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REVALUATIONS:
HISTORICAL AND IDEAL

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REVALUATIONS:

HISTORICAL AND IDEAL

BY

ALFRED W. BENN,

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH RATIONALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY," "MODERN ENGLAND," ETC.

"Zarathustra has found no greater power on earth than good and evil."—FR. NIETZSCHE.

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TO

VERNON LEE

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PREFACE

THE title of this volume may possibly remind some readers of an expression—"Umwerthungen," in English "Transvaluations"—first brought into vogue by Nietzsche; the motto of the book is taken from Nietzsche; and one of the essays which it contains is devoted to a criticism of Nietzsche's ethics. Under less provocation than this, hasty or superficial reviewers might be tempted to label me as a Nietzschian. Under less provocation than this, quite friendly reviewers have actually labelled me as a Hegelian. If I know anything about my own opinion, I am neither the one nor the other. But, if I had to choose, of the two I had rather be called a Hegelian. And anyone who takes the trouble to read my study of the great immoralist will find that he is treated from the point of view of one who accepts in principle the traditional morality—

> As one compelled in spite of scorn
> To teach a truth he would not learn.

My re-estimates, in fact, where they depart from the views generally accepted, relate not so much to standards as to their application, and not so much to things as to persons. Thus the paper which has been put first, and which in some ways is most diametrically opposed to the current commonplaces, does not find the ethical value of Hellenism in any opposition to the highest modern ideals of conduct, but in its approach to or anticipation of what we cherish as most essential to modern civilisation. Of course, I am prepared to hear that there is nothing new about what I claim for the Greeks, that every scholar knew all this already. It may be so ; but I am not aware that any scholar has said it in so many words ; and I know one scholar who, writing some time after the first publication of my essay, dogmatically stated the exact contrary. Professor De Sanctis, the most recent Italian historian of old Rome, comparing together the different branches of the Aryan race, finds in the Greeks "a certain atrophy of the moral sense." When a man who has access to Homer and the tragedians can say this, neither would he be persuaded though one rose from the dead. It is not, therefore, in the vain hope of inducing Professor De Sanctis to reconsider his verdict, but because it may interest my less prejudiced readers, that I venture to lay before them some very striking evidence on the subject derived from an unexpected quarter—the recently disinterred comedies of Menander. One of these, called *The Arbitration*, has for its argument the following story :—

> Charisios, a young Athenian of good family, has recently been married to Pamphila, a girl of his own class. Four months after the wedding Pamphila, unknown to her husband, gives birth to a child, of which Charisios, although unaware of his paternity, is the father. For in the course of a drunken frolic he had met and done violence to his future wife one dark night in the streets of Athens. Neither of them had seen the other's face, but in the struggle Pamphila had possessed herself of and retained a ring belonging to Charisios. On discovering what he supposes to be her ante-nuptial frailty, the young man separates from his wife and returns to his former associates. One of these, a slave-woman named Habrotonon, with whom he had once cohabited, gets hold of the ring and uses it to persuade Charisios that she has become the mother of a child by him. Her story reaches the ear of Pamphila's father, who, as some modern readers will be surprised to learn, is so scandalised by this evidence of his son-in-law's youthful misconduct as to propose that Pamphila, of whose misfortune he is ignorant, should immediately demand a separation. This, however, the young wife refuses to do, declaring that it is her wish to stand by her husband in good and evil fortune alike. Charisios accidentally overhears the conversation, and is so conscience-stricken by the contrast between his own resentment and the generous fidelity of his wife as in his

> turn to forgive her supposed lapse from virtue, even before everything is happily cleared up by a disclosure of the real facts of the case.

Professor De Sanctis places his countrymen at the head of the whole Aryan race for the perfect balance of their mental qualities, among which, of course, moral feeling holds a leading position. Now, the Latin comic poet Terence wrote for an Italian audience, and, although Julius Cæsar called him a half Menander, we do not find in his plays, charming as they are, the faintest trace of the moral delicacy which is now shown to have been a distinctive trait of his Greek prototype.

The instance quoted does not stand alone. In another comedy, of which considerable fragments have recently been discovered, Menander introduces a girl, supposed to be of foreign birth, who as a consequence of her inferior social position has been living in concubinage with a soldier, and, having innocently provoked his jealousy, experiences very rough treatment from him. Being subsequently recognised as of Athenian parentage, her first impulse is to exclaim, "Then I shall be reconciled"; on which her father observes:

I love that word "be reconciled,"
Proving in thee the right Hellenic strain—

in which, as would seem, the forgiveness of injuries was a leading trait.

Depreciation of Hellenism has been associated, in such writers as Matthew Arnold and Ernest Renan, with an exaggerated and distorted estimate of Hebraism, of the values represented by Israel as a factor in universal history. My essay on "The Alleged Socialism of the Prophets" has for its object to point out the very serious misstatements of Renan on this subject. It is not offered as a revaluation of my own, but as a criticism on a revaluation which, in my opinion, is much more remote from truth than the generally accepted view. And I have tried to show in another essay, largely based on the researches of German scholarship, that Socialism is not a Hebrew but a Greek idea, subsequently imported from Greek philosophy into the teaching of the early Church—not, as Renan thinks, taken up by the Gospel from the prophetic tradition.

My essay on "Pascal's Wager" goes to prove that the great Jansenist's celebrated defence of Christianity is, as logic, utterly worthless; and that, as morality, it credits God with proceedings for which the most audacious Jesuitical casuistry would blush to apologise.

When the essay on Buckle first appeared, now more than a quarter of a century ago, I was privately censured by an eminent living critic for wasting my time in exposing the fallacies of a philosopher whose memory only survived "in half-educated German circles." The revival of Buckle's fame and the diffusion of his wonderful work in cheap editions during the last ten years will, I hope, be found a sufficient apology for reprinting what, I believe, is still the only complete explanation of his system ever offered to the public. I may mention also that, as the literary executors of Lord Acton have recently thought fit to republish two most bitter and pedantic articles of his on Buckle, there ought to be room in contemporary literature for a somewhat more appreciative estimate of one who, if he did not equal the Roman Catholic historian in some branches of erudition, far surpassed him in speculative genius.

A generation has passed since the word "Agnosticism," originally created by Huxley, was first put into general currency by Leslie Stephen. But the full meaning of the term, instead of being elucidated by constant use, has become ever more obscured. I cannot hope to correct the evil; but I shall at least have the satisfaction of putting on record in a somewhat more permanent form my protest against the misuse of what, whether it stands for truth or for error, serves at any rate to mark off in contradistinction from older forms of rationalism an interesting and, it may be, a permanent phase of speculation.

A. W. B.

July, 1909.

CORRECTIONS

P. 47: "Nicias consummated the ruin of the Sicilian expedition by postponing his retreat a whole month in consequence of an eclipse of the moon." In point of fact, Nicias was compelled to begin his retreat a few days after the eclipse; but his wish and intention was to put it off for a month, and the delay of a few days proved equally fatal.

P. 86: "Some such measure......as the Licinian Rogations." It is now the opinion of the most authoritative Roman historians that the Licinian Rogations included no agrarian provisions.

P. 111, *note*: For "Emmanuel" read "Emanuel." The passage referred to occurs on p. 36 of Deutsch's *Literary Remains.*

REVALUATIONS

THE ETHICAL VALUE OF HELLENISM

If we are to judge by certain estimates current in the popular literature of the present day, the ethical value of Hellenism is either zero or a minus quantity. The ancient Greeks were Pagans in the sense that they were neither Jews nor Christians; and the word "Paganism" is commonly used to connote the complete absence of moral restraints, more especially of those which are imposed on the sexual relations. An epigrammatic novelist describes a group of young people, among whom marriage seems to have been replaced by connections of a more transitory character, as living in a world of Christian names and Pagan morals. Mr. Shorthouse, speaking through the mouthpiece of John Inglesant, refers to "the old world of pleasure and art—a world that took the pleasures of life boldly, and had no conscience to prevent its cultivating and enjoying them to the full." Apparently John Inglesant had not read the Epistle to the Romans. Another writer of fiction, Mr. Benjamin Kidd, seems to think that altruism was unknown before the Christian era. Mr. W. D. Howells implies in one of his novels that monogamy only dates from the same period.

And a far higher authority, Matthew Arnold, has made the antithesis between Hellenism and Hebraism common form in literature—Hellenism standing for science and art, Hebraism for conduct; that is to say, for three-fourths of life.

Before inquiring into the justice of this summary and wholesale condemnation, I would call attention to the singular circumstance that a directly opposite estimate of Pagan virtue prevailed all through the Middle Ages. It might have been supposed that during the centuries when Catholicism reigned without a rival over the Western conscience, and when the traditions of the *régime* which it had displaced were fresher than among ourselves, observers, especially ecclesiastical observers, would have been still more deeply impressed by the moral regeneration assumed to have been wrought by the Church. Such, however, is not the case. Among mediæval authorities there seems to be but one opinion as regards the moral superiority of classical antiquity over their own contemporaries. "The Gentiles," says Abélard, "who had no scriptural law and heard no sermons, put us to shame by the example of their virtue, by the excellence of their precepts, and by the consistency of their lives with their teachings. Their philosophers boldly rebuked wickedness and suffered for truth's sake. Nor was it their philosophers only who shone so brightly in comparison with us. There is abundant evidence going to prove that the same virtues were practised by the worldly and the unlearned, and by women as well as by men."[1] It may be urged, and, indeed, it has been urged, that Abélard was a freethinking rationalist who sought to undermine Christianity. A much-scandalised apologist refers us to John of Salisbury for a very different view of the matter.[1] We turn to the pages of that excellent prelate, and find, to our surprise, that he confirms rather than contradicts his master's statements. Examples of every virtue are to be found among the characters of antiquity. The perfect model of what a sovereign ought to be is furnished by no Christian prince, but by the heathen Trajan. The Socratic teaching is a well of morals undefiled. If people find the Christian religion too severe, let them go to the Greek philosophers for lessons in chastity. And, indeed, if John is to be believed, they were in sore need of such lessons, for nothing so bad has been written about imperial Rome as his descriptions of court society in the Europe of the twelfth century. Doubtless the anarchy that prevailed under Stephen is largely responsible for the corruption laid bare in the *Polycraticus*.[2] But no such extenuating circumstances can be pleaded for the ages of faith and chivalry when, a century later, we find Roger Bacon repeating in more definite and explicit terms Abélard's exaltation of Pagan over Christian morals. If, says the great Franciscan, we cannot emulate, or even understand, the wisdom of the ancient philosophers, it is because we do not possess their virtue. Wisdom is inconsistent with sin, and demands perfect virtue in its professors. And of all sins the most fatal to learning is unchastity, from which none but a very few, and those by special grace, are exempt in their youth. Nor is this a mere general statement. He proceeds to relate how a number of professors and students of theology had the year before been expelled from Paris for the practice of unnatural vices. Such was the state of morals shortly before the death of St. Louis, at the very climax and flowering-time of mediæval Catholicism.[1]

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[1] *Opera,* ed. Cousin, II., p. 409.

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[1] Reuter, *Religiöse Aufklärung*, I., p. 317.

[2] *Polycraticus*, Lib. III., cap. 13.

I am not aware that any such clear and emphatic testimony to the superiority of Pagan morals is given by Dante, but it is at least suggestive of the same leaning that he should ascribe what little good Florence possessed to the descent of some few of her citizens from the ancient Romans. And we know from a brilliant chapter in the *Convitto* how highly he rated the virtues of the Romans, referring them even to divine inspiration. Whether he had an equally high opinion of the Greeks cannot be positively affirmed, but there is a significant passage in the *Inferno* pointing in that direction. The motive to which Ulysses appeals when urging his companions to sail beyond the Pillars of Hercules is the remembrance that they were not born to live like brutes, but to pursue virtue and knowledge. And to this appeal the Greek sailors, according to Dante, readily respond.[2]

It may be objected that Dante was a poet and a scholar, more in sympathy with the old than with the new spirit; Roger Bacon a man of science sheltering himself under the Franciscan habit—

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[1] *Compendium Theologiæ*, ed. Brewer, pp. 398 *seq.*

[2] *Inferno,* Canto xxvi., 118 *seq.*

both, perhaps, Christians only under compulsion. There is, however, one more authority, to which no such exception can be taken—the authority either of Aquinas or of one whose speculations were permitted to pass under his name. This writer, while confessing a preference for the republican form of government, admits that it is "only fitted for men living in the primitive state of sinlessness, or so wise and virtuous as the ancient Romans were"[1]—clearly not for a society so corrupt as the crusading chivalry of France.

To what cause shall we ascribe this extraordinary revolution in Christian opinion as to the moral value of classic civilisation? A sufficiently easy solution suggests itself at once. The mediæval scholars romanced about Pagan virtue because they did not know what Paganism was. The Greeks and Romans were to them what the Chinese were to the philosophers of the eighteenth century; and they used them just like those philosophers, as a stick to beat their contemporaries with. The far more complete knowledge of Pagan life and literature that we owe to the Renaissance and to modern research has led to very different conclusions, and it is on these that the estimates quoted at the beginning of this essay are based.

But the suggested explanation seems insufficient. If the schoolmen knew less than we know of Pagan literature, the fact remains that for all practical purposes they knew enough. If they had not read Aristophanes and Plato, they had read Aristotle's *Politics*, Terence, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, Suetonius;

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[1] Aquinas (?), *De Regimine Principum,* II., 9.

above all, they had read the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; nor does there seem the smallest reason to believe that a wider and deeper study of the Greek authors would have altered their estimate of the Greeks, except, perhaps, to raise it still higher, by making them more familiar with the whole range of Greek virtue. The truth is that their reading of classical antiquity was not biassed as ours is by an apologetic interest. They accepted Christianity because it was true, not because it strengthened the hands of the social reformer, the magistrate, and the policeman. Hence, there was no particular motive for exaggerating its services in that direction. Religion, no doubt, was useful, but its utility consisted not so much in making people better members of society as in saving them from eternal damnation. Baptism gave a chance, absolution *in articulo mortis* gave a certainty of escaping from that dreadful fate; and the possession of so precious a privilege was the great advantage that the Christian possessed over the Pagan. Otherwise, as we have seen, he had nothing to boast of—rather the contrary. Whatever vices the Church condemned had been condemned by Greek philosophy. Whatever vices had been practised among Pagans were repeated with aggravating circumstances in the most famous seats of Christian learning; and those whose experience had familiarised them with the cesspools of Paris and Bologna listened with more blunted sensibility to the unsavoury records of Thebes and Athens.

It might, indeed, be imagined that the appalling penalties inflicted on such offences in this world, and imagined for them in the next, bore witness to an entirely new sense of their flagitiousness in the mediæval conscience. But no mistake would be greater than to use the criminal jurisprudence of the Middle Ages as a gauge of their moral susceptibility. Difficulty of detection for one thing, and the supposed slight cast on the honour of an earthly or heavenly sovereign for another, counted for incomparably more in the assessment of punishment than the actual wickedness of an offence as measured by the animosity that it excited in the public opinion of the times. Now, of that public opinion no austerer representative can be quoted than Dante; and what Dante really thought about the vice that is always brought up as the special opprobrium of Greece is sufficiently indicated by his extreme cordiality towards the lost soul of Brunetto Latini,[1] and by the fact that he subjects all sins of unchastity to an equal intensity of torment in the cleansing fires of purgatory.[2] Evidently the great Catholic poet was no more of a rigorist than the Platonic Socrates whose half-tolerant attitude so much shocked Professor Huxley.

We must, then, look elsewhere than to a mere increase of knowledge for an adequate explanation of that great revolution in the historical conscience which has led many of our contemporaries to reverse the mediæval view so completely that in the popular imagination Paganism, or, more precisely, the Græco-Roman spirit, has become identified with impurity, while Christianity has come to be regarded even more as the chief instrument of moral reform than as the God-given means of salvation.

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[1] *Inferno*, Canto xv., 30 *sqq.*

[2] *Purgatorio*, Canto xxvii.

So far as I know, the change began with Luther. If in one way the Reformation was the last fruit of the Renaissance, in another way it was a reaction against the Renaissance. In returning to the standpoint of primitive Christianity Luther and his successors could not fail to become imbued with the hostility felt by the first Christians, and above all by St. Paul, towards the Pagan world; and all the more so as the worst vices of Paganism were being resuscitated under their eyes in papal Rome. Moreover, the dogmas that Luther attacked had been bound up in a peculiar way with the philosophy of Aristotle, and, therefore, the Aristotelian ethics became a special object of his animosity. The doctrine of moral habits seemed radically inconsistent with the doctrine of instantaneous regeneration. Men do not become just by performing just actions; they perform just actions because they have been made just. Speaking generally, Rome had apostasised from the purity of the gospel by incorporating with it much that was Pagan in doctrine and ritual; therefore with Paganism in all its forms war must be waged.

Rome naturally enough refused to accept this account of her parentage; but it made her all the more anxious to disclaim so compromising a connection. Hence both great divisions of western Christendom have united in vilifying the civilisation to which mediæval scholars looked back with fond regret as an unattainable standard of excellence. And before long their joint hostility was still further aggravated by a new provocation. Undeterred by the double tide of reaction, the Renaissance continued to pursue its victorious career. Taking up human progress at the point where it had been let fall by Greek culture, the modern mind set itself to replace feudal Catholicism by a new art and a new science, a new morality and a new State. Concurrently with this great enterprise it carried on an unceasing criticism on the existing *régime*, its institutions and its beliefs. Both processes, the constructive and destructive, were powerfully aided by principles and examples derived from classical antiquity. All these efforts culminated in the French Revolution, whose leaders avowedly looked for their models to Greece and Rome. And as the Hellenic spirit had shared in their momentary triumph, so also it shared in the ruin and disgrace that speedily overtook their cause. For the first time since they came into existence the products of the Greek genius were systematically neglected and defamed by educated men; recourse being had to mediæval art, literature, and politics for new ideals to put in their place. The Romanticists consciously ranged themselves behind the forces of reaction in Church and State; and it was not without reason that Byron, the glorious standard-bearer of European progress, directed against them his fiercest attacks. So, too, the cause of Greek independence for which Byron gave his life became the battle-cry of resurgent Liberalism, and perhaps helped to win back Canning, the future Liberal leader, to the Liberal principles that had been his first love. Conversely, the Holy Alliance thwarted Greek aspirations to the utmost of its ability; and its literary agents carried the war into historical literature. Writing in 1834, J. S. Mill observes that "the most elaborate Grecian history which we possess [Mitford's] is impregnated with the anti-Jacobin spirit in every line; and the *Quarterly Review* laboured as diligently for many years to vilify the Athenian republic as the American."[1] Even greater bitterness was displayed by reactionary theologians. The Abbé Gaume in France and Dr. W. G. Ward in England joined in making the grotesque proposal that the Greek and Latin classics should no longer be taught in school, their place being supplied by patristic literature.[2]

The leaders of the reactionary movement against the French Revolution and the philosophy of the eighteenth century were, in truth, anything but Conservatives. They caught the spirit of innovation from their opponents, and even sympathised to a certain extent with their aims. Agreeing with them that the world needed to be reformed, and agreeing also that its reformation should be effected by social reconstruction, by education, by popular literature, by journalism—in short, by all the machinery that the schools of enlightenment had set in motion, they differed from them chiefly in holding that all these instruments should be animated by religious ideas, used for religious purposes, and wielded by the ministers of religion or by laymen to whom their confidence had been given. This is not the place to expatiate on that vast movement, nor, indeed, has the time come for its history to be written. The important thing for us to observe is that it led to a new interpretation of Christianity, of the Church, and of the Bible. In rivalry with the ideals bequeathed or inspired by Hellenism, these also were represented as embodying a scheme of social reform, an ideal polity, a new reading of life. Thus it came about that Pagan and Christian morals, ancient and mediæval civilisation, were ranged in an unreal opposition and unhistorically contrasted as darkness and light. And so strong was the prejudice generated by the unscrupulous assertions of the reactionary party, so skilful were the rearrangements by which facts were disguised or set in a false light, that a generation taught to discard supernaturalist metaphysics has continued to accept a supernaturalist version of history, according to which the highest elements of human nature, intelligence and conscience, may exist and be developed in complete isolation from one another.

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[1] *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. i., p. 113.

[2] *W. G. Ward and the Catholic Revival*, pp. 114, 118, 194, and 454.

So much has seemed necessary by way of preamble in order to clear the ground for a candid consideration of the thesis I am prepared to support, which is no less than this—that the ethical value of Hellenism fully equals its intellectual and artistic value; that the Greeks were as great in what belongs to the conduct of life as they confessedly were in the creation of beauty or in the search for truth. They were, what Huxley called them, the real Chosen People, and that in a more absolute sense than he would have dared to maintain.

To avoid all possible misconstructions, I wish to state at the outset that I accept the current English and American estimate of morality. I have no desire to be classed with the neo-Pagans—if the persons calling themselves by that name still exist as a class; I detest their theories, and I believe that in most ancient Greek communities they would have been summarily lynched had they tried to put those theories into practice.

It must be further understood that when I speak of Hellenism and of the Greeks I speak of what was highest and best in the race and in its bequest to posterity. This amounts to no more than is assumed in estimating the claims on our gratitude of any other extinct race or civilisation, or of any religion whether extinct or not. We really know little more than this, nor does it concern us to know more. The good lives on, the evil dies. The point needs emphasising because it has been particularly neglected in discussing the subject on which we are engaged. Instead of comparing Greek practice with the practice of other communities, Greek ideals with other ideals, we ignore the ideals and compare the practice with our own highest theoretical standards. I do not propose that the question of practice should be left out of account; on the contrary, I wish that it should figure largely in the estimate. An ideal to deserve the name must sooner or later, and sooner rather than later, influence conduct; failing that, it becomes worse than nothing, mere lying cant and hypocrisy. At the same time, in default of other evidence, it ought to count for something that a particular ideal should have been entertained in a particular society; it must, we may argue, have been suggested to our authority—poet, orator, or the like—by some happy experience of his own or by the tradition of a better age. And this is more especially true when we are dealing with a frank and sincere people, as the Greek, or at least the Ionian race, will presently appear to have been.

Another point also should be borne in mind. In placing the ethical value of Hellenism on a level with its intellectual and æsthetic value I am claiming for it no chimerical perfection. The art of Hellas was not perfect, nor was its philosophy; still less its science. In all three the Greeks have been surpassed by the successors who, profiting by their lessons and their example, have taken up their tradition and carried it to a higher pitch of excellence. And what is more to the point, other races, working simultaneously with them, or at a later period in complete independence of their influence, have in some ways shown a more delicate æsthetic perception, a truer sense of objective reality, a more penetrating reach of reflection, a more successful ingenuity in devising methods of calculation. So also with morals. The virtue of chastity may have been better taught and more generally practised among the Jews, self-devotion among the Romans, personal loyalty among the Germans, sympathy with all living things on the banks of the Ganges. But just as no alien philosophy and no alien art, taken altogether, could compete with the philosophy and the art of Hellas, so neither was the moral life of any other people so rich, so well balanced, so identified with its inmost nature, yet so capable of a world-wide diffusion or of expansion and adaptation to altered circumstances in after ages.

That the Greeks were so great in art and science furnishes a certain presumption that they attained, to say the least of it, some eminence in morality. To part off the æsthetic life and the intellectual life from the life of conduct, as Matthew Arnold does, is a mere conventional abstraction. It would be little to say that there is no hard-and-fast line of demarcation; there is, in fact, no line at all. Conduct is co-extensive with activity, and falls under different laws of obligation as its subject-matter varies; but it never escapes from obligation altogether. As regards fine art, this truth is now widely recognised, and finds expression in such common terms as "good work," "conscience," and "sincerity" in connection with the production and the criticism of æsthetic objects. And as regards scientific investigation it is almost too obvious to need emphasising. Of course the artist and, although more rarely, the philosopher may be faithful to the duties of his special calling and faithless to the ordinary duties of a citizen, like Benvenuto Cellini or Francis Bacon. But the same possibility of a high moral development in one direction, combined with grave deficiencies in another, runs through the whole circle of human activity. There seems to be no solidarity among the virtues. Sovereigns exemplary in their domestic relations, and ready to undergo martyrdom for their religion, have been false to their word like Charles I., or false to their country like Louis XVI. And conversely the highest public loyalty may co-exist with gross private vices as in the case of William

III. A keen sense of beauty may have its temptations in the direction of sexual immorality; and the impersonation of Aprodite Anadyomene by Phryne, so picturesquely described by Matthew Arnold, may indicate a weak point of this kind in Hellenism. But Puritanism, too, has its temptations in the direction, among others, of savage cruelty towards women, abundantly illustrated in the history of our own civil wars.

Intellectualism, likewise, may have its moral dangers, among which want of common honesty will probably occur to most readers as the chief. But as this deficiency seems also to accompany every degree of stupidity and ignorance, the connection after all is very possibly accidental. However this may be, love of knowledge, as represented by the Greeks, has one great and characteristic virtue—the love of truth. The claim will excite some surprise. From Cyrus to Hobart Pasha the enemies of that people have habitually spoken of them as liars. I cannot say that my own small experience of the modern Greeks has given me that impression. On the contrary, they struck me rather as a frank and straightforward race, very inaccurate certainly, but without any intention to deceive. Our business, however, is not now with the average Greek, ancient or modern, but with the *élite* of the Pagan period; and of these it may be said, I think, that they have set an example of truthfulness unequalled except by those moderns who have been trained in their school. "Hateful to me as the gates of Hades is he who hides one thing in his breast and tells another," says the Homeric Achilles; and Plato, with a still more exacting standard of veracity, censures Achilles for uttering threats that he does not mean to execute.[1] Sophocles, in what is, ethically at least, the noblest of all his tragedies, makes Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles and the guardian of his tradition, quite incapable of carrying out the scheme of deceit into which he has been reluctantly drawn. "Tell no lies" was a maxim of Solon. Thucydides, himself a historian of admirable sincerity, seems to cast a slight shade of censure on the heroic Brasidas for making a statement that was untrue, although useful from the diplomatic point of view.[2] Epaminondas was famous for his strict adherence to truth; and Marcus Aurelius, known as Verissimus, ascribes his hatred of falsehood to the teaching of a Stoic tutor.[3]

A Roman satirist has charged the Greek historians with mendacity on a point where their accuracy has been signally confirmed by modern research.[4] He might with more justice have extended the accusation to his own countrymen. Early Roman history has been in many instances deliberately falsified by national or family vanity; nor are the later portions altogether trustworthy. We are told of Dr. Arnold that "the falsity and corruption of the Latin historians was for ever suggesting to him the contrast of their Grecian rivals." And if Arnold had directed his studies more systematically to what is called "Sacred History," the same contrast might have suggested itself in a more unpleasant form. If we are to credit the Higher Criticism—which is the only honest criticism—whole masses of ancient Hebrew literature are deliberate forgeries, in the sense in which we speak of the forged Decretals of Isidore; and the incidents related in them are to a great extent fictitious. Theologians tell us that the fabrication of documents purporting to contain a divine revelation did not at that period and among Orientals imply the same guilt that a like proceeding argued in the Middle Ages and would argue now. If so, it seems rather audacious to refer us to such a quarter for elementary moral instruction. However that may be, we have to congratulate ourselves on the fact that in Attica, at any rate, public opinion had early risen to a stage at which truth and falsehood were more accurately discriminated. Herodotus has preserved an anecdote that well illustrates the contrast offered by Hellenism and Hebraism in this respect. During the sixth century B.C. a great religious revival, now known as Orphicism, sprang up in the Greek world and had Attica for its principal seat. One of the leaders of the movement, a certain Onomacritus, stood high in the favour of the Peisistratid Hipparchus, and seems to have been employed by him in editing the prophecies of Musaeus, a somewhat mythical authority of the school. Having, however, been detected in the act of interpolating a prediction of his own in the collection, the unlucky forger was summarily expelled from the country by his indignant patron, one of whose maxims, engraved where every passer-by could read it, was, "Do not deceive thy friend."[1]

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[1] *Hippias Minor*, 370 A.

[2] iv., 108.

[3] *Meditations*, i., 15.

[4] Juvenal, x., 174.

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[1] Herodotus, vii., 6.

Hipparchus was not, in other respects, a model of virtue, but it is fortunate that in this matter of pious forgeries we have been brought up on his principles rather than on Hilkiah's. But our excellent training has its occasional inconveniences. It makes some honourable persons too reluctant to admit that forgery and fabrication on a great scale were actually practised by holy men among the Jews. Moving in a world of Hellenic sincerity, and not without the simplicity that a wise Hellene has called the principal element in a noble nature, they have failed to realise the possibilities of Hebraic duplicity. A typical example of this uncompromising attitude is furnished by the manner in which that great and high-minded theologian, F. D. Maurice, was impressed by the speculations of Colenso. "I asked him," writes Maurice, "if he did not think Samuel must have been a horrid scoundrel if he forged a story about the I AM, speaking of Moses, and, to my unspeakable surprise and terror, he said 'No. Many good men have done such things. He might not mean more than Milton meant.'"[1] Most educated theologians have come to agree with Colenso, except that they would place the composition of the Elohistic narrative considerably later than the time of Samuel. But their whole tone as regards the limits of truthfulness in religious teaching is such as to inspire plain men with something of the "surprise and terror" felt by Maurice.

It may be objected that Plato, a typical Greek and the greatest of Greek moralists, took similar liberties with the truth, to the extent even of leaving it doubtful whether he really believed in any God or in any future life. The fact is so; and his warmest admirers must always regret that it should be so. Such prevarications show the mischief that comes of trying to combine mythology with philosophy. But, at any rate, Plato knew what he was doing. Unlike our modern theologians, he avoided what he called the "lie in the soul," not deceiving himself, however much he may have wished to deceive the people. Even here we can see how admirably well Ruskin has said of the Greeks, "they have not lifted up their souls unto vanity."

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[1] *Life of F. D. Maurice,* II., p. 423.

From the consideration of veracity as practised in Greece we pass to that part of conduct which is more directly concerned with the mutual relations of human beings, to the great interests of justice and beneficence.

It is a familiar fact that the people of whom we are speaking divided all mankind into Greeks and barbarians. By the latter they originally meant only those whose language they could not understand. But in time barbarian came to mean much more than this. With the Greeks, as with ourselves, it stood for the opposite of civilised. But the civilisation with which they identified Hellenism was no mere material good. The barbarians might have better roads, more accumulated capital, a more highly developed industrial system, larger and even better disciplined armies than theirs. In the eyes of a Greek these things were desirable, but they were not the one thing needful. That one thing without which there could be no real civilisation was the reign of law in opposition to the rule of a despot on the one hand, and on the other to that anarchical state of society where wrongs are redressed, or rather perpetuated, by private vengeance. It is a blessing, says the Jason of Euripides, to live in a country that is governed not by brute force, but by law.[1] And the same poet makes Tyndareus tell his son-in-law Menelaus, who has been excusing the matricide of Orestes, that he has become barbarised by living out of Greece so long. Otherwise he would see that the right course for Orestes was to bring his mother before a court of justice on the charge of murdering her husband. For when one homicide is requited by another the blood-feud goes on for ever, to the total destruction of orderly and peaceful relations.[2] Let those who expatiate on the moral superiority of Hebraism to Hellenism remember that this barbarous principle of blood-vengeance is sanctioned by the Priestly Code promulgated by Ezra in the middle of the fifth century B.C., and that it was in full force at the very time when the noble verses of Euripides were being recited before the assembled people of Athens.

And this suggests another contrast. Thanks to the eloquence of Renan and the still more fervid declamations of James Darmesteter, himself a Jew, much attention was drawn ten years ago[3] to the passionate preaching of justice by the Hebrew prophets. It was well that this should be done, and done so well. It was well that devout readers of Scripture should be made to realise the fact that the prophets of Israel had something else to do than to mystify their hearers by discussing the affairs of modern Europe between two and three thousand years in advance. And it was well also to remind pious company-promoters and guinea-pigs that subscriptions to missionary societies would not have purchased absolution for wholesale robbery from Amos and Isaiah. All honour to the preachers who, whether at Samaria and Jerusalem or in London and Paris, identify religion with justice and mercy rather than with dogma and ritual! But let not our recognition of their services blind us to the still greater services of those who, unaided by supernatural promises or terrors, actually accomplished that for which the prophets vainly strove—the legislators, magistrates, and orators who established and carried on the righteous governments of Greece under which the poor working man could not be plundered with impunity as he was plundered in the Holy Land.

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[1] *Medea*, 536–38. [2] *Orestes*, 485 *sqq.* [3] Written in 1901.

Certain historical errors die hard, and one has just occurred to me against which it would be well to enter a caution. I can imagine some readers exclaiming, "There were no paid working men in Greece; the free Greek citizens were an oligarchy living in idleness on the produce of slave labour." Such, indeed, seems to have been at one time the prevalent belief, and it may still survive in certain circles. To assert that the Greek democracies were not democracies at all in our sense of the word, but aristocracies of a particularly oppressive kind, was part of the reactionary and anti-Hellenic propaganda carried on after the French Revolution, to which reference has been already made. The assertion is, however, untrue, and anyone may easily convince himself by consulting the Greek literature of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. that the bulk of the Athenian voters consisted of petty shopkeepers, peasants, and day labourers. Slaves no doubt there were, and a good many of them, although their number has been enormously exaggerated, as Professor Beloch shows in his brilliant work on the population of the ancient world.[1] But slavery existed everywhere in antiquity, in Judæa as well as in Greece. White slavery, indeed, lasted far down into the Middle Ages, with the partial approval of the Church, and was finally extinguished by purely economical causes; while black slavery, after being actively promoted by professing Christians, and attaining portentous dimensions without a protest from the Christian conscience, owed its final destruction to a movement set on foot by freethinking philosophers and then taken up by that most rationalistic of Christian sects, the Society of Friends. But the original impulse to abolitionism came, as will presently be shown, from Greek thought.

Returning to the contrast between the Greeks and other nations, it has to be observed that the barbarians, too, had their laws—a fact of which we cannot suppose Euripides to have been ignorant, as it was already familiar to Herodotus. The really important distinction was that, while the Greek laws gave a far more effectual protection against the arbitrary will of the rulers and against the passions of private individuals, they did not become, as with the Asiatics, an instrument of irremediable bondage. Where men's habits of thinking took their whole shape and colour from the traditions of despotism the law itself could not be conceived but as a despot armed with divine authority and raised above criticism or emendation. There may have been something of the same feeling in Greece also. But at a comparatively early period it was met and overcome by the idea of law as an expression of the collective will, and therefore as something that might be altered with the altered needs of the community, or with the increase of general enlightenment. Her teachers expressed this principle in various ways, one by declaring that man was the measure of all things, another by contending that the measure was rather supplied by nature, by the rules of conduct that experience showed to be observed at all times and in all places.

