produced work; between the purveyor of a new "cult" and the pioneer in intelligent thought and living; between the versifier and the poet; between the obscurantist and the philosopher. This discrimination does not come save by prayer and fasting. That is to say, we have to train ourselves to think, and so to fill the vital gap in sane living. Mechanical living is easy once we have decided to be robots and not men. We can then march, salute, and goose-step in perfect order. We can put our cross against "yes" and commit mass sadism to command. But it may yet be a good thing for the world that some countries fail to see validity in all this, still believe that liberty is the fundamental issue—liberty for the individual and liberty for the nation. Opportunism obscures this and, together with these nations, is therefore suspect. Opportunism has done well for itself, so well that some of us are tempted to indulge in it. But eventually it cannot save us; nothing can save us, or the opportunists, but the triumph of principles.

V. Of Obscurantism in the Law a good deal might be said, but I propose to be very brief on this subject. In their very inception laws are deliberately constructed on obscurant lines, so that their interpretation may be elastic. The individual case may then receive consideration on its merits and the application of the
law bear some appropriate relation to it. This is presumably the meaning of the absence of punctuation throughout long sentences; the meaning of a sentence is not intended to be as exact and as clear as commas and semicolons would make it. But this provision inevitably means that opposing advocates may avail themselves of the obscurity for the purpose of forensic eloquence. The licence inherent in the obscure wording of a law leads not infrequently to such complicated issues that the particular case comes to bear little resemblance to its original form. Examples are numerous, but Dickens's story of Mr. Pickwick's trial has illustrated this happening for all time.

The institution of trial by jury, though it has its shortcomings, does a good deal to rectify the confusion that often arises during the hearing of a case at law by requiring the proceedings to approximate to common sense. And the good influence of the appeal courts in this country is due largely to the mature wisdom of the judges rather than to any special capacity they possess for disentangling knotty points in the reading of our laws. All said and done, the difficulty in interpreting laws which Nature has made for man is not so great as the difficulty in interpreting the laws that man has made for man.

The obscurity which is deliberate in the framing of a law has some positive value, but no
value seems to attach to the seemingly interminable lag that characterizes and obscures many law processes. The fact that a Royal Commission has been set up to elucidate, to attempt to simplify, and to expedite legal proceedings in general, seems to establish this fact.

But whatever may be gained in this direction, the paradox which presents itself so strikingly—that "the science whose main object is the achievement of order is most open to the accusation of indefiniteness and uncertainty"—will remain. It is interesting to note that Lord Macmillan does not consider this state of things irremediable. He remarks that "it is not with the technical words of our craft that I am so much concerned. These have attained a reasonable scientific precision. It is for a more accurate and scholarly use... of ordinary vocabulary... that I plead."

VI. Of Metaphysics and of Mysticism. In his recent autobiography, when reviewing his study of the great issues which lie around considerations of the supernatural Lord Snell says: "I read many metaphysical books, which, notwithstanding the erudition of their authors, provided me with less comfort than confusion..." And he quotes Emerson's

† Lord Snell, Men, Movements, and Myself, pp. 128–129.
question: "Who has not looked into a metaphysical book? And what sensible man ever looked twice?" And yet, how complex we are! How fascinated at times by the play of ideas as we let them circle around in the thin air of the intangible! Emerson himself, as we all know, toyed at times with notions that we must, if we are not slavish in our hero-worship, regard as obscurant. It is not difficult to recognize a distinction between the metaphysical and the transcendental, but it is very difficult to mark off the transcendental from the mystical.

H. G. Wells considers that we have serious need of a new system of Metaphysics, and if it were not that I fear lest men should drift once more into that old habit decried by Bacon of spinning "webs of sophisticated speculation out of their own bowels," I would agree with him. As it is, I should hesitate to run the risk. But if a new Metaphysics is attempted, then I agree with the author of First and Last Things that what is wanted is philosophy, and not a smattering of the history of philosophy, and that the proper way to discuss Metaphysics is to discuss the accumulated and digested product of human thought.*

There is an idea, not uncommonly met with, that Metaphysics and Mysticism have a good deal in common. This is, of course, quite

* P. 6 in the Thinker's Library Ed.
erroneous. The notion is probably due to the realization that they have this in common,—they can engage our attention without any consideration of things as they are; the content of both of them lies outside phenomena.

