

Morality describes the acute consciousness accompanying an imperfect adaptation to the environment. Virtue is an attribute of imperfection ; it characterizes the transient state of pupilage in which the soul is passing from the letter of the law to the spirit of love. We seek a higher type of activity than the moral, one in which the sympathetic thought, the kindly word, the just and loving deed shall be the immediate spontaneous expression of the man's most intimate nature, one in which the impulses of the soul have been so transformed that the deepest springs of action contain no bitter water, but well forth only cheerfulness, courage and chivalry, one for which victory has been made needless because strife within the self has ceased and the right action is the expression of a unity which has but one response to make to the demand of the environment. The great man is he who does the work he is called upon to do simply and directly, without any awareness of remarkable quality in his action, he for whom there is no question of duty or alternative, who sees the one thing to do and does it sincerely and unconsciously as a child.

We need a new term to describe such a nature. The moral world has no name for it ; it lies wholly above and beyond its scope. We turn to the world of æsthetic relations for a name, and call it *beautiful*. Yet this character, always approximated, is never fully attained. Every victory in the moral life prepares the way for new struggles. "One can never be good," I have heard a wise teacher say, "but one can always be *better*." We stand ever midway in the spiritual landscape. All that lies before us, toward which we strive, we call virtue ; all we have overpassed, which now lies behind us at lower levels we call vice. There is no absolute vice in life, nor absolute virtue,—or shall we say that all life is either absolutely vicious or absolutely virtuous, no other alternative being possible. The strenuous breasting of the tide and endeavour toward that which is above and beyond us, is virtue ; the fatuous lack of such endeavour, with its inescapable drifting backward to a lower level, is vice ; and every action must be representative of either the one or the other.