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[1] J. Beloch, *Die Bevölkerung der griechisch-römischen Welt*, pp. 84 *sqq.*

Either of these methods would serve to accomplish the step that first makes morality what it is, the transition from the letter to the spirit of legal obligation. We owe to Rome the word equity by which that essential element of law is ordinarily expressed; but the notion is purely Greek. It is that ἐπιείκεια—rather oddly translated "sweet reasonableness" by Matthew Arnold—which Aristotle has defined in a manner that leaves nothing to be desired. He tells us that the equitable man fulfils the intention of the legislator in cases for which the legislator, being tied to general terms, could not provide. In cases of disputed right he will not grasp all that the letter of the law gives him, but will take somewhat less than his strict right. And as the laws must be interpreted in the light of their original intention, so also the merit of the obedience paid to them, or the demerit of disobedience, must be measured by the agent's intention. Involuntary transgressions, according to Aristotle, are not deserving of punishment, but of pardon, and sometimes of pity. That anyone can justly be made to suffer punishment for a wrong committed through no fault of his would, from this point of view, have been absolutely unintelligible. So also would be the theory that crimes can be expiated by the sufferings of the innocent. And at the present day such beliefs are explicable only as survivals or recrudescences of Hebraic barbarism, quite impossible in a completely Hellenised society.

A spiritualised morality relieves the individual from all responsibility for actions not committed intentionally by him or through any negligence on his part. But within the sphere of individual life it extends responsibility from overt acts to thoughts and desires. A Spartan who consulted the Delphic oracle on the desirability of appropriating a deposit that he had sworn to return received for answer that his very question amounted to a crime, and would be punished as such.[1] When the poet Sophocles dwelt somewhat too rapturously on the charms of a beautiful stranger, Pericles reminded him that the eyes of a general should be as pure as his hands.[2] And, in what is believed to be a portrait of Aristeides, Aeschylus describes him as wishing not to seem but to be the best.[3]

[1] Herodotus, vi., p. 86.

[2] Plutarch, *Pericles*, chap. viii.

[3] *Seven against Thebes*, 588.

An intention or wish may be made the subject of human, or at least of divine, penalties, as we saw in the case of the fraudulent Spartan, and may be repressed solely through the fear of such. Therefore, to complete the spiritualisation of morality it must become wholly disinterested, or dependent on none but internal sanctions. Greek philosophy rose to this height. It pronounced the distinguishing mark of a sage to be that he would act as before if the laws ceased to exist. And Plato pushed the principle to an extreme when he maintained that, even if the just man should live in obloquy and die in torment, he would have chosen wisely in preferring righteousness to prosperous iniquity.[1]

The sanction of disinterested virtue lies in the pain given by a wounded conscience to those who violate its dictates. Both the notion and the name of conscience are Greek creations, and first received wide currency from the Stoic philosophy, whence they passed to St. Paul and became so thoroughly incorporated with Christian theology that, in the opinion of many, the existence of such an inward monitor was unknown to Paganism. But we find it distinctly recognised by Isocrates[2] a century before Zeno taught at Athens; nor can we suppose that a popular rhetorician was the first to formulate so profound a thought. Indeed, the thing itself goes back to Homer, in the character of whose Helen it is a distinguishing trait. Alike in the supreme triumph of her beauty on the walls of Troy and in the dignity of her rehabilitated matronhood at

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[1] *Republic*, p. 361.

[2] *Demonicus*, i., p. 16.

Sparta, the sense of forfeited female honour is ever present to her thoughts, and that without the least admixture of supernatural terror—for the goddess Aphrodite is offended by her scruples—or of shrinking from public opinion, for no voice is raised against her but her own.

"In justice," says Phocylides, "is summed up the whole of virtue." "Justice," says an unknown Greek author, "is more beautiful than the morning or evening star." But what, after all, did they mean by it? Aristotle, who quotes these lyrical expressions, gives no very helpful definition; nor does Plato, although his *Republic* was written to develop the idea of justice. Here, again, we may profitably consult Isocrates. That excellent teacher tells us not to do to others what would make us angry if it were done to us[1]—the first and far the more important part of the golden rule. The principle is not enunciated as if it were particularly new; but Isocrates applies it elsewhere in a way that was new to his contemporaries, that had not occurred to anyone outside Greece, and that even now is not universally recognised. He tells husbands that they have no right to exact from their wives what they do not give, and that the fidelity which they demand is equally obligatory on themselves.[2] Monogamy had been a law with the Greeks so far back as we can trace their history, and they regarded polygamy with abhorrence as a custom of the Barbarians[3]—a fact which those should remember who set the Hebrews, a polygamous people, on a higher moral plane. And we see by this passage in Isocrates that some, at least, among the Greeks were prepared to draw the logical consequences of monogamy. Nor was the principle here enunciated ever quite forgotten. Plato also in his last period enjoins the same constancy on husbands, though rather on grounds of social utility than of justice;[1] and although the first Stoics, like some moderns, advocated free love for both sexes alike, Epictetus, writing four centuries later, returns to the same standard of conjugal fidelity, with the recommendation, which is also Platonic, of antenuptial chastity for men as well as for women.[2]

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[1] *Nicocles*, p. 61.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 40.

[3] Euripides, *Andromache*, 177, 243, 464.

According to the Greeks, the obligations of equality and reciprocity rested on natural law. The invariable return of physical phenomena at equal intervals of time, the co-existence and mutual limitation of the everlasting elements that make up the universe, were so many object-lessons in justice, so many silent protests against the abuse of superior strength or the violation of sworn pledges among men. And unmeasured indulgence in sensual gratifications was similarly interpreted as a derogation from the rationality by which nature had expressly distinguished men from brutes. Thus the maxim, Follow nature, came to be accepted as the great constitutive principle of morals. And it was not merely used as a general sanction for the accepted code of conduct, but still more as a potent engine of reform, as a protest against inveterate abuses, or as an index to new ideals of perfection. We have not now to discuss the logical value of the physiocratic method. It may be used at all times, and it was more than once used at Athens, as an apology for anti-social egoism on the part of individuals or of States. Civilisation itself has been condemned as a departure from nature ; and, conversely, nature might be denounced as the great enemy of civilisation, with the further deduction that no artificial refinement on our original pleasures should be tabooed merely on the ground that it is unnatural. But good causes are often supported by bad reasons ; and, whether logical or not, the Greek appeal to nature seems on the whole to have made for righteousness. Certain detestable vices were once for all stigmatised as unnatural, and a constant warfare kept up against them by the philosophers from Prodicus to Plotinus, until the attack was taken over by Christianity to be prosecuted with more drastic methods, although, if we are to believe Roger Bacon and Dante, for a long time with no greater success.

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[1] *Laws*, pp. 839-40.

[2] *Encheiridion*, xxxiii., p. 8.

Another application of the same principle led to the denunciation of slavery as contrary to nature. The cry was apparently first raised to justify the revolt of Messenian Helots against their Spartan masters, but it soon received a far wider application. Certain philosophers struck at the root of what was not then a "peculiar institution" by declaring that all men were born free. This assumption has been mercilessly criticised by Bentham, and more recently on the same lines by Huxley. As a question of logic, their triumph is complete ; but the crudeness of the naturalistic formula should not blind us to the truth that it contains. To enslave a human being is to treat him like a brute, or, in the still more degrading phrase of Aristotle, like a living tool; and no reasonable being will, in the long run, submit to such treatment, or regard it as anything but an outrage. Reasonings of a more elaborate and far-reaching character show that the exploitation of one class by another leads to the ruin of the whole community; but nothing so surely rouses the oppressed to revolt, or the brave and disinterested to the championship of their cause, as an appeal to this wounded sentiment; and it is part of our ethical debt to the Greeks that the appeal was first made by them.

To assert one's own rights, and to respect the rights of others, is much, but it is not all; and, human nature being what it is, a well-organised community cannot rest on the single virtue of justice. After law, and the spirit of law which is equity, we must bring in the third and completing element of morality, which is love. I am not sure what is the current estimate of the Greeks in this respect. Perhaps the same popular writers and preachers who deny them morality and conscience think of them also—*ad majorem Dei gloriam*—as a heartless and selfish people, wrapped up in a sense of their own superiority to the rest of the world. Mr. Stillman, who stood up for the modern Greeks, called their Pagan ancestors (or predecessors) a cruel and bloodthirsty *canaille*. Burckhardt, with more scholarship than Stillman, seems to have arrived at pretty much the same conclusion. In fact, they suffer from being so very modern. We judge them not by comparison with the Jews or the

Romans, or even with mediæval Christendom, but by our own ethical standards.

Here again the antithesis between Hellenes and barbarians may prove helpful. In English and other modern languages "barbarous," as we know, has the secondary meaning of inhuman and cruel. But this association has come down to us from the Latin, and was adopted by the Latins from the Greeks. In Greek literature the instances where "barbarous" is used in the sense of cruel are certainly late and few, but they are sufficient to show that cruelty was regarded as essentially alien to the Greek character. Nor was the belief unfounded. History and literature testify to its validity, to the relative humanity of the Greeks, and more especially of those among them in whom the Hellenic type most perfectly realised itself. Homer's Achilles was a merciful victor until the death of Patroclus almost extinguished pity in his breast, and even then it could be reawakened by the tears of Priam. Euripides tells us that to slay prisoners of war was against the laws of Athens.[1] The Spartan Gylippus pleaded, though in vain, for the lives of the captive Athenian generals at Syracuse; and another great Spartan, Callicratidas, declared that no Greek should be sold into slavery with his consent.[2] With the spread of philosophy this feeling received a wider extension. Agesilaus impressed on his troops the duty of treating their Persian prisoners with humanity.[3] Epameinondas refused to participate in a political assassination.[1] Dion, the pupil of Plato, declared that he had learned in the Academy not merely to be loyal to his friends, but to forgive injuries and to be gentle to transgressors;[2] and we know from Plato's *Laws* that this was really what the master taught. Philip and Alexander too, though ruling over a semi-barbarous people, and not without a deep taint of barbarism in their personal habits, showed in their hour of triumph a clemency hitherto unknown to the possessors of irresponsible power.

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[1] *Heracleidae,* 961–66.

[2] Grote, *History of Greece*, vi., pp. 179 and 387.

[3] *Op. cit.*, vii., p. 429.

These, it may be admitted, are no more than individual instances of a merciful disposition. But language may fairly be quoted in evidence of its wide diffusion. The very word humanity is of Greek origin, being a translation (through the Latin) of φιλανθρωπία, which conveys the same meaning with a somewhat warmer tone. And there is the more direct evidence of Plato, who tells us that one expects the inhabitants of a Greek city to be good and gentle. Gentleness and humanity, says Isocrates, are of all qualities the most highly esteemed among men; and the Athenians, at least, liked to be complimented on their possession. But the best proof of their prevalence is afforded by a passage where it is quite incidentally and unintentionally disclosed. In what is meant to be a very satirical picture of democratic society, obviously drawn from his own native city, Plato mentions that the last extreme of popular liberty is where "the slave is just as free as his purchaser." Even allowing for exaggeration, where so much as this could be said slaves must have been very kindly treated. And it is a fresh tribute to Athenian humanity when Plato adds that " horses and asses have a way of marching along [in the streets of a democratic city] with all the rights and dignities of freemen." He also mentions, what to many will sound the most surprising thing of all, that under an extreme democracy—*i.e.*, at Athens, there was complete equality between the sexes.[1]

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[1] *Op. cit.*, viii., p. 78.

[2] Plutarch, *Dion*, p. 979, A.

To appreciate fully the humanity of the Greeks we must compare them with the other leading nations of antiquity. Little need be said of the great Oriental monarchies. Of these Egypt seems to have been the least barbarous ; yet Egyptian sculptors loved to represent their most famous kings in the act of butchering a crowd of defenceless captives, and their labourers as fainting under the taskmaster's stick. The Phœnicians, with their crucifixions and human holocausts, may also be summarily dismissed. If the early annals of the Israelites as recorded in the Hexateuch were authentic, we could no more ascribe any feeling of humanity to such a sanguinary and fanatical horde than to the Huns or to Abdul Hamid. Happily, and to the no small satisfaction of enlightened modern Jews, the wholesale atrocities recounted with so much complacency by the priestly historian are demonstrably fictitious. But the fiction has a historical value. It shows what were the ideals of the Jewish nation in the fifth century B.C., and presumably of their descendants for many centuries afterwards ; and the impression thus created is deepened by the testimony of the equally fabulous book of Esther.

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[1] *Republic*, viii., p. 563 (Jowett's translation).

The only people of antiquity who can dispute the moral supremacy of Greece are the Romans. They had, no doubt, their good qualities; but of these humanity was not one. In reference to the political struggles of the early Roman republic, Macaulay has indeed credited them with a tenderness for the lives of their fellow-citizens unknown to Greek factions.[1] But Dr. Arnold has conclusively vindicated the Greeks from this aspersion. He points out that the bloodless struggles between the Patricians and the Plebeians are more properly paralleled by the equally bloodless contest of the "party of the coast" at Athens with the Eupatridæ; while the more sanguinary faction-fights of later Greek history answer to the proscriptions of Marius and Sulla, or of the Triumvirs.[2]

Apart from such episodical outbreaks of passion, we have indubitable proofs of the inhumanity of the Romans in the barbarous character of their punishments—especially their custom of flogging before executing, even in the case of prisoners of war—and still more of their amusements. It must indeed be admitted that through the contagion of Roman example the gladiatorial games spread at last over the whole Hellenic world. But Greek philosophy kept up a steady protest against this barbarity; and, when it was proposed to introduce the games into Athens, Demonicus the Cynic called on the people to begin by pulling down the altar of pity. According to the modern writer who has studied the civilisation of the Empire most profoundly, this amusement was never popular with any but the dregs of the people in Greece;[1] and it was finally abolished in the West through the heroic self-sacrifice of a Greek. Everyone has heard how the monk Telemachus made his way from the heart of the Eastern Empire to protest against the cruel exhibitions still kept up at Rome; how he descended into the arena of the Coliseum, threw himself between the combatants, perished by their swords, and produced such an effect by his death that public opinion insisted on the abolition of the gladiatorial games. But how few think of this pathetic story except as redounding to the glory of Christianity! Assuredly the death of Telemachus does honour to his religion. But it also does honour to his race and to that philosophical training which had been preparing it through long ages to accept with enthusiasm the new faith that was to give Greek philanthropy a mystical consecration and a world-wide diffusion.

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[1] In the Preface to his *Virginia.*

[2] Arnold's *Thucydides,* i., p. 519.

Before the advent of Christianity the diffusion, if not the consecration, had already begun. Renan, if I remember rightly, has said that the Greeks despised the Barbarians too much to embrace them in a single fraternity. But here, as elsewhere, the great French critic betrays the ineradicable prejudices of a seminarist. No ancient race was so generous to its neighbours or so beloved by them as the Greeks. Already in Homer the note of generous sympathy with a foeman is struck, and it never ceases to vibrate through the hearts of his successors. Cyrus and Anacharsis were Greek ideals; even Xerxes obtained a meed of admiration; and Rome owes much of her glory to the rapturous eulogies of Greek historians. It was seen that the superiority claimed — and justly claimed—over the Barbarians did not belong to the Hellenic race as such, for in earlier ages there had been no marked difference, and the primitive barbarism still survived in some Hellenic tribes, but was, as we should say, an evolution due to favourable circumstances. Hellenism, in fact, meant culture, and culture could be communicated to all who desired it. In the language of Hippias, the distinctions of birth are conventional; by nature all like-minded persons are kinsmen, friends, and fellow-citizens.[1] In the language of Isocrates, the partakers of Athenian culture should sooner be called Hellenes than those who were merely of the same race.[2] And in the same spirit a doctrine of human collectivism was subsequently preached by the Cynic and, with more elaboration, by the Stoic school. Finally, Eratosthenes, followed by Plutarch, proposed to abolish the distinction between Greeks and Barbarians, and to replace it by a classification based entirely on the contrast between virtue and vice.[3]

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[1] Friedlander, *Sittengeschichte Roms,* ii., p. 384, 5th ed.

Had more of the earlier Stoic literature been preserved, we should, doubtless, have more such generous sayings on record. As it is, the philosophic writers of the Empire—some of them

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[1] Plato, *Protagoras,* p. 337.

[2] *Panegyricus,* p. 51.

[3] Quoted by Strabo, I., 9.

Romans—must remain our principal authorities for the idea of a common humanity with its implicit obligations of mutual service and love. But even if Seneca and Marcus Aurelius did not directly copy from the older masters, the spirit of their teaching remains purely Hellenic, and is derived by an unbroken tradition from the schools of Athens.

Moral reform is the verification of ethics. If the lectures delivered at Athens exercised no regenerating influence on their hearers, then they were what the enemies of philosophy called them, mere chatter, sophistry, waste of time, at best an abstract expression for what had been felt and done in the uncorrupted prime of Hellas. And this is what we are still—or were until lately—taught to regard as the net result of speculative Paganism by theologians who fail to see that as good a case might be made out against Christianity if its enemies employed the same logic. But the facts are beginning to be more impartially studied and better understood. A brilliant historian, to whom I have already referred, Professor Beloch, points out how much more humanely war was conducted by Greek generals in the fourth century B.C. than in the fifth, and what better ideas as to the position of women were beginning to make their way in the society of the same period. And he has no hesitation in ascribing this improved tone to the new standards introduced by philosophy. Nor can it be truly said that this advance was paid for by a proportionate decline in the manlier virtues. Courage and patriotism continued to be displayed when circumstances called them forth. The defence of Athens against Demetrius, against Antigonus, and, much later, against Sulla, was not inferior to the deeds of the Persian and Peloponesian wars; and numerous examples of a like heroism are to be found in the later history of other Greek states.[1]

Still more striking is the evidence offered by the history of the third century A.D. Alone among the inhabitants of the Empire the Greeks of that period spontaneously took up arms against the Gothic invaders and largely contributed to their destruction. This successful resistance is significant in more than one way. It bears witness not only to a revival of the old heroism, but also to the existence of an abundant and vigorous population. It would seem, then, that there had been a cessation or decrease of those immoral practices which in the classic age of Greek civilisation made war on family life. The improvement has been ascribed to the spread of Christianity,[2] but there seem to be no grounds for such an assumption. It does not appear from independent evidence that the new religion had made the advances that would have been necessary to account for so great a change; nor were its doctrines favourable either to family life or to the military spirit. And, what seems decisive, the most vigorous resistance to the invaders was offered at Athens, the last city in the Empire to be converted to Christianity. But even were the contention true, it would detract little if at all from the ethical value of Hellenism. Christianity could only convert the Greeks into heroic patriots by acting on the latent possibilities of the Greek genius itself. It exercised no such magic in Gaul and Britain.

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[1] Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte,* II., p. 441.

[2] In Sir Richard Jebb's *Modern Greece.*

If, indeed, the question of obligation be once raised, we shall have to ask not so much what the Greeks owe to Christianity as what it owes to them. The answer has been already given by modern criticism. Catholicism in its original and only true sense is but the theological expression for universal Hellenic humanity. The much-decried Tübingen school has made good at least one point—that the Church was first converted from a Jewish sect into a world-wide society by the Hellenist St. Paul, who in his turn owed his conversion to the martyr-death of the Hellenist Stephen. And, quite apart from the question of admission to church-membership, the root-ideas of Pauline theology are only intelligible when interpreted in the light of Stoic metaphysics. In other words, where Christianity differs most widely from Judaism it approaches most nearly to Greek thought. And this applies not only to faith, but to morals. The antithesis between Hebraism and Hellenism still remains valid, though in a sense different from that assumed by Matthew Arnold. We do not exactly go for lessons in veracity or in justice, in gentleness or in breadth of sympathy, to the Jewish Scriptures; if we want them, we shall find them given with incomparable charm in the literature of the Ionian race. And so long as moral training shall be imparted through Christian agencies it is vitally necessary that those agencies should be kept in touch with the sources whence the early Church derived its most human inspiration. For present purposes, then, the ethical value of Hellenism may be defined as its influence in fixing attention on the purely moral side of the popular religion, and in preparing men's minds for the eventual reception of a morality independent of religious sanctions.

THE INFLUENCE OF PHILOSOPHY ON GREEK POLITICAL LIFE

FOR nearly a century the theories of ancient philosophy have been studied with an industry and a sagacity that leave nothing to be desired, and the results have been not incommensurate with the effort put forth. We know early Greek thought better than it was known to Plato and Aristotle ; we understand Plato and Aristotle themselves better than they were understood by their immediate disciples ; we can enter into the mind of the Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics better, perhaps, than Cicero, Plutarch, or Sextus could. More recently, also, attention has been drawn to the immense practical influence of philosophy on the life of the Roman Empire during the first two centuries of its existence, as revealed in literature, religion, and law. Not only in the declamations of its satirists, but also in the decorations of its tombs ; not only in the lives of its most virtuous, but also in the rescripts of its most vicious rulers ; not only in heathen polemics, but also in Christian apologetics and dogmatics, the same all-pervasive spirit may be traced. But what philosophy did for Greece, except to destroy religion and to undermine public life, is a question that has not been very deeply studied. In these matters most of us bow to the authority of Zeller, who is deservedly considered the greatest master of the subject. From him we have learned to look on Greek speculation as tending to detach itself more and more from the concrete realities of life, and particularly from political life, as tending more and more to seek refuge from the lawlessness and oppression of the outer world in the inviolable sanctuary of the self-possessed, self-enjoying spirit. This isolating movement, begun during the Peloponnesian war, is supposed to have been consummated after the destruction of Greek liberty by Macedon, and to have realised itself, under various forms, in the doctrines of the Porch, the Garden, and the later Academy. Except in the negative sense there can, it would seem, be no question of any social influence exercised by such a philosophy as this.

But the later ages of Greek history may have been less degraded and hopeless than we imagine. In estimating the relative importance of men and things, our judgment is apt to be swayed by the prepossessions of a classical education. To know what happened in the sixth, and still more what happened in the fifth, century B.C. is justly deemed essential to liberal culture. That period is filled with some of the greatest events in human history, and illustrated by some of the most splendid monuments of human genius; to make them more interesting, some of the events may be studied in the narratives of eye-witnesses, and we may inspect some of the monuments for ourselves. But after the close of the great struggle between Athens and Sparta our sources flow more scantily and their purity becomes more suspected. The great stream of lyric and dramatic poetry entirely dries up, architecture and sculpture become weaker in themselves and are less definitely related to contemporary life. Prose composition, indeed, attains the greatest excellence it has ever reached, but the very beauty of its masterpieces withdraws the attention of scholars from their historical setting by lifting them into a region of ideal and undated perfection. So, too, while the fourth century gives us some of the foremost characters of all time, they seem constructed on such a superhuman scale that we cannot think of them as being what Themistocles, Pericles, and Alcibiades had been, the leaders and representatives of their generation. The impression produced is that of a few colossal figures surrounded by mediocrities, and projected against a background of petty and sordid intrigue. So far from redeeming their age, they seem to make its baseness more evident, and the widespread conviction of its degeneracy more credible. Indeed, the conviction is one that originated with the philosophers and statesmen of the time. Those who hold that Greece succumbed to the Macedonian arms through her own inherent viciousness may quote Plato and Demosthenes in their support.

As we approach the third century matters become far worse. If, as the late Professor Freeman used to complain, many Greek scholars seem to think that all history ends with the sacrifice of Tissaphernes, the number of those must be few who pursue their studies beyond the Lamian war. Henceforth we are almost entirely without the guidance and stimulation of contemporary documents, and few modern historians have attempted the ungrateful task of piecing together a connected narrative out of the fragmentary materials that have survived. Grote breaks off his work in disgust at the beginning of the Hellenistic period. Thirlwall carries his down to the destruction of Corinth, but Thirlwall is out of print, and is supposed to be out of date. Freeman's *History of Federal Government in Greece,* though abounding in eloquent passages, is, as a whole, unreadable. Droysen's *Geschichte des Hellenismus* would, both for style and scholarship, do honour to the literature of any country; but it has not, I believe, been translated into English. Adolf Holm has recently gone over the same ground in the fourth volume of his *Griechische Geschichte,* an English translation of which has appeared. He throws fresh light on some important points, but his closely packed summaries will be consulted by a very limited class of readers. And the same remark applies to Professor Julius Beloch, whose recently published volumes (*Griechische Geschichte*, III. and IV.) represent the last word of scholarship on this period.[1]

This lamentable dearth of information is the more to be regretted because the Hellenistic period was a time, not of decay and death, but of overflowing and fruitful life. It saw the seeds of a higher civilisation scattered over a region extending from the Ganges to the Atlantic. Nor did the universal diffusion of Greek ideas mean, what the diffusion of French and English ideas too often has meant, the effacement of national differences, the world-wide triumph of a single not very elevated standard of opinion, feeling, taste, and manners. On the contrary, what was vital and original everywhere sprang up into rejuvenated activity under that electric stimulus. At the contact of Alexander's armies all India united herself under a single chief; and, as a consequence of that union, Buddhism was carried in triumph from the Himalayas to Ceylon. Persia recovered much of her ancient energy, and her religion first received a complete literary expression under her Philhellenic Parthian kings. Judæa, while clinging more passionately than ever to the Thora, felt her imagination swept by a new whirlwind of apocalyptic visions. A series of colossal temples rose along the banks of the Nile, reared by the munificence of the Ptolemies, as if to show that the land they ruled was Egypt for the Egyptians even more than Egypt for the Greeks. After the visit of a single Spartan general, Carthage enters on the most heroic period of her existence. Rome first develops her whole potentialities of greatness in the light of Hellenic thought.

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[1] In writing the above I was not aware that Professor Mahaffy's excellent work on *Greek Life and Thought from Alexander to the Roman Conquest* (2nd ed., 1896) supplied the English reader with an account, at once popular and erudite, of the period in question.

Our own civilisation is more in touch with the age of the Diadochi than with the age of Pericles. The form of our tragic drama, the form and substance of our comedy, the love-interest of our novel, are derived from Menander. Our poets owe more to Theocritus than to Pindar. Before the present century the most admired statues in our museums came, without exception, from the later schools of sculpture. Above all, our science has been but the resumption and continuation of methods then first organised. Euclid systematised the geometry of the straight line and the circle; Apollonius worked out the geometry of conics;

Hipparchus taught men how to construct terrestrial and celestial maps; Aristarchus of Samos discovered the heliocentric system of astronomy; Archimedes created rational mechanics.

While the artistic and intellectual powers of the Greek genius were being exercised with unabated vigour, her military and political ability had not become extinct. Setting aside mythological characters, one-third of Plutarch's Greek heroes belong to the period after Alexander; and there were others whose lives he did not write. It seems incredible that this could have been an age of moral degeneracy, or that philosophy, possessing such an organisation as it had never enjoyed before, should not have been interested in the systematic reconstitution of society, especially since the revolutionary character of the times offered boundless opportunities for experiment. My object is to show that such an influence was actually exercised, proceeding from the schools of Athens, above all from Stoicism, as its source and centre. But to make this intelligible it will be necessary to trace briefly the relations that had connected philosophy with life in the previous course of its evolution.

With the Greeks the liveliest curiosity about the world was ever accompanied by the desire to make that world a worthier habitation for man. Their first thinkers were noted above all for a purely speculative interest in the constitution and origin of nature. Yet Thales, the acknowledged founder of philosophy, was quite as famous in his day for practical wisdom as for reach and daring of thought. We are told that he advised the twelve Ionian cities to form a confederation for the purpose of resisting the aggressions of Crœsus—advice which, unhappily for themselves, they did not follow. If Heracleitus withdrew in disgust from public life, none the less did he recognise an identical law of existence and of conduct, a wisdom that is common to all things. "Those who speak with intelligence," he declares, "must hold fast to the common, as a city holds fast to its law, and even more strongly; for all human laws are fed by one thing—the divine."[1] How he thought of nature as governed by an essentially moral law is shown by the saying that, if the sun were to transgress his measures, the Erinyes—the avenging handmaidens of justice—would find him out. In the same manner his predecessor, Anaximander, had represented the transitoriness of all individual existence as a vindication of eternal justice. Nor did the more mystical form assumed by Greek thought in Italy and Sicily lead to quietism or to paralysis of the moral will. Empedocles headed the democratic party in Agrigentum; Zeno of Elea died in attempting to deliver his native city from a tyrant; Melissus of Samos, who also belonged to the Eleatic school, defeated the Athenians in a sea-fight. Great uncertainty prevails about the history and teaching of the original Pythagorean school; but thus much seems clear, that they combined an attempt to explain the universe by mathematical principles with an attempt to carry analogous principles into education and social discipline. Plato's scheme of social reform seems to have been largely suggested by their example.

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[1] Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 139.

In all these instances the leading inspiration was evidently ethical. The organisation of the Greek city-state gave men ideas of law and order which they read into the physical world, conceiving it to be animated by a spirit like their own. But, so far, nature taught them no lessons that might not equally be learned in the Agora and the Boulê. An independent action of philosophy on life suggests itself to us for the first time in the relations between Anaxagoras and Pericles. For one thing, the new knowledge tended to clear the mind of superstition—no trifling advantage, when we remember how Nicias consummated the ruin of the Sicilian expedition by postponing his retreat a whole month in consequence of an eclipse of the moon. It is quite certain that Pericles, who had learned the cause of eclipses from Anaxagoras, would not have let his movements be hampered by any such scruple. But, if Plutarch is to be trusted, the mind of the great statesman was strengthened in a higher and more positive sense by his intercourse with the Ionian sage. The august spectacle of a universe where Reason reigned supreme gave, we are told, a certain inflexible majesty to the character of the democratic leader, and raised him above all subservience to the gusts of popular opinion. Whether it be historically true of Pericles or not, the idea remains important and suggestive. It has often seemed to me that Positivism, with its Religion of Humanity, leaves the individual insufficiently protected against the tremendous pressure of the race. Adequately to resist that pressure we need the conception of an existence beside which humanity itself shrinks into insignificance, but which, so far from crushing or absorbing our own personality, fills and expands it to infinity. The enthusiasm of humanity finds its corrective and counterpoise in cosmic emotion.

Before Pericles was dead, a revolutionary idea, of which neither he nor Anaxagoras ever dreamed, had perhaps been already evolved from the Ionian philosophy. This was the idea of Nature, considered not merely as the indefeasible order of objective existence, but as the original and supreme standard of social equity, the ultimate court of appeal against whatever seemed arbitrary or oppressive in positive law, custom, tradition, and temporary fashion. Each speculative thinker had sought, with undoubting confidence that it was there and could be found, for a primordial reality at the root of things, calling it water, air, fire, the Infinite, and so forth, but meaning just what persisted or periodically reasserted itself in a world of change. This constant element was not necessarily conceived as a single material substance; it might be a variety of substances, or simple extension, or a definite relation, or a process; but it was always what we call a phenomenon, never a metaphysical abstraction or noumenon. In Kantian language, it lay within the limits of a possible experience. Opposed to it were the baseless, unstable, illusory opinions of the vulgar. Such in its first intention was the meaning of Nature, the philosophical equivalent for the greater gods of the old religion. As scientific curiosity extended itself from the material to the moral world, to the human race with its division into numberless nations, each speaking a different language or dialect, and characterised by infinitely varying institutions, customs, and laws, yet in their dealings with one another appealing to a common standard of reasonableness and rectitude, there arose the obvious idea, Have we not here also to ask for a common principle from which all partial and local customs are so many ignorant, it may be mischievous, aberrations—in a word, for what exists by nature, as opposed to what exists by convention or law?

It is certain that the question was asked and the distinction drawn between φύσις and νόμος, but when or by whom the distinction was first drawn we do not know.[1] It occurs for the first time, unless I am mistaken, in the *Protagoras,* a somewhat early dialogue of Plato's, where we find it put into the mouth of the Sophist Hippias; and the evidence of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* goes to prove that it was associated with his teaching by others besides Plato. Modern historians of philosophy speak as if this distinction was the common property of all the Sophists, and was used by all with the same implications. In their opinion, the antithesis between Nature and Law was a mere pretext for invalidating the authority of Law, for releasing men from their obligation to obey the ordinances of the State, and therefore a powerful agent in the work of public demoralisation, at least when the oppression of the weak by the strong was defended as a natural right. If we are to believe Thucydides and Plato, such a justification of successful violence was actually attempted at the time of the Peloponnesian war; but to make Hippias or any other of the great Sophists responsible for such a perversion of their teaching would be like making Socrates and Plato responsible for the defence of injustice for delivering which their successor, Carneades, was expelled from Rome.

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[1] It has been ascribed to Archelaus, the disciple of Anaxagoras, on the very doubtful authority of Laertius Diogenes.

Let it be remembered that the only Sophists about whom we have any right to speak are Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, and Hippias. The last is the only one who is known to have directly distinguished nature from law or convention. His words, as reported or imagined by Plato, are: "All of you who are here present I reckon to be kinsmen and friends and fellow-citizens, and by nature and not by law; for by nature like is akin to like, whereas law is the tyrant of mankind, and often compels us to do many things which are against nature. How great would be the disgrace, then, if we who know the nature of things......should quarrel with one another like the meanest of mankind."[1] There is surely nothing sceptical, corrupting, or anti-social about the sentiment here expressed. Further, we have to note that arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy are mentioned among the subjects taught by Hippias[2]—a fact which seems to show that he studied the nature of man in connection with the nature of things. So far as we can make out, a somewhat similar method was followed by Prodicus. With regard to this teacher we have the precious, though scanty, contemporary evidence of Aristophanes, who, in the *Clouds*, compliments him on his eminent wisdom and learning, while in the *Birds* he playfully

[1] Plato, *Protagoras*, p. 337 B.; Jowett's trans.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 318.

announces a new theory of evolution that is to send Prodicus away howling—a clear proof of the interest taken by the Ceian moralist in such inquiries. How far he attempted to connect ethics with physics must, in the absence of more detailed information, remain uncertain ; but his own well-known apologue, *The Choice of Hercules*, as reported to us by Xenophon, affords some suggestive hints of a tendency in that direction. The word "nature" itself occurs three times over in a few lines ; and throughout there is a genuinely naturalistic assumption that pleasure is altogether censurable when it has not been purchased by a corresponding outlay of effort and fatigue. Here, for the first time, we catch sight of a principle pregnant with momentous and far-reaching consequences. For, by parity of reasoning, it might be urged that no man has any right to wealth that he has not earned by an equivalent amount of useful work, which is the root-idea of socialism ; or, again, that one class of the community should not receive gratuitous benefits at the expense of another class, which is the root-idea of Spencerian individualism. Plato, who, for reasons unknown, particularly hated Prodicus, only mentions him to ridicule the pedantic precision with which he insisted on the accurate use of language.[1] Altogether, we have here a master of encyclopædic range — physicist, philologist, and moralist—with Hippias, the earliest precursor of Stoicism and of modern university training.

