

## THE IDEA OF NECESSITY, ITS BASIS AND ITS SCOPE.

THE idea of necessity, although a fundamental concept in philosophy and science, has not as yet been so clearly defined that all thinkers would agree as to its meaning and significance. Necessity is frequently identified with compulsion, and thus it is supposed to be incompatible with freedom of will. It is also identified with fate, as if it were a destiny that existed above the will of man and the powers of nature, similar to the Moira of the ancients. It is said to exclude chance in every possible conception of the term and to cause the evolution of the world to proceed by a predetermined arrangement, like the mechanism of a clock.

We cannot endorse Mr. Charles S. Peirce's objection to the doctrine of necessity, but we side with him when he denounces the mechanical philosophy for considering minds as "part of the physical world in such a sense that the laws of mechanics determine everything that happens." Mr. Peirce is right when he rebukes the mechanical philosopher for "entering consciousness under the head of sundries as a forgotten trifle." In some sense minds are parts of the physical, i. e. the natural, world, but they are not parts of that province of nature which constitutes the special domain of physics and mechanics. Ideas are not motions and cannot be explained by mechanical laws.

Having criticised in a former article of ours Mr. Peirce's position, and having rejected the indeterminism proposed by him, we shall discuss in the following pages the basis and scope of the idea of necessity.