

## ANALYSIS OF INTRODUCTION.

[For the sake of the general reader who may desire to pass at once to the practical applications, the following outline of the Introduction—devoted rather to general principles—is here presented.]

### PART I.

#### NATURAL LAW IN THE SPIRITUAL SPHERE.

1. The growth of the Idea of Law.
2. Its gradual extension throughout every department of Knowledge.
3. Except one. Religion hitherto the Great Exception. Why so?
4. Previous attempts to trace analogies between the Natural and Spiritual spheres. These have been limited to analogies between *Phenomena*; and are useful mainly as illustrations. Analogies of *Law* would also have a Scientific value.
5. Wherein that value would consist. (1) The Scientific demand of the age would be met; (2) Greater clearness would be introduced into Religion practically; (3) Theology, instead of resting on Authority, would rest equally on Nature.

### PART II.

#### THE LAW OF CONTINUITY.

*À priori* argument for Natural Law in the spiritual world.

1. The Law Discovered.
2. „ Defined.
3. „ Applied.
4. The objection answered that the *material* of the Natural and Spiritual worlds being different they must be under different Laws.
5. The existence of Laws in the Spiritual world other than the Natural Laws (1) improbable, (2) unnecessary, (3) unknown. Qualification.
6. The Spiritual not the projection upwards of the Natural; but the Natural the projection downwards of the Spiritual.

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Henry Drummond  
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*“This method turns aside from hypotheses not to be tested by any known logical canon familiar to science, whether the hypothesis claims support from intuition, aspiration or general plausibility. And, again, this method turns aside from ideal standards which avow themselves to be lawless, which profess to transcend the field of law. We say, life and conduct shall stand for us wholly on a basis of law, and must rest entirely in that region of science (not physical, but moral and social science), where we are free to use our intelligence in the methods known to us as intelligible logic, methods which the intellect can analyse. When you confront us with hypotheses, however sublime and however affecting, if they cannot be stated in terms of the rest of our knowledge, if they are disparate to that world of sequence and sensation which to us is the ultimate base of all our real knowledge, then we shake our heads and turn aside.”*

FREDERICK HARRISON.

## INTRODUCTION.

“Ethical science is already for ever completed, so far as her general outline and main principles are concerned, and has been, as it were, waiting for physical science to come up with her.”—*Paradoxical Philosophy*.

### I.

NATURAL Law is a new word. It is the last and the most magnificent discovery of science. No more telling proof is open to the modern world of the greatness of the idea than the greatness of the attempts which have always been made to justify it. In the earlier centuries, before the birth of science, Phenomena were studied alone. The world then was a chaos, a collection of single, isolated, and independent facts. Deeper thinkers saw, indeed, that relations must subsist between these facts, but the Reign of Law was never more to the ancients than a far-off vision. Their philosophies, conspicuously those of the Stoics and Pythagoreans, heroically sought to marshal the discrete materials of the universe into thinkable form, but from these artificial and fantastic systems nothing remains to us now but

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an ancient testimony to the grandeur of that harmony which they failed to reach.

With Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler the first regular lines of the universe began to be discerned. When Nature yielded to Newton her great secret, Gravitation was felt to be not greater as a fact in itself than as a revelation that Law was fact. And thenceforth the search for individual Phenomena gave way before the larger study of their relations. The pursuit of Law became the passion of science.

What that discovery of Law has done for Nature, it is impossible to estimate. As a mere spectacle the universe to-day discloses a beauty so transcendent that he who disciplines himself by scientific work finds it an overwhelming reward simply to behold it. In these Laws one stands face to face with truth, solid and unchangeable. Each single Law is an instrument of scientific research, simple in its adjustments, universal in its application, infallible in its results. And despite the limitations of its sphere on every side Law is still the largest, richest, and surest source of human knowledge.

It is not necessary for the present to more than lightly touch on definitions of Natural Law. The Duke of Argyll<sup>1</sup> indicates five senses in which the

<sup>1</sup> "Reign of Law," chap. ii.

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*INTRODUCTION.*

5

word is used, but we may content ourselves here by taking it in its most simple and obvious significance. The fundamental conception of Law is an ascertained working sequence or constant order among the Phenomena of Nature. This impression of Law as order it is important to receive in its simplicity, for the idea is often corrupted by having attached to it erroneous views of cause and effect. In its true sense Natural Law predicates nothing of causes. The Laws of Nature are simply statements of the orderly condition of things in Nature, what is found in Nature by a sufficient number of competent observers. What these Laws are in themselves is not agreed. That they have any absolute existence even is far from certain. They are relative to man in his many limitations, and represent for him the constant expression of what he may always expect to find in the world around him. But that they have any causal connection with the things around him is not to be conceived. The Natural Laws originate nothing, sustain nothing; they are merely responsible for uniformity in sustaining what has been originated and what is being sustained. They are modes of operation, therefore, not operators; processes, not powers. The Law of Gravitation, for instance, speaks to science only of process. It has no light to offer as to itself. Newton did not discover Gravity—that is

not discovered yet. He discovered its Law, which is Gravitation, but that tells us nothing of its origin, of its nature, or of its cause.