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[1] Curiously enough, the late Mr. R. H. Hutton dwells on the extreme accuracy and precision of the late Professor Malden as a trait of distinction between that scholar and the ancient Sophists (in the Memoir prefixed to Bagehot's *Literary Studies*, p. xv.).

We gather from the report of Xenophon that the moral censure of Prodicus was directed against the vices of the rich and luxurious, special emphasis being laid on their artificial, unnatural character. The polemic thus begun would easily extend into an attack on all civilisation considered as a departure from the state of nature, from the innocence and simplicity of savage man; and it would be accompanied by a tendency to hold up as examples for imitation the nations who had remained at or near the primitive condition of mankind. We generally associate this tendency with the philosophy of the eighteenth century; but it is now known that Rousseau and Diderot were merely taking up the tradition of Greek thought. Although it may be traced back to Hesiod, the theory of a golden age still partially surviving among savages did not reach its full expansion before the middle of the fourth century B.C.; but there is evidence that it was already eagerly canvassed in the circles which gathered round the great Sophists, and could show that most satisfactory proof of vitality which is afforded by the rise of an antagonistic theory. To the glorification of nature was opposed the glorification of progressive civilisation; to the study of astronomy and physics was opposed the study of poetry, eloquence, modern history, and political institutions; to the ethical standards and sanctions derived from the healthy balance of the organic functions were opposed other standards and sanctions derived from the exigencies of the social state and the steady pressure of public opinion. At the head of this humanistic school apparently stood Protagoras; and nothing can better illustrate the sharp antagonism of the two ethical methods than a remark put into his mouth by Plato, so unlike anything else in the *Dialogues* that we must accept it as characteristic, if not as the reproduction of an actual utterance. "I would have you consider that he who appears to you to be the worst of those who have been brought up in laws and humanities would appear to be a just man and a master of justice if he were to be compared with men who had no education, or courts of justice, or laws, or any restraints upon them which compelled them to practise virtue—with the savages, for example, whom the poet Pherecrates exhibited on the stage at the last year's Lenæan festival. If you were living among men such as the man-haters in his Chorus, you would be only too glad to meet with Eurybates and Phrynondas, and you would sorrowfully long to revisit the rascality of this part of the world."[1] A somewhat similar vein of hostility to barbarism may, I think, be traced in the introduction to the history of Thucydides. It is significant, too, that, with many a tale of Greek cruelty to relate, his strongest expressions of horror are reserved for the savagery of the Thracians, and particularly for their massacre of all the children in a large boys' school at Mycalessus.

Greek thinkers habitually sought to clothe their principles in the most paradoxical form they could devise. Protagoras and Gorgias were not content to advocate humanistic studies at the expense of physical science; they tried to destroy the idea of

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[1] Plato, *Protagoras*, 327 C (Jowett's Trans.). Robert Lowe once quoted this passage with the keenest enjoyment.

Nature, root and branch. Protagoras taught that "Man is the measure of all things"; in other words, moral obligations and distinctions must be founded on the needs of a progressive society, not on the abstraction to which the physiocratic philosophers appeal. Gorgias set to work in a still more radical fashion. He wrote a treatise with the significant title, *On Nature or Nothing,* in which he maintained, first that nothing exists; secondly, that if anything existed it could not be known; and thirdly, that if anything existed and could be known, the individual possessing that knowledge could not communicate it to others. This, as the worthy Tiedemann observes, was "going much farther than common sense permits"; but the Greeks, as I have said, loved paradoxical statements; and Gorgias probably meant no more than Joseph de Maistre when he asked the apostles of "la Nature," "Qui est donc cette femme?" or than Alfred de Musset, when he put the equally difficult question, "Le cœur humain de qui, le cœur humain de quoi?"

Like the opposing cosmologies of Heracleitus and Parmenides at an earlier period of Greek thought, the rival theories of the physiocrats and the humanists each contained an element of truth, and the future progress of ethics depended on the recognition and combination of both. Since Protagoras a number of thinkers, among whom Professor Huxley may be mentioned as the last, but not the least, have shown that nature, apart from man, is anything but a safe moral guide, and that what she seems to inculcate is, in fact, the supremacy of brute force. On the other hand, the great diversity of moral codes observed at different times and in different places points to the necessity of some objective principle by which they must be tested, unless we are to resign ourselves to complete scepticism on the subject of right and wrong. Here physical science comes to the rescue by teaching us to look at things rather than words, and to follow the lines of demonstrative evidence rather than the shifting currents of popular opinion. But only the study of human interests as such can tell us what things we should look at, and what kind of proof the nature of the case demands. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, by creating the dialectic method and applying it to ethics, made a good start in this direction—so good, indeed, as completely to overshadow the predecessors whose ideas they appropriated and combined. Worse than this, some loose declamations of Plato and some special attacks on the rhetoricians and oligarchs of his own time have been construed into a distinct charge of immoral teaching brought against the great Sophists of the fifth century. Undoubtedly the naturalistic and humanistic principles severally admit of being pushed to anti-social consequences. The claim of the strong man—or, as he would call himself, the born ruler of mankind—to lord it over his fellows, and to gratify all his appetites at their expense, may be upheld as a natural right. A misinformed or deluded public opinion may be erected into the supreme standard of truth and justice, while the art of misinforming and deluding it may be inculcated as the first qualification of a statesman. But the Socratic dialectic, with its principle that the germs of truth exist in every mind and in every belief, is also capable of disease and corruption. We owe to it—beginning with Plato, or, perhaps, even with Socrates himself—the organised hypocrisy that defends the public profession and propagation of superstitious beliefs as the only form under which philosophic truth can safely circulate among the ignorant masses.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that the teaching of the Sophistic schools, based as it was on principles of everlasting validity, possessed merely negative or transitional significance. There is reason to suppose, from incidental references in Plato and Aristotle, that it continued to win adherents through the two generations that followed the death of Socrates. Above all, the note of naturalism became increasingly dominant, and powerfully affected the Socratic schools themselves. Plato's writings are a good example of the tendency. His earliest dialogues are almost entirely humanistic, with only slight or depreciatory references to nature; but in the *Republic* physiocratic considerations are already prominent, and in the *Laws*, a very late work, they meet us at every step, in connection, be it observed, with a very high and pure morality. Aristotle also refers to nature as a moral standard, the validity of which he recognises, although he cannot accept all the consequences drawn from it by some other philosophers.

Authorities are still divided on the question whether the influence which we have seen to be so potent in speculation was, or was not, mischievous in practice. Most German historians continue to believe that a decline in Greek morality began with the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, and continued without intermission down to the advent of Christianity; and they make Sophisticism responsible for at least the inception of the process. Traditions are very strong in German universities, and it has become a tradition in those seats of learning that to take fees for lecturing and to throw doubt on the popular mythology is very reprehensible conduct—when practised by an ancient Greek. It sometimes actually led people to believe in the right of the stronger! Fortunately there is one German, Professor Julius Beloch, who, having the advantage of living in Italy, has dared to think for himself. This brilliant and original historian not only vindicates the Sophists, as Grote and others had done before him, but makes short work of the whole charge of demoralisation brought against the Greeks. There is no surer test of a nation's moral standing than its conduct in time of war. If there is a virtue admitting of ocular and statistical demonstration, a virtue that can neither be concealed nor assumed, that virtue is humanity. Now Professor Beloch opportunely reminds us that the Greeks of the fourth century were much more humane than the contemporaries of Pericles.[1] Such horrors as the slaughter of the Theban prisoners by the Platæans and of the Platæan prisoners by the Thebans, of the Corcyræan aristocrats by the opposite faction and of the Melians by the Athenians, for no other crime than having refused to give up their independence, are justly branded with execration ; but it is unjustly forgotten that they find no counterpart in the next generation. We do not again hear of prisoners of war being shut up to die by thousands of slow torture in the quarries of Syracuse, nor yet of their being put to death by the more summary method of Lysander at Aigos Potamoi. The historian knows of only two cases in the wars of the fourth century where the storm of a besieged town was followed by the massacre of its male adult citizens —the capture of Orchomenus by the Thebans and the capture of Sestus by Chares.[1] The outburst of popular passion to which Phocion and his friends fell victims, though lamentable enough, is not to be compared with that which wreaked itself on the victorious generals of Arginusæ. Whether the persecution and exile of so many generals and statesmen, from Miltiades to Alcibiades, was due more to ingratitude mixed with envy on the part of the people, or to treason on the part of its leaders, may be doubted ; in any case there was guilt of the blackest kind somewhere, but guilt which we meet with only under a greatly attenuated form in the fourth century.

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[1] *Griechische Geschichte*, I., p. 595.

If we ask what was the cause of this wonderful change, the only possible answer is, the great revolution that philosophy had wrought in the minds of men. The mere habit of looking at things from a universal point of view has happily a certain power to enlarge the sympathies. Thus the rulers of Babylon, surrounded as they were by a learned priesthood, seem to have been much more merciful than the rulers of Assyria. Furthermore, the three great ethical schools characterised above must, through their various principles, have exercised a still more direct influence on the social feelings. The physicists, by drawing attention to the universal elements of human nature, helped to break down the barriers of race, language, and nationality that so powerfully foster feelings of mutual hostility among men. The humanists saw with perfect clearness that a state of nature meant lawless violence; but their object was by means of systematic instruction still further to develop the tendencies that make for peace, order, mutual helpfulness, and elevated enjoyment. Such of them as taught rhetoric or the art of persuasion by words must have looked with peculiar horror on the régime of brute force; indeed, it is impossible to study the writings of Isocrates, the chief teacher of rhetoric in the fourth century, without recognising through all the man's vanity, inconsistency, and subservience to success a sense of justice and mercy utterly alien to the tone of the Melian Dialogue. Especially significant is the declaration of Isocrates that Hellenism is a privilege not of race but of culture, and therefore open to all mankind.[1] Finally the Socratic school, with its willingness to learn from every one, its appeals to the reason that is actual or latent in every man and in every woman, its exaltation of the soul above the body, and of the higher over the lower psychic activities, must have contributed largely to the good work of humanisation that was going on.

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[1] *Griechische Geschichte,* II., p. 441.

In attempting to trace the general influence of philosophy on the spirit of the age we have been dealing with probabilities, of a high order indeed, but not affording the satisfaction of absolute certainty; and in the dearth of documentary evidence no more can be expected. But, on passing to the study of philosophy as an influence on the character of individual statesmen, we are no longer limited to conjecture; we have definite facts to show. Here our whole case might be staked on the name of Epaminondas, whom Professor Mahaffy calls "far the noblest of all the great men whom Greece ever produced, without a single flaw or failing."[1] This illustrious patriot was a pupil of Lysis, the Pythagorean, and became himself, in turn, a teacher of the whole state, devoting himself for years to the moral and intellectual elevation of his fellow-citizens. But what speaks most for the moral earnestness of Epaminondas is his refusal, after all those years of preparation for the deliverance of Thebes, to take part in the secret assassination of the oligarchs who were governing her as the servile agents of Lacedæmonian oppression. Philosophy had taught him a delicacy of conscience not only far in advance of the best public opinion of his own time, but also in advance of the sentiments entertained till a comparatively recent period by some Christian moralists. Another but inferior example of philosophy in action is furnished by Dion, the friend of Plato, and the first liberator of Syracuse. I am well aware of the prejudice under which the memory of this unfortunate patriot must suffer in the minds of all English-speaking scholars. There is nothing in Grote's *History of Greece* to equal for interest and pathos his narrative of the two Sicilian expeditions of Dion and Timoleon ; and the total effect of that narrative unquestionably is to make the ill-starred philosophic aristocrat play the part of a foil to the higher and purer glory of the successful Corinthian democrat. It is, however, only fair to remember that Timoleon had the inestimable advantage of coming after Dion, and of profiting by his mistakes. We have also to note that the one blot on the fame of the great liberator, his not interfering to save the innocent wives and daughters of Hicetas from the cruel vengeance of the Syracusans, was the very last sin of which his predecessor would have been guilty. When pressed to put a treacherous enemy to death, Dion answered that his prolonged studies in the Academy had for their object the conquest of anger, envy, and all contentiousness ; that it was not enough merely to reciprocate the goodness of others, it was necessary also to forgive injuries and to be merciful to the transgressor ; that for the person who is first attacked to revenge himself, though legally justifiable, is by nature no less censurable than the attack, as springing from the same root of ungoverned passion ; that human wickedness, however savage, must at last yield to the effect of unwearied beneficence.[1] For us the most interesting point to note is that, as Curtius says, the expedition of Dion was an enterprise undertaken by the whole Academy in its collective capacity—a fact quite irreconcilable with the subsequent statement of the same historian, that philosophers were at this time more and more withdrawing themselves from the repulsive contact of public affairs. Very significant also of the increased power now exercised by ideas is the desire shown by the younger Dionysius, and in a less degree even by his detestable father, to stand well in the opinion of Plato. So also is the selection of Aristotle as the tutor of young Alexander.

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[1] See above, p. 35.

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[1] *Rambles and Studies in Greece,* p. 227 (2nd ed.). I do not agree with the last words quoted. See Plutarch, *Eroticus,* xvii. 15; Athenæus, *Deipnosophistæ*, xiii., lxxxiii.

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[1] Plutarch, *Dion,* p. 979 A. The distinction between nature and law seems to point to a much older authority than Plutarch, probably a contemporary of Dion's. I have slightly paraphrased this sentence in order to make it more intelligible.

Thus far we have seen philosophy occupied in the work of systematising the moral law, reducing it to simple principles, connecting it with the eternal constitution of the universe, and developing it in the direction of a more comprehensive humanity. We have now to study it under the more stirring aspect of a reforming and revolutionary force, as an endeavour taken up by serious statesmen to reconstitute society on a basis of economic justice. In this connection the briefest reference to Plato must suffice, as that master's searching criticism of contemporary life and his twofold attempt to reconstruct it from the bottom up are, or ought to be, familiar to every student, if only for the unrivalled literary splendour of the writings in which they are embodied. Moreover, the subtlety and complexity of his genius raise Plato so high above the age that he cannot be taken as representing its general philosophical tendencies, although his works may be used as affording valuable evidence of the direction in which they pointed. The great word of that age, as of our own eighteenth century, was "Back to Nature!" and then also, as with Rousseau, the ordinances of Nature were interpreted in a levelling, democratic, socialistic sense, quite remote from the sharp class-distinctions of Plato. We have seen how Hippias, whom the young Plato made a butt for his ridicule, implicitly proclaimed the natural brotherhood of mankind. We learn from a fragment of Aristotle that a later Sophist named Lycophron declared nobility of birth to be a baseless privilege,[1] while another Sophist, Alcidamas, vindicated freedom as a natural right[2] —a principle which, as we know from Aristotle's *Politics,* was unhesitatingly pushed on to the absolute condemnation of slavery.

Those who, like these generous philosophers, have persuaded themselves that liberty, equality, and fraternity are natural to man, easily come to believe that this happy state was realised in the primitive condition of the race. We get a glimpse of their belief on this subject from the *Laws* of Plato, who, as I have said, came very much under their influence in his old age. He tells us that the men who lived immediately after the Deluge were "simpler, more manly, more temperate, and more just" than his own contemporaries (*Laws*, 679 E); and he attributes their superior virtue to their undeveloped industrial condition, to the absence alike of poverty and of wealth. The next step was to look round for a people among whom these delightful traits of primitive humanity had been preserved. It was found in the Scythians. Ephorus, a pupil of Isocrates, and the greatest

[1] Quoted by Stobæus, *Florilegium,* p. 494, 24.

[2] *Oratores Attici* (Didot), II., p. 316.

historian of later Greece, seems to have constructed a fancy picture of that barbarous race, which was received with unquestioning faith through the whole of antiquity, and in a revived form has even affected modern thought. Justice was represented as the most essential characteristic of these nomads; envy, hatred, and fear were unknown among them; such was their horror of taking even animal life that they subsisted entirely on milk; and they lived in a state of perfect communism, holding property, wives, and children in common, so as to constitute a single united family.[1]

Various causes combined to familiarise Greek social philosophy with the idea of communism. To a certain extent it had no doubt prevailed among the Hellenic tribes before they left the nomadic state, and the tradition was never entirely lost. When they settled in a new country the land would be most naturally distributed in equal portions among the conquerors, and any fresh territory that was subsequently annexed would be similarly disposed of. The rise of manufactures and commerce, with the accompanying introduction of a metallic currency, brought about a great inequality of wealth, leading to violent political disorders, which, in the case of Solon's legislation, necessitated a forcible remission of debts by the State—a precedent never afterwards forgotten. Democracy, which at first meant deliverance of the poor from the oppression of the rich, afterwards came to mean a more or less disguised distribution of the property of the rich among the poor, and of the tribute paid by the subject cities among all classes, without any disguise whatever. Meanwhile a first rough analysis of social phenomena had led philosophers to the conclusion that covetousness was the root of all evil, that murder, robbery, and other crimes arose from the unequal distribution of property, or rather from its mere existence, for, as Menander said—

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[1] Pöhlmann, *Geschichte des antiken Kommunismus,* I., pp. 117 *sqq.*

> With naught to take no man would e'er be wicked.

From the prevalent view of marriage it followed that wives, like any other kind of property, were to be held in common. Strange as it may seem, the idea of such a revolution, so far from being regarded as a degradation, was welcomed with joy by the women. When, in 392, Aristophanes took communism as the subject of one of his wittiest comedies, the *Ecclesiazusæ,* he represented it as the work of the Athenian women, who go to the poll disguised as men, and change the institutions of the State by a snatch vote; and Epictetus, writing five centuries later, attributed the enthusiasm of the Roman ladies for Plato's *Republic* entirely to its proposal that there should be a community of wives.[1]

Aristophanes is our earliest authority for the existence of communism as a political ideal. It has, indeed, been maintained that his exhibition of it on the stage was intended as a satire on the proposals of Plato. But it seems most unlikely that even the first half of the *Republic* had been completed when the philosopher was only thirty-four; unlikely also that Plato should not have been mentioned by name in the play, if not actually brought on the scene. Moreover, in the *Republic* communism is carefully restricted to the governing class ; not till long afterwards, in the *Laws,* is it proclaimed as the ideally best arrangement for all mankind. I have already called attention to the remarkable fact that the *Laws* is saturated with a naturalism quite foreign to the earlier dialogues. What is the inference ? Plainly, that communism (in both kinds) was a standing doctrine of the naturalistic school, and that it probably originated with the immediate successors of Hippias and Prodicus. Most unfortunately, we only know that such persons existed through incidental references in Plato and Aristotle ; the Cynics, who bore the same relation to the philosophic naturalists that the Franciscans bore to the Dominicans, have completely superseded them in the notices of later compilers. But, even in the scanty utterances of Antisthenes and Diogenes, clear traces of a communistic theory have been preserved ; and it emerges full blown in what was practically by far the most important of the ancient philosophies, Stoicism.

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[1] Didot, *Fragmenta,* p. 53.

We are apt to think of the later Athens as divided among four or more equally serious or equally frivolous schools of philosophy. But in reality the Lyceum was devoted almost exclusively to physical science ; the Epicureans were a small, uninfluential group of recluses ; the Academicians, after abandoning the mathematical mysticism of Speusippus, contented themselves with a negative criticism chiefly directed against the doctrines of the Porch. This last alone gave a training at once positive, encyclopædic, and fruitful, mingling with every honourable pursuit, delivering its message to all men, and holding up, by the example of its teachers, no less than by the rigour of its tenets, such a standard of righteousness and purity as none but the prophets of Israel had raised before. So strong, indeed, are the traces of a Semitic origin among the chief Stoics, beginning with its founder, Zeno, that their moral earnestness has been attributed to a peculiar quality resident in the genius of the race to which the prophets also belonged. But this seems a very fanciful explanation of Stoicism. Taking them altogether, the Semites have never been remarkable for a high moral tone, least of all the Phœnician branch to which Zeno belonged. If the foreign extraction of the early Stoics betrayed itself at all, it was in a certain absolute, unconditional, uncompromising tone of thought common to all Asiatics, and due less to any racial idiosyncrasy than to the habits inbred by immemorial despotism. How little race has to do with it is evident from the reappearance of a precisely similar tone among the Russian novelists of the present day, who have imbibed it from the same environment. As a consequence of this rigorous absolutism, the Stoics abolished the distinction between mind and matter; they placed the world under the unconditional control of reason; they asserted the unbroken regularity of natural law; they substituted determinism for free will; they insisted, against Aristotle, that virtue constituted not the leading element, but the whole of happiness; and they claimed for perception an unerring certainty. But in every point of their system they did but develop ideas long familiar to Greek philosophy; and in their love of paradoxical statement, at least, they were entirely Greek. As a means of drawing attention, their paradoxes were perfectly successful, so much so, indeed, that down to the present day public opinion assumes almost without question that every philosopher is indifferent to pain and inaccessible to emotion; that he knows everything and can do everything, provided it be not of too frivolous a character; and that he is, or would like to pass for being, impeccable and infallible—in other words, that he answers to the ancient caricature of a Stoic. In reality, the Stoics never professed or required insensibility to pleasure and pain; they merely asserted, as we also do, the supreme and incommensurable value of moral goodness; and in ascribing all manner of merits and accomplishments to their ideal sage they merely demanded, as some of us also do, the systematic application of scientific principles to the whole field of human activity. But that the ideal sage had ever been realised on earth they did not believe; and if their principles suffered any sense of humour to survive they must have smiled at the *naïveté* of a Macedonian officer who, hearing that the wise man was an excellent general, joined the school in hopes of becoming one himself.[1]

At the moment when Zeno first proclaimed his message under the painted portico of Athens it seemed as if all free and noble public life had come to an end in Greece. That fourth empire, so well described by the Book of Daniel as "a beast terrible and powerful and strong exceedingly with great iron teeth, devouring and breaking in pieces and stamping the residue with his feet," had devoured her last patriots and trampled her liberties into the mire. To the unexampled clemency of Philip and Alexander had succeeded the terrorism of their brutal generals. A successful military adventurer, Demetrius Poliorcetes, remarkable not less for his frightful profligacy than for his shining abilities, was lodged in the Parthenon, and received divine honours from the servile Athenians. All the most virile elements of the community were drawn off to Asia and Egypt by the lucrative prospects of mercenary service. It would not have been surprising if, in the circumstances, no lesson but that of fatalistic indifference to outward events had been learned by the degenerate youths who divided their time between the boudoir of the hetaira and the lecture-hall of the sage. Nevertheless, Zeno lived to see the last great struggle for Greek independence begin ; his successors saw its temporary victory and its development into a movement that seemed to promise the realisation of their own social ideals.

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[1] Plutarch, *Aratus,* xxiii., p. 1037 f.

In the year 280 B.C. a Gallic storm, like that which had devastated Italy more than a century before, broke on the Hellenic world. Macedonia, whose proud boast it was to shield civilisation against barbarism, succumbed at once to the shock, and her usurping king, Ptolemy Keraunos, fell in battle with the invaders. The human deluge poured on, but was arrested and flung back by the unsupported levies of central Greece. Their heroism still lives for us embodied in the form of the Apollo Belvedere, the marble copy of a bronze statue erected to commemorate the repulse of the barbarians from Delphi, and representing the god in the act of shaking his shield in their faces.[1] Other famous works of plastic art owe their inspiration to the same desperate conflict, as it afterwards raged in Asia Minor, such as the dying Gaul of the Capitol; the group of a Gaul supporting the body of the wife whom he has just slain, and plunging a sword into his own breast, in the Museo delle Terme at Rome; also, perhaps, those Pergamene reliefs which are now the glory of Berlin. But it was not merely in art that the victorious consciousness of resurgent Hellenic life found expression. Sparta exhibited all her ancient heroism in repelling an attack made on her by Pyrrhus, the greatest general of the age; a few years afterwards Athens made a desperate but unsuccessful effort to shake off the Macedonian yoke. This, which Droysen calls her last but her most honourable attempt to recover her ancient liberty—an attempt first rescued from oblivion in modern times by the great historian Niebuhr—is known as the Chremonidean war from its leader, Chremonides, a friend, perhaps a disciple, of Zeno. Droysen has no doubt that the movement was inspired by Stoicism, which had now been taught for a whole generation at Athens, and was diffused through all Hellas by the students who had flocked from every quarter to the intellectual metropolis, as well as by Arcesilaus, the high-minded scholarch of the Middle Academy.[1] Not that Zeno himself was an enthusiast for republican liberty; the tenour of his doctrine was rather favourable to monarchy, and he was personally the friend and confidant of King Antigonus Gonatas, against whom this rising was directed. But the lessons of moral earnestness and zeal once learned cannot be appropriated by any political party; they can, however, raise partisanship to a higher level by investing it with the authority of a divine mandate or consecrating it to the service of an impersonal ideal. Thus the modern Stoicism of Carlyle[2] gave fresh energy to aspirations that he misunderstood or despised; and at the moment when the master was inditing his *American Iliad in a Nutshell* many of his unknown disciples may have been dying in order that human beings should not be engaged as servants for life against their will.

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[1] According to Beloch (III., p. 582), the Gauls actually took and plundered Delphi; but, as they were subsequently defeated by the Greeks, the Apollo retains its symbolic value.

The Chremonidean war only served to rivet the Macedonian yoke more firmly on the necks of the Athenians. But the emancipating movement spread like wildfire in the Peloponnesus. Two disciples of Arcesilaus, Ecdemus and Demophanes, slew the unlawful ruler of their native city Megalopolis, and restored it to freedom; they then aided Aratus in achieving the still more glorious deliverance of Sicyon, and finally, at the invitation of Cyrene, crossed the sea to give that great African colony the blessing of an orderly republican government.[1] Federation, an entirely new political experiment, was tried with success by the famous Achaian League; its President, Aratus, drove the Macedonian garrison from Corinth, and gave Athens the independence that she could not achieve for herself. How high the tide of enthusiasm was running appears from the story of Lydiades, a noble youth who, having possessed himself of supreme power in Megalopolis, and exercised it some years for the public good, voluntarily surrendered his autocracy and descended to the rank of a private citizen, whence he was soon raised by the free votes of the people to the presidency of the Achaian League.

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[1] *Geschichte des Hellenismus,* III., pp. 228 *sqq.*

[2] Of course this is not to be understood as meaning that Carlyle was a Stoic in *practice.*

So far philosophy had done wonders, but its greatest triumph still remained to win. This was the reconstitution of the Spartan State. One of the most curious chapters in the history of speculation relates to the use made of Sparta and her institutions in the schools of Athens. Professor Edward Caird has called attention, from a Hegelian point of view, to the remarkable union in Rousseau's mind of faith in nature with faith in education.[2] Just the same combination was exhibited by Rousseau's Greek predecessors; and as they found a model of uncorrupted natural virtue in Scythia, so they found an equally perfect model of artificial training in Sparta. It was supposed that the much-admired system which produced a Leonidas and a Gorgo, an Argileonis and a Brasidas, had been created in all its pieces by the legislator Lycurgus and preserved intact during several centuries after his death. But in truth the educational and semi-socialistic romance that we read in Plutarch, while it embodies some features common to the more primitive Dorian tribes, was in great part evolved out of their own moral consciousness by several generations of philosophers. Lycurgus is a pure myth, the human incarnation of an old Spartan god;[1] the equal division of land attributed to him no doubt represents an actual distribution of conquered territory among the predatory warriors who had established themselves by the Eurotas; but we have no reason to believe that a permanent equality of landed property was legally provided for; at any rate, in the historical period we find the distinction between rich and poor as sharply emphasised at Sparta as anywhere else.[2]

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[1] Polybius, X., 22. The reference is wrongly given in Droysen.

[2] *Essays on Literature and Philosophy,* I., 120 *sqq.*

The Greeks are a people who have always been more influenced by memory or hope than by immediate reality, and neither the complete overthrow of Sparta by Epaminondas nor her subsequent isolation from Panhellenic politics detracted anything from the traditional adoration paid her by popular rhetoricians and philosophical historians who continued freely adding to the picture of her primitive perfection. At last the glamour that she had so long exercised on others was reflected back on herself, and the fictitious legislation of Lycurgus was taken up in all seriousness by her more educated children as a charter still claiming their obedience and support. A reform of some kind was, indeed, imperatively needed, for the concentration of property in a few hands, everywhere a pressing evil, had been carried further, perhaps, in Sparta than in any other Greek state, and was eating away what still remained of her defensive military power. A modern historian has explained this economic revolution by the peculiar position that Sparta occupied as an emporium for what was then a kind of merchandise in extensive request—namely, mercenary soldiers.[1] Then, as always, the Peloponnesus supplied the best material of this description, and the *condottieri* who dealt in it brought enormous sums of money into the country. But not many benefited by the traffic. While the ruling class in Sparta had dwindled to seven hundred families, only a hundred of these possessed any property whatever. The young king Agis proposed to remedy this state of things by abolishing debts and dividing the land among the poorer citizens and the Periœcians. He led the way by surrendering to the State his own vast estates, together with personal property to the value of six hundred talents (£150,000). Some members of the royal family and some leading politicians were won over to the scheme, which at first seemed to carry all before it. But Agesilaus, the young king's uncle, was only anxious for the abolition of debts, in which he was personally interested, and found means to postpone the division of land, by which he would have been a loser. Meanwhile the Conservatives rallied their forces, a reaction set in, and Agis was seized by the Ephors and strangled in prison, together with his mother and grandmother. His widow Agiatis, the richest heiress in Sparta, was obliged to marry Cleomenes, son of King Leonidas, the official head of the reactionary party. But the noble Queen contrived to inoculate her young husband with the ideas of the martyred Agis; and the teaching of his heroic mother Cratesicleia was doubtless thrown into the same scale. Nor was his mind only subjected to the passionate impulses of feminine affection and grief; a higher and steadier discipline lent its aid to the great work.

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[1] I am aware that an attempt has recently been made to vindicate his historical reality.

[2] Pöhlmann, *ut ante,* p. 102.

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[1] Holm, *Griechische Geschichte,* IV., p. 287.

If in the case of Agis we can only assign to philosophy a remote and general influence, in so far as his animating ideals were a creation of thought, in the case of Cleomenes it becomes a direct and demonstrable agency. One of Zeno's most eminent disciples, a certain Sphærus, was at that time living in Sparta. He came from a Greek colony on the northern shore of the Euxine, and had grown up in the neighbourhood of those Scythians whose primitive communism excited such admiration in the schools of Athens. Among his numerous treatises, one on *Socrates and Lycurgus* and another on *The Laconian Constitution* are mentioned. This man became the intimate friend of Cleomenes, and assisted him in planning the great reforms which the young king, on gaining supreme power, pressed through with relentless vigour. For details I must refer to the stirring narrative of Plutarch. The agrarian reforms are carried out in the teeth of all opposition; a new body of stalwart citizen-soldiers is created; city after city opens its gates to the champion of the poor; Sparta resumes her old place as the leading state in Peloponnesus, in all free Hellas; her victorious king hopes to supersede the clever but cowardly Aratus as president of the Achaian League. Then comes the fatal reaction. Those who had hoped for a general abolition of debt turn against the reformer whose measures were dictated only by the public interest; Aratus, to his eternal shame, purchases the help of a Macedonian army against Cleomenes by surrendering the Acrocorinthus to Antigonus Doson. Defeated in battle, and already heart-broken by the loss of his adored wife Agiatis, the Spartan king refuses to end his sufferings by suicide. The sayings put into the mouths of great men are generally apocryphal; but the sentiment attributed to Cleomenes on this occasion is at least characteristic of the Stoic philosophy in which he had been bred. When urged to choose death rather than an ignominious flight to Egypt, he answered, as Plutarch tells us, that it is disgraceful either to live or to die for ourselves alone. But Egypt, as usual, proved a broken reed, and Cleomenes perished in an attempt to rouse the Greek population of Alexandria against its effeminate tyrant. The reformed constitution of his beloved Sparta had already been destroyed by Antigonus.

These events occurred between the years 243 and 221 B.C. Less than a century later a series of events took place in Rome offering such a close resemblance to the agrarian revolution in Sparta that, were not the historical reality of both proved by irrefragable evidence, we might almost suppose the one story to be a replica of the other. I refer, of course, to the reforms of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. Again, we find a generous, enthusiastic, and high-born young man seeking to rescue the pauperised masses from their degradation by the re-enactment of an obsolete law; again, the first reforming effort is stifled by illegal violence in the blood of its originator; again, it is resumed by a younger and far stronger successor, the transition being this time also effected through the instrumentality of a woman, the illustrious Cornelia; again, after a brief and brilliant period of success, the democratic autocracy succumbs to an energetic reaction of the propertied classes, passively aided by a fickle populace. But what interests us most of all is to observe that the Gracchi also were prepared for their generous enterprise by a Stoic philosopher, the Cuman Blossius, a pupil of the great school of Tarsus—"no mean city"—whose intellectual atmosphere was destined to exert an incalculable action on the Apostle Paul. Here, then, we have a signal corroboration of the historical deduction that seeks in Greek philosophy, and more especially in Stoicism, or more generally in the physiocratic school, for a key to the systematic socialistic enterprises of antiquity.

It cannot be said that the result of those enterprises was in any way satisfactory. Discord, bloodshed, anarchy, and despotism were their most evident fruits. The movement set on foot by Agis was followed by nearly a century of class-warfare, that at last necessitated the armed intervention of Rome and the reduction of the Peloponnesus under her sway. In Rome itself the period of civil wars dates from Tiberius Gracchus. In so far as they contributed to the foundation of the empire, we have no reason to complain of the result, but it was one that he never anticipated; while the distributions of cheap corn introduced by his brother Gaius proved a permanent source of demoralisation to imperial, as well as to republican, Rome.

Socialism as we know it to-day is lineally connected through French and German thought with the socialism of the Greek naturalists. There is, however, at least one marked distinction between the two, corresponding to the different forms of society that gave them birth. Ours is of the industrial, theirs of the military type. Every ancient city-state was more or less in the position of a besieged garrison or of a predatory band, and for the officers to appropriate most of the rations and all the booty was not only unjust, but suicidal. Cleomenes had for his sole object to restore the military supremacy of Sparta; the Gracchi must certainly have wished to recruit the population, and with it the armed strength of Italy. Hence, the redistribution of land was their watchword, capital being associated in their minds, not with the payment of low wages to the poor by the rich, but with the payment of high interest to the rich by the poor. The inference is obvious. If socialism failed to make way under a *régime* with which it had a natural affinity, its chances must be still weaker under an industrial and capitalist *régime*.

