

thesis. If it is that the natural sciences have a valuable contribution to make to the study of ethics, few would deny it; if it is, as I think, the contention that the central problem for ethics can be solved by the method of natural science, that seems to me a disastrous error. No doubt science can throw light on the way in which minds come to apprehend values but, as it seems to me, it cannot determine whether they are truly values or only appear to be such, nor can it determine the scale of values, if any.

A certain scepticism about some of the alleged findings of science may be permitted. For example, the super-ego appears to me to be a piece of useful mythology; probably it helps to "explain" the process by which we reach ethical maturity, but may it not be misleading to treat it as an "entity"? The important fact is that mature and sane men have ideals which, as they believe, commend themselves to their reason, and sometimes they have imaginary pictures of themselves as they know they ought to be. Again, the diversity of moral codes at different levels of civilization can be exaggerated. Virtues which are honoured among us, such as courage or even kindness, are honoured in crude and more limited forms by people of lower cultures. The development of moral ideas is not determined wholly by social condition; there is a dialectical development of the ideas themselves, and if it is true to say that societies create ideas, it is even more true to say that ideas create societies.

The use made of the psychological concept of "compulsions" perplexes me. As I understand it, a compulsion is an irrational and perhaps irresistible tendency arising from the unconscious. The moral experience in its authentic form is surely the opposite of a compulsion. The agent believes himself to have the responsibility of choice and the ethical "ought" is recognized not as something which must be obeyed but something which deserves to be obeyed, though it may be difficult and unpleasant. "Had it power (compulsion) as it has authority, it would absolutely rule the world." I am even more perplexed by what seems to be asserted about the goodness of evolution or even of all existence. "We must accept the direction of evolution as good simply because it is good." I think I must have failed to grasp this point, because in the preceding sentence we are told that revised ideas about evolution enable us to feel that it is not morally offensive, as T. H. Huxley thought it was. This seems to imply that Dr. Waddington has considered the course of evolution and found that it is not morally offensive. Now, how, on his own principle, could he possibly do that? What criterion did he apply? No doubt, as a theist I am bound to hold that there is a direction in evolution or rather that organic evolution is a

part, perhaps a very small part, of the Divine purpose, but I see no reason to suppose that at any given moment the actual direction of evolution is towards higher values, and this is pre-eminently the case when the process is largely determined by human will.

There is a most fundamental problem raised for ethics by the evolutionary hypothesis. I wish that Dr. Waddington had said more about it. Shortly it is this: evolution appears to suggest that all moral ideas are relative, but the moral consciousness regards some of them as absolute and unless it does so the moral life is simply abolished. We are confronted with the situation now in every home. There are some things of such value that men ought to be prepared to die for them; it is reasonable to be prepared to die for them. Why? Men answer with action and, it may be suspected, deplorably confused notions of ethical theory; but they act because, in their simple way, they believe that the voice of duty comes from a Source deeper and more intimate than the course of evolution.

W. R. MATTHEWS.

The Deanery,  
St. Paul's,  
London.

I JOIN issue with Dr. Waddington on two points. First, when he offers, as a typical example of a judgment that is at once ethical and scientific, the statement "You are an animal of such a kind that you must consume 7 mgm. of vitamin C per diem, and should consume 10 mgm." I see nothing ethical here at all. The rules acquire ethical significance only when in a given case I judge the effort after survival, to which it prescribes the means, to be morally right or wrong. If I am the father of a family and there is only a limited supply of vitamin C available, it may be my moral duty to throw the rule to the winds and forego the means to my survival. The 'must' of the rule is not the unconditional 'ought' of morality, but the condition of attaining an end, as to the morality of which the rule says nothing. The 'should' in the last clause is ambiguous; it may mean either 'you ought to' or merely 'you will have a better chance of surviving if you do'. The former meaning alone is ethical, but I fancy that Dr. Waddington intends the latter. He may reply that he sees no difference between the two, any more than when on a later page he identifies what is pleasurable or what leads to pleasurable results (two different matters, by the way) with what is good. We seem to be back in the dear old days of Herbert Spencer. Do fallacies never die, however often they are confuted? If 'you ought' is identical with 'you'd jolly well better', and if 'this is good' is only another way of saying 'I find this pleasant', then the moral consciousness

is an illusion and a cheat, and the sooner we stop talking about it the better.

