, as such, the *summum bonum*. And here we are confronted by a notorious contradiction; for, while Dr. Carus declares that “ethics should not start from any assumptions,”² his system cannot be built except on the assumption (assumption, as being a matter of subjectivity) that development is desirable in and by itself. To say that development consists in agreement with facts, or in an approximation to truth, may be a definition of what development is, but its desirability remains an ultimate postulate—an ultimate assumption. Even the reduction of progress to “soul-development” is an implicit substitution of subjectivism for objectivism, an unconscious return to the judging of nature by the standard of our feelings.

Admitting, then, that development is desirable in and by itself, and that, besides being desirable, it is actually desired, I shall leave other difficulties aside, and pass to the immediate consequences of the developmental theory, as thus understood (I almost said *mis*-understood). I shall endeavor to show how the objective sub-standard and the ideal standard can be combined, and what the results of the combination must be.

The first condition of our ideal of development is that it should be conceived as something possible or capable, of being realised by a due application of the laws of nature with which we are acquainted; and when, on the application of these laws, we find that our end is not attained, we must at once recognise that our ideal was such only in the popular sense of the word—that it was a dream; or, scientifically expressed, that we were in error, and that the object of our pursuit was only a logical possibility, conceived by us

¹ *Fundamental Problems*, p. 198; *Ethical Problem*, pp. 31-32.

² *The Monist*. 1., 4, p. 555.

as such through ignorance of some unexpected circumstances which make the realisation of the desired end an actual impossibility; in other words, we have to remodel our ideal so as to make it conform to the actual facts of reality, thus constantly modifying our subjective standard by our objective sub-standard, the former being mostly formal, the latter experimental. A consequence of this is that we cannot judge actions or individuals by their motives; at least, that we are not justified in passing any judgment of moral disapprobation. For, motives being themselves a part of our ideal, we may conceive and desire a special form of development where certain motives exist; but if, by actual observation, we discover that those motives do not exist, or that the contrary motives exist, and that, furthermore, these are not capable of being changed by any means at our disposal, we must conclude that we were reckoning without the host; that development does *not*, as a matter of actual fact, take account of our supposed motives; and, as we "*have to be pleased*" with what really exists, we cannot disapprove of any existing motives, whatever they may be. The only feeling we can consistently experience is one of disappointment at the erroneousness of our judgments and the frustration of our expectations; but all verdict of immorality is out of the question, as the form of development with which we finally "*have to be pleased*" is that form which actually takes place, not the form we have in our minds.¹ We may, no doubt, cling to our definition, and say that a moral man is one whose motives correspond to our ideal of development; but this definition is nothing but the statement of a logically possible fact, and, being stripped of all feeling of praise and blame, entirely loses its ethical importance. And it is further evident that, with regard to the realisation of our ideal, although we think that the ideal can (that is, *may*) be realised in a certain manner, yet if the event—the actual fact—prove that the ideal is realised in a different manner, we must again confess that our conception of the means was inadequate, that the means that nature has employed are the *only* possible means, and that, unless we give up the realisation of the ideal, those means must be regarded with approba-

¹The words of Antoninus the Philosopher (quoted by Dr. Carus himself) are a very clear statement of the monistic and determinist views (although the Stoics were not determinists in the modern sense of the term): "All is suitable to me, O Cosmos, that is suitable to thee! Nothing that for thee is in due time is for me too early or too late." And again: "There is hardly anything foreign to any other thing. For things have been co-ordinated, and they combine to form one and the same cosmos." Remember also the words of Epictetus: "If any one go to the bath too early, say not that he does wrong, but that he bathes before time. If any one drinks too much wine, say not that he does wrong to drink, but that he drinks too much. For, before thou knowest what moves him to act, how knowest thou whether he do wrong?"

tion, or, at least, not with disapprobation. Thus I do not believe I have been illogical in my application of the developmental principles (even in the above distorted form) to the actions and men connected with the life and death of Jesus. To say that we can further or retard the progress of mankind are metaphorical expressions,¹ and, if literally taken, they betray an absolute ignorance of the difference between the logically possible, based on *assumptions*, and the actually possible, based on reality. There is only one process of evolution, only one direction and one speed of progress, all predetermined from eternity, i. e., contained in the universe as potentialities that are actualised at definite times and in definite places. This is scientific and philosophical fatalism, but not practical fatalism; for we are never *absolutely* certain of what will take place, and, in that uncertainty, we act as if to accomplish what we believe may happen; but, should the event disappoint our expectation, all we can say is that the event could not be what we believed it would be.