The social influence of philosophy in Greece is far from being exhausted by the humanitarian tendencies of the fourth century and the agrarian movement of the third century. The great part played by women in the Spartan revolution belongs, I think, to a very much wider movement, inaugurated and sustained by philosophy. But this is a subject on which I am not now prepared to enter.

THE ALLEGED SOCIALISM OF THE PROPHETS[1]

M. Ernest Renan's *History of the People of Israel* is a disappointing work. Of course, it has great merits. M. Renan can write well on any subject, and any man of ability can write well about the events recorded in the Old Testament. The book contains eloquent passages, masterly sketches of character, flashes of profound historical insight, and renderings from Hebrew poetry, such as might have been expected from the pre-eminent translator of Job. Some at least of the results of modern criticism are distilled into as easy reading as the feuilleton of a Parisian newspaper. Above all, the whole subject is treated with a freshness and freedom that it would be vain to expect even in the most unfettered theological professor. Still, we expected something more from M. Renan. As a Semitic specialist, a historian, and a philosopher, he might have added somewhat to our knowledge of Hebrew life and thought. Not only has he added nothing, he has not shown himself on a level with the best knowledge of the age. According to Professor Robertson Smith, he "simply ignores the more modern criticism."[2] A notion has somehow got abroad that the author of the *Vie de Jésus* represents the extreme of negation in questions connected with the Biblical narratives. In fact, the leanings of M. Renan, like those of his countrymen generally, are to the conservative side. It will be remembered how through a dozen editions of the *Vie de Jésus* he upheld the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel, and I do not know that he has ever given up the passage about Jesus Christ in Josephus. There is in truth a good deal of eighteenth-century rationalism about this author, a summary *à priori* rejection of the miraculous element combined with a rather uncritical acceptance of the narratives in which miracles occur; hence the effort to explain miracles as natural events, and, where this method cannot be successfully applied, the tendency to charge the narrators of such events with sheer, deliberate fraud.

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[1] Written in 1893.

[2] *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church,* 2nd ed., p. 392.

It is not, however, of what M. Renan has left out that we have to complain so much as of what he has put in; or, perhaps, the less admirable side of his work might be summed up in a single phrase, "playing to the gallery." His audience consists very largely of persons whom I desire to mention with all respect—persons of the brightest intelligence, and, at least in the things of the intellect, of the most delicate taste. To their exacting demands, to their keen appreciation of what is excellent in style and brilliant in ideation, we owe the lucidity of French prose, the ingenuity and grace of French literature. Their opinion of a new play or a new novel is most valuable, and even on subjects requiring a certain amount of scholarship it is not to be despised. But you must not tell them to take much trouble; they like to think that their author is deeply read and laborious, but the result must be put before them in a finished form, and it is only in their appreciation of form that they are severe. Inaccurate or inconsistent statements are allowed to pass under cover of epigrammatic phrases, and the critic that exposed them would forfeit his reputation for good breeding.

For the last thirty years M. Renan has been falling more and more under the influence of such a public as I have described. His first popularity was won by no unworthy acts; it came to him unsought, and, one fancies, as a not altogether agreeable surprise. As a seminarist he had learned to despise the lay public, and he has recently let us know that his sentiments towards them still savour of sacerdotal scorn. As a professor of Hebrew he has never, like some of his colleagues, laid himself out to attract the large mixed audiences that infest the lecture-rooms of Paris. It was not his fault if he wrote in a style of unrivalled delicacy and distinction, or if his profoundly disinterested historical studies supplied new weapons to the anti-clericalists with whom he sympathised rather less than with their opponents. But no man can be popular with impunity; common politeness seems to require one to take into consideration the tastes and wishes of one's most numerous admirers. M. Renan has never, I think, quite equalled either in expression or in thought the essays published a few years before his *Vie de Jésus*, and then only known to a select few. In comparing the later with the earlier volumes of his great work on the history of primitive Christianity, can one escape the impression of an increasing vulgarity, a growing sensationalism, and a tendency to enlarge on scenes of lubricity and horror? The unfortunate series of dramatic attempts beginning with *Caliban*, and culminating in *L'Abbesse de Jouarre*, are only explicable on the theory that the great religious historian wished to win the applause of a class for whom the liveliest work on religion is not exciting enough. In the work of which I write, the *History of Israel*, the desire to please *les honnêtes gens*, as they are called in France—not, by any means, necessarily "honest people," but rather what we call "nice people," accomplished men and women of the world—has produced the most mischievous results. Unlike Carlyle's horse, M. Renan thinks that his first duty is to say clever things, and his efforts in this direction are not always very fortunate. At his best, no one has ever shown such perfect delicacy of touch, but he exercises this gift only on the condition of treating serious subjects in a serious manner. The gay Voltairean mockery that he sometimes affects does not seem to come natural to him; it sounds like the light talk of a heavy man; often flippancy has to do duty for wit.

This, however, is a mere matter of taste, and has little to do with the intrinsic value of the work. What the reader has to complain of is a thoroughgoing perversion of history in the interest of a flimsy theory. One might have expected from M. Renan a satisfactory treatment of the prophets of Israel. He is fully alive to their importance. He fully accepts the modern view of their teaching as the very soul of Hebrew history, and its highest documentary evidence as the first proclamation of absolute monotheism, the first ethical interpretation of religion, the immediate and adequate antecedent of Christianity. To many his account of the prophets came as a revelation. Professor James Darmesteter tells us that even the *boulevardiers* were, for a moment, thrilled by the vision of those Titanic figures with their awful denunciations of idolatry and oppression, of selfish luxury and shameless vice. But I fear that the historian of Israel caught the ear of the *boulevardier* by accommodating himself freely to the language and sentiments of that cheerful and pleasure-loving personage, the modern Parisian equivalent of "the man about town." M. Renan has elsewhere told a certain story about a country curé who preached on the Passion of Jesus Christ in such moving terms that the whole congregation were melted into tears. "Do not weep, my children," exclaimed the kind old man, in much concern at their grief; "all this happened a long time ago, and perhaps it is not quite true either." It sometimes looks as if he had taken a leaf out of that excellent curé's book. The *boulevardier* must not make himself too anxious. Let him bear in mind that the prophets were very uncivilised persons, without a notion of politeness, who wrote a long time ago, "when morality needed to be affirmed and established." It will relieve him to hear that moral rigorism, although, after all, it was once of use, "now does humanity nearly as much harm as good."[1] Professor Darmesteter, who is a friend and admirer of M. Renan, might profit more by the master's example. He actually quotes Jeremiah's fierce sarcasm about "every man neighing after his neighbour's wife" as "an excellent description of the drama and fiction of our own day."

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[1] III., p. 155.

Not only did the prophets live a long time ago (before morality became superfluous), but the *boulevardier* may be comforted by the assurance that what they said was not quite true. "There is great exaggeration in the picture drawn by Amos of the crimes committed in the palace of Samaria. ......His ideas about rich scoundrels, thieving merchants, men of business, and monopolisers of corn, are those of a man of the people without any knowledge of political economy"[1] One cannot help being reminded of the same writer's remarks on the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans explaining the apostle's terrible picture of heathen vices, by his complete ignorance of good society.[2] St. Paul, we are told, entertained much the same absurdly exaggerated ideas about the debaucheries of the higher classes that an honest and simple-minded Socialist working man entertains now. I should not give much for the morals of good society in our own time if they at all resemble what we know to have been the habits of Græco-Roman society on the evidence of writers who had every opportunity for observing and not the slightest motive for maligning it. The secular literature of Samaria has perished, nor do we know what sort of songs those were that her nobles sang on their ivory couches; but the testimony of the other prophets, some of whom mingled freely in court-circles, goes to confirm the denunciations of Amos.[3] When the shepherd of Tekoa raises his voice against the oppression of the poor, he is silenced in the same off-hand manner. What he describes as monstrosities are, it seems, simply the plainest social necessities — lending money on security, payment of debts, and taxation. To the *boulevardier*, living under tolerably just laws tolerably well administered, the answer may seem conclusive ; but a scholar and an Eastern traveller ought not to be so limited in his ideas. M. Renan must surely know that taxation may be so adjusted as to become an instrument of the most hateful oppression, and that, though it may be a social necessity, it has over and over again endangered the very existence of society. We know no more of Ephraim than Amos and Hosea tell us ; but, fortunately, we are in a position to study the early history of Athens and Rome, the late history of the Roman Empire, the antecedents of the French Revolution, and the contemporary administration of Asiatic despotism—notably of Egypt before the English occupation—in the light of information that is above suspicion. From the Eupatrides to the pashas, every governing class invested with absolute power and unrestrained by moral scruples not only drains the people of their life-blood, it also brings the State to destruction unless it is saved by some such measure as Solon's partial cancelling of debts, the Licinian Rogations, or the Revolution of '89. For the indebtedness of the poorer classes is a direct consequence of the exorbitant taxes levied on them by the rich, to meet which they have to borrow money at usurious interest, at first to the no small profit of their oppressors, who continue to grow richer, while their subject grows poorer, until the weakening of the foundation involves the whole edifice in ruin. Thus the artisan or peasant sees his tools and household goods wrung from him bit by bit, while the fruits of his industry, exchanged for foreign luxuries, are wasted in unproductive expenditure. The political economist would be faithless to common honesty if he condoned the rapine, whether lawless or legalised, by which the wealth of the Ephraimite nobles was acquired, and faithless to the principles of his own science if he sanctioned the vulgar ostentation and the vile sensuality to gratify which it was wasted. Luxury has been defended in modern times on the ground that it checks the growth of population. The practices described by Amos and Hosea would assuredly have that effect; but to check the growth of population was simple suicide among a handful of highland clans struggling for existence against the armies of Damascus and Assyria.

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[1] II., p. 432.

[2] *Les Apôtres,* p. 309.

[3] Cf. Hosea iv. and Isaiah xxviii.

So far there is no difficulty in understanding the attitude of the prophets towards the rich and powerful class. An elementary knowledge of history explains it, and a deeper knowledge can but confirm the explanation. But M. Renan is quite put out by this attitude; this is not exactly the language that he or his friend the *boulevardier* would hear uttered in a fashionable Parisian pulpit. Strange to say, the spokesmen of God did not think twice before they damned persons of that quality. But a solution of the mystery is forthcoming. "The most deeply rooted idea of those old times," he informs us, "is that there are poor people because there are rich people......wealth being always the fruit of injustice."[1] Only a single fact is cited in proof of this sweeping assertion. Travelling in the East, M. Renan was once particularly struck by the goodness of the inhabitants of a certain village where he had spent the night. "It is because they are poor," explained his dragoman.[2] Probably the dragoman was right. One may experience the same contrast without going beyond Southern Europe. But to say that wealth produces wickedness is not to say that wickedness produces wealth. Of all authorities, the Hebrew Scriptures, with their not very refined doctrine of material and temporal rewards and punishments, seem least to sanction such an idea. The Book of Job, that admirable compendium of Hebrew philosophy, furnishes us with an excellent test-instance. Job has fallen from the greatest prosperity into extreme destitution and suffering. His friends are most anxious to prove that the catastrophe is due to some fault of his own. What then, on M. Renan's principle, would be more natural for them to urge than that the very fact of his having been so rich proves him to have been a public robber? Now it is true that Eliphaz the Temanite advances an argument (Job xxii. 5–10) tending this way ; but Job victoriously asserts his innocence against this as against all the other purely constructive accusations of his friends. Alike in the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph, written down shortly before the appearance of the first literary prophets, and in the character of the virtuous woman,[3] composed after prophecy had died out, we find the same intimate association between wealth and worth.

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[1] II., pp. 424, 425.

[2] III., p. 38.

[3] Proverbs xxxi. The character of the successful woman of

If the East can supply no parallel instances of such wanton attacks on the established social order, such denunciations of the rich simply because they are better off than other people, as the oldest written prophecies are here interpreted to be, the West comes to the rescue with illustrations of a kind peculiarly intelligible to a Parisian reader. The prophets were "radical and revolutionary journalists, declaiming their articles in the street. ......The first chapter of Amos is the first opposition leader that was ever published," and Amos himself the father of all such as contribute to the subversive press.[1] Like the modern Nihilist, the Hebrew thinker held that if the world cannot be just it had better not exist.[2] But by justice the prophets mean Socialism, and "Socialism is of Hebrew origin. It has regard above all things to strict justice, and to the happiness of the greatest number."[3] It is a point of honour with M. Renan to contradict himself frequently, and isolated phrases of his must not be taken too seriously; but here he carries on the same idea from volume to volume, and when the scene changes from Samaria to the Southern kingdom we are again assured that "*mutatis mutandis* Socialism comes to us from Jerusalem."[4] "The Jahvism of the prophets of Judah is essentially a social religion; its object is the reformation of society in accordance with justice."[5] "The Judaism

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business, in that very *bourgeois* novel, Ohnet's *Serge Panine*, seems to have been taken straight from this Judaic ideal.

[1] II., pp. 422, 425.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 438.

[3] P. 541.

[4] III., p. 2.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

of the eighth century was a theocratic democracy, a religion consisting almost entirely in social questions."[1] "The party that supported this ideal of religious Puritanism was hostile to the secular power *(l'état laïque)*, opposed to military preparations, and would hear of nothing but social and religious reforms."[2] "Jeremiah was much less interested than his predecessors in the social question,"[3] but he certainly contributed his share to its solution if, as the historian bluntly expresses himself, he was "the soul of the fraud" by which Deuteronomy was palmed off on Josiah and the people as the last Tora of Moses[4]; and Deuteronomy was an attempt to put the new ideas into practice, "the programme of a sort of theocratic Socialism, merging the interest of the individual in that of the collective mass."[5] I cannot say whether we are to understand the Levitical law, framed during the Captivity, as a contrast to or a continuation of Deuteronomy, when we find its object stated to be "the happiness of the individual guaranteed by the social group to which he belongs";[6] nor, again, is it easy to see how the Semitic thirst for justice implies egoism,[7] if ignoring the individual was a part of its programme under Josiah; but this is possibly a specimen of the noble daring with which a man of genius sets himself above logic.

It seems, indeed, very hard to study the prophets in a disinterested, historical spirit. For a long time exegesis was thoroughly perverted by the attempt to read into them a complete system of Christology, including both the biography of Jesus and the metaphysical doctrines of his followers. Then followed a period, the last days of which some of us can remember, when their pages were ransacked for predictions of a future that never came and never will come, or when the events of modern history were read out of symbols that find their adequate interpretation in reminiscences of the prophet's own experience. It is said that Wilberforce, the anti-slavery statesman, having ascertained to his own satisfaction that the little horn in Daniel meant Bonaparte, rushed into Pitt's cabinet with the exciting intelligence. "Good God, sir," exclaimed the much-tried Minister, "do you call Bonaparte a *little* horn?" More recently, in accordance with that law by which supernatural beliefs become ever more degraded and grotesque as they are abandoned to a lower class of believers, we have witnessed that monstrous product of ignorance, fanaticism, and delirious racial vanity, the derivation of the Anglo-Saxon people from the lost tribes of Israel, presented as the clue to prophetic literature. Scarcely less preposterous, and, considering the scholarship of its author, still more astonishing, is the view that parallels the preaching of righteousness with the utterances of that sinister press which begins with Henri Rochefort and ends with Ravachol. No doubt there are analogies between a chapter of Amos or Isaiah and an anarchist article. Both are short, and both contain violent denunciations of the rich. But while the resemblances go no farther, the contrasts are nearly inexhaustible. Let us begin with the most obvious, though not the most important. To the journalist the very condition of success is that his paper shall be popular. The prophet, too, had to draw an audience, and, as M. Renan points out, he sometimes attracted it by sufficiently strange methods of self-advertisement. But he depended neither on their plaudits nor on their pence, and therefore, unlike the democratic journalist, he could speak the whole truth, or what seemed to him the truth, without adulteration or reserve. In this respect the Neapolitan capuchin, to whom M. Renan also compares him,[1] occupies an equally independent position; but there is the enormous difference that the capuchin belongs to a vast organisation of immense antiquity. He occupies a place in its hierarchy, and is amenable to his official superiors; he fights for their aggrandisement, and his successes score as points in their game. In a less degree the same remark applies to the revolutionary journalist. He also has an organised party behind him, who shelter him in adversity and give him a share of the spoils when they win. Any day he may be carried into place or power by a wave of popular feeling as Rochefort was in 1870, as he would again have been had General Boulanger triumphed in the elections of 1889.

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[1] P. 41. [2] P. 96. [3] P. 154. [4] P. 209.

[5] P. 229. The exact words are: "*procédant par la solidarité, ignorant l'individu.*"

[6] P. 427. [7] P. 496.

The great prophets were essentially independent of all such corporate obligations and party ties, and above them. It was the fashion not long ago, and still is in certain quarters, to speak of them as an organised body in the Israelite or Jewish community, actuated by a spirit of jealousy towards the priesthood, and forming a centre of opposition to its claims. All such ideas have been finally dispelled by the great critical discoveries of the last generation, which prove that the priesthood itself as a powerful hereditary corporation did not exist until after the return from Babylon, and was then rather the creation than the opponent of prophetism. Schools of the prophets there undoubtedly were, but they seem to have resembled the dancing dervishes of our own day rather than the great writers to whom we now give the name, and who, indeed, included them in a common denunciation with the corrupt nobles and priests. Speaking for himself, Amos indignantly repudiated all connection with the guild. When Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, bade him "flee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there"—turn an honest penny by lecturing, as we should say—he answered: "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, and Iahveh took me from following the flock, and Iahveh said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." In like manner Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel describe themselves as receiving individual, unexpected, and even unwelcome calls. No doubt, like the journalist, the capuchin, the socialist agitator—one may perhaps add the temperance lecturer—they spoke and wrote as the mouthpieces of a cause infinitely higher and greater than themselves. The vital difference was that they bore no party banner, that they preached no partial reform. They were animated and borne up in death-defying courage and faith by the vital, victorious spirit of Israel as a nation without distinction of class or tribe, and —mounting higher, further still—by the spirit of the world as a whole without distinction of imperial or vassal states.

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[1] II., p. 423.

Hence follows another fundamental contrast. The journalist is almost always, from the nature of his calling, a revolutionist—sometimes of the mild and sleepy type that prefers lying on the left to lying on the right side, or *vice versâ;* sometimes of the violent and furious type that would turn the house upside down; but always a revolutionist in the sense of desiring a transfer of power. We are all unhappily familiar with the method employed for accomplishing this end—a perpetual, microscopic criticism of the words and actions of the office-holders for the time being, varied by corresponding puffery of their rivals, and promises of the great things they will do when their innings comes, and seasoned by appeals to the lowest passions of human nature, to the impulses of destructiveness and greed. Far otherwise was it with the prophets. Like true Orientals, they recognise only one form of government, an absolute monarchy, and their evident wish is that it should be transmitted by hereditary succession. I speak only of the writing prophets, not of those earlier half-legendary seers —Samuel, Ahijah, Elisha—who were always pulling down one king and setting up another. How different was the spirit of Hosea; with what feelings he contemplated the treacherous massacres that accompanied the overthrow of the house of

Omri—massacres evidently condoned or approved by Elisha—may be seen from the name given to his child: "Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." The experience of two centuries had taught the prophets the uselessness, and worse than uselessness, of merely replacing one dynasty by another; and they were deeply impressed by the tranquillity of Judah under the legitimate sceptre of the house of David. Nor did they believe much in a change of ministry. Only on a single occasion did Isaiah interfere to effect the substitution of one high official for another. Being much displeased with the conduct of a certain Shebna, who was so confident of holding office for his whole lifetime as to begin hewing out a sepulchre for himself, apparently within the precincts of the royal palace, the prophet, speaking in the name of Iahveh, recommended that he should be replaced by Eliakim. M. Renan refers invidiously to this passage as a puffing advertisement (*réclame*) of Eliakim; yet he candidly admits that, if Shebna had not been counterbalanced by Isaiah, Jerusalem under Hezekiah would probably have shared the fate of Samaria. We shall have to consider later the importance of the part played by the prophets as political advisers. We are dealing now with their general attitude towards the community and the state. Here Isaiah's interference on behalf of Eliakim is, as I have said, a solitary exception to the rule they generally observed of leaving the constitution of society as they found it, while inculcating on all classes the same principles of purity, justice, and mercy. To speak of their ideal as in any sense democratic betrays a thorough confusion of Western with Eastern, of modern with ancient modes of thought and action. Amos and Isaiah had no notion of setting class against class, or of putting themselves at the head of a popular faction to redress the wrongs of the oppressed. M. Renan does indeed fancy that he has discovered the existence of such a faction under Hezekiah, calling themselves the *anavim*, or poor and needy; he quotes long passages from the Psalter, giving expression to their enmities and their griefs;[1] but here, again, we see the danger of ignoring the results of criticism. In the opinion of the best judges the Psalms referred to, so far from belonging to the age of Isaiah, date from a period not less than two hundred, and possibly three or even four hundred years later. Indeed, M. Renan himself, with his usual candour, reminds us that the word *anavim* is never used by Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Nothing can well be imagined more wearisome and profitless than an old newspaper article; in many instances nothing could seem more hollow or insincere. To this rule the articles of an irreconcilable French journalist offer no exception. How artificial is the indignation! How shameless the misrepresentation of facts! How poisonous the misconstruction of motives! The words of the prophets, on the other hand, have continued through all ages as fresh as when they were first uttered, and even now, when we no longer regard them as magical revelations of the unseen world, they are studied with unabated interest. This is a point on which I need not enlarge, as their claim to a superhuman origin is now most frequently rested on their marvellous power over the conscience and the imagination. They have earned an immortal life because the men who uttered those words rose far above all the petty and partial and transitory antagonisms by which the ingenious French historian would explain their activity.

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[1] III., pp. 41, 45 *sqq.*

M. Renan urges that the prophets resemble the radical journalists of our day in the vagueness of their charges and the violence of their declamations.[1] Some of their charges sound distinct enough, and are reproduced with amplifications by himself. "The administration of justice was the greatest curse of the age; false witness was the commonest thing in the world; thus the dominant party held the lives of its adversaries in its hands." Very true; but observe what follows: "The fanatical party (Isaiah and his friends) did not fail to use this means of ridding themselves of their enemies."[2] Not a tittle of evidence is adduced in support of this accusation, which I quote only to show the animus of the writer. On two occasions Jeremiah specifies the grievances of the oppressed poor plainly enough. At a time of utter destitution and imminent danger of complete national ruin, when Pharaoh Necho had stripped the country of its gold and silver, King Jehoiakim found nothing better to do than to build a new palace of the costliest materials and on the largest scale. He either employed forced labour, or refused to pay his workmen their stipulated wages, thereby bringing down on himself a stern and well-merited rebuke from Jeremiah. It seems incredible, but it is a fact that the effeminate tyrant finds an apologist in the philosophical historian, to whom ruinous luxury seems meritorious as a protest against moral rigour. M. Renan is good enough to admit that "*if* Jehoiakim left his workmen unpaid he was certainly in the wrong," but hastens to add that, "when we find those that now give work to the people habitually spoken of as robbers by the organs of the democracy, we become cautious about putting faith in such allegations."[1] This new method of writing history savours somewhat of reasoning in a circle. First the prophets are likened to radical journalists, and then they are assumed to speak according to the same standards of veracity and good sense. The contrast drawn by Jeremiah between Jehoiakim and his father, the great reformer Josiah, gives his critic occasion for a not very creditable sneer. "Did not thy father," says the prophet, "eat and drink and do judgment and justice? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well." How, it is asked, can Josiah be called happy when he was killed at Megiddo? Strange that a Frenchman of Athenian culture should call any life unhappy that ended with a heroic death on the battlefield.

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[1] II., p. 493.

[2] III., p. 124.

Despite repeated warnings from Jeremiah, who alone had courage and foresight enough to speak unwelcome truths, Zedekiah revolted against his lawful suzerain, Nebuchadrezzar, and speedily found his capital invested by a Babylonian army. The Jewish king, in his terror, proclaimed the emancipation of all the Hebrew men and women who were at that time held in bondage. It appears that this was no more than the remedy for a grievous wrong, for the year of Jubilee was passed, and by the Deuteronomic law they were entitled to their freedom; which, however, on this occasion seems to have been only granted on condition that they should join in the defence of the city. The decree was obeyed; but soon afterwards Nebuchadrezzar raised the siege, and the freedmen were again reduced to slavery by their former owners. Then the avenging voice of the prophet made itself heard in accents of terrific sarcasm: "Thus saith Iahveh: Ye have not hearkened unto me to proclaim liberty, every man to his brother, and every man to his neighbour; behold I proclaim unto you a liberty, saith Iahveh, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine.......And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant......when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof, the princes of Judah and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land......I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and......of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven and to the beasts of the earth" (Jer. xxxiv. 17–20). It is admitted that this time the indignation of the prophet was

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[1] III., p. 274.

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[1] III., p. 358.

perfectly justified.[1] Yet one fails to see how, on M. Renan's principles, the whole story is to escape suspicion, or why the breach of faith should not be excused on grounds of State necessity. Meantime I must ask the reader to bear in mind the latter part of the quotation, as it will be referred to in the sequel.

If, however, it could be shown that the prophets were Socialists—if, that is to say, their quarrel was not with the abuses and corruptions, but with the very structure and foundation, of civilisation as they knew it—then, indeed, our estimate of their trustworthiness, of their ethical value, and of their historical importance would be seriously affected. More than this, we should have to frame a new philosophy of history, race, and religion—a philosophy that would claim for Judæa, for the Semites, for monotheism, what has hitherto been claimed for republican Athens and Rome, for the Aryans, for free Hellenic speculation. So great a change in opinion could be justified only by the strongest arguments. But M. Renan, after his manner, produces no arguments at all—gives us nothing more than repeated assertions. If he should live to write the history of Greece, we may expect to find him making assertions of a directly opposite tendency, which will then have the advantage of being true. For we are in a position to show that the prophets were not Socialists in any sense of the word; that Socialism had never dawned on their horizon; that it was, on the contrary, a creation of the Greek genius, and an outgrowth of democratic institutions.

Socialism is now generally understood to mean the abolition or restriction of private property, in order to the more equal diffusion of wealth and happiness through the entire community.[1] The question whether such an arrangement is practicable or desirable need not delay us here. The important thing is that we should distinguish it from all legislation directed towards the protection of the poor against the fraud or violence of the rich, and against administrative oppression, as well as from all exhortations to private charity. A very little consideration will enable us to perceive that Socialism, so understood, can be developed only at a late stage of civilisation. Property must have come to be clearly distinguished from its owners—not such an easy process as some may imagine; attention must have been called to the moral evils arising out of its appropriation by a few, a high ideal of disinterestedness must have been framed, if it is hoped that the rich will voluntarily surrender a part of their superfluities; or a high degree of concerted action must have become possible among the poor if it is expected that they will possess themselves by force of what is wanting to them. By a still harder effort of abstraction, men must have learned to distinguish the community as a whole from its component members, and they must have had long experience of a centralised administration successfully managing the affairs of the nation, before they feel disposed to trust it with the office of regulating industry and distributing its fruits where they are needed. Only in the centres of Western civilisation has such an elaboration of ideas ever been possible. An equally important consideration is that entertainment of them implies a transformation of theological beliefs wholly inconsistent with Eastern habits of thought. Men must have convinced themselves that the social organism is a machine that they have created for themselves, and can alter at their own discretion, rather than a divine creation to be altered only at the good pleasure of God. The more primitive faith has hopes of its own, but they are not hopes that take the direction of Socialism. God can create wealth to any extent; therefore he can supply the wants of the poor without depriving the rich of their property. According to the Messianic visions of the prophets, this is exactly what he will do at last. Meantime they invoke his retributive justice to punish the rich for depriving the poor of *their* property. For there comes a period in the history of every community when this worst of all iniquities is habitually perpetrated—when the suppression of it is the one engrossing problem of human thought. On the diverging methods adopted for its solution the future courses of theology and politics once depended.

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[1] Written in 1892. The word most generally used now is "Collectivism."

The pinch of poverty makes itself felt at an early stage of social progress. But the remedy first tried is the occupation of more fertile land—a process generally accompanied by the destruction or enslavement of its previous possessors. When the simultaneous expansion and mutual pressure of the various tribes has restricted each within certain limits, government and religion become organised. Kings and gods are then looked on as a refuge for the distressed, and are freely exchanged for others when they fail to give satisfaction. After a time the notion of law becomes dissociated from its human enactors, and is placed under the guardianship of superhuman beings, who are credited with the origination of this as of every other institution. The divine power, being plastic to reason, is thought of as perfectly just; while sad experience shows that human powers are too often the contrary. When the military class has become differentiated from the industrial class, and governmental functions are monopolised by the former, their increased authority is pretty sure to be exercised for their own profit, and the more so as the king, whose weight is ordinarily thrown on the side of the people, sees himself overshadowed or reduced to a puppet by the nobility, and his jurisdiction set at naught by their lawless violence. As appeals were formerly carried against the chiefs to the king, so they are now carried against both to the gods, or to God conceived as the supreme ruler of the world. Such was the stage of social evolution, and such also the moment of reflection reached almost simultaneously by Hesiod in Bœotia and by the older prophets in Samaria and Jerusalem. There was this difference, however: that, as the shadows of actual iniquity were probably much darker in Palestine, the splendours of idealised and personified justice were there more intense, the vision of impending retribution more imminent and appalling than in Hellas. But in both alike oppression seemed the one great evil; and no more appeared to be needed to make men happy than that every one should possess what his fathers had left him, and be permitted to reap the fruits of his labour in peace.

After this the paths of the two races rapidly diverge. In the elegies of Solon we find much the same story of social antagonism as in Amos, with the same protests against the rapacity of the rich. Solon's touching lamentations over the Athenian citizens who were sold away from their homes vividly recall the organised white slave trade between Israel and Tyre.[1] But the remedies adopted differed as widely as the European differs from the Asiatic character. Solon passed an ordinance relieving the oppressed debtors from a considerable portion of their liabilities; and, by giving the people a large share in the government, he guaranteed them against injustice for the future. So much for M. Renan's assertion that "social questions were severely eliminated in the Greek city-state."[2] Had such been the case, Greece could not have "furnished the complete model of a civilised society."[3] It might more reasonably be maintained that in Greece the social question took precedence of every other. The whole object of a Greek democracy was first to secure the poorer classes against oppression, and then to provide for them a larger share of material advantages. In Athens not only was the principal weight of necessary taxation thrown on the rich, but at last, under the pretence of payment for the performance of public functions, the poor were subsidised out of the exchequer and supplied with amusements free of charge, besides being frequently settled as colonists on conquered territory. Complete Communism was the logical outcome of such tendencies; and accordingly we find Communism ironically suggested by Aristophanes, and most seriously adopted by Plato as part of a comprehensive scheme for the reformation of society.[1] Religion was also the subject of Plato's most anxious consideration—a fact which M. Renan must have forgotten when he rashly declared that "social and religious questions escaped the infantile serenity" of the Greek mind. Neither is it true that no protest against slavery came from Greece.[2] On the contrary, we know, by the evidence of Aristotle, that certain Greek philosophers said what no Hebrew prophet had said before them, what no Christian apostle said after them: Slavery is wrong, because all men are naturally free. If we cannot so peremptorily answer the allegation that "Greece did not, among her other great achievements, create humanitarianism; she despised the barbarians too much for that,"[3] it is simply because the evidence in her favour, if adequately presented, would fill a volume. Here I need only observe that the Greek contempt for barbarians opposed no insuperable obstacle to their admission into the ranks of Hellenism; for, according to Isocrates, what made a Hellene was not race, but education. Our own use of the word

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[1] II., p. 427. [2] III., p. 43. [3] *Ibid,* p. 91.

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[1] I am aware that in the *Republic* Communism is limited to the guardians of the State, who are necessarily but a small minority of the citizens; but in the *Laws*, while recognising private property as the only practicable arrangement in the actual condition of civilisation, Plato pronounces Communism in the most absolute sense to be the ideally best constitution. And Plato's scheme is always criticised by Aristotle in reference to its universal applicability.

[2] III., p. 91. I am not quite sure whether Renan's words imply as much. In form they are limited to the Homeric age.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 504. *Cf.* the first Essay in this volume.

"barbarous," as synonymous with inhuman, shows how we identify the opposite of barbarism, which is Hellenism, with humanity itself.

The history of the social question in Rome runs for a time much the same course as in Athens. There is at first the same oppression of the poor by the rich,[1] the same redress of grievances through the instrumentality of political institutions, and subsequently the same wholesale maintenance of the necessitous classes at the public expense, the chief difference being that what was done by a democratic assembly in the one State was done by a democratic despot in the other.

Far different was the method followed in Judæa. There the prophets sought for salvation by purifying the Iahveh religion from every vestige of polytheism and idolatry, from every intermixture with the cruel and licentious orgies of Syrian superstition. M. Renan does full justice to the enlightened, beneficent, and progressive character of the war waged against heathenism by the noblest spirits of Israel.[2] "In no Greek city," he observes, "was the struggle against idolatry and against selfish priestly interests carried on with such originality as at Jerusalem." At the same time, it should be remembered that nowhere in Greece were those evils so rampant or so noxious. However this may be, the share taken by Jeremiah in the great conflict of the higher against the lower forms of religion might, one would think, have saved him from the outrage of being compared, at least for one side of his character, to an implacable Jesuit.[1] But the experience of the *boulevardier,* and indeed of most modern Frenchmen, stands so far from the prophetic spirit that any attempt to illustrate the one from the other must be hopelessly misleading.

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[1] This remains true of the age of the Gracchi, whatever we may think of the stories told in Livy and accepted by Niebuhr.

[2] III., pp. 180–81.

Monotheism in the abstract is, as F. D. Maurice observed, a mere negation, and not more refreshing than any other negation. The first commandment of the Decalogue, in Clough's cynical version, is a particularly easy one to obey :—

> Thou shalt have one God only ; who
> Would be at the expense of two?

The real value of monotheism lies in its relation to ethics. Unity of person and power implies unity of will. A plurality of gods may pull different ways, what is a virtue to the one being a vice to the other. This, as Mr. Shadworth Hodgson has well observed, gives peculiar interest to the Hippolytus of Euripides, where the hero is punished by Aphrodite for his obedience to Artemis. A single supreme ruler can have only one law—a law which tends to uphold the order that he has created, and which, so far, must make for righteousness. The Creator of the universe is also conceived as omnipotent, and therefore able to enforce his decrees by irresistible sanctions. Thus to the prophets every calamity that befell their own people, or the world in general, was a punishment for sin. Nor is this all. Monotheism promotes, as no other religion can, the idea of a common humanity, or at least of a common nationality, with its accompanying obligations of mutual kindness and mercy.

