

IS ETHICS POSSIBLE?

IN REPLY TO MR. ANTONIO LLANO.

BY THE EDITOR.

ANTONIO LLANO, a philosopher of very outspoken views, has made his mark both as an author and an editor. His monthly magazine, *El Pensamiento Contemporáneo*, which was devoted to philosophy, history, and science, contained Spanish translations of articles by the most noted men of our time, Tyndall, Maudsley, Huxley, Sayce, Wallace, G. J. Romanes, Spencer, Crispi, Andrew D. White, John Stallo, F. Max Müller, Mivart, Prince Kropotkin, Ingersoll, and others; and Mr. Llano's own books deal with philosophical, ethical, and religio-philosophical problems.¹ I am glad that a man of Mr. Llano's calibre takes an interest in the philosophy of *The Open Court* and *The Monist*, but regret to see that in his attempts at being consistent, he becomes one-sided, and that through following his one-sided line of thought he is not aware of the inconsistencies to which his aspiration of being rigidly logical leads him.

Mr. Llano claims to be a consistent Spinozist, and his Spinozism is more Spinozistic than that of Spinoza himself. He believes in absolute determinism which, in his opinion, is identical with fatalism, involving a surrender of both the freedom of will and of morality. In his philosophy there is no room for "the possible." Logical possibility is based upon assumptions and actual possibility is limited to reality. Everything not real is impossible, for the course of the world's evolution is predetermined in its minutest details. Ethics is therefore built upon a fallacy: the *ought* presupposes the *can*, but there is only the *must*. "A scoundrel is as necessarily a scoundrel as a horse is a horse." From

¹ *El Cristianismo ante La Filosofía, La Moral y La Historia.*

this standpoint, which is a most rigid fatalism, Mr. Llano charges me with inconsistency, which, as he declares, is due to a conflict between feeling and judgment. If I were not biassed by heredity and tradition, I should see that there are no such things as right and wrong and that my system of ethics is built upon an assumption. In reply I shall briefly state my reasons for believing in ethics and in the reality of the moral ought.

Let us first recapitulate the problem of free will, for here the root of our difference lies.

Freedom of will is a condition in which a man can do as he pleases, and it is a matter of course that in such a case he will necessarily act according to his character. Is that incompatible with determinism? Not at all! If the wills of certain people are free, an honest man will unhesitatingly resist temptation, while a thief under the very same conditions will steal. All actions, which result from the specific character of a man, are actions of his own and of his free will; and yet they are performed with necessity according to the irrefragable law of cause and effect.

It may be that Mr. Llano will object to this definition of free will, because he defines free will as a will that is not determined at all. To which objection I reply that I, too, reject that kind of free will; but I submit that a will which is not determined at all, not even by its own nature, is not a free will, but pure haphazard. Such a conception of free will is nonsensical; and, in addition, such a kind of free will, if it existed, far from being an indispensable condition of ethics, would make all ethics futile. What would be the use of trying to influence men by preaching ethics and by building up character if a man's decisions were not determined by his character?

Mr. Llano has the right to propose for his own philosophy any definition of free will he likes; but if he wishes to understand me, he must at least for the time being accept my definition, which regards that will as free which enjoys the liberty of acting according to its own nature.

If this definition of free will be granted, it will be readily seen that freedom permeates nature in all its domains. When zinc is dissolved in hydrochloric acid (HCl), the acid is decomposed, its chlorine unites with the zinc, forming chloride of zinc (ZnCl₂), whilst its hydrogen escapes in a gaseous form. The elements act in strict agreement with their nature, but not because there is a power that forces them to combine and separate. If the zinc were endowed with consciousness and speech, it would say, "I like

to join the chlorine"; and the chlorine would avow, "Zinc is preferable to hydrogen." It is possible that the hydrogen would feel the smart of a jilted lover; but, then, it mixes with the air and is quickly comforted, for it will soon find another consort.

While it is a stretch of imagination to impute human sentiments to the chemical elements, there are, nevertheless, certain analogies between psychical and non-psychical phenomena, and the most obvious resemblance consists in the difference of primary and secondary movements. Primary movements have their ground in a quality of the moving thing, as the falling stone and the combination of oxygen with carbon into carbonic acid in the flame, etc. Secondary movements are due to push or pull, which is an external influence or impulse, as the stone thrown up and the cart drawn by a horse. Primary movements are acts of liberty, secondary movements are acts performed under constraint against the nature of the moving bodies. The needle of a magnet points toward the north spontaneously, for it is the nature of magnetised iron to adjust its position in conformity to the magnetic currents of the earth; but if the needle be pushed aside and is turned toward the south it suffers violence; and if it could feel its condition and express it in words, it would complain of compulsion.