The Natural Laws then are great lines running not only through the world, but, as we now know, through the universe, reducing it like parallels of latitude to intelligent order. In themselves, be it once more repeated, they may have no more absolute existence than parallels of latitude. But they exist for us. They are drawn for us to understand the part by some Hand that drew the whole; so drawn, perhaps, that, understanding the part, we too in time may learn to understand the whole. Now the inquiry we propose to ourselves resolves itself into the simple question, Do these lines stop with what we call the Natural sphere? Is it not possible that they may lead further? Is it probable that the Hand which ruled them gave up the work where most of all they were required? Did that Hand divide the world into two, a cosmos and a chaos, the higher being the chaos? With Nature as the symbol of all of harmony and beauty that is known to man, must we still talk of the super-natural, not as a convenient word, but as a different order of world, an unintelligible world, where the Reign of Mystery supersedes the Reign of Law?

This question, let it be carefully observed, applies

to Laws not to Phenomena. That the Phenomena of the Spiritual World are in analogy with the Phenomena of the Natural World requires no restatement. Since Plato enunciated his doctrine of the Cave or of the twice-divided line; since Christ spoke in parables; since Plotinus wrote of the world as an imaged image; since the mysticism of Swedenborg; since Bacon and Pascal; since “Sartor Resartus” and “In Memoriam,” it has been all but a commonplace with thinkers that “the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.” Milton’s question—

“What if earth  
 Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein  
 Each to other like more than on earth is thought?”

is now superfluous. “In our doctrine of representations and correspondences,” says Swedenborg, “we shall treat of both these symbolical and typical resemblances, and of the astonishing things that occur, I will not say in the living body only, but throughout Nature, and which correspond so entirely to supreme and spiritual things, that one would swear that the physical world was purely symbolical of the spiritual world.<sup>1</sup>” And Carlyle:

<sup>1</sup> “Animal Kingdom.”

“All visible things are emblems. What thou seest is not there on its own account ; strictly speaking is not there at all. Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea and body it forth.”<sup>1</sup>

But the analogies of Law are a totally different thing from the analogies of Phenomena and have a very different value. To say generally, with Pascal, that “La nature est une image de la grace,” is merely to be poetical. The function of Hervey’s “Meditations in a Flower Garden,” or, Flavel’s “Husbandry Spiritualized,” is mainly homiletical. That such works have an interest is not to be denied. The place of parable in teaching, and especially after the sanction of the greatest of Teachers, must always be recognised. The very necessities of language indeed demand this method of presenting truth. The temporal is the husk and framework of the eternal, and thoughts can be uttered only through things.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Sartor Resartus,” 1858 ed., p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Even parable, however, has always been considered to have attached to it a measure of evidential as well as of illustrative value. Thus : “The parable or other analogy to spiritual truth appropriated from the world of nature or man, is not merely illustrative, but also in some sort proof. It is not merely that these analogies assist to make the truth intelligible or, if intelligible before, present it more vividly to the mind, which is all that some will allow them. Their power lies deeper than



## INTRODUCTION.

9

But analogies between Phenomena bear the same relation to analogies of Law that Phenomena themselves bear to Law. The light of Law on truth, as we have seen, is an immense advance upon the light of Phenomena. The discovery of Law is simply the discovery of Science. And if the analogies of Natural Law can be extended to the Spiritual World, that whole region at once falls within the domain of science and secures a basis as well as an illumination in the constitution and course of Nature. All, therefore, that has been claimed for parable can be predicated *à fortiori* of this—with the addition that a proof on the basis of Law would want no criterion possessed by the most advanced science.

That the validity of analogy generally has been seriously questioned one must frankly own. Doubtless there is much difficulty and even liability to gross error in attempting to establish analogy in specific cases. The value of the likeness appears this, in the harmony unconsciously felt by all men, and which all deeper minds have delighted to trace, between the natural and spiritual worlds, so that analogies from the first are felt to be something more than illustrations happily but yet arbitrarily chosen. They are arguments, and may be alleged as witnesses; the world of nature being throughout a witness for the world of spirit, proceeding from the same hand, growing out of the same root, and being constituted for that very end.”—(Archbishop Trench: “Parables,” pp. 12, 13.)

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differently to different minds, and in discussing an individual instance questions of relevancy will invariably crop up. Of course, in the language of John Stuart Mill, "when the analogy can be proved, the argument founded upon it cannot be resisted."<sup>1</sup> But so great is the difficulty of proof that many are compelled to attach the most inferior weight to analogy as a method of reasoning. "Analogical evidence is generally more successful in silencing objections than in evincing truth. Though it rarely refutes it frequently repels refutation; like those weapons which though they cannot kill the enemy, will ward his blows. . . . It must be allowed that analogical evidence is at least but a feeble support, and is hardly ever honoured with the name of proof."<sup>2</sup> Other authorities on the other hand, such as Sir William Hamilton, admit analogy to a primary place in logic and regard it as the very basis of induction.

But, fortunately, we are spared all discussion on this worn subject, for two cogent reasons. For one thing, we do not demand of Nature directly to prove Religion. That was never its function. Its function is to interpret. And this, after all, is possibly the most fruitful proof. The best proof of a

<sup>1</sup> Mill's "Logic," vol. ii. p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Campbell's "Rhetoric," vol. i. p. 114.