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[1] III., p. 350.

Among the Greeks Zeus was looked on as the god of suppliants and fugitives. The Iahveh worship supplied a common ground where rich and poor could meet. The foreign cults introduced from Damascus or Assyria, the revivals of Canaanite heathenism, or the survivals of ancestor-worship in old Israelite families, would have no such reconciling influence. It is not to be supposed for a moment that this association between the religion of Iahveh and the practice of righteousness was the result of any conscious reasoning in the minds of the prophets or of their disciples. They preached what we call monotheism, not because it was beneficent, but because it was true, and because its observance was imposed on Israel by the strongest obligations of gratitude for the great deliverance from Egypt.[1] But a connection was established by the logic of feeling, more potent than the logic of thought, when he who loved Iahveh with his whole heart was drawn through that high affection to love his neighbour as himself.

In all this there was nothing, and could be nothing, that we call socialistic. To an Israelite thinker the institution of property must have seemed a primordial ordinance of God, and so also must the inequality of its distribution among men. In fact, what the prophets condemn is not wealth, but wealth procured by violence or fraud. The Deuteronomic legislation is generally admitted to have been compiled under prophetic influence, however alien its ritualistic prescriptions may have been to the spirit at least of Jeremiah. Deuteronomy assumes at every step the existence of private property and the distinction between rich and poor, and virtually sets on them the seal of divine approbation. M. Renan, as we have seen, has the hardihood to call it the programme of a sort of theocratic Socialism ; but we need not go beyond his own pages for a contradictory instance. He refers with approval to the commandment bidding the employer pay the hired labourer his wages before sunset, "for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it."[1] Evidently the Judaic working man had no thought of abolishing the capitalist, or of claiming a share in the profits exactly equal to the amount of wealth created by his labour ; he was only too thankful if his small wages were punctually paid. Nor did the Deuteronomist foresee any termination to this state of things. "The poor," he tells his hearers, "shall never cease out of the land" (xv. 11) ; and, accordingly, sundry provisions are made for relieving their wants—provisions which few would call socialistic, even if they were enforced by the authority of the State, whereas in this instance they were more probably rules laid down for the guidance of private charity. Had there been any germ of Socialism in Deuteronomy, we should expect to find it still further developed in the Priestly Code. Such, however, is not the case. The Levitical legislator sanctions private property to the full extent of permitting it to be inherited ; he regulates sacrifices according to the means of the person offering them ; he allows the very poor to sell themselves to the rich, provided they are not kept in perpetual bondage; and, reviving a very ancient recommendation, he bids the judges "not respect the person of the poor" any more than they are to "honour the person of the mighty"—a clear proof that the poor were not to be released from the duty of fulfilling their legal obligations (Lev. xix. 15). The section containing this passage is supposed to date from the time of Ezekiel, or not much later, and therefore ought to show more immediate traces of prophetic influence than the rest of the Priestly Code. In the oldest collection of laws the rule runs: "Neither shalt thou favour a poor man in his cause" (Exod. xxiii. 3). The Deuteronomist omits it, possibly because in his time there was no danger of any such partiality.[1]

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[1] I am not assuming that the Exodus was historical, but only that it was believed to be historical when the great prophets wrote.

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[1] Deut. xxiv. 14, 15 ; Renan, III., p. 230.

That a learned, acute, and candid historian should pervert, or at least miscall, patent facts to such an extent is a phenomenon demanding some explanation. One cause of M. Renan's aberrations is, as I have already said, his growing appetite for popularity. Maurice spoke of the *Vie de Jésus* as a translation of the language of the Gospel into the language of the boudoir. We have it now supplemented by a translation of the language of the prophets into the language of the boulevard. But other causes have also been at work to bias the judgment of the eminent writer. Regarding as he does, with perfect correctness, the ethical teaching of Jesus as springing directly from the teaching of the older prophets; and regarding as he does, with less correctness, primitive Christianity as Socialism put into practice, he naturally looks for a germ of the later in the earlier morality, and, looking for it, he finds it.

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[1] It is a curious instance of learned ignorance that Emmanuel Deutsch, the great rabbinical scholar, should have credited the Talmud with the subtle observation that judges are liable to be prejudiced in favour of the poor. Readers of Charles Reade's novel, *A Simpleton,* will remember how a London magistrate, taken from the life, will not listen to a charge of theft against a servant-girl, though supported by the clearest evidence.

But it is by no means certain that the early Christians had their goods in common, or condemned the possession of wealth. No such idea is to be found in the writings of our earliest contemporary authority, St. Paul; in the oldest Gospel, that of Mark, it only appears on a single occasion —the story of the young man seeking salvation; while the third Gospel and the Acts, in which it becomes prominent, are considered by good authorities to be idealising works of later date. Granting, however, that the early Church was communistic, we have to ask under what inspiration the tendency arose; and the answer at once suggests itself that here, as in other points, the influence of Essenism is apparent. Now, Zeller has, with great plausibility, traced the Communism of the Essenes, as well as some other practices of theirs, to a Pythagorean—that is to say, to a Greek—source.[1] And, although frequently disputed, this derivation has been recently fortified by the adhesion of no less a scholar than Professor Schürer.[2] Thus the Socialism of Christianity, questionable enough in itself, affords no ground for ascribing any such doctrine to the prophets of Israel.

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[1] Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*, V., pp. 325 *sqq.* (3rd ed.).

[2] *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, II., pp. 491 *sq.* (2nd ed.).

Perhaps another and still stronger consideration operated to suggest to M. Renan what seems so utterly mistaken an interpretation of Hebrew prophecy. It may have seemed to him that the demand for justice so powerfully expressed by Amos, and, in a less degree, by the prophets of Jerusalem, necessarily carried with it a condemnation of the existing system of property, with its resulting inequalities of material happiness. We do hear it sometimes urged that for one man to be rich and another poor, when the former works no harder than the latter, or, as frequently happens, does not work at all, is unjust on the face of it. Again, it is urged that it is unjust to pay the labourer less than the exact pecuniary equivalent of the wealth he creates, or to ask interest for a loan. Such arguments may be good or bad; I have no wish to enter into a discussion of their validity. As a matter of fact, very few Individualists would accept them. Certainly the chief philosophical representative of Individualism, Herbert Spencer, far from admitting the abstract justice of Socialism, would call it the negation of justice. But on this point M. Renan occupies a very peculiar, perhaps I may say a unique, position. He evidently looks on Socialism as being at one and the same time perfectly just, perfectly humane, and perfectly inexpedient. Such a paradox is quite in keeping with his general philosophy, if we can dignify with that name his cheerfully ironical way of looking at things. The world, he has told us elsewhere, is essentially unjust *(l'injustice même)*, and the thought does not seem to cause him much distress. Perhaps it will be set right some day; perhaps not. Meantime the brilliant intellectual culture, the decorative adjuncts, the charm of high-bred manners that make life worth living for him, are rooted in social inequalities. But Socialism also has its æsthetic side, and appeals to romantic imaginations. Thus through his very culture he can admire while he condemns the fanatics who would replace it by a measured and monotonous happiness.

Fortunately, we are relieved from entering into a discussion of this alleged antinomy between justice and civilisation; for to the prophets, at any rate, justice did not mean the equalisation of social conditions. It meant that every one should continue to possess his own in peace, his own being what law and custom entitled him to. It seemed no hardship to Nathan that one citizen should have exceeding many flocks and herds, and another only one ewe-lamb; the injustice began when the rich man robbed his poor neighbour of that solitary possession. Elijah did not propose to nationalise Ahab's ivory house, but only that the royal family should not seize Naboth's vineyard, and do its owner to death through the agency of perjured witnesses. Jeremiah would not have grudged Jehoiakim the pleasure of a new palace if he had paid the masons and carpenters for building it. However strange it may seem to the present generation, the prophets, and indeed all good Israelites, held that to keep one's word was an essential element of justice, or rather its very foundation. To the Psalmist the man who "walks uprightly and works righteousness" is also the man who "swears to his own hurt and changes not." Let me add that he does not take usury; but on this point Aristotle, the great anti-Socialist thinker, would have professed the same opinion. Looking back now to Jeremiah's denunciation of the faithless nobles who re-enslaved their emancipated bondsmen, we are able to appreciate the full significance of their crime. They had broken a contract made according to the most ancient Semitic custom, by cutting the sacrificial victims in two, arranging them in parallel rows, and walking between the severed halves. This was called "cutting a covenant," and the parties so pledged invoked on themselves the fate of the slaughtered and divided animals should they be faithless to their contract. Next to kinship, this was the firmest bond of moral obligation between man and man, and eventually it seems to have assumed a higher sanctity even than the ties of blood; for, while all other duties were placed under the sanction of religion, the binding force of religion itself rested on the duty of fulfilling the covenant made on Sinai between Israel and Iahveh.

Emerson has finely observed that it is the privilege of the intellect to carry every fact to successive platforms. The things of the intellect have no more distinguished living representative than M. Renan.[1] Let us, then, grant him this privilege to its utmost extent. Let us not take it amiss if he smiles with tolerant, good-humoured irony at our attempts to tie him down pedantically to the accepted meanings of words; if he attributes our excessive logical punctiliousness to a lingering strain of the Puritanism that we profess to have disregarded in theology. A Socialist, he may observe, is not necessarily a Communist, with a cut-and-dried scheme for handing over land and capital to the State; nor did he ever represent the prophets as so many Fouriers and St. Simons. It is enough that they give a somewhat disproportionate share of their attentions to the sufferings of the poor, and that the earlier prophets at least treat religion and government mainly as instruments for redressing the wrongs of the oppressed, to the neglect or disparagement of other, perhaps more important, considerations, such as the national defences, the adornment of life, and the study of pure truth. By this concentration on a single class of interests, and by the violence of their language, they differ from the Greeks, while to the same extent they resemble the modern irreconcilable journalist. Agreeing to use the word "Socialism" in this extended sense, I must still demur to the application. For what we call the social question did not even exist for the prophets. What they demanded was the enforcement of the ordinary criminal law, the expediency of which is no longer a question, except perhaps among the irreconcilable journalists. The rest of us, at any rate, hold it to be the first condition of existence to a civilised community, and it is fairly well fulfilled by the modern State. Such brigandage as the prophets describe, if practised at all now, is practised by members of the poorer classes. But experience shows that social order, ever so well maintained, leaves an enormous mass of human misery untouched ; the problem how to get rid of this misery is precisely what we call the social question. That it should be asked at all presupposes a rather high standard of morality; it assumes that the well-to-do classes are seriously interested in the welfare of their less fortunate fellow-citizens. But neither morality nor religion will tell us how to solve it, any more than they can tell us how best to reform the Government, or to organise the national defences. Rather must social organisation help morality, if it be true, as some insist, that our present commercial system makes honesty impossible. In other words, the problem is not moral, but intellectual, because the question is not one of ends, but of means. All admit that the welfare of the masses is supremely desirable ; what inquirers differ about is the way in which to set to work in order to obtain it. The Socialist has one scheme, the Individualist another ; the party politician says that he has more pressing business to look after. The Hebrew prophet, could we consult him, would tell us to be very good and religious, and Iahveh would make everybody happy. He saw the end, but not the means.

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[1] Written in 1892.

Thus, if we cannot say, with M. Renan, that the abuses denounced by the prophets are social necessities,. neither can we say, with M. James Darmesteter, that their teaching, reinforced by modern science, suffices to meet our present needs. In the first place, the simple injunction of morality, even when backed up by any amount of supernatural terrors and hopes, seems scarcely enough to make men good ; and, in the second place, even if men were all individually to become good, the working of the whole industrial machine as at present arranged would not necessarily become beneficent in its operation. We must either come to recognise a large residue of misery as inevitably resulting from the constitution of things in themselves, or we must devise a scheme for getting rid of it by some great concerted series of associated actions. In either case it will be the tradition of Greek philosophy, not of Hebrew prophecy, that we shall continue. Philosophy teaches us to understand the eternal concatenation of causes and effects, and this leads to resignation; or to practise the successful adaptation of means to ends, and this brings about reform.

The prophetic view of life was what the Germans call "unvermittelt"—unmediated—or, to use a barbarous but expressive word, unmachined; and the void the prophets left was destined to be fatally supplied, first by the priests, and afterwards by the Scribes and Pharisees. But as a moral programme it was complete. No one virtue is favoured at the expense of the rest. Recent critics have dwelt, with excessive emphasis, on their inculcation of justice and mercy; but the prophets give quite as much prominence to truthfulness, temperance, and purity. If we do not find exhortations to courage and patriotism, the reason is that these virtues could take care of themselves. Like all the other Semites, the Hebrews were ready to fight for their country to the last drop of their blood; the duty of wise counsellors was rather to restrain than to urge them on.

We pass to the charge most often brought or insinuated by M. Renan against the prophets, that they were bad citizens—factious fanatics, who habitually obstructed the Government in providing for the national defence. Let us remember what was the position of Judæa during the last century and a half of her existence as a kingdom. She was for the whole of that period, with one brief interval of subjection to Egypt, a vassal State of the great Mesopotamian monarchy, under the headship first of Nineveh, and afterwards of Babylon. She owed this position to the pusillanimity of Ahaz, who, contrary to the advice of Isaiah, had sought the protection of Tiglath-pileser against the combined forces of Israel and Damascus, consenting in return to become his tributary. The yoke thus voluntarily assumed seems to have been very galling—at least to the Judæan nobles, who were constantly endeavouring to shake it off. As Judah was evidently far too weak to resist Assyria single-handed, their invariable policy was to call in the help of Egypt. This step was resolutely opposed by the prophets, who well knew into what a decrepit condition the once formidable monarchy of the Nile had fallen, and how untrustworthy were any promises from that quarter. We may well believe also that, subjection for subjection, they preferred the rule of their ancient kinsfolk on the Euphrates to that of their ancient taskmasters in the Delta. At any rate, their advice was eminently judicious, and it even extorts the reluctant approval of M. Renan, who allows that, "on the whole, Isaiah was right, notwithstanding the strangeness of his arguments. Egypt was not a solid support."[1]

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[1] III., p. 14.

But Isaiah was no advocate of peace at any price. When Sennacherib insolently, and it would seem in defiance of sworn treaties, demanded the surrender of Jerusalem, and when the hearts of her defenders were failing, the prophet at that decisive moment confronted the emissaries of the great conqueror with a defiance still haughtier than their own, and saved the future of religion by his timely assurance. Here, again, M. Renan admits that "the conduct of Isaiah seems to have been most correct."[1] On another occasion, when Baladan, king of Babylon, sought to draw Hezekiah into a compromising alliance, the prophet is said to have uttered a significant warning of the danger involved in such a scheme; and once more his policy is coldly commended by the historian.[2]

The part imposed on Jeremiah a hundred years later differed in some essential respects from that played by his great predecessor. He had not to rouse the nobles of Judæa from a state of careless frivolity or of mournful apathy, but rather to discountenance their overweening confidence and spasmodic energy. It would seem that the Iahvistic movement, with its accompanying conception of Zion as the chosen dwelling-place, the holy and inviolable temple of Judah's God, had already taken such a hold on men's imaginations as to inspire them with a belief in its impregnability to attack. On the other hand, the overlord of Palestine was no mere conqueror, no blind destroyer like Sennacherib, but probably the greatest and wisest ruler that the East has yet seen. Nebuchadrezzar united distinguished military abilities to an equal eminence in the arts of peace; all that later generations attributed to the mythical Semiramis was really done by him. For an Oriental despot he showed exceptional clemency, or at least exceptional moderation. M. Renan, indeed, says that the chief men of Judah were scalped after the fashion of Red Indians in the presence of Nebuchadrezzar before they were put to death at Riblah.[1] The Biblical narrative gives no support to this assertion. The only evidence adduced in its favour is a figured representation on an Assyrian bas-relief—as if the Babylonians had the same customs as their savage northern neighbours![2] There is every reason to believe that Nebuchadrezzar wished to leave Jerusalem standing as an ornament and bulwark of his empire. In such circumstances the repeated attempts of her nobility and priesthood to shake off the Babylonian yoke were sheer madness, closely akin to the revolt of the Zealots against Rome long afterwards; their faith in divine assistance was inspired by the same obdurate fanaticism.

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[1] III., p. 107.

[2] "Isaïe fut encore inspiré par un politique assez sage" (p. 118).

Jeremiah, alike by his counsels of submission and by his proclamation of a purely spiritual religion independent of sanctuaries and priesthoods, showed himself the true predecessor—more than that, the master and model—of Jesus. Yet M. Renan is so misled by false modern analogies that in this sober, sagacious, far-sighted prophet he can see nothing better than a howling fanatic, half a Félix Pyat, half an implacable Jesuit—a monkish soul without an idea of military honour. In order to understand him, we are told to imagine a French political writer in July, 1870, calling the Prussians the ministers of God.[1] The letters that passed between the Jewish captives in Babylonia and the remnant left in Jerusalem are compared with what we may suppose the correspondence between the transported Communists in New Caledonia and their friends in Paris after 1871 to have been.[2] Most probably the letters from a Parisian Socialist to his more unlucky fellow-conspirators beyond the sea were filled with hopes of a fresh revolution, of a speedy and triumphant return to France, of signal vengeance on the bloody Versaillese. There were, indeed, some among the captive Jews who cherished such hopes of deliverance, and there were some among the priests and prophets of Jerusalem who encouraged them. These, however, were the bitter enemies of Jeremiah, and nothing incensed them more than the true prophet's advice to settle down quietly in their new country, building houses and planting gardens, as they and their posterity were to live there for seventy years, but, above all, to behave as law-abiding citizens. Consulted by Zedekiah, during the final siege, about the best course to pursue, Jeremiah advised, what was in fact the only rational plan, immediate surrender; as if, says M. Renan, military honour was nothing! The historian ought to know that honour in our sense was then undiscovered, and that even now honour does not require that an untenable position should be held at the risk of utter destruction.

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[1] III., p. 365.

[2] For a juster appreciation of the great Chaldæan king see Eduard Meyer's admirable *Geschichte des Altherthums.*

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[1] III., p. 289.

[2] *Ibid,* p. 319.

Zedekiah's motive was really not honour of any kind, but moral cowardice—the fear of being ridiculed by the Jews who had already gone over to Nebuchadrezzar. After all, M. Renan honestly admits that "Jeremiah's fierce declamations, had they been listened to, would have prevented frightful massacres";[1] but his supposed case of a Frenchman foreseeing and announcing the disaster of 1870 is not an instructive parallel. France was no weak vassal State, bound by solemn engagements to pay tribute to the king of Prussia, but an independent Power, and, as many thought, fully the equal of Germany in military strength; nor was there any danger that Paris, in the event of capture, would incur the fate of Jerusalem.

To represent Jeremiah as a religious enthusiast, opposed to the lay element, the military and political leaders of the Jewish State, is an entirely mistaken view. No such distinction then existed, for the simple reason that all parties were imbued with religious ideas; the only difference was in the relative purity and enlightenment of the faith held. The party of resistance *à outrance* was represented not merely by selfish and treacherous oppressors of the poor, but by prophets who vehemently predicted that the foreign yoke would be broken and the sacred vessels brought back from Babylon within a year, by priests who kept shouting that Iahveh would not permit his temple to be destroyed. In answer to their chimerical expectations of divine assistance, Jeremiah was obliged to keep on repeating that a people so plunged in immorality and superstition would deservedly be abandoned to the doom their own folly had incurred. But he was not, as seems to be popularly supposed, a mere prophet of evil. Taking up and giving a still higher development to Isaiah's great idea of the Remnant that was to be saved, he trusted—as the event proved, with perfect correctness—to the purifying influences of exile for the filtering out of a new people that had been "poured from vessel to vessel," not "left standing on his own lees" like Moab, whose "taste remaineth in him and his scent is not changed." Thanks to those prophets whom we are now asked to look on as a subversive and dissolving force, working only for individual happiness and indifferent to great public interests, Israel again became a united and heroic nation when the ruin which they foretold had already long overtaken Edom and Moab, Philistia, Tyre, and Damascus—if by ruin we may understand the forfeiture of their political existence. To say that "the Hebrew thinker, like the modern Nihilist, holds that if the world cannot be just it had better not be at all,"[1] presents an unmeaning alternative. The Hebrew thinker held that justice was the foundation of all stable existence; that when the divinely commissioned forces, ever operating for the destruction of iniquity, had done their work of denudation, an everlasting core of righteousness would remain to be the centre of a new world of life and light and joy.

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[1] III., p. 333.

One more charge remains to be noticed. It is said that the victory of the pietists under Josiah was followed by a literary decline ; that no more such works as the Song of Solomon, Job, and Proverbs were produced.[1] Here, too, we see the fatal effect of ignoring the results of modern criticism. There is a growing consensus of opinion in favour of placing Job and Proverbs long after Jeremiah ; and more than one critic would assign as late a date to the Song of Solomon. In fact, we have to thank the monotheistic movement for a great literary revival succeeding to a century of almost utter sterility. No nation could have gone on for ever producing such wonderful works as the old heroic and patriarchal legends, the cycle of prophetic narratives, and the earliest written prophecies. An age of reflection could do nothing better than give us what the perfected Iahveh religion actually gave, the visions of Ezekiel, the nameless voices of the Exile and the Return, the Psalter, and—*pace* M. Renan—the Book of Job.

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[1] II., p. 438.

This, then, is the result of our inquiry. The prophets no more anticipated the problems of modern society than they predicted the events of modern history ; but if we desire a fitting modern parallel to their spirit and influence, it must be sought among the wisest, calmest, and best balanced, rather than among the flightiest and most feverish heads of our time. Balance and harmony are, in truth, the most pervasive characteristics of their teaching, by whatever tests it is tried, with whatever order of interests it has to deal. In the existing remains of their discourses the directly anti-social actions are not more severely condemned than the vices whose deleterious operation is less obvious and immediate. The rights of the poor are vindicated, but without prejudice to other rights on which the future of civilisation depended. There is nothing in the religion of the prophets that the purest morality can condemn; there is nothing in their morality that the most prudent or patriotic statesman need ignore. They wrote both for an age and for all time, using the utmost exaltation of imaginative sublimity, the keenest arrows of sarcasm, the tenderest entreaties of wounded yet unconquerable affection, and the most concentrated energies of language as an embodiment and expression of the highest spiritual verities then attained. No minds were ever, in T. H. Green's sense, more truly organic to the eternal consciousness. None ever placed the divine so far above the human, but none ever wrought more surely for the reunion and recognition of both as interdependent elements of a single absolute existence.

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[1] III., p. 250.

THE HIGHER CRITICISM AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Theological orthodoxy, even orthodoxy of the most rigid type—the orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic Church—has made its peace with physical science. The nebular hypothesis, the antiquity of the earth, the antiquity of man, the development of our race by natural selection from purely animal ancestors, the intimate connection between psychic and nervous processes—whatever, in short, we sum up under the convenient name of evolution—may be accepted and taught without prejudice to the religious belief, whose very foundations such theories were but lately supposed to threaten. A cynic might observe that, if it takes two to make a quarrel, it also takes two to make peace, and that, so far, science has received the overtures of her old enemy very much as the overtures of Darius after the battle of Issus were received by Alexander. Let us assume, however, that the conflict is at an end, or that the abandonment of a few indefensible outworks has left the ecclesiastical citadel more secure than ever against assault. Still, the conflict, so happily concluded, may not be without its warnings. Was it not, to say the least, ill-advised on the part of theology to provoke such a conflict at all, and still more so to stake her very existence on points as to which, by her own admission, she was quite in the wrong? Is the present moment a well-chosen one for renewing the conflict in another quarter, with at least an appreciable chance of seeing it terminated by another humiliating surrender?

These are questions that answer themselves; yet, from the tone habitually employed by the accredited defenders of orthodoxy in reference to what is called the Higher Criticism, one would imagine that they had never been asked. With some honourable exceptions, it is a tone marked by the same curious mixture of fear, contempt, ridicule, and ignorance that characterised the official denunciations of Darwinism in the last generation, and of geology in the generation before the last. To make the parallel more complete, just as certain timid or jealous or retrograde specialists were acclaimed by the religious and conservative press as the only genuine or authoritative representatives of physical science, so in our own time scholars who uphold the traditional opinions are habitually spoken of by the same press as if they had a monopoly of learning, honesty, and good sense.

But among the controversial devices most freely used to discredit the results of the Higher Criticism there is one not paralleled in the old warfare against advanced physical science. While no one with any pretensions to culture ever supposed that Laplace, Lyell, Darwin, Helmholtz, Claude Bernard, and Berthelot constructed their scientific theories in a spirit of hatred to natural religion, and in order to dispense with the necessity of a Creator and an immortal soul, it is assumed, not only by the vulgar ruck of apologists, but also by many among the most learned and highly-placed teachers of official orthodoxy, that men like Baur and Renan

Kuenen and Wellhausen, have spent their lives in the study of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures only that they might destroy the documentary evidence of revealed religion, although from their point of view the disproof was wholly unnecessary. For these critics, it is said, start with a conviction, based entirely on *à priori* reasoning, that the supernatural does not exist, or cannot be known. Divine omnipotence never intervenes to change the course of nature; divine omniscience never discloses the secrets of futurity to man. So, when the exercise of such miraculous powers is authenticated by historical evidence that would be enough to satisfy the most exacting in the case of any ordinary event, the evidence is rejected as insufficient, or as anonymous, or as of late date, or even as a deliberate fabrication. The most arbitrary hypotheses are put forward to explain how the narratives came into existence, while the documents embodying them are taken away from their reputed authors and assigned in part or wholly to late dates, with no other warrant than the individual caprice of the critic. As fast as one such hypothesis is refuted, another succeeds it, and is proclaimed with equal confidence. Their production is limited only by the ingenuity of unbelief, which, however, exhausts itself in vain efforts to undermine the "impregnable rock" of traditional faith.

Such is the uniform reply made to the Higher Criticism by all its assailants, lay and clerical, Catholic and Protestant. One and the same note sounds through the grave and guarded admonitions of Leo XIII., the smug insular self-satisfaction of Bishop Ellicott, the mild jocularity of Dr. Salmon, the truculent misrepresentations of Dr. Wace, the tortuous evasions of Mr. Gladstone, the supercilious man-of-the-worldism of Mr. Arthur Balfour, and, I am sorry to add, through the efforts, only too successful, of the dying naturalist, Romanes, to sophisticate away his own scientific conscience. Grant, they contend, the credibility of the supernatural, and the Higher Criticism is ruined, the credibility of the Biblical narratives restored.

One must wonder at the moderation with which so irresistible a weapon has been employed. It might be wielded with equal effect in other fields than that of Biblical criticism. Was not the acceptance of evolution a little hasty? Let us see whether the ground abandoned to physical science may not yet be regained.

The nebular hypothesis, as originally framed by Kant and Laplace, is now, I believe, universally abandoned. A spherical body, containing the same amount of matter as our solar system, and filling up the orbit of Neptune, could not revolve on its own axis nor throw off those successive rings out of which the planets were once supposed to be formed. Indeed, the so-called ring of Saturn, which first suggested the hypothesis, is now known not to be a ring at all, but a collection of minute satellites. Nevertheless, astronomers continue to hold a nebular hypothesis of some sort —that is, they believe that the stars and planets were originally formed by the aggregation of smaller bodies. Here, then, is an excellent opportunity for the theologian to intervene and to taunt the physicist with having recourse to the most desperate shifts in order that he may escape from the unpalatable alternative of admitting that the celestial orbs, as we now behold them, were the work of a Divine Hand, which, in the poet's words, "bowled them flaming through the dark abyss."

Turn we now to geology. It is no secret that the authorities on that science are at sixes and sevens with regard to the antiquity of the globe, its actual consistency, and the nature of the forces by which its crust was shaped. But all are agreed in assuming that its age must be counted by millions of years, and that during the whole of that immense period none but material agencies, such as fire, air, water, and ice, have been at work beneath or above its surface. Here, again, there seems to be an admirable opportunity for our orthodox friends to come to the rescue. I can imagine them exclaiming: "You are struggling with difficulties of your own creation; accept the miraculous, and they will disappear by enchantment. Only prejudice forbids you to believe that God made the world in six days. The story of the Deluge is perfectly in harmony with the catastrophic theory of Cuvier, which you abandoned for the uniformitarianism of Lyell merely because it necessitated an occasional intervention of Divine omnipotence." I can imagine such a speech, but I do not hear it.

Many of my readers will remember the controversy that raged some time ago between Herbert Spencer and Dr. Weismann on the question whether natural selection alone is sufficient to account for the origin of species, or whether it should be supplemented by the transmission of acquired parental qualities. The controversy was conducted with conspicuous ability on both sides, and other physiologists took part in the discussion, scarcely, if at all, inferior to the original disputants in knowledge and reasoning power. Which party got the better of the argument is out of my power to decide, and, indeed, it is not yet concluded; but one point struck me very forcibly as having been established beyond the reach of doubt, to judge by the unanimity with which it was assumed by all who expressed an opinion on either side. No one seemed to question for a moment that, however species originated, they were brought into existence by purely natural causes. Again, the supernaturalistic philosophers had an opportunity for urging the insufficiency of a mere physical hypothesis, the unreasonableness of rejecting miracles where their aid appeared most necessary; and again the opportunity was missed, or so feebly used that public opinion remained uninfluenced by the reminder.

Among various explanations of this strange anomaly that might be offered, the following seems the most probable: Physical science is understood to proceed solely by the method of induction, and it is as a result of induction that the theory of evolution has been accepted as applicable to the whole range of physical phenomena. Facts guaranteed by observation and experiment go to show that the heavenly bodies either are, or have been, in a state which can be fully accounted for only as a result of the aggregation of diffused matter moving in obedience to the law of gravitation, while opinions may well differ as to the precise manner in which the aggregation took place. An examination of what is going on over the earth's surface shows it to be subjected to processes of upheaval, subsidence, denudation, erosion, and accumulation of fluviatile deposits; the prolonged action of these processes would account for any changes known to have ever occurred. Other inductive evidence justifies us in concluding that such action was actually exercised in the past; although the *modus operandi* in any particular instance leaves room for considerable diversity of opinion. Finally, ascending to biology, the anatomy and physiology of contemporary plants and animals, and the stratigraphical arrangement of extinct species, as demonstrated by geological research, carry home the conviction that, since the first dawn of life, no species has ever come into existence except as the offspring of some different and older species; and all that Darwinism, or any rival theory, attempts is to account for this admitted fact. To put the point somewhat differently, in those sciences that deal with the material universe naturalism holds the field; supernaturalist explanations only begin where our knowledge ends, and perpetually give way as it progresses. On the other hand, in the case of documents embodying the record of a revelation—assuming that a revelation has actually been given—the relation is reversed. Here supernaturalism occupies the positive pole, and naturalism the negative pole; the reference to ordinary causation only comes in when our faith ends, as the expression of an abstract possibility, the blank form of a scientific explanation where the theological explanation has been arbitrarily rejected, and nothing definitely convincing can be put in its place.

Let us assume that the conservative theologians would accept such a vindication as I have here suggested of their very tolerant attitude towards physical science, contrasting so vividly with their contemptuous repudiation of the Higher Criticism ; and I have tried to put the case for them as strongly as I could. Observe what its adoption implies. Simply this, that when criticism employs the methods of induction it is entitled to the same respect as any other inductive science. Now, in point of fact, the Higher Criticism uses no other methods and makes no larger assumptions than any physical inquirer, while it takes much less for granted than the conservative theologians themselves.

So far I have spoken of the Higher Criticism as if the meaning of the term were universally understood. But, in truth, there are many worthy people to whom it conveys nothing more than a vague emotional association of mingled dread and contempt. Very often we find the mysterious bogey shut up in a cage of quotation marks, as if it were a detected impostor, not fit to go at large. Whether it is intended to cast doubt on the adjective or the substantive, or both, does not appear. We may talk without offence of the higher education and of the higher mathematics—nay, even of the higher theism or the higher pantheism; but not, it would seem, in any serious sense, of the higher criticism. Yet, what the unfortunate name denotes is, after all, something very simple and very necessary. It merely means an inquiry into the composition, authenticity, and date of ancient documents. Such criticism is called "higher" in contradistinction to the "lower" or more elementary criticism which deals with correct readings and the exact meanings of words. No claim to superior dignity or difficulty is necessarily implied, only that the one criticism rests on and presupposes the other, just as the upper story of a house rests on its ground floor.

All ancient literature is amenable to the Higher Criticism ; although, from the language sometimes employed, one would think that it had never been heard of except in connection with the Bible. The Vedas, the Zend Avesta, Homer, Hesiod, the Platonic Dialogues, and some patristic writings, are favourite subjects for its exercise, often with results completely subversive of pre-conceived opinions. Certain Biblical critics have distinguished themselves in profane as well as in sacred literature. Eduard Zeller, the great historian of Greek philosophy, and Albert Schwegler, one of the greatest authorities on early Roman history, both belonged to the much-decried Tübingen School. Within the range of Biblical studies, even the humblest believers must sometimes become higher critics in their own despite, at least if they care to know when the Book of Job was written, or who was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Book of Job suggests considerations highly relevant to our subject. It will scarcely be pretended that the results reached by a critic who sets himself to determine the date and authorship of that wonderful drama need in any way be affected by his opinions about the supernatural. Miracles are related in it; but the most rigid conservatism does not insist on our believing that they actually happened. The story may be a parable, and not literally true. Accordingly, when the higher critics bring it down to the Persian period, or even later, the bitterest intolerance cannot pretend that they are actuated by sinister motives. Whether we assign it to the age of Moses or to the age of the Maccabees, its doctrinal value remains unaltered. So with regard to the alleged interpolations. It would be monstrous to assert that the critics who consider the speech of Elihu to be a later addition of workmanship inferior to the rest of the poem, do so because they find that it stands in the way of their private theories. The question is one of pure literature, of artistic taste, not of theological dogma at all. Of course, a similar remark applies to the other condemned passages, such as the descriptions of the mines, of Leviathan, and of Behemoth.

Another good instance is supplied by the Book of Ecclesiastes. Not long ago nearly everyone believed that this caustic satire was what it professes itself to be—a genuine work of Solomon. Thackeray would have been greatly surprised to hear that his favourite *Vanitas Vanitatum* was not really written by "King David's son the sad and splendid." Yet few scholars would now care to dispute the critical verdict which assigns Ecclesiastes to a date at least six centuries later than the time of Solomon. Here again no rationalistic or *à priori* principle was involved. Inductive evidence alone decided the question, above all the late and debased Hebrew in which the book is written.