So long as the character of a thing remains the same its primary motions will be the same under the same conditions; and if the character be changed, as for instance by magnetising a piece of iron, its behavior will change accordingly.

Mr. Llano is apparently under the illusion, which is very common among philosophers, that the laws of nature are metaphysical entities, and he believes that to them is given dominion over all things in heaven and on earth. Thus the cosmic order which is constituted by their harmony does not appear to him grand and beautiful, but awful and oppressive. He says:

"In whatever direction we turn, the austere and implacable monster of Necessity rises before us, proclaiming, by 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."

Natural laws are not tyrants; they are not powers which dominate over things and creatures; the laws of nature are formulas which describe the actions of objects according to their nature so as to make it possible to foredetermine the results of given conditions. Determinism does not mean that the various things are com-

pelled by an external force ; it means that there is stability and regularity in nature. Thus the law of gravitation is only a comprehensive statement of the actions of gravitating bodies. The stone does not fall to the ground at the bidding of Newton's formula, but on account of its own gravity.

Mr. Llano's monster of Necessity is the child of an antiquated metaphysicism ; it is bred in the close air of the philosopher's study, and will never be believed by those who feel the thrill of real life in their hearts. But suppose he could infuse this idea into the artist, the inventor, the poet, the man who dares to do and to achieve, would it not quench the fire of their youth? Would they not turn away in submissive resignation from their own aspirations at the thought that whatever happens takes place according to irrevocable laws : that Moloch Necessity is everything ; we are nothing but tools in his hands ?

Necessity has two meanings : (1) inevitableness or determinableness, meaning that which unfailingly will be,¹ and (2) compulsion, a condition by which something is forced or compelled to act in a certain way by some external power. If necessity is to be identified with compulsion we had better abandon determinism as a superstition which is as untrue in theory as it is baneful in practical life, and speak simply of the describability of the course of future events in the measure of our knowledge of the nature of things.

That every single particle of the world is ensouled with freedom, that it acts differently under different conditions, but always according to its nature, is an important truth which we should never lose sight of ; but its true significance increases with the unfoldment of organised life. With the appearance of consciousness the powers of nature reach a higher stage of freedom having new potentialities ; and, choice having been made possible, right and wrong, goodness and badness, virtue and vice are introduced. That indifference of all actions of which Mr. Llano speaks does not exist in the world of conscious life. With cognition, necessarily the possibility of error originates, and thus when the blind impulses of inorganic nature rise into the realm of conscious aspiration we have sin and righteousness.

Mr. Llano is under a radical misapprehension of facts when he claims that between the action of Jesus and Judas Iscariot there is no difference of kind but "only of degree," because the immoral is

¹ The word is composed of *ne*, the negation, and of a derivative from *cedere*, to go away, signifying that which will not disappear, that which will stay.

in his opinion merely "a state of relative undevelopment." We might as well say that there is no error in the world, for error is merely a state of less developed truth; that there is no missing an aim, for missing is simply a state of not yet having reached a place. Failures and mistakes, however, do not originate by mere differences of degree; they are instances of following a wrong direction. Evil, error, vice, sin, are not merely negative quantities; they are positive factors as much as virtues, knowledge, and noble achievements. If I say $2+2=5$ and act accordingly, it is not merely a not-yet-completed but a wrong computation.

While it is quite true that a criminal is the product of conditions and can to that extent as little help being a criminal as a horse can help being a horse, it is not true that for that reason the distinction between badness and goodness ceases. A diamond can help being a diamond as little as glass can help being glass, but for that reason a piece of glass is not of the same value as a diamond.

To understand how a criminal has become a criminal will no doubt make those who judge his deeds considerate and compassionate, but it will be no argument for looking upon him as a saint or letting his crimes go unrebuked. On the other hand, a genius has no reason for boasting. He, too, is the product of conditions. The doctrine that we are by God's grace what we are has acquired a new sense in the light of scientific considerations.¹

The scientific view taken of crime and virtue is the beginning of a new era in mankind, which was anticipated in the East by Buddha and in the West by Christ. Our judiciary is not as yet administered from the Buddhist-Christian point of view, but follows the principle of retaliation. Instead of treating crime as a disease, we punish crime. Instead of educating the criminal and creating conditions under which the disease of immorality will be cured we torture him, well knowing that this method has the tendency of ruining him altogether. The times, however, are changing now. Our penal code is slowly being adapted to the new world-conception, and the criminal condemned to die is no longer tortured as in former centuries, but executed with as little pain as possible.

