

Sociology teaches us that, of necessity, that is not the way of the world. Good and evil are necessary to the sociological order of things, the world assimilating the one and excreting the other. The maximum value of the individual is therefore variable. There is no mathematical certainty about it. And this arises as much from the within as the without of the man. As a creature of circumstances, with himself as one of them, his function is not always at its fullest tension for good or for evil. A man is neither all bad, nor can be all good. The conscience grows by absorption, and so does the tree, but a maple is not a beech nor is a birch an oak. There is within every living organism an individualizing force, a force within us and not of us that makes for righteousness, that makes for good or evil, for growth or decay, for beauty or rottenness in all that we see around us; and we teachers and educationists are ever longing to lay hands on this nucleotic force, eager to fashion in our own way this fashioner of fate, notwithstanding the lion in the way. Which came first, the egg or the bird? Answer me, and I will tell you which came first, man or his environment. And when we see society saturated with so many false beliefs, when we see a false coin examined so scrupulously and an unworthy opinion allowed to go Scot free on its way of evil, when we see the lesser logic hurrahed over, while the ground-work of the truth of things is only listlessly thought of, the task of discovering the general solvent of ethics becomes the task of the alchemist when science was in its babyhood.

Is it a natural law that men for the most part love the things they ought to hate? Is the doing of things we ought not to do and the leaving undone things we ought to have done a fixed decree necessary for the safety of society? Is it a sociological principle that people should so seldom make the most of their mind and moral energies? Is there none good, no not one, and why? Does wrong-doing always hurt some one? Does right-doing ever hurt any one? Does the leaven of good leaven more than the leaven of evil? What is moral force? Is there a conservation of moral energy as there is a conservation of physical energy? What is a belief? Is it a cause or an effect? What is a dogma. Is it a product or a creator? What is a motive? Is it primary or derived? These are problems, sociological