All the Hagiographa have in like manner been brought down to post-exilian times, and we might go through them all without finding a single instance to confirm the charge brought against criticism of arbitrarily rejecting whatever testifies to the supernatural, until we come to the Book of Daniel. Here, certainly, are miracles and prophecies of the most astounding description which must be given up as discredited fictions if Daniel is, what free inquiry has ever since Porphyry's time pronounced it to be, a Maccabean forgery. To a Rationalist the prophecies are of course in themselves decisive. But the inductive evidence is quite strong enough to carry conviction without the rationalistic argument, and, were it not for theological prejudice, would long since have been found convincing. The charge of forgery is brought home to pseudo-Daniel not by his true prophecies, but by his false history; by his false prediction of the coming judgment; by his corrupt Hebrew; by the silence of every witness who might have been expected to allude to him from Ezekiel to Ecclesiasticus.[1]

Travelling backwards through the Hebrew Bible, we find ourselves in the second great division known as the Prophets, and embracing, besides the writers now exclusively so-called, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Here, also, the Higher

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[1] The reference in Ezekiel is not to a contemporary, but to a very ancient celebrity.

Criticism has played havoc with old traditions, but only one of its achievements has excited much attention or called down much obloquy on its representatives. I refer to the assignment of many portions of Isaiah, and more particularly of chapters xl.–xlvi., to exilian or post-exilian authors. Here, at first sight, the apologist has an easy game, and can triumphantly carry an uninstructed audience along with him. "You look up and down the book," he will say, "for predictions of the fall of Babylon and of the Return from the Captivity, and wherever you find them you pronounce the whole chapter or section containing them to be a late interpolation or addition. That may be what you call scientific criticism. We, for our part, call it arbitrary, unscrupulous, and 'tendentious,' to use a word invented by your German friends." Those who use such language assume the possibility or, rather, the actual occurrence of miracles which not merely transcend the experience of life, but also transgress the laws of probability and reason. If God ever interferes with the order of nature to the extent of revealing the course of events in the distant future, it must, one would suppose, be as a warning or as a consolation for those to whom the vision is vouchsafed, not as a theatrical exercise of superhuman power. But the contemporaries of Isaiah knew Babylon only as a subject city of Nineveh and a possible ally of its enemies, not as the conqueror and despoiler of Judah; to be assured of its downfall some two centuries later would neither have purified their morals nor strengthened their faith, even supposing them to have listened to the prophet, which they most certainly would not have done. But what gives the Higher Criticism a solid inductive basis is the evidence of language, and by this it is prepared to abide in every instance where a received date has been changed.

In the Hexateuch we have a series of narratives swarming with miracles and prophecies, while in the higher criticism of the Hexateuch we have results of the most revolutionary character that Biblical inquiry, or indeed any branch of ancient history, has ever known. But neither in this instance can it be shown that the criticism was prompted by a desire to get rid of the miracles and prophecies, nor if they were reduced to the proportion of ordinary occurrences would the convincing force of the new views be appreciably diminished. The literary analysis into three distinct series of documents running through the whole compilation would still hold good; the evidence of Hebrew historians and prophets would still prove that the series constituting the Priestly Code was unknown till long after the Return from Babylon, and that the Deuteronomic series was unknown before Josiah and Jeremiah; the analogies of legend would still render it overwhelmingly probable that the patriarchs of the earliest narratives were eponymous heroes who never existed; physical science and ancient history would still prove to demonstration that the stories of the Creation, the Fall, the Deluge, and the Tower of Babel are simple myths. If it be once granted that these results have been obtained by a trustworthy method, it is not, I think, assuming too much to say that such prophecies as the Blessing of Jacob and the

Song of Moses were composed after the event, and may be used for dating the passages in which they occur.

When Bishop Colenso entered on his epoch-making examination of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua, he expressly disclaimed any intention of assailing the credibility of the miraculous narratives as such. At the time a very clever woman observed to the present writer that the Bishop resembled a man who should say, "My dear little fish, you need not be afraid of me, I don't want to catch you; I am only going to drain the pond in which you live." At the present moment the water is very low not only in the Hexateuch, but throughout the Old Testament; most of the fish are dead, and the rest are gasping for breath. Starting, as we have seen, with no prejudices whatever on the subject, the Higher Criticism has proved far more fatal to supernaturalism than that old-fashioned rationalism which was content to strike out or explain away the miraculous portions of Biblical history, while leaving their reputed authorship and general authenticity intact. Rather I should say that the Higher Criticism, without departing from the prudent reserve with which it began, has furnished ample materials for an authoritative judgment to a still higher science for whose sake alone it is worth studying—the science of historical evidence. This science refuses to accept any story not intrinsically probable, except on the testimony of eye-witnesses, or, at the very least, of contemporaries. If a narrator is proved to have made false statements on matters of ordinary experience, his testimony to extraordinary occurrences has no value. If such occurrences are not mentioned by older and apparently more trustworthy narrators of the same history, then the probability that they did not take place becomes extreme. If two narratives of equal value give inconsistent accounts of the same alleged occurrence, the improbability of its having taken place in the manner described is proportioned to the extent of their divergence. One need only apply these canons to the Hexateuch, Judges, and Samuel, as they now may be studied in the light of the Higher Criticism, for the consequences to become at once apparent. The oldest and best "Mosaic" narratives are probably at least five centuries later than the events that they relate; the most recent are nine centuries later. The Priestly record is a deliberate wholesale fabrication; the Deuteronomist, where he does not copy his predecessors, is a pious romancer; the Elohist and the Iahwist differ from one another, in some respects rather widely; the Iahwist document itself shows signs of being a disjointed amalgam. The story of Balaam is made up of at least two contradictory versions, and one of these versions excludes the incident of the talking ass, which belongs to the Iahwist. Let who will believe in the abstract possibility of that performance: can anyone seriously believe that an ass was endowed with a human voice in order to rebuke her master for doing a thing which he had been divinely commanded to do, and which, when he did it, redounded to the glory of Israel and of Israel's God? Literary analysis, when applied to the story of Gideon, leaves it in its original form a series of perfectly natural incidents; and the same may be said of the story of Saul's election to the kingdom. Professor Cheyne has shown in his last work on Isaiah how the story of the moving back of the shadow on the dial—one of the very few miraculous incidents in the history of Judah—was gradually built up in three successive redactions. Of the Elijah and Elisha group of miracles we can only say that they are unsupported by evidence as good as might be quoted for the most extravagant stories of the mediæval saints.

With regard to prophecy in the sense of supernatural prediction, little need be said. As we have seen, the Higher Criticism shows by inductive evidence that the Second Isaiah and Daniel spoke not of future but of contemporary events; the same is true of the Pentateuchal prophecies; many alleged predictions of the literary prophets were not offered as such by their authors, but owe their traditional character to a perverted exegesis; while the announcements, certainly numerous enough, of Israel's redemption and glorification have been signally falsified by history. As to the pretended "Christology of the Old Testament," it has long been dissipated by such a sober interpretation of the texts as would be admitted without dispute in the case of any other document.

I fear that before this some of my readers may have been getting a little impatient. They have perhaps been saying to themselves: "Yes, of course this is all very true of the Old Testament, and we knew every word of it before. But the real question, the only interesting question, is about the New Testament, and especially about the Gospels. They stand on quite a different footing from the Hexateuch and Judges. There are certain stories in the latter that we are not sorry to get rid of. The revelation of Jesus Christ is quite another matter. We neither wish nor are we obliged to part with it. And why should we? Because some stories are mythical does it follow that all are? Because the heroic legends of Greece and Rome are worthless as history, does it follow that we are to lose all confidence in Thucydides and Julius Cæsar, in Demosthenes and Cicero? Ought not the evidence that suffices to prove an ordinary event suffice to prove a miracle where miracles were to be expected, as in this instance they were? For Christianity is itself the standing wonder, only explicable by reference to the personality of Christ as set forth in the Gospels. And then"— But this is not a dialogue, and I am not a thought-reader. Let me recall the question to its original limitations. Our object was to inquire into the truth of a grave charge brought against the Higher Criticism—the charge of preferring a less to a more probable explanation of the same facts, because the more probable explanation would involve the admission that miracles may happen. I have tried to show that, so far as the Old Testament goes, this charge is unfounded. So complete an acquittal of the critics in respect to so important a branch of their activity furnishes at least a strong presumption that in dealing with the documents of early Christianity they have not thrown scientific method to the winds. Sometimes the same men have cultivated both fields, as Ewald, Reuss, and Samuel Davidson; in all cases they have been trained in the same schools and are animated by the same spirit. Suppose it true that they have sometimes gone too far in their negations, or at least farther than a cautious conservatism would approve: their temerity may be easily paralleled in the labours of classical scholarship where hostility to the supernatural cannot be supposed to bias the inquirer. No aspersion is ever cast on the scientific honour of a Hellenist who holds that the speeches in Thucydides are entirely manufactured by that historian, or that Socrates never uttered a single sentence that is put into his mouth by Plato, or that several of the Platonic Dialogues are spurious. Not long ago Xenophon's *Memorabilia* was generally accepted as a genuine account of the Socratic teaching. Several portions of it are now suspected to be very far from deserving that character, yet no outcry has been raised.

Again, it is entirely unwarrantable to assert, as Dr. Salmon does,[1] that critics who disbelieve in the supernatural are on that account interested in denying the authenticity of the books where miracles are related. I should like to ask Dr. Salmon, or any other orthodox Protestant divine, whether he believes in the miraculousness of that extraordinary series of cures related in full detail by St. Augustine at the end of his treatise *De Civitate Dei*, and, if not, whether his incredulity has ever inclined him to reject the treatise itself, or this particular part of it, as a forgery. I have little doubt that he would manage to combine the most absolute disbelief in the miracles as such with the most unhesitating acceptance of the record as coming from the pen of the great Father. At any rate, if I cannot answer for Dr. Salmon, I can answer for the higher critics. If the evidence of eye-witnesses could convert rationalists to a belief in miracles, incredulity on this point would long ago have ceased to trouble the apologist, and Protestantism would have ceased to trouble Rome.

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[1] *Historical Introduction to the Books of the New Testament*, p. 8.

But, as I have said before, there are miracles that the Higher Criticism does reject in a very summary manner—miracles that would be wonders without being signs; miracles that, so far from being of any evidentiary value, would, if they were established, be the destruction of all logical evidence whatsoever; miracles that are a derogation, not from the course of nature, but from the laws of reason. Now these are miracles that apologetic orthodoxy accepts, and attacks the critics for not accepting. If the story of the Virgin-birth were true, how could two such inconsistent accounts of it as those given by the first and the third Evangelist both be current in the early decades of Christian history? How could St. Paul not know it; or, knowing, not allude to it? If the raising of Lazarus is a historical event, how could it escape the notice of the Synoptics? How could the same teacher deliver to the same audience during the same period discourses differing so widely, both in form and matter, as the speeches of Jesus in the First or Third and those in the Fourth Gospel? How could one so gifted with supernatural prescience as to foretell the circumstances of the siege and capture of Jerusalem in the minute detail of the Third Gospel, be so utterly mistaken as to declare, in the words of the Second Gospel, that the end of the world would come within the lifetime of some who were then born (Mark xiii. 30)? Surely modern criticism is entirely within its rights when, just as in the case of Daniel, it uses these two predictions, one fabricated and the other falsified, to place "St. Mark" and "St. Luke" at such a distance from the events they record as to take them out of the category of eye-witnesses, or even of those who derived their information from eyewitnesses.

The question whether the Fourth Gospel was or was not written by St. John is often ignorantly or wilfully confused with a quite different question—the value of Baur's theory as to the evolution of primitive Christianity. In reality the two are quite distinct. First, the untrustworthiness of the gospel was proved. Then and only then did there arise the necessity of asking when and where and by whom was it written. It would no doubt be highly satisfactory if these points could be cleared up. But no constructive solution of the problem could add to the real strength of the destructive criticism which it necessarily presupposes, nor can the fragility of any particular solution take away from that strength. As to the Tübingen theory, it probably retains as much value as any other scientific theory that has now been before the world for fifty years. Let it not be supposed that science alone shares with woman the privilege of changing her mind. Orthodoxy changes also. Compare *Lux Mundi* with *Aids to Faith;* compare the present attitude of Rome towards the higher criticism of the Old Testament with her attitude in Renan's youth. Of course I know what orthodox theologians will say. They have discovered that propositions once supposed to be *de fide* are really open questions. But that is enough. The definition of faith changes with startling rapidity, and perhaps we have not yet reached the limit of its transformations.

We have seen that the higher criticism of the Old Testament, although it did not begin by denying the miraculous, ended by denying it, or rather by leaving the science of historical evidence free to deny it. What, then, it may be asked, is the result towards which New Testament criticism points? It seems to me that the final verdict must be the same. That miracles should go on increasing in magnitude, the farther we go from the place and time of their alleged occurrence, is a circumstance that cannot fail to awaken suspicion. Now the miracles of the Fourth Gospel are the most astounding of all, and are related with the strongest emphasis on their supernatural character and on their evidentiary value as manifestations of the divine omnipotence. There is something particularly Hellenic about the writer's consciousness in this respect—his extreme anxiety to differentiate the miraculous sign from the ordinary course of nature, and to surround it with every guarantee of authenticity. What we find is a wise economy, not, as with the Synoptics, a rank profusion of marvels. There are no cases of diabolical possession, because the Fourth Evangelist, believing though he did in a supreme power of evil, belonged to a society that was too philosophical to explain epilepsy and hysteria, as the lowest savage might, by the presence of malignant spirits. Now it is just this gospel that criticism, for quite other reasons, considers last in order of time, and in the order of ideas most remote from Jewish or Palestinian habits of thought.

Criticism has disengaged from the Acts of the Apostles a contemporary document of high value, supposed to be written by a companion of St. Paul, and known as the "we-source"; it has also subjected the earlier portions of the book to a searching comparison with the parallel narratives contained in the genuine epistles of St. Paul himself. Confining our attention to the supernatural, we find least of it (if, indeed, there be any) in the "we-source," and most in the legendary narratives bearing marks of a comparatively late origin; while the Pentecostal gift of tongues, which in Acts offers such an extraordinary spectacle of divine power, shrinks in St. Paul to a performance very much on a level with the phenomena of the Irvingite church.

On grounds of literary analysis, criticism declares the Second Gospel to be the oldest of the Synoptics. But this document has nothing about the virgin-birth of Jesus, and, when freed of later additions, nothing about the Ascension. According to it, Jesus died with an exclamation of despair on his lips quite incompatible with the prevision of his speedy return to life. His reported refusal to work miracles is probably authentic, as there would have been no reason for inventing it at a time when thaumaturgic powers were freely attributed to him; and we can still see how his appeal to the "sign of the prophet Jonah" was afterwards apologetically corrected into a prediction of his own death, burial, and resurrection. The words "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," by the way, point to a variation of the resurrection-story not otherwise recognised in our gospels.

My object in the foregoing pages has not been to defend the methods and results of the higher Biblical criticism, nor even, except in the briefest manner, to recapitulate them. Nor have I attempted to discuss the general problem of the supernatural in its relations to the order of nature. My object has been to show the hollowness, if not the insincerity, of a plea put forward for the purpose of suppressing discussion by denying the right of rationalistic critics to speak at all about subjects to which they have devoted their lives. At the same time, I have suggested the motive that lies at the bottom of this discreditable attempt. Beyond doubt, many, perhaps most, of the higher critics disbelieve in miracles and supernatural predictions. I will go further still and freely grant that with some of them, such as Strauss, Renan, and Mr. Walter Cassels (the author of *Supernatural Religion*), the denial is based on philosophical considerations. But Renan, at any rate, combined for many years with his absolute disbelief in miracles a belief that the gospels were written by the men whose names they bear; and when he partially abandoned this position, it was under the stress of historical, not of philosophical, arguments. Now this is just what the enemies of criticism find so irritating—that the evidence of history is turning against them; that the documents, when scientifically investigated, should, as it were, of themselves, fall into a progressive series exhibiting more and more of the supernatural the farther removed they are from the original events, and a decline of truthfulness going along with an increase of intellectual culture in the narrators the farther removed they are from the original eye-witnesses. Such is the power and flexibility of modern philosophy that, once released from the necessity of verification, it can be made to prove or disprove anything. So the modern apologist flies to speculation whenever he has the chance, in the hope that his ark of faith may ride triumphant on a deluge of scepticism.

> Verachte nur Vernunft und Wissenschaft,
> Des Menschen allerhöchste Kraft,
> So hab' ich dich!

said Mephistopheles a hundred and twenty years ago. The new Mephistopheles, disguised as an angel of light, sees in historical reason and historical science alone the barrier that separates him from his victims. "Thank heaven we have got rid of history!" a Jesuit Father is reported to have exclaimed when Papal Infallibility was voted. His Protestant brother would gladly get rid of it also. As good a device for the purpose as any other is to damage the reputation of the laborious inquirers who clear the way for true history and accumulate the materials for its edifice; to substitute for the decisive issues of experience the interminable wrangles of metaphysics; above all, to convert an appeal to reason into an appeal to authority. Perhaps there would be a good case for anyone who chose to maintain that there is a greater weight of learning and ability and disinterestedness on the progressive side. But we have no wish to exchange one bondage for another. Our object is not that the Higher Criticism should be reverenced, but that it should be read. Doubtless the official apologists will say that in this respect they have done their duty. Let them then prove their familiarity with the arguments of their opponents by fair statements and fair replies, not by confusing the outcome of an inquiry with the assumptions from which it sets out.

PASCAL'S WAGER[1]

A CERTAIN rustic moralist in Mr. Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* gives his opinion about the relative chances of salvation contingent on attending church or chapel in the following homely but telling terms :—

"We know very well that if anybody goes to heaven they [chapel-folk] will. They've worked hard for it and they deserve to have it, such as 'tis. I'm not such a fool as to pretend that we who stick to the church have the same chance as they, because we know we have not. But I hate a feller who'll change his old ancient doctrine for the sake of getting to heaven."

So far the excellent Coggan, for such is the name of Mr. Hardy's pot-house philosopher. Whether churchmen or dissenters should be credited with the better chance of salvation is a deep question in which I do not now propose to enter. The Conformist and the Nonconformist conscience may safely be left to take care of themselves. But the ingenuous confidences of this particular churchman suggest a problem of wider interest on which I propose to offer a few remarks. Is there any method of salvation that may be called distinctly mean? I believe there is at least one such, and I am sorry to say that it is a method recommended by no less an authority than Pascal.

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[1] A remarkable passage in Dr. McTaggart's work entitled *Some Dogmas of Religion* (pp. 213–16) presents so close a parallel with one of the arguments put forth in the following pages that I might incur the charge of borrowing without acknowledgment were the fact not mentioned that my essay was originally published in the *International Journal of Ethics* for April, 1905, a year before the appearance of the work referred to, and that Dr. McTaggart had certainly read it, as is proved by the quotation from Pascal on p. 213 of his book.

What the French call "*le pari de Pascal*"—in English, Pascal's wager or bet—forms the theme of one of the most celebrated passages in his fragmentary defence of Christianity, published after his death and universally known as the *Pensées*. A very elaborate edition of this work, filling three large volumes in the great series of French classics, which is one of the glories of French bibliography, has recently appeared.[1] Nearly the whole of the first volume is occupied by an elaborate Introduction, in which all the literary facts necessary for the full understanding of Pascal's position are brought together. Then comes a presumably immaculate text accompanied by an ample array of critical and explanatory notes, the Thoughts themselves being so arranged in sections as to exhibit themselves to the best logical advantage; and the whole is completed by what is rare in French books, an excellent index. So far as externals go, we cannot expect that this splendid and sombre genius will ever make a better appearance before the world than in M. Léon Brunschvicg's edition.

Pascal's apologetics are as obsolete as his satire on the Jesuits is fresh and living. The Higher Criticism has ruined his theory of Christian evidences. Evolution has ruined his theory of the

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[1] The references in this essay are to this edition.

Fall. And what some modern mathematicians defend with arguments no more solid than his would not have been recognised by him as the true faith. But one, at least, of his points has secured an undying literary interest from the extraordinary energy and passion with which the case is put rather than from any peculiar ingenuity or originality in the thought itself. This is the argument of the wager to which I have already referred.

It runs as follows. Speaking by the light of nature, says Pascal, God, supposing him to exist, must be out of relation to ourselves. Being without parts or limits, he is infinitely incomprehensible. We can neither know what he is, nor even that he is. This admission goes beyond that form of modern Agnosticism according to which we can say with certainty that the Unknowable exists, but not what it is. And, of course, it goes very far beyond Herbert Spencer's affirmation of an Unknowable which is infinite, eternal, an energy, and the cause of all things. But we are not to take so sceptical a confession as defining Pascal's own position. Being a Christian, he has other sources of information than the light of nature. His supposed sceptic—who turns out to be a very real sceptic with a place in French literary history—has none. But the sceptic's ignorance cuts both ways. It leaves the non-existence of God as uncertain as his existence. Reason supplies no means of choosing between the two alternative possibilities. Nevertheless, we are obliged to back one side or the other, to play at a game of hazard in which, at an infinite distance, heads or tails will turn up. "But," answers the sceptic, "I do not want to play at all; in such a doubtful case as what you describe prudence bids us abstain." To which Pascal replies: "You must bet; you are in for it; it does not depend on your will." For as his Port Royalist editors put it, in an elucidatory addition to the text, "Not to bet is to bet for the non-existence of God."

Plato observes, in the *Republic*, that he "hardly ever met a mathematician who could reason" (531 E). So, at least, Jowett translates the passage—not, perhaps, without a spice of malice. According to some, the word he uses (διαλεκτικοί) does not exactly imply what we mean by ability to reason. But I think it will be admitted to imply the power so signally displayed by Plato himself in the *Parmenides*—the power, that is, of exhaustively enumerating the possible issues in a given question, and of deducing the necessary consequences in each instance. And it seems to me that, whatever may be the case with modern mathematicians as a class, Pascal shows himself remarkably deficient in that sort of dialectical ability—so much so, indeed, as to ruin the basis of his whole argument at the very start. The deficiency may or may not be connected with his great mathematical genius; anyhow it is there.

Why must I bet? No reason whatever is given, but it needs only a very slight acquaintance with the dogmatic Christianity of Pascal's time to supply what he leaves unsaid. To be saved man must believe positively in the existence of God; to leave it an open question is to incur the same penalty as complete atheism—that is, eternal damnation.

Here we come at once on a flagrant self-contradiction, which, even if it stood alone, would leave the sceptic triumphant. Pascal began by saying that God, as infinite, is unrelated to us (*il n' a nul rapport à nous*). But, if so, he can neither save nor damn us: our future fate has nothing to do with his existence or non-existence, still less with our opinion or absence of opinion on the subject.

I do not profess to know much about the turf; but I strongly suspect that anyone who had such loose notions as Pascal about the laws of betting, if he acted on them, would soon be cleared out of every penny he possessed—that is, supposing his ignorance to be real; while, if it were assumed for the purpose of eluding payment, he would before long find himself turned off every race-course in England.

However, we will let that pass. We will suppose that the words "out of relation" slipped in by an unfortunate oversight, and would have been deleted had the author lived to see his work through the press; noting, however, that they were allowed to stand by the logicians of Port Royal, who otherwise made free enough with his manuscript. Let it be granted as not impossible that the infinite Being, if he exist, is no other than the God of Catholicism. But there is a long way from possibility to certainty, and Pascal himself has warned us that the knowledge, if any, of God's existence is quite distinct from the knowledge of his attributes. Assuming there to be a God, that bare fact leaves us in absolute ignorance about his character. Now it might fairly be contended that the number of different characters which may possibly be ascribed to an infinite being is infinite, and even infinite in the second degree on account of the possible permutations and combinations of attributes. Accordingly, the conditions of the wager must be altered. Pascal has appealed to the light of reason, and to reason he must go. Apart from objective evidence, of which there is at present no question, the chances against his theology's being true are at least infinity to one.

It is, however, on the cards that Pascal, admitting so much, might still maintain that a man of sense was justified in staking his life on the existence of God. In order to make this clear we must examine the conditions of the wager.

"If you win," he tells us, "you win everything; if you lose, you lose nothing." In the more concrete language of religious belief, if there is a God and you have faith in his promises you gain everlasting felicity; if there is no God, death ends all. It is not precisely explained what is meant by staking your life; but, as Pascal is addressing himself to a careless worldling, he must be supposed to mean what such a person would call "life"—that is to say, an existence of sensual and social enjoyment. The author of the *Thoughts* would not admit that the abandonment of such a life involved any real sacrifice; and so far the serious moralist of any religion or of no religion would not be disposed to quarrel with him. But in fact, as we shall see presently, there is much more involved—certainly more than the sage who finds life "very tolerable without its amusements" is prepared to give up.

Of course no Christian, and Pascal less than another, believes that eternal felicity can be won as the fruit of such a cold-blooded calculation, such brutal cynicism, to use M. Sully Prudhomme's blunt phrase,[1] as would seem to be implied by the aleatory proceeding recommended. Simply as a bet it would, to the Searcher of all hearts, be no more than the celebrated short prayer, "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul!" In fact, it is only the first step towards acquiring a genuine conviction. And Pascal does not leave us in doubt about the second step. His sceptic is made to reply: "I fully acknowledge the force of your reasoning. But is there no way of seeing the faces of the cards?" "Yes, there are the Scriptures, *etc.*" "But what if I am so constituted that I cannot believe?" "Do what others in your position have done before. Act as if you believed; take holy water, attend Mass, *etc.* The natural effect of all that will be to make you believe, and to stupify you *(vous abêtira)*." "But that is just what I am afraid of." "Why so? What have you to lose?"

I do not think that such a method would commend itself to the ingenuous mind of Mr. Hardy's rustic. I fear Coggan would "hate a feller" who submitted to such a degradation "for the sake of getting to heaven." Even the Port Royal editors were ashamed to print this precious advice, softening it down into a harmless recommendation to imitate the conduct of believers. Victor Cousin was the first to publish the words as they were originally written. That brilliant rhetorician was neither a deep nor a sincere thinker; but he still retained some respect for truth and reason. He asked, Was that, then, the last word of human wisdom, and can we only approach the supreme Intelligence by the sacrifice of our own? But nowadays, among orthodox Frenchmen, Victor Cousin would pass for a dangerous character—an "intellectual." M. Brunschvicg defends Pascal by putting a sense on his words which they will not bear. *S'abêtir*, he tells us, means no more than that we should get rid of the prejudices which stand in the way of faith. Surely, if so great a writer wanted to say this, he had command enough of the French language to say it for himself. A course of dogmatic theology, however disagreeable, would, one might suppose, be more effective against rationalistic prejudices than a course of holy water. Pascal was a shrewd observer, and understood the effect of mechanical devotion better, perhaps, than his apologist. One need only study the faces in a Bavarian *Corpus Domini* procession or at a Breton *Pardon* to see what "abêtissement" means.

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[1] In his article entitled "Le Sens et la Portée du Pari de Pascal," in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of November 15th, 1890.

Besides a natural if sinful objection to part with his reason, the sceptic has still a difficulty. The hope of salvation is all very well, but against the happiness it gives we have to set the fear of hell. To which Pascal replies, sensibly enough from his point of view: Which has more reason to fear it, he who remains in ignorance if there be a hell, with the certainty of being damned if there is one, or he who is certainly persuaded of its existence, with the hope of being saved if it does exist?

This is a very important passage. Both Ernest Havet, in his notes to the *Pensées*, and M. Sully Prudhomme, in his essay on the wager, have assumed, as not needing discussion, that backing the wrong side involves not only the loss of eternal felicity, but also the positive payment of an infinite penalty under the form of everlasting torment. A more recent critic, however, repudiates their interpretation. The eminent philosopher M. Lachelier, writing in the *Revue Philosophique,*[1] declares peremptorily that hell has no place in the wager. As the terms are first stated it certainly is not mentioned; but to insist on the omission seems more like a lawyer than a philosopher. And even from the strictly legal point of view M. Lachelier's contention seems unjustifiable. In drawing out the full significance of the wager we have a right to interpret its conditions in the light of its author's known and unconcealed opinions about the future fate of unbelievers. To say that I am obliged to bet must mean that my refusal would entail the same consequences as if I betted against God's existence and lost. And that must be more than the mere privation of eternal felicity, for so much the sceptic is already prepared to face with equanimity. Besides, when he asks to see the faces of the cards played Pascal refers him to Scripture for information; and we know that in the eyes of a seventeenth-century Catholic Scripture consigns the infidel to eternal torment.

One is almost ashamed to labour so obvious a point. But it is a question of some interest why the chance of damnation is left to be inferred when it might have been made to figure with such tremendous effect in the wager as originally stated.

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[1] June, 1901, p. 625.

I apprehend that the reason is one of simple politeness. Pascal, as Walter Pater reminds us,[1] was a gentleman; and the sceptic for whose benefit he started the whole idea of making the supreme verities a subject of betting was also a gentleman and a dear friend of his, the Chevalier de Méré, a man of the world, and apparently, like others of the kind, a gamester. That is why Pascal addresses him in terms borrowed from the favourite amusement of his class; and that is also, I suggest, why he spares him words not suited to polite ears. Both, however, understand perfectly what the truth of the Catholic theory would imply. A losing bettor not only misses infinite happiness, but has to pay the stakes by suffering infinite misery. And with great tact the first reference to this unpleasant aspect of the wager is put into the mouth, not of the Christian advocate, but of the hesitating sceptic. Méré, not Pascal, is made responsible for introducing it into the discussion. To convince ourselves that the softening down of the risk incurred by infidelity is a mere concession to the rules of personal politeness, we need only turn to the passages where Pascal has to deal with mankind in general. Here the loss of felicity is not mentioned as a motive for belief. With his usual and incomparable splendour of rhetoric, he describes death as infallibly destined to place the impious and indifferent under the horrible necessity of submitting either to eternal annihilation or to eternal misery, without knowing which of these eternities has been prepared for them for ever.[2] And this alternative, such as it is, must not be thought of as existing objectively in the nature of things, or rather in the unknown purposes of Providence, but subjectively in the reasonable apprehensions of the doubter.

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[1] *Works,* VIII., p. 63.

[2] II., p. 121.

Judged by Jesuit or modern Ultramontane standards, the author of the *Provinciales* and the *Pensées* may have been a heretic. But he was far too good a Catholic to entertain for a moment the idea that hell could mean annihilation. He speaks *ad hominem*. If you are right in your unbelief, you will cease to exist at death ; if you are wrong, you will certainly be tormented for ever.

So much being established, let us return to the wager and its implications. It was presented under the form of an even chance, with nothing to lose (except one's reason) on the one event, and everything to gain on the other. One is struck by the suspicious resemblance to a plea sometimes advanced for trying a quack remedy. It may do good, and it can't do harm. Now, in the case of a drug about which we know nothing—for the modesty of that "may do good" is really a confession of complete ignorance—the possibility of harm is precisely measured by the possibility of benefit. For us the chances are equal, because neither event is anything more than a chance. And an attentive examination shows that Pascal's reasoning suffers from the same fatal flaw.

From respect for so great a name two enormous assumptions have been let pass. We withdrew our objection to the logical impossibility that a Being out of all relation to man can affect man's future fate. And we accepted as an even chance the infinitesimally small probability that an infinite personality, supposing it to exist, has exactly the character of the God in whom Jansenist Catholics believed. But our concessions must end here. What security has Méré that in accepting the wager he sacrifices no more than his reason and the healthy enjoyment of life? "You have," says his friend, "the word of God." Is that so certain? or is it a sufficient guarantee? It will not do to call the question blasphemous, for our moralist has imbued us with the idea that truth is a matter of geography, and we know what the Nicene Creed would be called across the straits of Gibraltar.

Here we have the nemesis of agnosticism as a method of faith. A universal solvent is created and then poured into some consecrated chalice in the ingenuous expectation that the holy vessel will resist its corrosive action. In a series of brilliant aphorisms congealing the loose and lazy scepticisms of Montaigne into a hailstorm of diamond-pointed epigrams, Pascal had denounced the supposed eternal laws of human morality as a set of arbitrary expedients, varying from country to country, and merely intended to win respect for the authority of their princes. From such a discordant medley of customs no fixed moral standard or natural system of ethics can be elicited. Still less can our ideas of what is right and good be applied to the criticism of God's ways with man. Anterior to revelation we cannot predicate morality, more than any other attribute, of the infinite Being; nor can a self-revealing Deity be expected to act in conformity with human notions of right and wrong when those notions are not conformable with one another.

Pascal accepts the consequences of his sceptical theology with cynical candour. "What," he exclaims, "can be more opposed to our wretched rules of justice than the eternal damnation of a child without any will of its own for a sin in which it seems to have had so little share that it was committed six thousand years before the said child came into existence?"[1] In fact, moral distinctions are created by God; and "the sole reason why sins are sins is that they are contrary to his will."[2] Were the whole human race to be eternally damned, God would stand acquitted of injustice.[3]

Nevertheless, with an inconsistency not uncommon among sceptics Pascal recognises one kind of moral obligation as universally binding, so much so as even to impose itself on God in his relations to man. And that is the obligation of keeping a promise. It is mentioned quite naïvely as a self-evident truth, valid apparently on both sides of the Pyrenees. "There is a reciprocal duty between God and man.......God is bound to fulfil his promises."[4] If we have backed the winning card, the stakes will be honestly paid.

I know not what answer the Chevalier de Méré made to the aleatory apologetics of his illustrious friend; but his conversion was delayed so long as probably to have been effected by considerations of a different order. He might well have required a better security for the divine fidelity than Pascal's guarantee. It seems rather rash to infer that, because a gentleman keeps his word and pays his debts of honour, the Jansenist God will. A Being who is wholly unaccountable may mean something different from what he says, or the exact opposite, or nothing at all. An irresponsible despot is generally not less remarkable for perfidy than for cruelty. He who predestines little children to eternal damnation may quite possibly be reserving the Sisters of Port Royal for the same fate. We were told that the whole human race might justly be sent to hell, and how do we know that the full divine right may not after all be exercised. "We have the word of a King for our Church, and of a King who was never worse than his word." Such was the confident answer of the English Bishops to those who suspected the intentions of James II. History tells how their credulity was rewarded.

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[1] II., p. 348. [2] III., p. 104. [3] I., p. 125.
[4] III., pp. 277–8.

What is more, Pascal's interpretation of Scripture goes to prove that deceit and treachery are among the revealed attributes of his God. A particularly nauseous quality of that personage is that, not content with exercising his undoubted privilege of damning human beings at sight, he tries to manufacture a colourable pretext for their condemnation by introducing difficulties into the Bible. "There is obscurity enough to blind the reprobate, and clearness enough to make them inexcusable."[1] "Do you suppose that the prophecies quoted in the New Testament are mentioned to make you believe? No, it is to prevent you from believing."[2] The whole Jewish people were purposely blinded to the real meaning of the Messianic prophecies in order that their rejection of Jesus Christ might render them unsuspected witnesses to the authenticity of the evidentiary documents committed to their charge. Had they accepted the gospel, it might have been said that they had forged the predictions by which its supernatural origin is attested, and of whose antiquity their word is the sole guarantee.[1]

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[1] III., p. 23.