Dr. Waddington puzzles me, again, when he argues that the evolutionary process itself supplies us with a criterion of good, and that we need no other. I fail to see what he means by saying that this "cosmic fatalism does not imply a fatalistic attitude in the evolution of any particular section of the world", for example, of one's existing society. The 'psychological compulsions' with which he identifies ethical principles are surely, in his view, determinant of every act of every citizen in every race and age. If so, morals, whose business it is precisely to draw 'class-distinctions' among our natural impulses, vanish from the picture. Moreover, what ethical criterion can be derived from the scientific doctrine of evolution? Biology knows nothing of the qualitative distinction of higher and lower, better and worse; it can only display the continuity in the modifications of species through descent, showing what form of life succeeds what, and that certain more complex organisms have less complex organisms as their temporal antecedents. If the second law of thermodynamics should work its will and if all mind and all life should be eliminated from our planet, the process would be just as much an evolutionary process, in the sense relevant to biology, as that by which man has arisen from the ape. Apart from ethical presuppositions read in from other and non-scientific sources, evolution has no concern with value. The cosmic process is not indeed, as Huxley thought, immoral, save for those who indulge the 'pathetic fallacy' and interpret it in the light of their own emotions; but it is wholly amoral. The scientific study of it cannot teach us what is good or what we ought to do. It cannot even say 'must' in its predictions; it can tell us only what has been, what is, and what, in varying measure of probability, will be in the time to come. It cannot tell us that what will be is right or good.

These are my two grounds of dissent from Dr. Waddington, and I think they are fundamental to the issue. With much else in his article I cordially agree. But I venture to add a remark that travels a little beyond the scope of his discussion. It seems to me important to grasp the bearings of this amorality of Nature on our present world troubles. Are they not in large measure due to the fact that our knowledge of science, especially in its practical applications, has outrun, far outrun, our morality? Science has placed instruments of world-shaking power in the hands of rulers who abuse them for their own unrighteous ends. These instruments are in themselves, like physical Nature, non-moral. Neither Nature nor science is to blame for their misuse by man. Morality lies in the will to good,

immorality in the will to evil, that is, in the choice of ends, not in the means to their attainment. Of those ends, whether they be good or whether they be evil, science, for all its glory, can tell us nothing.

W. G. DE BURGH.

Little Cocklands,  
Burford, Oxon.

I PROPOSE to touch very briefly on those points in Dr. Waddington's article with which I agree, although, even where I agree, I cannot resist the temptation of entering a disclaimer against his uncritical taking over lock, stock and barrel of the pretentious jargon with which psycho-analysts disguise the commonplaceness of their observations upon the obvious. What, for example, does all this talk about the super-ego and its imposition upon the personality—is it, for example, upon "a merely receptive and featureless individual" or upon one who is "himself a factor in the origin of his super-ego"?—really amount to? That there is an individual person exhibiting certain specific characteristics which distinguish him from others—my dislike, for example, of the taste of marzipan, or my delight in the smell of privet; that this individual is born and grows up in an environment and that his resultant beliefs, including his ethical beliefs, are the result of the impact of the environment upon the characteristics which distinguish him from others, as well as upon those which he shares with others. That, as it seems to me, is all that Dr. Waddington and Melanie Klein are saying, and, put like that, it scarcely seems to justify the fuss.

I agree again with Dr. Waddington's interpretation of Marxism. I agree, that is to say, that Marx *did* provide for changes in, as well as conservation of systems of, social ethics, while retaining my private opinion that the real agents of ethical change are to be found less in the factors that Marx and Dr. Waddington emphasize than in the appearance of an ethical 'sport' in the shape of a Christ, a Buddha, a Socrates or a Blake who points the way to new levels of conduct and new standards of value to which in course of time the accepted moral codes of society as a whole gradually creep up. Or don't creep up! If they don't, then, to adopt a biological metaphor, the 'sport' has failed to breed true. I deliberately employ the biological metaphor in witness to my belief that the process of evolution still proceeds by 'mutation', although the scene of its operations has now been largely transferred from the physical to the mental and spiritual spheres.

So much having been said by way of not very impressive agreement, I come to my two major quarrels.