¹Buddhism speaks of the time of grace in somewhat the same sense as Christianity. When we receive instruction that is beneficial and leads us on the path of salvation to Nirvāna it is no merit of ours, but a grace that is offered us, as we read in the Jataka tales:

"If in this present time of Grace
You fail to reach the happy state,
Long will you suffer deep remorse."

—Trans. by T. W. Rhys Davids, p. 157.

It is true, as Mr. Llano says, that "we are natural phenomena"; but we are not blind or unconscious things; we are sentient beings. Sentiency and corporeal objectivity are two abstractions representing different qualities of the same reality. As such they are radically distinct but not separate. Every subjective feeling is the psychical aspect of a cerebral commotion; and as every cerebral commotion possesses a definite form, so every feeling is distinct in kind. The objectivity of the world can thus, according to the varying forms of objects, be impressed upon the subjectivity of sentient organisms, and a sight-sensation of a definite form grows by repetition to represent the object that causes it. The subjectivity of the human soul is practically a comprehensive inventory of the surrounding world and its relations, serving as a guide through life or as a means of adaptation to conditions. In other words, the form of subjectivity is the product of objective influences.

The things of the inorganic world act according to their nature and so do living animal organisms. But the nature of living animal organisms does not consist of purely mechanical or chemical properties; they exhibit a new feature, which is called mentality or the representative value of feelings. The animal mind is determined in its actions by ideas and not by pull or push or chemical affinity.

Now it is the appearance of consciousness in the cosmic evolution which renders ethics possible. A thinking being is not like a stone; it does not follow the first impulse; a thinking being deliberates before it acts, and comes at last to a decision which is executed. This is a higher phase of freedom, for it adds the possibility of choice, and man, the animal of abstract thought, can form ideals of a state of things, not as it is, but as it ought to be.

Mr. Llano will make an objection here. He will say that in the realm of the soul the same determinism obtains that rules in the domain of purely physical phenomena. Now I grant that psychical phenomena are as much determined as physical phenomena; but here as there we are confronted with freedom. There is only this difference, that that which determines the decision of a man is his character. Ideas are the factors and the responsiveness of ideas consists of other qualities than mechanical push and chemical affinity. It is true that the strongest idea will prevail over weaker ideas, but the strength of ideas cannot be measured in foot-pounds. The strength of ideas depends upon various other factors, among which the conviction of their truth is perhaps the most important one.

The appearance of the soul is not a break in nature, but the

product of a natural evolution. That the continuity from the formation of crystals to the aspirations of human beings is uninterrupted is not an evidence of man's degradation, but on the contrary it proves that the world as a whole is more than a haphazard conglomeration of matter in motion. There is a teleoarchy¹ of some kind—a cosmic order which prompts aspirations in a definite direction. This teleoarchy works blindly in the lower spheres of nature and acquires consciousness in man. Man is himself a natural phenomenon; but he is a phenomenon in which the eternal conditions of being can be reflected. Thus the transient can become a mirror that pictures the immutable; the particular can comprehend the universal; that which is conditional can grasp its own conditions and trace them back to the unconditioned order of existence.

The old supernaturalism which assumes that some extramundane personality, power, or entity enters into the natural world by a break of the cosmic order, has become untenable; but for that reason we need not deny the existence of the moral tendencies that manifest themselves in the world-process. We propose a new supernaturalism, which believes that the potentialities of a *sursum*, of an aspiration to rise higher, are contained in the natural. Man forms a higher empire in nature which is above the physical. It is true that obedience to the law that conditions man's evolution constitutes morality, but the highest morality imaginable is a state of mind in which man's sentiments have become an incarnation of the world-order. The man who is obedient to the laws of morality still feels himself the subject or slave of a power which he apprehends to be stronger than himself. But he can so love justice, righteousness, kindness, charity, that his whole nature is determined by these qualities. He can become an incarnation of these aspirations, so as to be identified with them. That is the state of heart which characterised the Buddha ideal of the Buddhists, and that is the gist of the ethics preached by Christ. There is no longer any need of requesting obedience to the moral law of a man whose sentiments are aglow with it and whose will is bent on realising it.

