

discipline, to think of words expressing sensible objects and their relations as connoting certain supersensuous attributes. This is frequently seen in the repugnance of the metaphysical mind to receive a scientific statement about a matter of fact simply as a matter of fact. This repugnance does not generally arise in respect to the every day matters of life. When we say that the earth is round we state a truth which every one is willing to receive as final. If without denying that the earth was round, one should criticise the statement on the ground that it was not necessarily round but might be of some other form, we should simply smile at this use of language. But when we take a more general statement and assert that the laws of nature are inexorable, and that all phenomena, so far as we can show, occur in obedience to their requirements, we are met with a sort of criticism with which all of us are familiar, and which I am unable adequately to describe. No one denies that as a matter of fact, and as far as his experience extends, these laws do appear to be inexorable. I have never heard of any one professing, during the present generation, to describe a natural phenomenon, with the avowed belief that it was not a product of natural law; yet we constantly hear the scientific view criticised on the ground that events may occur without being subject to natural law. The word "may," in this connection, is one to which we can attach no meaning expressive of a sensuous relation.

This is, however, not the most frequent misuse of the word may. In fact, the unscientific use of language to which I refer, is most strongly shown in disquisitions on the freedom of the will. When I say that it is perfectly certain that I will to-morrow perform a certain act unless some cause external to my mind which I do not now foresee occurs to prevent me, I make a statement which is final so far as scientific ideas are concerned. But it will sometimes be maintained that however certain it may be that I shall perform this act, nevertheless I may act otherwise. All I can say to this is that I do not understand the meaning of the statement.

The analogous conflict between the scientific use of language and the use made by some philosophers, is found in connection with the idea of causation. Fundamentally the word cause is used in scientific language in the same sense as in the language of common life. When we discuss with our neighbors the cause of a fit of illness, of a fire, or of cold weather, not the slightest ambiguity attaches to the use of the word, because whatever meaning may