Before closing this part of my discussion, I would call attention to some features of the law of development, which, I think, will farther strengthen my position.

The universe, mechanically considered, is an immense (probably infinite) system, the fundamental law of whose operations is the law of action and reaction. Whatever our ideas of force may be, every phenomenon can be described as a reaction, in the sense that it is the response of a mode of existence to the action of another mode of existence. This law, also known as the law of causation, operates with equal rigidity (at least we believe so) in the region of the intellect and of the emotions,—in the world of knowledge and in the world of morality; and, just as in the physical world it would be unreasonable, nay irrational, to expect an effect where the cause was wanting, it would be in the same degree unreasonable and irrational to expect, in the moral world, the rise of higher conditions, which can only originate as reactions on lower conditions, without the existence of those lower conditions. The features of our civilisation of which we so often boast as our glorious achievements have originated in the antagonism between opposite social forces, opposite tendencies and ideals: liberty has been born in oppression, toleration in political and religious despotism; and, while we may deplore that such should be the law of

¹ Thus Dr. Carus says that, although the soul-development of the race "is of a spontaneous nature, man can, to a great extent, make or mar his own fate and that of his race." (*Ethical Problem*, p. 41.) Such expressions, however, coming from so strong a necessitarian as Dr. Carus, must be taken in a figurative sense.

nature, we must either "be pleased" with it, or blame nature for being what it is. Are we, then, to brand the Russian autocrat as a perverse fiend, the enemy of his subjects and of mankind? Leaving aside the fact that his actions *are* the immutable laws of the cosmos, we must remember that from his tyranny the freedom of the Russians will probably be the inevitable consequence, and that, without the action of despotism, the reaction of liberty could not take effect. And, should it be said that he would be a better man if he, of his own free will, granted more rights and gave more security to his subjects, and that freedom may exist without previous oppression, the answer simply is, that this could *not* be so, for the all-convincing and unanswerable reason that it *is not* so; and that, as said before, we must not confuse in our judgments the logically possible with the actually possible, the actually possible being what exists, and what does not exist being impossible.¹

VI.

Having presented and discussed what I conceive to be the most salient inconsistencies of the ethics of development, I shall now attempt to trace them to their main psychological sources; sources from which, as will be apparent, all ethical systems have sprung, and from which they draw their very life.

The first source is to be found in the law of conflict between feeling and judgment. The nature of this law will be readily seen by an illustration. A nervous woman may take the five cartridges out of the five chambers of a pistol, count them and hold them in her hand; and yet, if the weapon be pointed at her, she will scream with fright, and not improbably faint away. Her judgment, it is evident, tells her, beyond all doubt, that it is impossible that any harm should come to her from the unloaded weapon; but her deeply rooted feelings, organised by heredity, or by association, or both, unavoidably impel her to act in opposition to her correct judgment. This is a very simple, and, I think, a very plain instance of the law of conflict. In the higher and more complicated forms of conduct a similar phenomenon takes place, which, although of a more complex character, is yet of the same identical nature. Through the combined agencies of heredity and educa-

¹ This view of the possible and impossible was very strongly held by Wyckliffe. According to him "that only is possible which is actual, though men may conceive of many things as possible which in fact are not possible." "Whatever is possible is actual," and therefore God's power and God's action are identical. This doctrine, as can be easily seen, logically leads, as in fact it led Wyckliffe, to absolute fatalism and predestination. (See Neander's *History of the Church*, Vol. V., pp. 166-8, Torrey's translation, Boston, 1871.)

tion we find ourselves possessed of certain feelings (what the original source of those feelings was matters not for our present purpose), which, invariably aroused whenever certain circumstances concur, prompt us to follow, or at least approve, certain lines of conduct, and to shun, or at least disapprove, certain other lines of conduct. When, however, we endeavor to rationalise our conduct, to give a reason for our actions, one of two things will happen :— either we take our feelings as our starting-point and criterion, in which case our theory may finally come in conflict with ascertained truths or other accepted theories, but not, if logically developed, with the given feelings themselves ; or we may start from other phenomena, both objective and subjective, and in this case it may happen that the logical consequences of our theory will come in conflict with the feelings in question, by establishing facts which, according to our experience, must give rise to opposite feelings. In the latter case we find ourselves involved in the perplexities of contradiction ; for, while it was our purpose to give a reason for our conduct, which we take for granted is reasonable (not being able, owing to the complexity of the case, to detect our error as easily as in the example of the woman given above), we arrive at the opposite conduct, or at the opposite feeling, as the only one that is really reasonable, or rational ; and as we still persist in believing that our habitual feelings are defensible on rational grounds, simply because we cannot help feeling and obeying them, we undertake to frame a theory of reconciliation, which cannot fail to be characterised by its inconsistency,