According to Mr. Llano, every man is the product of conditions, and we are what we are by necessity; therefore, the must governs us, and there is no sense in speaking of the ought. The premise is true, the conclusion is wrong. Mr. Llano forgets that

¹The old teleology, whose workings are extraneous, is wrong; the world has not been designed like a watch; there is not a demiurge who in the fashion of a human artifex constructed the universe. But there is an intrinsic teleoarchy, an orderly arrangement of the actions that take place in the world, the nature of which is most obviously apparent in the harmony of mathematics.

the ought, the ideal, by which a man allows himself to be guided, is also a factor and, indeed, a most important factor among the determining causes. One of the conditions that make a man is his own thought. A man who cherishes the idea of his responsibility will act differently from the man who imagines that he is irresponsible. The idea that we are unfree, that we are products of chance and helplessly doomed to be determined by conditions, is oppressive (as Mr. Llano's case proves), while the thought of our responsibility gives strength and rouses us to vigorous action. The man inspired with the idea of responsibility will investigate and try to learn, the man who thinks he is unfree will be indifferent and passive. Considering the importance of ideas, as the determining factors of man's actions, is it not necessary to devote a special study to the subject for the sake of distinguishing between wholesome and injurious ideas?

In ethics we ask which ideas are wholesome and which injurious, and the answer in brief is that the truth is wholesome and untruth injurious. There is no need here of entering into details, for the question has been discussed repeatedly, and we shall emphasise the fact only that truth does not mean mere correctness of knowledge but also and mainly truthfulness of heart.

Ethics would be futile if man's action did not depend upon his beliefs and habits. Since his beliefs and habits are the main determinant factors of his fate for his own personal good as well as that of the whole race, ethics is as necessary for human conduct in general as mechanics is indispensable for mechanical engineering. Indeed, ethics belongs to the necessities of life, it is the bread of life, and a wrong ethics is not less injurious than poison that is used for food.

Mr. Llano declares that "the ethical ought is erected on an assumption of some kind,—on an *if*." Ethics has sense only for him who desires to attain the aim and end of ethical aspirations, not for him who has other ends, or no end at all.

This same objection was made to ethics as a science years ago from another standpoint. Mr. Salter in defence of intuitionist ethics granted that a scientific inquiry into facts may teach morality to him who longs for truth and for a life of truth, "but," says he, "the fact is that we may desire other things."

My answer to Mr. Llano is the same as it was to Mr. Salter. "The ultimate question of ethics is not, what *we desire* but what *is desired of us*."

When we want to have truth, we must drop our personal likes

and dislikes. Exact science eliminates the subjective and aims at a purely objective statement of facts. He who wants to think correctly must leave aside the *I*'s and the *me*'s. It is no exaggeration to say that the intrusion of self is always the main source of error.

While it is wise to drop all *I*'s and *me*'s, we grant that the world is full of them, and we must take their presence into consideration. And who can deny that the thwarted endeavors of self-willed men teach us a most impressive lesson?

The man who desires pleasures and does not stop to think what is desired of him, may have, for a time at least, pleasures; but then he must take all the consequences of his actions. The man who delights in crime may actually commit crime, but the evils that result from crime will come not only upon those against whom he trespasses, but finally upon himself also. A truly scientific ethics knows of no assumptions; it gives information as to the consequences of deeds; and the sufferings of life, including the final dissolution of ourselves in death, set us to thinking how we can escape evil. Here the answers may be many, but there is one only which I deem to be right, it is the answer of Buddha and of Christ, both being practically the same, and these injunctions are substantially the same that are taught by the ethics of science. According to Buddha it is the eightfold noble path of righteousness that leads to salvation, implying an extermination of all selfishness, hatred, and passion, which are the three roots of all evil. And Christ says:

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another" (John, 13, 34), and, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you" (Matth., 5, 44, and Luke, 6, 35).

There is a time in the cosmic evolution when consciousness originates; and there is again a time when the idea of self in its full contrast to the not-self dawns upon consciousness. But then again comes a time when the relation of the self to the whole begins to be understood. That is the origin of ethics, and that is the meaning when people become anxious about themselves, about their soul, about their fate and the destiny of their lifework after death. Then such questions are asked, What shall I do to enter life eternal? These aspirations are a transition which lead from the question, "What do I desire?" to the other question, "What is desired of me?" There is no assumption whatever in scientific ethics. He who does not ask the question, "What is desired of me?" will remain stagnant at a certain phase of his evolution and will reap the consequences of his thoughtlessness. He is comparable to the anthropoid who does not want to become man. He will

either remain what he is, if that be possible, or share the fate of the unprogressive anthropoid: his name will be blotted out from the book of life.

