
All times and nations have felt or played with the idea of Fate. The Greeks were pursued by the thought of a mysterious and ineffable Necessity presiding over the divine caprices of the gods. The Mahomedan sits calm and inert under the yoke of Kismet. The Hindu speaks of Karma and the writing on the forehead when he would console himself for calamity or failure or excuse himself from perseverance and masculine effort. And all these notions are akin in the general imprecision of the idea they shadow forth and the vague twilight in which they are content to leave its ulterior significance. Modern Science has brought in an equally formless and arbitrary predestination of Law of Nature and Heredity to contradict the idea of responsibility in a free, willing and acting soul. Where there is no soul, there can be no freedom. Nature works out her original law in man; our fathers and mothers with all that they carried in them are a second vital predestination and the dead generations impose themselves on the living; pressure of environment comes in as a third Fate to take from us the little chance of liberty we might still have snatched out of this infinite coiling of forces. The triple Moirai of the Greeks have been re-enthroned with other masks and new names. We believe once more in a tremendous weaving of our fate, but by the measured dance of immense material Powers. It is the old gods again, but stripped of intelligence and the chance of human sympathy, inexorable because they are conscious neither of themselves nor of us.

It is doubtful whether belief in Fate or free-will makes much difference to a man's action, but it certainly matters a great deal to his temperament and inner being; for it puts its stamp on the cast of his soul. The man who makes belief in Fate an excuse for quiescence, would find some other pretext if this were lacking. His idea is only a decorous garment for his mood; it clothes his indolence and quiescence in a specious robe of light or drapes it with a noble mantle of dignity. But when his will clutches at an object or action, we do not find him pursuing it with a less strenuous resolution or, it may be, a less childish impatience or obstinacy than the freest believer in free-will. It is not our intellectual ideas that govern our action, but our nature and

temperament, — not *dhī*,¹ but *mati* or even *manyu*, or, as the Greeks would have said, *thumos* and not *nous*.

On the other hand a great man of action will often seize on the idea of Fate to divinise to himself the mighty energy that he feels driving him on the path of world-altering deeds. He is like a shell discharged from some dim Titanic howitzer planted in concealment far behind this first line of trenches which we see thrown out by Life into the material world; or he is like a planet sped out from Nature's hands with its store of primal energy sufficient for its given time, its fixed service to the world-life, its settled orbit round a distant and sovereign Light. He expresses in the idea of Fate his living and constant sense of the energy which has cast him down here whether to break like some Vedic Marut the world's firm and established things or to cut through mountains a path down which new rivers of human destiny can pour. Like Indra or Bhagirath he precedes; the throng of the divine waters follow. His movement decides their course; here Indus shall flow, there Ganges pace yellow and leonine to the sea. Therefore we find that the greatest men of action the world has known were believers in Fate or in a divine Will. Caesar, Mahomet, Napoleon, what more colossal workers has our past than these? The superman believes more readily in Destiny, feels more vitally conscious of God than the average human mind.

A saying of Napoleon's is pregnant of the true truth of this matter. Questioned why, since he talked continually of fate, he thought it worth while to be always thinking and planning, he answered with just reason, "Because it is still Fate who wills that I should plan." This is the truth. There is a Will or Force in the world that determines the result of my actions as part of the great whole; there is a Will in me that determines, concealed by my thought and personal choice, the part that I shall take in determining the whole. It is this that my mind seizes on and calls my will. But I and mine are masks. It is All-existence that gives

¹ These are terms of Vedic psychology. *Dhī* is the intellect; *mati*, the general mentality; *manyu*, the temperament and emotive mind.