This, I should venture to say, accounts for the lack of logic discoverable in naturalistic systems of ethics. For, so long as the so-called moral ideals are adhered to, and the feelings of moral approbation and disapprobation are held to be justifiable on scientific principles, the determinist element of monism, and of naturalism generally, must be partially surrendered ; the necessary result being a crippled and vulnerable system, easily accessible through the breaches made by the admissions of its own advocates. There is only one logic consistent with determinism—the inflexible and implacable logic of Spinoza ;¹ and the only conclusion that that logic warrants is, that there are no such things as right and wrong ; or, if the word right be permissible, that everything is right. The antagonism between this conclusion and our inherited feelings ac-

¹ I am not, however, ignorant of the fact that in Spinoza himself we may often detect serious inconsistencies, traceable, I think, to the general source of error in these matters—the law of conflict. But, as a rule, he accepts the consequences of his thoroughgoing necessitarianism.

counts, as I have said, for the conciliatory theory of ethics I have been analysing in the course of this essay. The antagonism is so great, and even so shocking, that we recoil in horror when confronted by the bare corollaries of our fundamental propositions; we naturally and unconsciously distort the rules of logic, and finally convince ourselves that there is no such antagonism, but that, on the contrary, the postulates of determinism are the most solid foundation on which the current, subjective morality can rest. Of our feelings, which are only one part of our general interests, it may be said what Bentham says of personal interest in general: they do not "attack men's integrity in front, but undermine it," by strongly directing attention to whatever conforms to them, and diverting it from whatever conflicts with them. They form an unconscious bias (unconscious, as it is not apprehended as such) which it is difficult to eradicate.¹

The second source of error is of kindred nature with the first, and consists in the habit (due, no doubt, to the limitations of the human understanding) of conceiving phenomena as related to their *immediate* causes only; whereby we disconnect these causes from their necessary accompaniments and antecedents, and regard them, in a certain measure, as independent facts and first causes, instead of secondary and component causes, in themselves dependent upon other causes and determinant circumstances. This mode of conception is indeed valid, under certain limitations, and even unavoidable for practical purposes, provided we do not fall into the error of extending it beyond its proper boundaries. Thus Spinoza says that we may with propriety speak of some things as depending upon man's pleasure, although man's will is not free; because, in the first place, man is a part of nature, and whatever he does is done by nature *through* him; and, in the second place, because "we must define and explain things by their immediate causes."² In the impossibility of embracing in consciousness, by an intellectual act, the infinite series of causes and effects constituting cosmical existence, we are compelled to abstract the subjects of our inquiry from the total integral of which they are but differential

¹Bentham, *Deontology*, Vol. II., Chap. iii., p. 139 (Bowring's edit., 1834). It is a well-known fact that, as Mr. Lecky remarks, we always gravitate towards that intellectual system which is more in accordance with our emotional nature. "Every moral disposition brings with it an intellectual bias which exercises a great and often a controlling influence upon the most earnest inquirer." (*European Morals*, Vol. II., Chap. iv., p. 192, Appleton, 1889). I may, perhaps, be allowed to refer to an essay in *The Philosophical Review* (V., 4, July, 1896), where I have discussed this subject at somewhat greater length.

²Spinoza, *Traité théologico-politique*, Chap. vi, (in *Œuvres*, translated by Saisset, t. II., pp. 71-72).

terms ; and by thus breaking the continuity of nature, or rather, by thus studying nature in a discontinuous manner (what we inevitably have to do), we are liable to commit the error, unfortunately so common, of objectifying our subjective states, and believing that discontinuity exists not in our conceptions only, but in nature as well. Moreover, where the connexion between one of the secondary or immediate causes with which we have to deal and the rest of natural phenomena is not easily or accurately discoverable, the tendency to make of the disconnexion an objective reality grows in proportion, and this again engenders the belief (we might say the *feeling*) that those immediate causes are independent causes, which may either agree or disagree with the rest of reality we designate by the name of nature. For obvious reasons, this erroneous habit is particularly exhibited in our judgments relating to human conduct, whose springs are to us generally unknown (an ignorance lying, as showed by Spinoza, at the root of the illusory belief in the freedom and autonomy of the will) ; and, although we may correct our judgments and plainly recognise our error, the error, having been organised as a habit, continues, as in the case of the moral feelings, to be our unconscious guide, and to vitiate our arguments ; it makes us forget, in our usual ratiocinations, that we have changed our premises, our fundamental principles, and leads us into the belief that the old conclusions and ideas are still legitimate. It is, indeed, a curious fact to notice that, as a general rule, it does not occur to our philosophers that, the whole foundation of philosophy having been relaid, all human conceptions must be radically changed : they prefer to accept the current conceptions, accusing our predecessors of having been poor logicians, who had the most wonderful gift of deriving right conclusions from wrong premises.