There is this peculiarity about ethics, that there are many roads leading to it. The man who longs for happiness will find that there is no absolute happiness possible, and the best thing he can do is to drop altogether his hankering after pleasures and lead a moral life. On this basis a hedonistic ethics is possible. A man who is egotistic and ambitious will find that there is no success in life possible except he surrender his vanity. And on this basis an ethics of egotism can be erected. All these different methods, insufficient though they may be, lead practically to the same conclusion, pointing beyond the self of man and teaching him to seek a purpose higher than his limited life and individuality.

The new solution of the problem of self (which in detail has been explained elsewhere) brings about a radical change of attitude, for upon the proper solution of the psychological problem all other problems of philosophy, religion, and ethics depend. The new conception of self destroys the illusion of the limitedness and narrowness of self as held by the psychologists of the old school, and shows us the human soul as the divine incarnation of the eternal prototype of rationality and moral endeavor, revealing both its whence in the past and its whither in the future.

The self in the old sense is destroyed and with it the vanity of all selfishness. But there is a new self which takes the place of the old limited self; and the new self is infinite in its potentiality, for the new self identifies itself with the eternal conditions of existence. Our eyes are opened, and we discern those subtle influences which build up the structure of our soul and are as invisible to the uninitiated as for instance the geometrical proportions of the barn or the meadow are nonentities to the sheep.

If it is true, as Master Eckhart says, that man is what he loveth, the new self is truth incarnate, for it loveth truth above everything, and consists in the endeavor of living out the truth, realising it more and more in comprehension as well as in practical application. The old Adam must go, and the new Adam is a higher man, no longer a particular ego but divinity incarnate, no longer an isolated individual but the universal realised, the ideal that has become flesh.

The main ideas underlying the ethics of Christianity are true, but the commonly accepted church-dogmas and their interpretations are wrong. As useful inventions generally precede scientific

comprehension, so the precepts of practical morality were discovered long before our sages could explain the psychological basis of these apparent paradoxes. The Religion of Science is needed because science is sufficiently advanced to-day to catch up with religion. Religion (practically applied religion, as taught by Lao-Tsze, the Buddha, the Prophets, and Christ) was in advance of science by more than two millenniums, and it is the science of religion or theology that is unprogressive. Not that theology is wrong in principle, but it is slow in accomplishing its task. Not that we must have less theology or science in religion, but more. Not that we must abolish science in religion, but we must perfect it. For science (i. e., genuine science, not the one-sided productions of the average sciolist) is the comforter that illumines the world and brings about the fulfilment, the *πληρωσις*, so dearly longed for by St. John and the early Christians.

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Mr. Llano discovers the source of what he is pleased to call the inconsistencies of Developmental Ethics in "the law of the conflict between feeling and judgment." He says:

"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."

Mr. Llano forgets that sentiments are very important factors in the makeup of man's soul. To disregard our feelings for the sake of some logical argument would be as wrong as to be swayed by feelings alone without subjecting them to a careful analysis and revision. Man's sentiments are the sediment of an immeasurably long chain of experiences, partly inherited, partly personal, and are of too great importance to be neglected or to be regarded as utterly without foundation. Our sentiments are sometimes more reliable than our logical deductions in which we are too apt to omit an important factor. Thus, for instance, in the illustration which Mr. Llano proposes, we should decidedly object to a behavior such as he mentions, and far from blaming the woman who screams when an unloaded revolver is pointed at her, we blame the man who handles the revolver carelessly. Almost all the accidents that happen are due to toying with weapons which were supposed not

to be loaded. I know of a case in which two brothers, who have great experience with guns, had unloaded a revolver the construction of which they investigated, and one pointed it at the other, when all of a sudden the revolver went off, and the ball went right through the head of the other boy, entering near the nose and coming out near the ear. The young man, an officer of the militia, assured me that he could conscientiously declare on oath that to his knowledge there could not have been a shot in the revolver. He added, "It was a lesson that I shall never forget." Fortunately, the bullet did not kill his brother, and after several weeks of suffering he recovered without any serious injury, leaving only a small mark on his face. But not all cases end so happily, and it is advisable for every one to mind sentiments, because they sometimes represent the influence of factors overlooked in so-called scientific expositions which are seemingly faultless, and, so far as pure logic is concerned, unquestionably correct.

