

and the Bible" he ought before all to apply morality to this task: that is, be fair, and not impute things to the Bible which are nowhere found in it. If any one had never heard of the Bible before and would read some of the statements Mr. Westermayr has made about it, he would get the impression that it is the most immoral and bestial book that has ever seen the light, and that every copy of it ought to be destroyed. The article under discussion is representative of a type of minds, who after losing belief in the Bible as a divine inspiration—the most deplorable and unhistorical dogma ever made—now fall into the same unhistorical and uncritical attitude themselves and refuse to find anything redeeming in it.

NATURAL MORALITY, RELIGION AND SOME UNSETTLED PROBLEMS.

BY VICTOR S. YARROS.

TWO admirable articles appeared in *The Open Court* for September, 1916, which deserve wide circulation. It is a pity that tens of thousands of conventional moralists and theologians cannot be somehow induced to digest, ponder and honestly meet the arguments presented by Messrs. Lyman and Westermayr in their respective articles on "Natural Morality" and "Moral Law and the Bible." Not that these writers will claim striking originality; what they say has been said before, many times. But what they say is said so simply, clearly, reasonably, that it is calculated to impress minds that are repelled by more aggressive polemics, or minds that cannot be reached by metaphysical subtleties.

But the very reasonableness and persuasiveness of these articles invite certain frank comments and questions. I wish to call the attention of the writers, and of the readers of this magazine, to certain assumptions that are often made and to certain problems that remain unsolved in the ablest expositions of natural morality and scientific religion.

Of course, all religions and moral systems are in one sense "natural." Nothing that exists is supernatural. The distinction between the natural and the miraculous, or supernatural, spells intellectual babyhood. It was, however, perfectly natural for the slowly ascending human race to make this distinction. Nothing in the crudest religion or mythology is unnatural or strange. We can see now, in the light of several sciences and of contemporaneous

studies of primitive tribes, that everything we call superstition seemed almost self-evident at certain stages of intellectual development. Man has created all the gods he has worshiped, and he has had to create them in his own image. He has peopled the world with angels, fairies, etc., and could not help doing so. Every belief rests on supposed facts and supposed evidence. If to-day, many of us are able to rise to higher conceptions, and to form mature, worthy ideas of the universe of which we are part, we owe this to vast accumulations of facts, to the experience of ages, to discoveries and inventions, and to the reasoning of many acute and brilliant minds.

If, then, religion and morality have evolved naturally—nay, inevitably—precisely as all other institutions and doctrines and systems have evolved, it follows that many of our present conceptions are in no sense final, and that dogmatism is unwarrantable in any direction.

We have no right, scientifically speaking, to dogmatize on the status of woman, or on the relations between the sexes. We cannot, for example, say too confidently that natural morality and natural religion “enjoin” upon us the monogamic family. It is quite conceivable that the future will witness profound changes in the family. We cannot flatter ourselves with the belief that the civilized and moral races are monogamic. The horror we call “the social evil”—prostitution—and the daily testimony of the divorce courts; the headlines that stare us in the face every day telling of vice, immorality, adultery, promiscuity, etc., forbid any complacent assumption as to the actual prevalence of monogamy. Moreover, we know that not one case in ten is reported or discovered, and we also know that in millions of instances freedom from immorality or sin merely means lack of opportunity. The sins of the imagination, as Lecky wrote, are as real as the sins of actuality. Jesus was right about adultery.

It is not, surely, a mere accident that pure-minded and noble-hearted social reformers like St. Simon, Fourier, Robert Owen, and others, should have been led to form “heretical” ideas concerning sex relations and the family. These heresies discredited their economic and social teaching with many, but, while we may deplore this, we cannot wish that they had suppressed their convictions on the question of marriage and the family. If they erred, candid discussion is the only true remedy for error, the only preventive of the growth of error.