A very striking illustration of the habit referred to in the preceding paragraph is presented by the writings of Dr. Carus. I have already called attention (indeed, attention has been called to this for several hundred years) to the inconsistency and incongruity in saying that we are natural phenomena, and affirming, at the same time, that we can, or may, oppose or follow, disagree with or conform to, natural phenomena. Expressions of this kind may, no doubt, be used metaphorically ; but Dr. Carus seems to take them in a literal sense, and make of such propositions the very foundations of his ethics. One of the most important definitions with which he sets forth ; one which he constantly reasserts, in one form or another, is, as I have had occasion to notice, that "individuals

are moral in so far as they conform with the cosmos, in so far as they *become* one with the All," and immoral in so far "as their conduct does *not* agree" with the laws of the universe.¹ And, in order to exculpate his "God" (i. e., the "cosmos") from the everlasting accusation of being responsible for the evil existing in the world, Dr. Carus (although he might have given an irrefutable answer by saying that an unconscious cosmos can be neither responsible nor irresponsible) says: "The constitution of the universe is such that we reap as we have sown. When we say 'we' it is understood that it means not our present individualised existence only, but our entire Karma, past, present, and future. It includes all the causes of our being. . . . Thus it becomes apparent that not God is guilty of the evil conditions of our state of being, but we ourselves."²

I need not insist on the contradictory nature of such statements, when compared with the first principles of the monistic philosophy; on the presentation of man as different from nature, or, in the words of Spinoza, as an empire within another empire. The contradiction itself is, I think, sufficiently obvious; while the cause of it, its psychological source, I hope to have made clear. I cannot, however, abstain from referring to the candid answer given to the embarrassing question of the origin of evil by one of the greatest exponents of monism—Spinoza himself.

Good and evil, perfection and imperfection, he says, are not external conditions inhering in the objects of nature: they are modes of thought, abstractions used for the purpose of comparison. Of a work of human art we say it is more or less perfect according as it is more or less adapted to the purposes for which it was *designed* by man. Through our repeated experiences we arrive at the conception of certain conditions that must be fulfilled in order to accomplish a proposed end in the best possible manner; and this end, as represented in consciousness before it is realised, is an ideal to which the object to be attained must conform, and a deviation from which we consider an imperfection. This, however, always presupposes an *end* in view, a purpose; but of an object which is made for no end or purpose we cannot say that it is either perfect or imperfect, there being no term of comparison. Once, therefore, we have discarded the idea that there is an intelligent design in universal phenomena, the problem of whether things be perfect or imperfect, in their relations to the whole cosmos, becomes entirely unmeaning; and our endeavors to give it a meaning are based

¹ *Fundamental Problems*, pp. 208, 315, 321. The italics are mine.

² *The Monist*, Vol. IV., 3, p. 413: "Ethics and Cosmic Order."

“rather on a prejudice than on a true knowledge of nature”; on the prejudice, namely, that nature aims at the attainment of special ends.¹ As to the origin of good and evil, they have, no doubt, as all else, their source, their cause, in the very essence of God; they are, however, subjective states existing only in our minds, but which, considered in relation to God, have no significance, in the sense of antagonistic realities. Right and wrong are equally indifferent to God, since they represent emotional conditions of joy and grief, of which God is not capable; and it is only in a figurative sense that we can say we disagree with God or sin against God.²

Among the causes to which the inconsistency of developmental ethics is traceable might also be mentioned the belief in the freedom of the will, which, although rejected in principle, has left profound marks even in the minds of the most thorough-going determinists. This important subject, however, would compel me to extend this article beyond the space at my command. The reader, I think, will have no difficulty in applying the principles of the last paragraphs to the unconscious survival of the free-will philosophy.

¹ Spinoza, *Ethics*, Pt. IV., Introduction; also, *Lettre à Blyenbergh* (in *Œuvres*, t. III., pp. 402-404).

² *Lettre à Blyenbergh* (in *Œuvres*, t. III., pp. 395-397).