

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

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### THE PERSONALISTIC CONCEPTION OF NATURE.<sup>1</sup>

#### I.

THE position of this address as interlude in a discussion of mechanism and vitalism<sup>2</sup> has determined its starting point. The first division of the paper will attempt accordingly to trace the metamorphosis of vitalism into personalism and to show that this psychological vitalism antagonizes no justified claim of mechanism. The later divisions of the paper will discuss the philosophical nature and the bases of a personalistic cosmology.

As the preceding discussion has made most clear, the outstanding difficulty in the settlement of the issue between mechanism and vitalism is that each term has been used in radically different senses, often fused but seldom distinguished. It follows of course that one may be mechanist or vitalist in one meaning of the term but not in another of these senses; and it follows, equally, that one may be a mechanist in one sense and a vitalist in another. The three sets of contrasted meanings are, briefly, the following: (1) Mechanism, in the first meaning of the word, describes the universe in structural terms; vitalism, taken in the corresponding sense, conceives the universe functionally, that is, in terms of relation. (2) Mechanism in the second sense is synonymous with determinism; while vitalism

<sup>1</sup> Read as the President's address at the eighteenth annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association held at Harvard University, December 27-28, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> For the papers contributed by the leaders of this discussion, cf. this REVIEW, Vol. XXVII, pp. 571 ff. (Nov., 1918).