As I see it there is this fundamental difference between Metaphysics and Mysticism. Those speculations concerning the first principles of things, which are the province of Metaphysics, engage the mind in an intellectual pursuit, whereas that ecstatic contemplation of oneness with the Deity, which is the essence of Mysticism,* lies outside the intellect and exists in the realm of feeling. A metaphysical argument, since it demands orderly and controlled thinking, requires that the sentences used in its construction shall resolve into component parts, and that one part shall bear some relation to another part. These demands are not made of Mysticism. Here the dominant type of expression is exclamatory, the mental experience is entirely subjective, and lies in the realm of reverie, not in that of constructive thought.

Now the trouble with most of us is that too much of our mental life is already spent in reverie. "This is our spontaneous and favourite kind of thinking. We allow our ideas to take their own course, and this course is deter-

* See Evelyn Underhill's Essentials of Mysticism, Chap. I.
mined by our hopes and fears, our . . . desires, their fulfilment or frustration, by our likes and dislikes, our loves and hates and resentments. All thought that is not more or less laboriously controlled and directed will inevitably circle about the beloved Ego." * I do not intend this to mean that there is no effort on the part of the mystic to escape from this primitive play of his mind. The saint does, again and again, make this effort, and as all mental effort, involving as it does the use of the will, is useful to the developing mind, something is attained by way of mental discipline. The mystic poet, Donne, gives us an admirable picture of this struggle between the dominance of pure reverie and the concentration upon subjectiveness: "I throw myself down in my chamber and call in and invite God and his angels thither, and when they are there I neglect God and his angels for the noise of a fly, for the rattling of a coach, for the whining of a door. . . . A memory of yesterday’s pleasures and fear of to-morrow’s dangers, a straw under my knee, a noise in mine ear, a light in mine eye, an anything, a nothing, a fancy, a chimera in my brain, troubles me in my prayer." †

Of Metaphysics, as we know it at present, the most that can be said is that it may be made

† Quoted by Robert Lynd, The Art of Letters.
a good mental exercise. In this sense it may have its intellectual uses, and something may pass over and be of service in the practical issues of life. But it must be allowed that, inasmuch as the indulgence in Mysticism intensifies the purely spiritual part of our minds, which is a much more basic part of our personality, the possible gain is far greater. Even the Pragmatist counts mystical expressions as possessing value if they lead to practical consequences.* In Mysticism, however, though control is difficult, the danger of encouraging mere mental catalepsy is great.

An analysis of the “Quiet Hour” will lead us to much the same conclusion. It may be spent in an orgy of pure reverie, a form of thought which needs no encouragement. And only to those who regard the dream-state as having preferential value over the processes of thought that concern themselves with the corpus of ascertained knowledge, and its application to human life, will the time thus spent have any value. And there are such. Science and Health inculcates this doctrine. “Organization and Time,” we are told, “have little to do with Life. . . . The mortal night-dream is sometimes nearer the fact than are the thoughts of mortals when awake. The night-dream . . . throws off some material fetters. It falls short of the skies, but makes its mundane

* Wm. James, Pragmatism, p. 151 sq; p. 273 sq.
flights quite ethereal." Modern psychological study explains to us the part that dreams play in our mental life, but surely the majority of us do not regard them as the more important part. But here is a thesis which proclaims that when "the body lies listless, undisturbed, and sensationless, and the mind seems to be absent" [an inconceivable state] "it is then that life is at its highest and its best." *

Again, the "Quiet Hour" may be spent in a state of ecstasy, in rapt entrancement, in which case there is an actual break of mental contact and a substitution of an almost physical process, of little or no service to mental culture. But if the "Quiet Hour" is spent in active attention to what has been happening in our mental life, to a consideration of how it has reacted to various stimuli and to what useful purpose these reactions may be put if desirable, or how avoided if undesirable, then there is a chance of mental progress. The issue must be clear if we wish to be wise. Whether we incline towards Naturalism, or whether we incline towards Mysticism, whether we are tough or tender—and most of us are both—depends on our temperament. What signifies is that we are honest with ourselves.