[2] III., p. 15.

It would surprise me to learn that there was any greater distortion of truth and justice in the casuistry of Escobar than in the sophistry of his Jansenist satirist. And the Jesuits, if they erred, had at least the excuse of erring on the side of mercy. They constructed fire-escapes where Pascal opens *oubliettes*.

Our only knowledge of God, our only proof that there is a God, comes through the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament and their fulfilment in Jesus Christ. But it is of the very essence of these prophecies to be ambiguous and misleading. We asked to be shown the cards with which that awful game for our soul's salvation is being played "at an infinite distance," and our wish has been gratified : the cards are no other than the pages of Scripture. And now we learn that their colour and value depend entirely on the inscrutable will of the dealer. He can call black red and a king a knave. He can change trumps at pleasure and count an ace as eleven points or as one. That is how his antitype, Napoleon, played chess, moving the pieces just as he liked, regardless of rules. Our Ariel-souled thinker constructs a God meaner if not more malignant than the Setebos of Caliban, in that wonderful study of Robert Browning's which is also such a scathing satire on the creed of his youth. Granting that such a person exists, our conduct cannot be affected one way or the other by the fact. Being unable to take his word for anything, we are exactly in the same position as if he had never spoken. Perhaps after all he is less amenable to the charms of adulation and submission than his more abject adorers would have us believe. Our moral superiority over him may at last make its ascendancy felt. Possibly in that case his first impulse would be to wreak vengeance on the reptile souls who sought to stupefy their reason by the copious use of masses and holy water. Then we who never stooped to that degradation will intercede with the converted Moloch for the shivering wretches, who may escape with no worse penalty than transmigration into the bodies of apes.

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[1] II., p. 16 ff.

Briefly, then, the existence of an infinite Being out of relation to ourselves cannot possibly influence our future fate. In the absence of positive evidence it remains infinitely improbable that an infinite Being actively related to us should have a character identical with that of the Jansenist deity. Assuming such a deity to exist, the chances are precisely equal that he will or that he will not behave towards us in any particular manner. Therefore, so far as theology goes, Méré is rationally justified in adopting the line of conduct that seems most agreeable to his own desires. When the door of death opens it is even betting whether the lady or the tiger will receive him.

Metaphor apart, no revelation can be of any practical value unless it is assumed to come from a person whose word we can trust. But the veracity of God is only guaranteed by his general moral perfection, and such perfection can only be conceived as the consummation of human goodness. But goodness includes justice as known to us by earthly examples, and these, according to Pascal himself, forbid us to believe that innocent little children can merit eternal torments—or, we may add, that Méré could merit them for honestly using his reason to find out the truth, or even the judges of Galileo for suppressing it. In theology the method of Descartes is a surer guide than the method of Montaigne.

The idea of accepting Christianity (understood in an orthodox sense) as a probability which seems safer to believe than to disbelieve has been traced back to Arnobius, from whom Pascal is supposed to have derived it through Raymond Sebond, whose *Natural Theology* he had certainly read. But the after fortunes of the argument are more interesting than its origin. It had the singular good fortune to be taken up by Butler and made the very keynote of his *Analogy*, whence it passed to the leaders of the Tractarian Movement, betraying its inherent weakness by the conflicting interpretations respectively put on it by Newman and Keble.

I do not know whether Butler had or had not read Pascal; but his theory of probability as applied to the evidences of Christianity is a distinct improvement on the wager, in so far as it encourages instead of abolishing the use of reason. On the other hand, his appeal to the most degrading of all "pragmatic" motives is considerably more explicit, and will hardly be denied even by the most unscrupulous of apologists. After detailing the arguments for revealed religion based on the performance of miracles and the fulfilment of prophecy, he shows an uneasy consciousness of their insufficiency, but urges as a make-weight that "a mistake on the one side may be, in its consequences, much more dangerous than a mistake on the other."[1] Butler alleges, it is true, that he gives this ominous warning, not to influence the judgment, but the practice, of his readers. The distinction, however, is not easy to grasp, nor is any attempt made to illustrate it. If his sole object was to strengthen the motives for virtuous action irrespective of creed, he ought to have made his meaning plainer. Many of the Deists would have agreed with him in recommending a high and pure standard of morality, while deprecating the attempt to compromise it by a reference to selfish hopes or fears. In any case, judgment and practice cannot be isolated from one another, nor made amenable to different orders of motives, least of all when we are discussing a creed most of whose advocates consider that a man is morally responsible for his belief. It is difficult not to think that Butler knew this, although he avoids committing himself to an open use of the argument *ad terrorem*. Nor will any reservation make his theoretical assumption anything but a gross fallacy. There is no safe side in religion, for there is no experience to show where safety lies. To seek safety may, for aught we know, be the most dangerous, as it is certainly the most pusillanimous, of choices.

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[1] *Analogy*, Part II., chap. vii., *sub fin.*

In the controversy between theology and rationalism it requires a greater effort of abstraction than most minds are capable of to grasp this possibility, and to appreciate its bearing on the aleatory method of belief. And as between Roman Catholicism and the various Protestant sects all doubt would vanish. The superior safety of belonging to the Church which alone claimed to monopolise the means of salvation was constantly urged as a motive for submitting to its pretensions, and proved, in fact, a most efficacious method of proselytism. Henry of Navarre is said to have put the argument in a particularly pointed form. The Protestant divines whom he consulted on the subject reluctantly admitted that he might be saved if he became a Catholic. The Catholic divines told him without hesitation that he would certainly be damned if he remained a Protestant. He therefore chose that side which, by universal agreement, offered the best prospect of escaping from perdition. What the great King had offered, more than half in irony, as an excuse for his politic apostasy was accepted in deadly earnest by many persons of quality in England under Charles I. as a reason for deserting the cause of the Reformation. Charles II.'s deathbed conversion was probably dictated by the same motive ; and, if so, it offers a crowning example of the adroit opportunism by which his whole life was guided. In this as in other respects the ablest of all the Stuarts bore a close resemblance to his grandfather, the ablest of the Bourbons. When Butler wrote the danger from Rome had greatly diminished, but had not wholly disappeared, as we learn from Neal's *History of the Puritans* (1732) and Middleton's *Free Inquiry* (1747).[1] It is therefore rather surprising that he did not observe what consequences might be drawn from an argument, perhaps derived from Pascal, in favour of Pascal's creed.

If English churchmen did not draw the logical consequences of their greatest champion's apologetic method, their escape is due not only to the happy inconsistency of the theological intellect, but also to the pervasive influence of eighteenth-century rationalism, extending as it did far beyond the small circle of avowed freethinkers. Whatever else Englishmen might believe, their own Deists and the Voltairean movement abroad gradually convinced them that Popery was a superstition too absurd for even a Frenchman to accept—destined to speedy extinction, Horace Walpole thought, if the ill-advised abrogation of our penal laws had not given it a new lease of life. It would have surprised the dilettante of Strawberry Hill to hear that his own experiments in Gothic architecture had rather more to do with the dreaded revival of mediæval faith than the repeal of some obsolete statutes. Anyhow, by accident or otherwise, he proved a true prophet. Whether as grim wolf or good shepherd, two centuries after *Lycidas* Rome once more put in play the arts against which Milton had raised his warning voice. Or rather the natural magnetism exercised by the larger on the smaller body acted without the help of any direct proselytism on the part of Jesuits or others to disintegrate the Church of England and to draw its detached fragments into the central orb of Christendom.

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[1] The date of the *Analogy* is 1736.

Now it is interesting to note that in this process the method of Pascal and Butler played an important part, and was appealed to with confidence by both parties, by those who clung to the Via Media of Anglicanism and by those who scorned it as an illogical compromise between the right way and the wrong.

Cardinal Newman briefly refers to Butler's doctrine of probability as the guide of life as that whence his own theory of faith took its rise. Keble treats it at much greater length, and in particular connection with the issue on which he and his greater friend parted company in a very interesting but little read document, the preface to his *Sermons, Academical and Occasional,* published in 1847, soon after Newman's secession.

The principle in question is stated as follows: "In practical matters of eternal import, the safer way is always to be preferred, even though the excess of seeming evidence may tell in any degree on the opposite side. Thus, if one mode of acting imply that there is an eternity and another contradict it......the tremendous, overwhelming interest at stake ought to determine a man's conduct to the affirmative side. He should act, in spite of seeming evidence, as if eternity were true."[1]

Keble had not the same lingering regard for truth as such that still distinguished Butler; and the context clearly shows that "acting" means not merely conformity to Christian ethics, but also that adhesion to the Catholic creed which, in the supposed circumstances, some, among whom the present writer is one, would call, in plain language, cowardly and deceitful.

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

Fortunately, or rather inevitably, systematised immorality is suicidal; and a recent incident has reminded us that when sailors fall into a panic they are apt to fire into their own ships.[1] Keble very frankly admits that "the principles of Butler and Pascal" cannot be limited to "the controversy with unbelievers."[2] And if personally he had been disposed so to limit them, Newman would not have allowed him to stop short. So he proceeds to state the argument for going over to Rome in terms which I shall not transcribe, as they are substantially identical with the Bourbon argument (white plume argument, let us call it) already quoted.

Keble's way of getting out of it is amazing, and practically amounts to an abandonment of the whole principle. It is that "the argument put in this form proves too much, for it would equally show that Puritanism or Mahometanism, or the ancient Donatism, or any other exclusive system, is the safer way."[3] And he also goes on to remark, rather late in the day, that there seems to be something "cold and ungenerous" about the method—in short, what we call mean. Accordingly, it is to be reserved for the exclusive benefit of unbelievers, and not mentioned in controversies among Christians. But we have seen that as against unbelievers the probabilist method is quite invalid. When the factor of inscrutable and irresponsible omnipotence has been introduced into our calculations the adoption of one particular alternative becomes no more advisable than the adoption of another. Whatever creed we profess or reject, the chances of our being saved or lost remain precisely equal. For a Being who is morally capable of damning us at all is capable of damning us for taking him at his word. Nor has the orthodox believer any right to charge those who advance such an argument with irreverence or flippancy. To the God whose existence he assumes their reasoning may appear perfectly reverent and serious.

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[1] The reference is to the Dogger Bank incident of October 22nd, 1904, when Admiral Rozhdestvensky mistook the Hull trawlers for Japanese torpedo-boats. On that occasion some of the Russian ships are reported to have suffered from the misdirected fire of their consorts.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 7, 8.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

Pascal's method was destined to one more singular development before it silently took its place among the obsolete weapons of religious controversy. With the collapse of the Tractarian Movement the rationalistic movement which it had temporarily arrested returned in a flood, and before many years had passed became predominant at Oxford, at least among her more serious and intellectual residents. To meet this new danger Mansel delivered his famous Bampton Lectures in 1858. He does not, I think, ever mention the argument *ad terrorem*, but he follows Pascal in denying that our moral distinctions are applicable to the proceedings of an infinite Being about whose real nature we are totally ignorant; and he follows Butler in contending that every other system is open to as many objections as Christianity, or rather as his own particular version of Christianity.

Mansel was hailed by his admirers as a second Butler ; but the reception of his work by the intellectual public generally showed that such methods had passed out of date. I question whether, in the controversy that it provoked, a single name of distinction is to be found on his side. Against him were such writers as F. D. Maurice, James Martineau, R. H. Hutton, and Professor Goldwin Smith. Herbert Spencer, accepting his premises, pushed them to the length of an Agnosticism which absolutely excluded belief in revealed religion, and reduced natural religion to the most attenuated of abstractions. But the most resounding stroke of all came from John Stuart Mill. In the course of his destructive attack on the philosophy of Mansel's teacher, Sir William Hamilton, the great thinker and moralist, then at the very height of his fame and power, turned aside to tear up the flimsy pretences under which the Bampton Lecturer on the *Limits of Religious Thoughts* had attempted to eliminate morality from religion. Pascal is not named ; but here at last Pascal's method receives its final quietus. Convince me, says Mill, that the world is ruled by an infinite Being of whom I know nothing except that his proceedings are incompatible with the highest human morality, "and I will bear my fate as I may. But there is one thing he shall not do : he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow creatures ; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."[1]

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[1] *Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 124 (3rd ed.).

Mansel sneeringly forbore "to comment on the temper and taste of this declamation."[1] But what he said or did not say mattered equally little. The ghastly idol had fallen and fallen forever.

It has been said by some who are in full sympathy with Mill's contention that the sentiment here expressed, however admirable, is irreconcilable with his utilitarian ethics. I am not so sure of that. The moral degradation of worshipping an omnipotent demon through eternity might conceivably be more painful than any punishment in the demon's power to inflict. Or, on finding himself defied, he might "tak' a thought and men'"—to the great increase of the general felicity. But there seems a sort of pedantry about such considerations. If the supreme ironies are partly serious, supreme seriousness may well be a little ironical. There is such a phrase as "I bet you all to nothing," and as the language of the gaming-table has once been introduced it may here be appropriately used as best describing Mill's position. There is no more than an infinitesimally small chance that Mansel's non-moral theology may be true; but neither on that chance nor on any other will a high-principled human soul forfeit its self-respect.

My object has been to show that to incur either intellectual or moral degradation on a calculation of selfish interest would be not only mean, but unavailing. For with the limitation of our knowledge assumed by the theologians who appeal to such motives there is no safe side, the chances either way being precisely equal whatever attitude towards the hidden arbiter of our destiny we assume. It remains, then, that our conduct should be determined by considerations equally applicable whether the supernatural does or does not exist.

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[1] *Philosophy of the Conditioned,* p. 168.

BUCKLE AND THE ECONOMICS OF KNOWLEDGE

IT seems at first sight like a satire on the teaching of Henry Thomas Buckle that, nearly twenty years after his death,[1] public interest should be more attracted by the pettiest details of his personal life than by the intellectual achievements but for which those details would never have been recorded, or, had they been recorded, would never have been studied. It might be urged that this was just the sort of gossip from which he desired to set history free, and to substitute for it an inquiry into the general laws by which men's actions in their totality are determined. Yet many of these details strikingly illustrate a peculiar and neglected aspect of his philosophy. For he held that moral and affectional motives are all-powerful with the individual, although exercising an inappreciable influence on masses of men acting together. Accordingly he considered that much which ought not to find a place in history might very properly be relegated to biography, regarding the latter, indeed, as not susceptible of scientific treatment. His life, then, if it does not verify his entire philosophy, at least does not contradict it. It may also be taken as confirming and deepening the personal impression made long ago on his more sympathetic readers. There are passages in the *History of Civilisation* which show plainly enough that Buckle was full of deep tenderness and ardent enthusiasm. But without Mr. Huth's biography[1] we should not have known how thoroughly good a man he was. Every page exhibits him to us as a genial companion, a judicious adviser, a devoted friend. But we learn little more about his peculiar cast of intellect than that he had a memory even greater, if possible, than Macaulay's. For the rest, nothing that Mr. Huth has published tends to elucidate the causes, whether general or special, which made his philosophy what it was. Fortunately, however, the information required for that purpose is easily accessible. Next after his country, parentage, and early associations, Buckle's true antecedents and environment are to be found in the school of thought to which for the most part he belonged. The object of this essay is to show what tendencies he represented, and in what particular directions he attempted to work them out.

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[1] Written in 1880.

The English thought of the last half century, so far as it is really English and not a revival of old dogmas or an importation from the Continent, has been, under its most general aspect, a philosophy of freedom, individuality, spontaneity, experimentalism. Foreign observers often take it, superficially enough, for mere empiricism—the fit expression of a national character which they persist in regarding as narrow, selfish, and materialistic, incapable of wide ideas or of lofty aspirations. That such a people should also have created the richest poetic literature of modern times is an anomaly which they do not feel called upon to explain. Perhaps a little reflection would show them that our art and our philosophy, so far from being opposed, are products of the same imaginative genius working in different directions. It would then be understood that, if we appeal to experience, the enlargement and not the limitation of knowledge is what we have most at heart; and that our utilitarianism is not the substitution of a low for a high standard, but of a progressive for a stationary, a social for a personal morality. Moreover, the English habit of individual liberty combines with the restless English imagination in leading our foremost minds to adopt whatever abstract theories offer the widest scope to spontaneity, to freedom of enterprise, to variety of choice. It was his thorough comprehension of this tendency and the consistent manner in which he brought it to bear on speculation that qualified John Stuart Mill to be for so many years the leader of English thought. His *Essay on Liberty* only expresses more briefly and clearly the fundamental aim of his larger works, which was to show that existing beliefs and customs, resting as they did on experience, might be superseded by a wider experience. He has told us himself that this was the aim of his *Logic;* and the drift of his *Political Economy* is evidently to exalt as much as possible the part played by free and conscious human agency in the distribution of wealth. That the system of Herbert Spencer is from beginning to end a philosophy of liberty and individualism need only be stated to be perceived. We know from his own declaration that the whole series of works composing it were undertaken with a view to its ethical conclusion, and we know also that his ethical ideal is a society where the component parts interfere to the least possible extent with one another. Thinkers of a more limited scope are dominated by a similar tendency. Charles Darwin has, so to speak, projected the experimental method into nature, and shown that it is the condition not only of scientific progress, but of all vital progress whatever. Spontaneous variation and natural selection correspond exactly to repeated trial and failure followed by eventual success; and among animals also those families prosper most where there is most diversity developed—in other words, where originality is least trammeled. The same idea is present in Alexander Bain's theory of voluntary action, which offers a parallel to Darwin's theory of organic evolution the more remarkable from its having been worked out before the latter was published. According to it, all sorts of movements are spontaneously set up by young creatures, and only those muscular combinations survive in memory that experience proves to be associated with pleasurable feeling, or with relief from painful feeling. Another instance of the prominence given to experimental freedom by English thought is the place which Stanley Jevons assigns to hypothesis in his *Principles of Science,* particularly in the chapter on "The Character of the Experimentalist," where it is very clearly explained that scientific discoveries are not made by divination, but by repeated guesses, most of which are utterly wrong. The two greatest works of modern English historical literature, Grote's *Greece* and Macaulay's

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[1] *Life of T. H. Buckle.* By Alfred Henry Huth. Two vols. London, 1880.

England, are both, but the former more especially, pleadings in favour of political liberty. Even those writers who, like Carlyle and Ruskin, on the whole approve of despotism rather than of democracy cannot avoid doing homage to the English spirit. For the attraction of arbitrary power to Carlyle was that it enabled exceptionally gifted individuals to carry out their designs without let or hindrance; and Ruskin protests against machinery because it destroys the personality of the workman, his free initiative and spontaneous energy. Even the breezy criticism of Matthew Arnold may be mentioned in this connection as a help to the emancipation of thought from routine methods and from party ties. Finally, the English Positivists, while accepting a Continental philosophy, distinguished for its animosity to many forms of liberty, are so far faithful to the traditions of their own country as to lay special emphasis on that part of Comte's doctrine which demands the liberation of the spiritual from the temporal power.

This general tendency of English thought was most fully accepted by Buckle. As a writer, love of liberty was his ruling passion; as a philosopher, the idea of liberty was the centre of his system. Although a devoted student, he preferred it even to knowledge.

> Liberty [he exclaims] is the one thing most essential to the right development of mind and to the real grandeur of nations. It is a product of knowledge where knowledge advances in a healthy and regular manner; but if, under certain unhappy circumstances, it is opposed by what seems to be knowledge, in God's name let knowledge perish and liberty be preserved. Liberty is not a means to an end, it is an end itself. To

> secure it, to enlarge it, and to diffuse it should be the main object of all social arrangements and of all political contrivances.[1]

But the necessity for choosing between knowledge and liberty was not likely to present itself to him in a practical form. Each was conducive to the other; each in its way was a realisation of mind, an expression of inward spontaneous energy. He conceived that the love of knowledge was, equally with the love of wealth, inherent in man, and was adequate to the production of all progress when allowed free play by the presence of favourable material conditions and the absence of artificial restraints. This notion was, in truth, a generalisation from his own peculiar circumstances. The elder Buckle had been engaged in business, and had bequeathed a competence to his son which enabled the latter to devote his whole time to intellectual pursuits. Although averse from office-work, he kept up the traditions of business and carried them into philosophy. Political Economy supplied a natural connection between the basis and the superstructure of his existence. From that science as from a centre all his other studies branched out, and from it he borrowed the method by which they were arranged. It was, then, quite natural that he should look on Adam Smith as the greatest man that Scotland had ever produced, and on the *Wealth of Nations* as the most important book ever published. He himself aspired to be the Adam Smith of a still more comprehensive science, and to found the Economics of Knowledge.

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[1] *Miscellaneous Writings*, I., 44-45.

Buckle's opinions were formed at a time when *laisser-faire* was the undisputed law of political economy, and his early manhood coincided with the stirring period of agitation for free trade—an agitation in which we are told that the young student was intensely interested. Thus at a very early period his speculations were biassed by a strong prejudice against governmental interference; and his plan for extending the laws of wealth to knowledge required that something analogous to the protective system should be discovered in the intellectual sphere. This is why Buckle tries to bring bad government of every kind under the heading of protectionism, and why he looks on churches in particular as associations invested with a kind of speculative monopoly, to the great detriment of scientific industry. Anti-clerical rather than anti-theological, his attitude is, in this respect, exactly the reverse of that taken up by Auguste Comte, who highly approved of ecclesiastical organisation, but wished to utilise it for a new sort of teaching.

But, over a large part of the globe, human intelligence had to contend with an even more formidable enemy than the protective spirit—an enemy, indeed, to whom the unconquerable pertinacity of that spirit was, in most instances, due. Such was the point of view from which Buckle regarded Nature. He speaks of her as carrying on a perpetual warfare with man, sometimes victorious, sometimes vanquished, but always tending to thwart and drag him back to her own level. It is astonishing that one who formulated this fundamental antithesis so sharply, and who in other respects has so frequently expressed his adhesion to the popular metaphysics of the 'fifties, should ever have been charged with materialism. A notion has somehow gained currency that Buckle proposed to deduce the history of every country from its physical geography. Nothing could well be more unlike the truth. He distinctly marks off the regions where, in his phraseology, nature was subordinated to man from those where man was subordinated to nature ; and it was with the former that, as a historian of civilisation, he was almost exclusively concerned. The idea that human beings and human societies are themselves natural products had apparently never occurred to him. This, however, was not for want of acquaintance with the theory of evolution, the basis of which he had fully accepted. Writing some years before the appearance of the *Origin of Species,* he alludes to fixity of species as an "old dogma" on which successful attacks had already been made ;[1] and in the same passage he assumes that phenomena of every order have always been determined by their own laws without any interference from without. But he was averse from accepting the absolute dependence of mind on brain, nor could he well have done so consistently with his passionate faith in its immortality. Hence his scornful doubt that the human mind could be handed down like an heirloom ;[2] his opinion that the intellectual and moral faculties do not improve ; and his deliberate omission of race from the physical conditions which a historian has to consider. Even where he does admit physical influences they are of a very indirect character, and they are just those which would be picked out by the economist and the literary student rather than by the physiologist. Nature wars against political liberty by producing over-population, and so enabling landlords and capitalists to concentrate all power in their own hands. She wars against intellectual liberty by the multiplication of extraordinary and terrifying phenomena which stimulate the imagination at the expense of the understanding. Buckle seems to have confounded an originally rapid rate of increase in population with its final increase up to or beyond the limit of subsistence. Over-population is theoretically possible under any conditions of climate, food, and soil; and it is not necessarily involved in one rate of increase more than in another. The existence of vast plains isolated from the rest of the world, whether fertile or barren, seems a likelier cause of despotism than any other that can be named; while, conversely, whatever geographical circumstances are favourable to the development of several independent national centres, near enough for active intercourse with each other, but protected by natural frontiers against mutual aggression, and similarly situated with regard to the world at large—such regions, in short, as Greece, the basin of the Mediterranean, and Western Europe generally—are also favourable to liberty. It would seem also that the aspects of nature have much less to do with superstitious beliefs than Buckle supposed. For such beliefs were originally diffused over the whole earth under very similar forms; they have not remained constantly associated with awe-inspiring scenery; and where such an association does exist, as for instance in South America or the East Indies, it can be better explained by difficulty of communication with the centres of enlightenment than by any direct influence exercised on the imagination.

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[1] *History of Civilisation in England,* Vol. I., p. 806, *note.* The references throughout this essay are to the original edition in two volumes.

[2] *Miscellaneous Writings,* I., 17.

My object, however, is not so much to criticise Buckle's views as to show in what modes of thought they originated. And here we have a remarkable verification of the guiding principle laid down at starting. Following the true English method, our philosopher construes universal history, not as an organically connected whole, but as a great collection of spontaneous experiments on the possibility of human progress. Mind is scattered broadcast over the whole earth, but in only a few instances does it meet with conditions favourable to its development. Everywhere outside Europe civilisation has been arrested, either because wealth could not be accumulated at all, or because it could not be diffused so widely among the masses as to enable them to understand and act on the ideas put forward by men of genius. In Europe a new set of forces, historical instead of geographical, come into play, and a series of eliminations bring us at last to England as the only country where mind has been able to manifest its inherent powers of expansion on a scale wide enough to furnish materials for determining the natural law of all progress. By an equally ingenious train of reasoning Guizot proves that civilisation can best be studied in France; a country which Auguste Comte, on quite different grounds, also erects into the normal type of intellectual evolution. No doubt the patriotic bias spoken of by Herbert Spencer has something to do with these preferences; but a deeper reason will be found in the character impressed on every philosophy by the social conditions under which it is framed. A thinker who translates the ideas of his own nation into abstract formulæ will naturally find that this same nation best satisfies the requirements of his particular system. He may even extend the method to particular periods, and imagine that the world was never so enlightened as when his theory of what it ought to be first became fixed.

Besides his patriotic feelings, there was probably another strong motive which induced Buckle to select a single country for the application of his new method. This was the desire to simplify the hypothetical science of history, which, but for some such artifice, threatened to become unmanageably complex and difficult. The same consideration throws some light on his celebrated rejection of morality as a factor in the progress of civilisation. None of the author's theories provoked so much hostile criticism at the time of their first publication, nor were any of them supported by such weak and inconsistent arguments. It will perhaps be worth while to glance at the principal assumptions which those arguments involve. They are as follows: (1) The innate moral dispositions do not change; (2) Moral truth is not progressive; (3) Innate disposition and knowledge between them account for the whole of moral conduct; (4) Moral forces exercise no great or lasting effect on human affairs. Of these four propositions three are refuted by the history of slavery alone. It was not always known that slavery is wrong, nor, in fact, was it always wrong; the perception of its iniquity was made more active by religious feeling; and its abolition was in great part due to the excitement thus produced. With regard to the alleged stationariness of the innate moral dispositions—by which term of course nothing more than sympathy need be implied—everything goes to prove that on the average civilised children are born with a better nature than savage children, or than their own remote ancestors. It is, however, conceivable that, conceding the existence of moral progress, more may have been done for human happiness by purely intellectual progress. One great example of a benefit due entirely to the latter is, according to Buckle, the comparative infrequency of war in modern times. His argument is a perfect nest of fallacies. The stimulus given to war by intellectual causes, such as individual genius and the adoption of new beliefs by whole nations or sections of nations, is entirely ignored. It is taken for granted that the invention of gunpowder localised the military spirit in a separate class and thereby weakened it, whereas the localisation seems to have been greater before gunpowder came into general use;[1] nor was it likely that war should become less popular when its risks were confined to a particular class than when they were shared by the whole community. That national quarrels are discouraged by the diffusion of sound economical doctrine is doubtless true; but the false doctrines from which those quarrels formerly sprang were equally intellectual forces, only made possible by a great development of reflection. Buckle gives as a reason for neglecting the influence of legislation on progress, that the best laws are those which have been passed for the repeal of bad ones ; he does not consider how easily the same argument might be turned against his own favourite theory of social dynamics—a remark which applies equally to that other great intellectual triumph, the decline of religious persecution. For, so far, it is the most intellectual religions that have been the most intolerant ; and modern thought in winning liberty has only won back what ancient thought enjoyed everywhere except at Athens. Nor is this all. Another influence adverse to war is, we are told, the great increase of travelling due to the extension of locomotion by steam. Different nations are brought into closer contact with one another, their mutual esteem is thereby increased, and their hostile feelings are proportionately diminished. Now, what is this mutual esteem if not a moral motive, brought into play, indeed, by intellect, but itself the determining antecedent? And, to make the self-contradiction worse, we learn that the reason why men's respect for each other grows with their mutual intimacy is that the good in human nature considerably outweighs the bad. If so, what becomes of the position that virtue and vice exactly balance and neutralise each other's effects?

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[1] See Macaulay's Essay on Machiavelli.

Apart, however, from these obvious objections, there is a deeper objection to the theory, which, so far as I know, has never yet been pointed out—

namely, the indistinctness of the whole antithesis between moral and intellectual laws. Buckle saw clearly enough that duty is partly a matter of knowledge, without seeing that all knowledge must, as such, be intellectual ; and he altogether failed to observe that the pursuit of science must equally, as a mode of action, come under moral laws. A life's devotion to the pursuit of truth demands no inconsiderable amount of temperance and courage ; while candour in dealing with the opinions of others, and readiness to test one's own opinions thoroughly, imply a degree of fairness and disinterestedness not inferior to that which may be displayed in the performance of any other duty.

In estimating the influence of religion, literature, and government on civilisation, Buckle finds his task greatly simplified by the previous elimination of morality ; the immediate effects of these three agents (to which art should have been added as a fourth) being exercised on action rather than on knowledge ; while, again, the consciousness that morality depends upon such complex conditions was a further motive for leaving it out of account altogether. Yet even so the questions raised in this connection are most inadequately treated in the chapter specially devoted to them. So far as literature is concerned, Buckle himself subsequently took up a totally different position, expatiating eloquently on the stimulus which poetry gives to scientific discovery, and on the importance of keeping the intellect in perpetual contact with the emotions ;[1] for which purpose, as need hardly be observed, literature is our most valuable auxiliary. His remarks on this head remind us of what Professor Tyndall has since said; and a little farther reflection might have led him to anticipate what the same authority has stated with respect to the moral basis of intellectual work.

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[1] II., p. 502.

Such considerations would, however, have been inconsistent with that thoroughgoing parallelism between knowledge and wealth, between logic and political economy, which our author was bent on establishing; for the laws of material industry, as he had learnt them, were completely dissociated from morality and from disinterested emotion. It is not a little curious that two other English thinkers, Darwin and Herbert Spencer, should almost simultaneously have been carrying economic principles, the one into zoology, and the other into all philosophy. For the "struggle for existence" is avowedly based on the Malthusian law of population; and the formula of evolution grew out of an attempt to place the doctrine of *laisser-faire* on a truly scientific foundation. Buckle uses both principles, although on a much more limited scale; he explains the tropical civilisations, as we have already seen, by the advantage which an unrestricted multiplication of human beings gave to land and capital over labour; he explains the European civilisations as a constant struggle between governmental interference and the natural development of intellect; and we shall presently see that he forces deduction and induction into an analogy with the production and distribution of wealth.

It sometimes happens that a philosopher errs, not by following his own ideas too far, but by not following them far enough; and I cannot help thinking that Buckle would have been better inspired had he pushed his parallel one step further, and introduced the theory of exchange into his intellectual economics. He would then have seen that the importation of knowledge from one country into another is the very condition of its progress; that for the community as well as for the individual isolation means death; that no nation, however gifted, can subsist on its own mental stores; and that truth acquires an altogether new power when transferred to a fresh soil. He would not then have held that the laws of intellectual or any other progress are best ascertained by studying their action in a country secluded, so far as possible, from external interference. And he would also, perhaps, have perceived that the decay of the great tropical and sub-tropical civilisations arose partly from this very seclusion, partly from the reaction of the barbarism by which they were surrounded on every side, entailing as it did an ever-increasing preponderance of the military spirit, together with a crushing burden of taxation within. As it is, he unconsciously bore witness to the truth whose full force he failed to recognise. England, which he declares to be the one country least affected by foreign influences, does in reality owe much of her intellectual greatness to those very influences. The circumstance that we did not formerly travel much abroad for pleasure, or receive many visitors from the European Continent, is comparatively insignificant. We traded round the world; we received books, inventions, discoveries, and ideas from all quarters.

When Buckle began to write the Renaissance had not yet attracted the universal attention it was destined to receive a few years after his death; still, its immense importance in the life of reason had already been pointed out before his time, and no one can now[1] help noticing what a void is produced by its total absence from the pages of this historian. He seems to think that, towards the close of the sixteenth century, men suddenly, and for no particular reason except the negative one of ecclesiastical decay, began doubting what they had hitherto believed, and that modern enlightenment sprang as spontaneously from their doubts. The truth is that they questioned one set of beliefs because they had become familiarised with another and contradictory set, embodied in the classic literature of Greece and Rome. Nor was the intellectual life of England dependent only for its first awakening on an external stimulus; it was sustained through the whole seventeenth century by continual contact with the minds of other nations; while no sooner was their influence partially withdrawn, as happened in the eighteenth century, than it fell into a speedy decline. Buckle has noticed the dearth of speculative genius which followed the deaths of Locke and Newton, but he has failed adequately to explain it. Curiously enough, too, the explanation which he does offer is inconsistent with his own principles. According to him, it arose from the diversion of the national genius partly into practical pursuits, partly into political contests.[1] Here, then, are two most serious disturbances, totally unconnected with the protective spirit, not allowed for in his general philosophy of history, and all the more dangerous that they are likely to gain instead of losing strength with advancing civilisation. That, however, he exaggerates their effect during the period referred to will become evident when we consider how much greater their activity has since become, without proving incompatible with a brilliant revival of science and philosophy. If we ask what was the cause of that revival, Buckle will himself supply us with the answer. He attributes it first to the influence of the Scotch school, and then to the "sudden admiration for German literature of which Coleridge was the principal exponent."[2] Only prejudice could have prevented him from acknowledging our obligations to France as well.

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[1] Written in 1880.

When we turn to other countries, Buckle furnishes fresh evidence of the same truth—the intellectual interdependence of nations. He tells us that France, enervated by the despotism of Louis XIV., was only saved by a wholesale importation of English ideas; and that the German intellect was raised to an even abnormal activity by contact with those eminent Frenchmen who flocked to the court of Frederic the Great.[3] English and Greek literature had, by the way, much more to do with that extraordinary fermentation than Maupertuis and his colleagues; but, as Buckle unhappily did not live to sketch the history of

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[1] I., p. 808. [2] *Ibid,* p. 809. [3] P. 217.