Nor can we dogmatize on the question of crime and punish-

ment. We still murder the murderer. Is capital punishment really necessary as a deterrent? Is it only a means of discipline, or is it prompted by the savage desire for revenge? No society has adopted the doctrine of non-resistance to evil as Jesus preached it, and as Tolstoy, in our own day, so dogmatically defended it. We judge, we punish, we inflict cruel penalties. Suppose the non-resistants had the power and opportunity to experiment with the abolition of all punishment and restraint; would the thoughtful among us encourage them to make the experiment? Would not lynch law and mob rule straightway take the place of legal and judicial punishment? Bernard Shaw seriously asks us in his latest "Preface" to give non-resistance a trial. He says that modern science has confirmed the views of Jesus regarding crime and punishment. Perhaps it may be said with justice that science has condemned capital punishment. But has science condemned *all* punishment? If so, where and when? Will Mr. Shaw tell us?

Manifestly, trials, prisons and executions do not fully deter. But it is a transparent fallacy to conclude that they have no deterrent effect whatever. Many are undoubtedly influenced and checked in their anti-social careers by the fear of exposure and punishment, even though a few are either too desperate or too stupid to reflect on the chance of punishment.

If restraint and punishment are essential to the process of socializing and improving the individual, of fitting him for the better state, then non-resistance would be a reactionary and destructive, not a progressive and constructive, social-policy. Will non-resistance ever be safe, or possible? I venture to doubt it, but this question is irrelevant and unimportant. When Shaw asks us to give non-resistance a trial to-day, with human nature as we know it, we simply stare and wonder at his naïveté. We certainly find nothing in natural morality or natural religion to require the practice of non-resistance.

One more question may be touched upon—man's relation to the "lower animals." What do natural religion and morality have to say concerning this? The Bible is not wholly silent on the subject, but it does not take us very far. Have we the right to kill animals for food? Have we the right to breed them for slaughter? Are the vegetarians right, or are they illogical and sentimental? The universe is what it is; throughout nature—"red in tooth and claw"—life feeds upon life, and creatures prey and slay in order to live and reproduce themselves. But is this tragic fact—tragic to some of us

humans at our stage of evolution—sufficient to justify to our own consciences our treatment of animals?

There was an extraordinary fallacy in Huxley's famous distinction between "the cosmic process" and "the ethical process." Huxley was apparently blind to the unity of nature. Although an aggressive agnostic, he categorically asserted that man is at war with nature and must combat the cosmic process. As if this were a possible enterprise! Huxley overlooked the evidence as to the existence of what he called the "ethical process," in the animal kingdom and among the primitive savages. But, while Huxley was wrong in his attempted distinction, for man is a part of nature and has no instincts, proclivities and sentiments that are not "cosmic," he dimly perceived the fact that man is ascending and improving his environment by emphasizing, developing and applying his social instincts and curbing his anti-social ones. We have elevated competition to a higher plane, and cooperation, or association, is more and more taking the place of strife. It is folly to suppose that strife and struggle can ever be eliminated, but it is not folly to hold that we can further refine the struggle for life. Should not, then, this process of purification and elevation extend to our treatment of animals?

Natural morality, to repeat, is tentative. It has grown up slowly, and is still growing. We can explain "naturally" why we condemn lying, slander, theft, brutal physical assaults, and the like. Other things we cannot readily explain, and we may even entertain doubts concerning their legitimacy and necessity, or their permanence. Natural morality is not merely a body of doctrines; it also furnishes a point of view, a manner of approach. If it fails to teach us to treat every problem scientifically and historically—to realize that no field or corner of human conduct is exempt from natural law—it has failed in its essential part.

MISCELLANEOUS.

APHRODITE AS MOTHER GODDESS.

In the volume on Greek and Roman Mythology (edited by William S. Fox of Princeton) of the excellent series of the *Mythology of All Races*, published in thirteen volumes by the Marshall Jones Company of Boston, a brief chapter is given to each of the major Hellenic divinities. The treatment of Aphrodite in art is thus briefly summarized:

"Through three or four centuries the Greeks were slowly evolving an