VII. In matters of Health, Disease, and Medicine the influence of Obscurantism has been, and still is, marked.

We have only quite recently become interested in Health as distinct from Disease. This may be the reason why our ideas are still very confused, whether we consider the health of the individual or the Common or Public Health. I have dealt with this confusion elsewhere,* but I want to refer briefly to two obscurant notions that face us. In the first place it is a confusion to think that we can separate the health of the body from the health of the mind. Less and less can this be done with the growth of civilization, when our needs have become less simple and our occupations more monotonous. It has become, therefore, an obscurant notion that we can make a nation fit without some attention to the amenities of life. It is equally obscurant to suppose that, where the miner, the agricultural labourer, and the artisan are concerned, health and happiness can be divorced from economic considerations.

A further confusion arises from the notion that Health is an artificial, and not a natural, thing. This is the work of the pundits rather than of the doctors. They have forgotten that there was formerly such a thing as occupational fitness, and that it is the urbanization of the masses of the people, and the industrial revolution, that have lowered the general hygiene, rather than any change in the capacity of the human body to be fit.

Medicine has had a very long struggle to get

* Health and a Day, p. 102. sq.
free, first from Magic, then from Religion, and then from Metaphysics. Until the era of scientific medicine began with Harvey, Medicine was in bondage, one after another, to these. For nearly 2,000 years of dominance of Medicine by Metaphysics and Religion, we have not so much to blame the influence of Plato’s abstract and theoretical outlook upon Nature, though this did exercise a stranglehold both upon Medicine and upon Science generally, nor even to blame the influence of the Church, as to lament the fact that close contact of the human mind with the world of Nature had not yet been made. For this revolution in human affairs Medicine had to await the arrival of Francis Bacon, to whom we owe the systematic reform of natural philosophy and the first intelligent attempt to place the investigations of Nature on a solid foundation. If we want to realize how slow Science was in being born, we have only to remember that 350 years elapsed between the appearance of Roger Bacon’s *Opus Majus* (with the almost contemporary teaching of his fellow Franciscan, Duns Scotus), and the *Novum Organum* of his great namesake, Francis. During the whole of this time almost nothing happened in the field of Medicine. And if we want to realize how rapidly Science, and Medicine, its most humanist expression, have grown since the darkening doors of Obscurantism were burst
open, we have only to remember that between Harvey's great discovery and the corpus of medical knowledge as it exists to-day a period of time almost exactly the same is all that has elapsed.

So buried in Obscurantism was the whole science and art of medicine in the time of Roger Bacon and Duns Scotus, so cramping the vested interest of the Church in the subservience of man's mind, that though the former pointed out clearly what were the great hindrances to the understanding of Life, and though the latter insisted that belief in, and service to, God were not a necessary first stage in any examination of Truth, their clarion calls met with no response. Roger Bacon considered these hindrances to be four: the example of frail and unsuitable authority, the long duration of custom, the judgments of the untrained crowd, and the concealment of our ignorance by a display of apparent learning. But the orthodox philosophy of the Church was that of Thomas Aquinas, not that of Scotus. So the quarrel between the theologian and the scientist was inevitable. The first clash came with Copernicus and Galileo in the field of Astronomy. Nature loves simplicity, said Copernicus, a statement echoed by Newton one hundred years later, but the recognition of this truth meant farewell to the slavery of men's minds, and so long as it continued to hold
temporal power the Church killed or persecuted its discoverers.

Organized Medicine of to-day has in most civilized countries broken away from Magic and Religion, though traces of both these influences can still be seen by those who care to look for them. We still see some of the old complicated prescriptions and régimes which formerly owed their existence to the operation of Faith and Suggestion. With the new knowledge gained on the material side, there was a danger lest our pathology and our therapy might fail altogether to take cognizance of psychical factors. The tendency to parcel out the patient’s disability among various laboratory departments, or to attempt to deal with it by the growing technical skill of the surgeon’s craft, leaving the mind of the sufferer out of consideration, went to severe and, to some of us, alarming lengths up till very recent years. This was a swing over to another, and equally undesirable, form of obscurant medicine. We saw the spectacle of the patient arriving at the ground-floor of a splendidly equipped Medical Centre. The lift bore him to floor 3 for a blood examination, to floor 9 for an electrocardiogram, and to floor 16 for a complete radiological survey. But no one asked him what his own ideas were about his illness. Still less did anyone make contact with him—himself—his fears, ambitions, loves, and hates: but chiefly
would it have been well to make close acquaintance with his fears. It was forgotten that he was still half savage and half babe; that he was man in the making, not man made. Now, however, the part played in disease and in its cure by the mind is itself being made a matter for study, and we are seeing the growth of psychopathology and psychotherapy as a rational and important branch of Medicine. The physician has become priest, just as the priest was once physician; not only priest, but teacher, legislator, and social reformer. No longer in the interest of the community can the work of the doctor be confined to the consulting-room, the hospital ward, and the laboratory.