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And now in conclusion I may be allowed to discuss briefly a point not mentioned by Mr. Llano, which, however, is closely connected with the subject.

We understand that ethics as a science is the product of a continuous evolution; we know that the religious leaders in the world have found the right solution instinctively. As a genius makes an important invention, or as a poet finds by inspiration the word that thrills thousands of hearts, so the moral teachers of mankind taught lessons of highest morality at a time when their truth was so far from being scientifically comprehensible that it appeared paradoxical—naturally so, for it is paradoxical from the old standpoint.

The great unknown inventor of the wheel was not familiar with the science of applied mechanics as it is developed in our time, but he is one of those that laid the basis of it, and his invention is still the corner-stone in that grand edifice. The same is true in ethics of him who first proclaimed the law of love and charity. The souls of these men are with us to-day, constituting the kingdom that is within us. We are the continuance of aspirations that began long before we were born.

Considering the close connexion of the present with the past, we prefer reform to rescission and deem a purification of the traditional religious conceptions better than abandoning them. It is true that the words God, soul, immortality, and religion have become new; they have become more definite, more exact and less mythological, but that is exactly what must be expected. History

is a change and a growth. He that sat upon the throne said: ". . . . But behold, I make all things new!"

I know that at present both the conservatives and the liberals look with suspicion upon this method of pouring new wine into old bottles, but the time will come when they will understand it. The situation may be briefly explained by a simile. There were in former times people who believed in mathematics as if it consisted of lines and circles and other figures that were living in heaven and came down from time to time upon earth in a miraculous way for the sake of helping poor mortal man, calculating distances, erecting buildings, constructing bridges, tunnelling mountains, and other feats of engineering. But a schism arose: there were men who declared that mathematics did not exist at all and that every belief in mathematics was a superstition. There was one among them who said that mathematical truths (if they deserve the name at all), so far from being true, are actually wrong; they are "purely mental" and refer to "purely imaginary objects." He claimed "there exist no points without magnitudes; no lines without breadth, nor perfectly straight; no circles with all their radii exactly equal, nor squares with all their angles perfectly right." Believing that "the points, lines, circles, and squares" which the mathematician "has in his mind are simple copies of the points, lines, circles, and squares which he has known in his experience," he claimed that the science of mathematics consists of "assumptions" which are not only faulty but even "inconceivable." This view was actually defended by Mr. John Stuart Mill,¹ and it characterises most drastically and consistently the attitude of all negativism, drawing the ultimate conclusions of the main tenets of the nominalistic philosophy.

Such is also the contrast between the parties of the conservatives and freethinkers. The conservatives believe that God is a being; some freethinkers declare that God does not exist at all. There is on the one hand a literal belief in a traditional mythology, and on the other hand a flat denial of the truths of religion. Now I take the liberty to differ from Mr. John Stuart Mill. I believe in mathematics, and I believe that the definitions of and theorems concerning mathematical lines designate truths which are not only real but super-real. I do not believe that they are beings of any kind who lead a life of bliss somewhere in heaven; they are not corporeal, nor do they possess astral bodies; still less can they be said to be metaphysical entities. Nevertheless they are not non-existent, for they are the eternal relations that apply to any possi-

¹ See John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic*, 8th edition, Chapter V., pp. 168, et seq.

ble world ; they are absolute truths whose being is indestructible and whose existence is the law that conditions the formation of every particular existence.

The same is true of God. The believer in the letter of his mythology looks upon the views editorially upheld in *The Open Court*, as atheistic ; and the freethinker criticises them for making compromises with superstition. Nevertheless, we are serious in saying that the average atheist is wrong in flatly denying the existence of God, while the old-fashioned believer is a pagan—that is to say, a man who believes in the letter of a myth and has no idea of its significance ; he surrenders the substance for the vessel in which it is contained ; he loses the reality by holding on to its shadow.

This position is a reconciliation of two contrasts, but it is not a compromise. It gives to science what belongs to science, and to ethics what belongs to ethics. By making ethics a science applied to practical life, it shows us the truth of the old religious ideals in a new light ; it renders it possible for us to grasp with scientific comprehension what our fathers were feeling after, groping in the dark for. And this is what we call The Religion of Science.