The doctor's function in social evolution, though specialized, is none the less important. What is of interest in connection with my immediate subject is to notice that "the relations which seem to be coming into existence between Medicine and Religion resemble in some degree those which" characterized "the early phases of its history. They differ chiefly in that the later phase recognizes explicitly, and is learning to understand, a set of conditions which were once allowed to play their part not only 'unregarded and unstudied,' but deliberately suppressed. Indeed, the course of history seems to be showing us that the close interdependence of different departments of
human culture will be just as much a character of its latest and its highest phase as it was . . . of its earliest and its lowest.”*  

But Man, the sufferer, shows a very considerable lag behind Medicine and its exponent, the doctor. The mysterious, which is the obscurant, often makes a greater appeal than does the plain statement of how the highroad of physiological rectitude has been departed from and how to regain it. For that reason an effort made through the emotions, or through the imagination, is often more efficacious than when it is made through the intellect or through the will.

The formula “ça passe, ça passe,” spoken without methodical examination, to a patient with eyes closed, is often more helpful than a careful survey followed by a diagnosis and a system of therapy. And, just as the Latin races have been more helped by the formula and the symbol in their religion than have the Anglo-Saxons, so do we find that the system of treatment which has in recent years become associated with the name of Coué is more successful with patients of the former, than with those of the latter, extraction. It was one of the former who, when asked if she would disrobe in order to be examined, said, with a look of great disillusionment and disappoint-

* W. H. R. Rivers, Medicine, Magic, and Religion, p. 117.
ment: "But, doctor, I heard you were so clever"; nor was her confidence ever completely restored.

Herein, too, lies the chief explanation of the quack's success. The argument, such as it is, runs thus in the mind of the patient: "He is not trained and he is not recognized by law; how clever he must be by nature, therefore, to be able to cure people; his power is a direct and supernatural gift, a power which on that account must clearly be superior to even the highest skill which comes from a long and painstaking study on the part of the registered practitioner." The main contribution to the treatment comes from the patient's belief, and the charlatan is not slow to make the most use of it. "He saw what was wrong with me at a glance." "He had a most magnetic personality." "He told me that he had been waiting for my particular case for years; it filled a gap in his otherwise complete experience." And so on.

A good deal of the professionalism that encumbers the healing art is really a form of Obscurantism; it is demanded, in many instances, as an essential part of the treatment. But this does not apply only to the work of the doctor; it is seen in many walks of life. Even the "bedside manner," which is so frequently made fun of, is not confined to Medicine. When the naval officer is in port, and his ship is under inspection, he exchanges his binoculars for a
telescope, though he no longer uses this primitive instrument at sea. It goes more suitably under the arm as he walks the deck, and it gives him something of the Nelson touch. It does us all good to see it.

The frequent request for some form of electrical treatment when there is no indication for this is a sign of the same hankering after the mysterious. No longer any mystery to us, maybe, but the request is often a survival from the days of magnetism and the magic that surrounded the more pseudo-scientific aspect of Mesmer's discovery. Even to-day I find patients taking a magnet to bed with them, and when I ask them the reason they speak confusedly about the polarity of the human body. If I speak of the E string of a violin being worn round the waist, an iron ring on their finger, a nutmeg in their pocket, a locket containing a trace of iodine suspended at their chest, or a stick of sulphur at their feet, I do but mention a few of the superstitions that still find currency—obscurat notions all.

The position taken up by the advocates of so-called "Nature Cures" is another good example. One of the chief tenets of this cult is that the use of "drugs" is contrary to what is called "Natural Healing." Drugs are mineral or vegetable or animal products in more or less purified and assayable forms. The obscurity here is that the use of the crude
substance is allowed, even encouraged, but the use of the essential ingredient as extracted and refined by the chemist is not. Hence Herbalists. You may peel off the bark from the cinchona tree and drink the infusion, but you may not use the tincture, and still less the active principle, quinine. You may “assist Nature” with a herbal tea, but you may not dose yourself with any, or all, of its ingredients in a purified form, because these are “drugs.” I think the popularity of senna pods is largely due to some similar vague belief or disbelief. If you are anæmic you may consume spinach, but you may not swallow iron. The amount of spinach you must eat will give you indigestion, or embarrass your kidneys with crystals of oxalic acid, and you may escape both of these afflictions by availing yourself of the knowledge which Science has given us. But if you are the victim of Obscurantism you are not unwilling to suffer for your belief that you are following Nature.

Few maxims have been responsible for more confused thinking than vis medicatrix naturæ. Nature, it is true, has provided the means of healing, but Science and Art have organized Nature’s provisions in this regard so as to make them more readily available and far more reliable. Consistency requires that the Nature curer should still get his heat and his light from the sun or from two flints struck together, and
should eschew the box of matches, the gas stove, and the electric light.

We cannot get healed without Nature, but Nature is a bad doctor. She lacks control. She will as lief kill you with her healing power as save you. If you are too full-blooded, Nature may bleed you, but she may bleed you to death if she is not checked. If you poison yourself, Nature removes the poison from your body by purging you, but she may go on with the purging long after all the noxious material has been voided, so that you are in danger of death from exhaustion. The duty of a good doctor is therefore to stand by, to be supremely vigilant, and to utilize the knowledge gained by Science to the patient’s fullest advantage. More and more, if we observe closely and note what attitude is most helpful, we find that it is “control” rather than “cure” that wins the day. The *processes* by which healing is effected are Nature’s processes, not ours, and efforts at substituting ours for hers not only obscure the issue, they are doomed to failure. A wise old physician, in my young days, having listened attentively to the patient’s account of his troubles was wont to ask: “Now tell me what treatments you have suffered?”

The very acceptance of the physical basis of life, the flesh and blood and bone which we call our body, is only grudgingly given by some. Even before the Church inculcated the
idea of the "vileness" of the body there were mystics who regarded it as a great misfortune. Porphyry records that the neo-Platonist Plotinus was ashamed of being in a body, and I meet folks to-day who apologize for their body and excuse themselves for possessing it.

The history of drugs teems with false ideas, and we sometimes see the persistence of a superstition long after the thought and feeling which originally underlay it have been lost. "At one time ... any fancied likeness in a drug or in its name to something in a disease, or in the name of a disease, was thought to be Nature's seal of its efficiency in that disease. In country districts nettle tea is still the popular remedy for nettle-rash. Because of its brilliant yellow colour turmeric is a remedy for jaundice, and the bloodstone is used to stop bleeding from the nose. The so-called principle that like cures like, on which the homoeopathic system professes to be based, was not an induction from full and careful experience, but a specious theory engendered in the mind of its discoverer by the captivating suggestion of words. ... Its faithful application in all cases might issue in practice like that of him who, obeying the Scriptural injunction to pour oil into an enemy's wounds, poured oil of vitriol into them."*

Osteopathy appears to have been born in an atmosphere of emotional Obscurantism. Its founder, Andrew Still, speaking of this event, tells us that he "was convinced that there was something surer and stronger with which to fight sickness than drugs. . . . The result" [he adds] "was that in 1874 I raised the flag of Osteopathy claiming that 'God is Good, and the machinery he put in man was perfect.' . . . Not until my heart had been torn and lacerated with grief and affliction could I fully realize the inefficacy of drugs." *

There are folk who object to eating what they term "dead food." All food, they say, should be alive—not live animals, because these folk are, I believe, mostly vegetarians—but live vegetables. We know that fresh vegetables have valuable nutrient properties which may be lost by cooking. Therefore it is useful to eat a certain amount of vegetables in the raw state, such as salads. But now comes the obscurant idea that the fact that the vegetables are alive gives them some other and mystical value. In some way they are more acceptable to the principle of Life—with a capital L. But in the process of digestion all live food is killed, and is not only killed, it is also broken up by ferments and by bacteria into a few basic constituent chemical substances

* Quoted by Hill and Clegg in What is Osteopathy, p. 12.