German thought, I need not press the point. Another striking illustration is offered by the history of Spain. Nothing in his whole work is more interesting than those condensed and vivid pages in which Buckle shows how, after having been brought to the lowest ebb of misery by her priesthood and her government, that unhappy country was restored to something of her former prosperity by the efforts of a foreign dynasty. Yet, strange to say, he seizes on this opportunity to push home the lesson that "no progress is real unless it is spontaneous."[1] That Spain temporarily fell back from the position won for her by Charles III. may be true enough. But did she become again what she had been a century before? And has she made no progress since then? The revolution of 1868 was, comparatively speaking, a failure, as indeed the revolutions of England and France at first seemed to be also; but at any rate it revealed the existence of a sceptical feeling diffused through the entire Spanish nation, and an utter decay of the old loyalty, which, according to our philosopher, are the most essential requisites of progress; and this scepticism, whatever may be its value, is altogether an importation from France and Germany—in other words, it results from a movement first set on foot by the reforming zeal of the Bourbons. The derivation of Scotch philosophy from England and France is not noticed, although the influence of France at least had already been pointed out by Carlyle in his essay on Burns.[2]

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[1] II., p. 99.

[2] In one passage Buckle speaks of "that interchange of ideas which is likely to become the most important regulator of

The preference shown by Buckle for home-grown over imported knowledge may have been suggested by Adam Smith's analogous preference of agriculture to manufactures, and of native industry to foreign trade. But when he declares the protective spirit in Church and State to be the great enemy of intellectual progress, and therefore of all civilisation, the very form of the expression places its economical derivation beyond a doubt. Here he is quite at home, and here his whole soul is thrown into the work. The polemic against protection occupies the larger portion of his history, and it was this that won for it such a far-reaching and resonant success. From a literary point of view that success was well deserved. I, at least, know of nothing in any work of the kind marked by such intense, sustained, victorious passion—the passion without which, as Hegel says, nothing great can be achieved, and which, in this instance, is rendered more formidable by the imposing array of facts brought up to support it at every step. To us of the present generation Buckle's words have a more individual distinctness and a more immediate interest than to his own contemporaries. For, since they were written, there has been a revival of the protective spirit under a new form, and in many quarters it is proposed that the old authoritative methods should be used to consolidate and extend reforms initiated by very different means. Endowment of research, endowment of Catholic professorships, compulsory education, compulsory

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European affairs" (I., p. 223). But he omits to notice that it has always been their most important regulator.

temperance, compulsory thrift, interference with freedom of contract, and Socialistic velleities of every kind—these are but the various parts of a system against which Buckle, had he lived, would have protested not less energetically than Herbert Spencer.[1] It behoves us then to examine with especial care the arguments by which his thesis is supported, and the historical examples by which he has endeavoured to verify them.

The protective spirit, as has been already observed, is twofold. It may either interfere with men's actions, or with their beliefs, or with both. In France it chiefly took the direction of political tutelage, in Scotland of ecclesiastical intolerance, in Spain of both combined; the consequence being that in the last-named country progress was completely arrested, while in the other two it has been irregular and unhealthy. The French Revolution was a reaction against the protective spirit, and its destructive violence was due to the rigour of the repression which provoked it. Few liberal thinkers will deny that Buckle's criticisms on the past and present condition of the countries just enumerated contain a large amount of truth. It is quite another question whether the wide generalisations founded on his historical survey are equally to be trusted. To begin with, it seems to me that the assumption of a fixed antithesis between the people and their rulers is eminently misleading. A country may be governed by a foreign race, possibly for its own good, but at any rate without its own consent or co-operation, like India at the present moment; or again it may be dominated by a priesthood sprung from its own ranks and speaking its own language, but to all intents and purposes the soldiers of an alien power, and quite out of sympathy with its real opinions; but apart from these exceptions every government is really representative, even when it is not created by the popular vote, and merely gives a sharper expression to the collective will or to the prevalent beliefs of the people. Sometimes the rulers will be a little in advance of their subjects, and sometimes a little behind them; but, to use a favourite formula of our author's, deviations in one direction will be compensated by deviations in another. Here the government will be too interfering, and there too remiss; but in either case the error will be attended by counterbalancing advantages; and probably each nation will have something to learn from the other. Everywhere there will be obstacles to progress; but they will arise far more from the natural inertia of the human mind, varying with race and geographical position, than from the distribution and application of political power; and they will equally affect all classes of society.

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[1] Written in 1880, when the agitation against Free Trade was only just beginning.

Again, Buckle seems to confound under the common name of political protection five distinct ideas: (1) Despotism of any kind; (2) the concentration of power in a few hands; (3) the favouring of one class at the expense of others; (4) interference with individuals for their own good; and (5) the feeling of personal loyalty towards a hereditary chief. He even goes so far as to identify what is called a paternal government with a "government in which supreme power is vested in the sovereign or in a few privileged classes."[1] Yet surely the government of Turkey is not paternal; nor is the development of democracy unfavourable to benevolent interference with private interests, as the present tendency of legislation in England proves. Buckle also associates economic protection with political absolutism and centralisation, although in the United States it flourishes under conditions the very reverse of these; while only a few years after the publication of his first volume free-trade was imposed on France by a despotic ruler.

Undoubtedly there are countries where the principle of authority is highly developed, and others where it is restricted within very narrow limits; but to say that the former are necessarily animated by a spirit unfavourable to scientific progress is probably more than Buckle would have ventured to assert in so many words; although, on putting his various expressions together, this is the only interpretation that they will stand. Yet it is notorious that science has received great encouragement from many absolute rulers both in ancient and modern times. In France it made great progress under the old *régime*. In Germany it has co-existed with a complete absence of political freedom. Perhaps he would have held that mere knowledge was an insufficient return for the sacrifice of individualism and spontaneity; but we have only to deal with his clear and categorical assertions—(1) "that the progress of mankind depends on the success with which the laws of phenomena are investigated, and on the extent to which a knowledge of these laws is diffused"; and (2) "that the great enemy of this movement is the protective spirit."[1] Now, I maintain that, whatever else the history of France proves, it does not prove the second of these propositions. Let us consider what arguments it suggests to Buckle. He does not, indeed, discuss the endowment of research put in practice on a large scale by Louis XIV., but he censures the encouragement given to literature by that monarch on grounds which, if they are worth anything, must equally apply to science. As usual, the principles invoked are purely economic. We are told that—

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[1] I., p. 557.

> Every nation which is allowed to pursue its course uncontrolled will easily satisfy the wants of its own intellect, and will produce such a literature as is best suited to its actual condition. And it is evidently for the interest of all classes that the production shall not be greater than the want—that the supply shall not exceed the demand. It is, moreover, necessary to the well-being of society that a healthy proportion should be kept up between the intellectual classes and the practical classes. It is necessary that there should be a certain ratio between those who are most inclined to think and those who are most inclined to act. If we were all authors, our material interests would suffer; if we were all men of business, our mental pleasures would be abridged. In the first case, we should be famished philosophers; in the other case, we should be wealthy fools. Now, it is obvious that, according to the commonest principles of human action, the relative numbers of these two classes will be adjusted, without effort, by the natural, or, as we call it, the spontaneous, movement of society.[2]

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[1] II., p. 1.

[2] I., pp. 628–29.

The obvious fallacy lies in supposing that literature is useless when those who are engaged in its production cannot live on the sale of their works. The idea of doing anything for posterity is quite ignored. And we are vainly left to imagine how the book-market is to provide needy philosophers not only with the necessaries of life, but also with the instruments of research, such as libraries, observatories, laboratories, and collections of natural objects, in the absence of state-aid, and even of private munificence, for that, too, must be excluded if we are to apply the law of supply and demand with complete consistency. To suppose that such aid, even when granted on a liberal scale, would impoverish the rest of the community is absurd, especially when we consider how largely scientific discoveries contribute to the national wealth. Nor can it be contended that the energies of scientific men are weakened by the receipt of public assistance (as those of other producers might be), so long as it does not exceed their real wants. Had our author lived to write his promised sketch of American civilisation, he would perhaps have found that the want of accumulated knowledge—which, according to him, is a serious obstacle to the progress of the United States—may be traced to a want of endowments for the support of learning in that country.[1]

Buckle, however, in the chapter to which I have been referring, evades the real issue by speaking at one time as if the interests of science or philosophy were identical with those of literature, and at another time as if the two were opposed. The former view is expressed in the passage just quoted, the latter in his subsequent arguments. We are told that Louis XIV., by encouraging art and poetry, arrested the great intellectual movement which had been in progress before his accession to power. It may be doubted whether any courtier ever attributed such omnipotence to a monarch as this republican historian. Here, again, an economical analogy is falsely applied. Because capital can be readily transferred from one employment to another, it does not follow that the same is true of brains. It is, indeed, evident from the facts furnished by Buckle himself that, before Louis XIV. assumed the direction of affairs, the French intellect was already executing the evolution ascribed to his mischievous interference with the natural course of thought. For "the poets, dramatists, painters, musicians, sculptors, architects, were, with hardly an exception, not only born, but educated, under that freer policy which existed before his time."[1] *A fortiori,* their career must have been already decided before his majority. That epochs of scientific and of artistic excellence should alternate with one another is, in truth, a regular law of history; and the same phenomenon has repeated itself at other periods when the cause, whatever it may be, evidently lay deeper than the vicissitudes of Court favour. It is another question whether the intellectual sterility which marked the latter half of Louis's reign is to be attributed to the protective system. Looking at our own Victorian age as it now is, compared with what it was twenty years ago, and at the present wretched state of French literature as compared with the generation of 1830, I am inclined to think that here also we are in presence of some mysterious rhythm, according to which many more great writers are born at one time than at another.[1]

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[1] I., pp. 220-21. It will be understood that the reference is to a state of things existing fifty years ago.

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[1] I., p. 648.

Passing from the protective spirit in politics to the protective spirit in theology, I must again call attention to the confusion of ideas lurking under a style of exemplary clearness. The somewhat heterogeneous forces represented by clericalism, asceticism, intolerance, and superstition are lumped together under a single heading; while the last of these terms is sometimes used to denote supernatural beliefs lying outside theology, and sometimes any amount of supernaturalism going beyond Buckle's own theistic creed. Sometimes the clergy are dangerous because they teach certain doctrines; at other times the doctrines are only dangerous because of the authority which they give to an organised class whose interests are opposed to progress. Sometimes the study of theology is attacked as a waste of power, because theology deals with subjects not admitting of any certain information; at other times because it propounds theories inconsistent with experience. Under cover of such ambiguities, the Scotch and the Germans are equally spoken of as being more superstitious than the English; although most of the faults with which Scotland is reproached are present in England to a considerable extent, and not present at all in

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[1] Things have got much worse since the above was written. Compare the concluding chapter of my *Modern England*.

Germany. Moreover, the evils indiscriminately associated with the protective spirit in theology, so far from being always combined, are often found to be inconsistent with one another. Asceticism is not the rule of established Churches, but of those religious teachers who are thrown for their support on the voluntary contributions of the people. It is also notorious that the latter class, precisely because they are not protected—that is to say, not educated at the public expense, nor admitted to the society of the higher orders—are generally distinguished by the greater illiberality of their sentiments. Again, a real theology, however largely intermixed with error it may be, is widely removed from the mere popular and spontaneous superstitions with which Buckle habitually confounds it, by the systematic cohesion of its dogmas, and by the severe intellectual effort implied on the part of those whose duty it is to assimilate and to defend them. It is no accident that so many *savants* should be the children of Protestant clergymen, and that so many philosophers should have been theological students in their youth. Even as a formidable enemy, Catholicism may have rendered valuable services to freethought, by nerving its advocates to the most strenuous efforts, and obliging them to find counter-solutions for the great problems to which the Church had already provided an answer. Buckle knew well that industry does not attain its highest development in regions where the wants of life are most easily supplied. He might have inferred from that significant circumstance that the intellectual energies gain fresh strength from the obstacles against which they contend. It would have been worthy of an English philosopher to point out that in the intellectual sphere also competition is needed to secure efficiency ; that great thought has always been aggressive and defiant ; and that the weakening of its antagonist may dangerously react upon itself.

After considering the causes by which knowledge is impeded, we pass to its own laws, to the conditions under which it is extended. Here the analogy between intellectual and industrial economics, which throughout has been our guide, is completed. We are taught to consider knowledge, like wealth, under the two heads of accumulation and diffusion. By the former progress is made possible ; by the latter it is actually effected. Had Buckle been really, what so many writers fancy he was, a disciple of Auguste Comte, he would here have availed himself of the results already reached in the Positive Philosophy. The law of the three stages was ready to hand, together with the classification of the sciences according to their logical and historical order of evolution. His true master, however, among contemporary thinkers is not Comte, but Mill ; he combines the *System of Logic* with the *Principles of Political Economy ;* he looks on deduction as the great instrument by which knowledge is accumulated, and on induction as the great instrument of its diffusion.[1] We have to lament that his whole case is not before us, for it was in the unwritten chapters on Germany and America that these two processes were to have been more particularly studied. I believe, however, that the method chosen was a mistaken one, and that its inadequacy may be demonstrated from the portions which he lived to complete.

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[1] I., p. 224 ; II., pp. 579 *sqq.*

It would appear, to begin with, that Buckle had either no clear idea of what is meant by induction and deduction, or ideas which were the reverse of true. And here let us pause to observe that our philosopher, while professing to discard the methods employed by metaphysicians for investigating the laws of mind, and setting very little value on the positive results which they have attained,[1] has in fact borrowed the whole framework of his system from these very metaphysicians, without acknowledgment and without criticism. He justly censures Reid for multiplying unproved assumptions. Yet he had a common-sense system of his own; only he never got so far as Reid; he never consciously formulated it to himself. Preoccupied with the idea of general laws as the one great object of knowledge, he forgot that, before laws can be even looked for, a preliminary mental analysis is needed, sometimes of infinitely greater difficulty and importance than any subsequent part of the inquiry. But, as nobody can move an inch without such an analysis, he takes for granted the distinctions of common language and common thought, without perceiving their purely relative and provisional value. It is only by studying the history of these distinctions that we can free ourselves from their tyranny. Buckle, apparently, had never done so, and, not having mastered them, they have mastered him. They are perpetually misleading, or tripping him up, or gathering in a hopeless tangle about his steps. So it is with the antithesis between nature and man derived from the Greek Sophists; the antithesis between the intellectual and the moral derived from Aristotle; the Socratic confusion of dutifulness with knowledge; and the assumption of an immemorial, unchanging moral code, smacking strongly of intuitionism. Then, again, we have the scholastic separation of the imagination from the understanding; and on it is superimposed a theory that art is due to the one and science to the other. This supplies him with a ready explanation of the disproportionate development of art in Italy and Spain; the imagination being stimulated to excess in those countries by the more imposing aspects of nature as compared with Northern Europe. It seems to have escaped his notice that in art the Belgians far surpass the Swiss, while in science the relation is reversed. Elsewhere, as I have already observed, he does justice to the scientific uses of the imagination, but straightway proceeds to confound imagination either with a knowledge of the emotions or with the emotions themselves. These, he incidentally declares, "are as much a part of us as the understanding"—which has never been denied—and adds that "they are as truthful" and "as likely to be right";[1] a doctrine which, if it has any meaning at all, would immediately reopen the floodgates of superstition, and reverse the conclusions elsewhere maintained by its author.

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[1] He mentions as the sum-total "a very few of the laws of association" (one would like to know how many there are altogether), "and perhaps I may add the modern theories of vision and of touch" (I., p. 151). Yet out of these materials nearly the whole of a new psychology has been constructed.

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[1] II., p. 502.

But of all the ideas that Buckle has borrowed from the "metaphysicians," he has used none so freely as their theories concerning the distinction between induction and deduction; nor is his want of philosophical training anywhere more painfully evinced, and this in three different directions: (1) as regards their abstract nature; (2) as regards their historical exemplification; and (3) as regards their connection with the accumulation and diffusion of knowledge. His account of the two methods is, at first starting, sufficiently accurate, though rather vague. "Induction is from particulars to generals, and from the senses to the ideas; deduction is from generals to particulars, and from the ideas to the senses."[1] But, on proceeding to explain what are the general propositions from which deduction sets out, he makes the following extraordinary assertion:—

> The deductive thinker invariably assumes certain premisses, which are quite different from the hypotheses essential to the best induction. These premisses are sometimes borrowed from antiquity; sometimes they are taken from the notions which happen to prevail in the surrounding society; sometimes they are the result of a man's own peculiar organisation; and sometimes...... they are deliberately invented, with the object of arriving, not at truth, but at an approximation to truth.

To which he adds that—

> a deductive habit, being essentially synthetic, always tends to multiply original principles or laws; while the tendency of an inductive habit is to diminish those laws by gradual and successive analysis.

Yet we had been previously told that—

> the inductive philosopher is naturally cautious, patient,

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[1] II., p. 419.

> and somewhat creeping; while the deductive philosopher is more remarkable for boldness, dexterity, and often rashness.[1]

One need only look at the mathematical sciences, which are universally admitted to be deductive, to see the absurdity of all this. To ascend from the part to the whole must always be *cæteris paribus* a more daring and hazardous process than to descend from the whole to the part. The truth is that what Buckle had in his mind throughout was not the opposition between two kinds of reasoning, but between reasoning on the one hand and observation and experiment on the other. For he mentions America as an extreme instance of the inductive spirit, and Germany of the deductive. Now, the Americans are well known to be excellent observers, but they have not contributed much to our stock of generalisations, either by the discovery of new or by the resolution of old laws; while German philosophy is remarkable for its habit of challenging current assumptions, and for its constant endeavour to construct systems out of the fewest possible first principles. Yet this interpretation, although it gives an intelligible meaning to some passages, is irreconcilable with others which seem to confound induction with the general principle of all reasoning, the demand of a proof; while deduction is represented as the submission of reason to unsupported authorities. Accordingly, the one method is characterised as theological, and the other as anti-theological.[2] The distinction cannot, in my opinion, be maintained. Particular facts may be, equally with general propositions, taken for granted or accepted on faith, and theological systems not only may be, but have been, built up out of such alleged facts, with no more aid from general assumptions than is necessary to any inductive process whatever. And the errors of such a system, or of any system, may often be most effectually overthrown by showing that it involves a contradiction, either of its general propositions with each other, or of those propositions with their logical consequences—that is to say, by deductive reasoning. It has even been held that the function of syllogistic logic is essentially negative, that it only amounts to the complete elimination of self-contradiction from thought. Buckle most unfairly opposes the rigorous and scientific employment of the one method to the loose and popular employment of the other, thus altogether missing the close connection which recent logicians have shown to subsist between them.

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[1] *Loc. cit.*

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 411 *sqq.*

When Buckle proceeds to illustrate the different types of reasoning by a survey of the literatures where he supposes them to be exemplified, his original misapprehension is continued and reinforced by other misapprehensions in the interpretation of those literatures. The Scotch intellect in the eighteenth century is chosen as an example of the deductive spirit; and the tendency of Scotch metaphysicians to assume the existence of ultimate principles in the human mind is given as an especial instance of its operation. An historian might perhaps be equally justified in taking Hume, Adam Smith, James Mill, and Thomas Brown, who all pursued the contrary method, as the genuine representatives of Scotch philosophy. But, passing over this objection, is it not obvious that we have here a confusion of psychology with logic; that to insist (whether rightly or wrongly) on the indecomposable character of certain mental phenomena; to maintain even that we have internal sources of knowledge independent of experience—is an entirely different thing from preferring one kind of demonstration to another? It might as well be said that the chemist who believes in the indecomposable character of the so-called elements is more deductive than he who seeks to resolve them all into a single substance, as that the *a priori* psychologist is so distinguished from his analytical rival. Indeed, of the two I should say that he who evolves all the manifold varieties of consciousness from the combinations of a few simple feelings, approaches nearest to the mathematical, and therefore to the deductive, method. The common-sense school, as their very name implies, were not reasoners at all; they never went beyond a superficial description and classification of the mental phenomena.

In dealing with the origin of this so-called philosophy, Buckle is equally at fault. According to him, its method is theological, its results are secular and liberal. The truth, however, is that Hutcheson, the founder of the school, borrowed his innate principles from Shaftesbury and Butler, who, being English, ought, on our author's view, to have taught the contrary system; while the habit of assuming their existence, once introduced, found high favour with orthodox Scotchmen, because it seemed to make for the spirituality of the soul and the supernatural origin of conscience ; thus furnishing a welcome support to those dogmas by which they were still powerfully affected. We are told that in Scotland the intellectual classes have long been remarkable for "boldness of investigation and freedom from prejudice."[1] I believe all continental critics will agree with me in thinking that they have been, comparatively speaking, much more remarkable for narrowness and timidity.

It is quite in accordance with his singular view of method that Buckle should declare Hume's metaphysical essays an exception to the generally deductive character of Scotch philosophy. For Hume was both the most sceptical of all thinkers and the one who carried the experiential system farthest. Yet, looking not at the matter, but at the logical form of those essays, I do not see how they can be distinguished from his other writings. For reasons already suggested, I should be inclined to consider them better examples of deduction than of induction. But, properly speaking, there is a stage at which speculation is so little developed that it cannot be brought under any strictly defined type of reasoning at all. Its method is then that of analogy, a rough attempt to interpret the unknown in terms of the known. The *Natural History of Religion* is a good example of this process. Hume, without investigating the evidence furnished by travellers, declared that polytheism was the natural religion of savages. Does it follow that his conclusions were evolved out of his own mind? By no means. He argued from the widest experience that the more abstract and universal a notion is, the more difficult is it to grasp ; and that the higher manifestations of mind follow, instead of preceding, the lower. In fact, he argued from all that was already known by experience of children, of uneducated persons, and of savages, to what still remained to be known of these last. To collect the facts about savage belief, and then to restate them in abstract terms, would not have been induction, because it would not have been reasoning of any kind, but simply description.

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[1] I., p. 225.

Buckle's account of Adam Smith is open both to these and to other criticisms. The works of that great thinker are represented as a perfect type of the deductive method. The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nations* are interpreted as complementary portions of a single science, having for its object the reduction of human nature to law. The peculiarity of the scheme is that the two grand motives of human action are separately considered, and treated apart from each other's disturbing action. These two motives are sympathy and selfishness ; the one is discussed in the *Moral Sentiments*, the other in the *Wealth of Nations*. By a logical artifice, each in turn is assumed to be the whole factor in human conduct ; although, in reality, their effects are always conjoined. Buckle exemplifies what he supposes to have been the method of Adam Smith by a singularly unlucky illustration from geometry. Real lines, he tells us, always have both length and breadth ; but the geometrician, in order to avoid insoluble complications, assumes that they possess the former attribute only. We are not informed whether he subsequently rectifies his omission by postulating lines which have breadth without length; but to complete the parallel he certainly ought to do so. A much more pertinent illustration would have been furnished by dynamics, which really does begin with the effect of forces taken singly, and afterwards proceeds to study them in combination. I conceive, however, that no such idea ever entered the head of Adam Smith as is attributed to him by his admirer. His two great works would, indeed, according to Buckle's theory, serve, not to complete, but to contradict and upset each other. For, be it observed, they do not study simple tendencies, but actual concrete facts of history and every-day life. To say that whatever men feel and think and do is the effect of their sympathies, and then to say that it is the effect of their selfishness, would, if these two forces were necessarily opposed to one another, be simply an unintelligible paradox. But the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is, as its very name implies, an inquiry into the origin of certain feelings, which are nowhere assumed to exercise a paramount influence over human conduct; nor, although they are derived from sympathy, do they exhaust its manifestations. Neither do sympathy and selfishness, in Smith's view of them, either divide the whole field of human nature, or reciprocally exclude one another.[1] The tendency to give and to seek for sympathy does not, in its original form, imply any self-sacrifice, and, in its more complex manifestations, is eminently favourable to that desire for wealth which Adam Smith regards as the principal cause of economic progress. Thus the *Wealth of Nations*, so far from taking up a psychological position opposed to, or lying outside, that of the *Moral Sentiments,* simply assumes the existence of desires which, in that work, had been explained, whether rightly or wrongly, as a particular manifestation of our social feelings. Moreover, even if its reasonings were based on the supposition that selfishness (in its narrowest sense) is the sole spring of action, they would not give a complete account of it, but only of so much as is concerned with the production of economical phenomena; while, again, the analysis of those phenomena embraces a variety of topics with which the science of human nature, properly so called, has nothing whatever to do.

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[1] That is, according to the present use of terms, which is also Buckle's. Adam Smith says that sympathy is not a selfish principle, using selfish in a much narrower sense than ours,

But if Adam Smith's works do not, when taken together, constitute a deductive psychology, can it be said that each of them singly is an example of the deductive method? Certainly not according to Buckle's own definitions. For the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* makes no unsupported assertions; it perpetually appeals to experience; and, instead of multiplying ethical principles, seeks to reduce them to one. Neither does the *Wealth of Nations* reason down from causes to effects, but, contrariwise, ascends from effects to causes, which, we are elsewhere informed, is a process characteristic of induction.[1] We begin with the division of labour, and are gradually led on to exchange, to the circulating medium, and to the different elements of price. Our modern systems are arranged on the opposite plan; they follow the objective order of things, not the subjective order of thoughts. It is true that Adam Smith does not obey the rules of induction laid down by Bacon; but then no science ever was, or ever could be, constructed in accordance with those rules. The same remark applies to Scotch physical philosophy. No doubt, it was largely hypothetical, conjectural, and not immediately verified by experience. But when was there ever a physical philosophy of which the same could not be said? Buckle does, indeed, draw a very marked distinction between the literatures of Scotland, on the one hand, and of England and France on the other. The former alone, according to him, was deductive; the latter two were inductive. But, had he taken pains to analyse the productions of English and French philosophy from the logical point of view, he could hardly have failed to notice how little they differed, in that respect, from the Scotch systems. He admits that Harvey and Newton used the deductive method. But Harvey and Newton between them represent half the scientific English intellect of their century; and if we add Hobbes, who assuredly reasoned from generals to particulars quite as much as, if not more than, Adam Smith, the balance will incline heavily against induction. Observation and experiment were, it is true, the favourite occupations of English science in the eighteenth century; but these are only subsidiary operations, not to be confounded with the generalising process itself.

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[1] II., p. 515.

With regard to the French philosophy of the same period, only a preconceived theory could have made anyone blind to its predominatingly deductive character. To prove this, I need only quote what M. Taine, a most competent authority, has stated on the subject :—

> Suivre en toute recherche, avec toute confiance, sans réserve ni précaution, la méthode des mathématiciens ; extraire, circonscrire, isoler quelques notions très-simples et très-générales, puis, abandonnant l'expérience, les comparer, les combiner, et du composé artificiel ainsi obtenu, déduire par le raisonnement toutes les conséquences qu'il enferme : tel est le procédé naturel de l'esprit classique. Il lui est si bien inné qu'on le rencontre également dans les deux siècles, chez Descartes, Malebranche et les partisans des idées pures comme chez les partisans de la sensation, du besoin physique, de l'instinct primitif, Condillac, Rousseau, Helvétius, plus tard Condorcet Volney, Sièyes, Cabanis et Destutt de Tracy. Ceux-ci ont beau se dire sectateurs de Bacon et rejeter les idées innées ; avec un autre point de départ que les Cartésiens, ils marchent dans la même voie, et comme les Cartésiens, après un leger emprunt ils laissent là l'expérience.[1]

It may be added that pure mathematics and astronomy, of which the former had always been deductive, and the latter had recently become so, were the sciences most successfully cultivated by Frenchmen at this period ; that Haüy, the great mineralogist, was, according to Buckle himself, indebted to deduction for his famous discovery ; and that the igneous and aqueous hypotheses in geology, which are given as instances of the same method when respectively employed by a Scotchman and a German, had already been similarly employed by Buffon, a representative French thinker. But the syllogistic character of the French intellect is so notorious that to illustrate it at greater length would be a waste of words.

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[1] *L'Ancien Régime*, I., pp. 262–3.

Such a profound misconception of the logical methods, whether considered in the abstract or the concrete, either produced or originated with an equally profound misconception of their sociological function. In order to carry out his parallel between the economics of industry and the economics of intellect, Buckle, as we have already seen, associated the accumulation of knowledge with the use of the deductive method, and its diffusion with the opposite procedure. Greece, Scotland, and Germany are examples of the former; England, France, and America of the latter. The nations belonging to the first group are remarkable for great breadth and boldness of speculation, but also for the deep gulf left between the intellectual classes and the mass of the people; while, in nations belonging to the second group, fewer great thinkers have arisen, but enlightenment has been more widely diffused, and, in England at least, a more regular development of civilisation has been secured. Three distinct grounds are offered in explanation of this alleged fact. Deductive reasoning rests on unproved assumptions. So also does theology, the great obstacle to intellectual progress; therefore it cannot be overthrown by a method partaking so largely of its own spirit. I have already taken occasion to show that this argument is invalid. The assumptions of science, not being accepted on authority, cannot favour authority; and false assumptions may be dialectically, as well as experimentally, overthrown. I have now to add that, granting the French philosophy of the last century to have been both deductive and sceptical, the possibility of a close connexion between the two characteristics is demonstrated; and a further proof will be found in the circumstance that English scepticism has always flourished most when deduction has been most generally employed.[1]

Buckle's second explanation is much more plausible. Where philosophers are removed from contact with the people, they will remain less affected by popular prejudices and less concerned about the consequences of their teaching. For that reason the physical schools of Ionia and Magna Græcia were far more daring in their denials than the ethical schools of Athens. Nevertheless, when the people have once become thoroughly sceptical their sympathy and support will give a fresh impetus to advanced thought among their teachers. That is just what is happening in Germany now.[2] On the other hand, where the people are both educated and bigoted, such a mere trifle as logical method will not prevent them from exercising the sternest control over their university professors. Hence the official science of Scotland is remarkable for its orthodoxy. Even Adam Smith was obliged to show of what edifying religious applications his moral theories admitted; and the conservative tendencies of the "common-sense" school have already been mentioned.

So far the respective influence of the two systems, as viewed by Buckle, is negative rather than positive. The one, according to his theory, does, and the other does not, remove the causes of popular superstition. The one does, and the other does not, leave the foremost minds completely free to work out the remotest consequences of their speculations. We now pass to the positive reason why induction should contribute more powerfully than the rival method to a general diffusion of knowledge. We are told that this is because the observations on which it rests, being accessible to a far greater number of minds, are proportionately better appreciated and more readily accepted than the abstract reasonings of deduction. Possibly our author may have had in his mind various passages where Aristotle describes induction as clearer, more persuasive, and more popular than the syllogism, which, on the other hand, is more cogent, and corresponds better to the order of natural causation. Such a distinction, however, applies rather to the loose illustrative induction of the Greeks than to the rigorous observations and experiments of modern science, where the facts are often much more abstruse than the inferences founded upon them. What these facts are can only be known to a few; the vulgar either remain ignorant of their existence, or else take it on trust; and, when faith is once admitted, all kinds of conclusions may profit by it equally, irrespective of the evidence on which they rest. Again, when Buckle says that "for one person who can think there are at least a hundred persons who can observe,"[1] he forgets that induction, being a process of reasoning, is necessarily a process of thought. Nor has the greater or less difficulty of understanding and practically applying a principle when once discovered anything to do with the kind of investigation by which it has been reached, or with the kind of proof by which it has been established. It might also be easily maintained that, while the tendency of generalisation is to lead us away from experience, the tendency of deduction is to lead us back to experience. A new truth may easily commend itself to the popular mind by explaining a multitude of phenomena which never would have suggested it to the original discoverer. Nothing serves to extend a knowledge of scientific theories so much as the inventions by which they are utilised. But both the making and the explaining of inventions are essentially deductive processes; they are the application of general laws to concrete facts. The truth is that, while all knowledge tends spontaneously to spread, the means by which its diffusion can be hastened have little or nothing to do with the order of investigations by which it was first obtained. The remark may seem commonplace, but popular education is not a question of logical method at all. It depends primarily on scholastic machinery, and more remotely on religion, literature, and government—that is to say, on agencies which Buckle has summarily excluded from his scheme of intellectual progress.

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[1] In 1840–60 it was associated with the first entrance of German philosophy; in 1860–80 with deductive theories of evolution; and in 1880–1900 with the Hegelian logic.

[2] Since these words were first written the purely intellectual evolution of German thought has been hampered by the efforts of the rich to place their property under the protection of a rehabilitated Christianity.

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[1] II., p. 582.

The theory of logical economy equally breaks down when we come to examine its historical verification. It is not true that Greek philosophy had no power to diminish popular superstition. One need only compare Euripides with Æschylus, or even Xenophon with Herodotus, to appreciate its effect. Without it, indeed, the conversion of the Roman world from a naturalistic polytheism to an ethical monotheism could never have been accomplished; without it Roman jurisprudence could not have been rationalised; without its revival mediæval darkness could not have been so speedily dissipated. The case of Germany is still stronger. No doubt the state of German middle-class education leaves much to be desired, and, by all accounts, is rather deteriorating than improving. No doubt, also, there is a deep division between the intellectual classes and the rest of the people. But this is due far more to the literary peculiarities of German philosophy than to its method of research. The public are repelled by speculative treatises, not because they reason from first principles, but because they are detestably written. A profoundly speculative work like the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* will run through several editions, if its style be but tolerably good. For the same reason Buckle's own book has had a great success in Germany—greater even than in England—although its method is rather deductive than inductive. But whether German philosophy be popularly studied or not, the scepticism now diffused through every class in Germany bears witness to the immense influence which it exerts on public opinion. If it is to be taken as a symptom of superstition that the Scotch churches are "still filled with devout and ignorant worshippers,"[1] it must surely be taken as a symptom of the contrary that the German churches are so scantily attended. Whatever Buckle says of Scotland is just what a continental critic would say of England, and, if so, every such charge would redound to the discredit of the inductive method which is supposed to have regulated our civilisation. Again, one would suppose from Buckle's language on the subject that the northern and southern divisions of Great Britain were sundered either by a difference of language or by an impassable frontier, instead of reading the same books, profiting by the same discoveries, and carrying on an uninterrupted exchange of ideas. Whatever our literature has done for ourselves, it ought to have done, although perhaps not to an equal extent, for the Scotch.

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[1] II., pp. 589.

A less ingenious theorist than Buckle would probably have been contented with a more obvious explanation of whatever bigotry still survives in Scotland. Having once struck deeper root, the theological or puritanical spirit has naturally remained stronger in that country than in England or France ; but there seems no reason for believing that Scotland compares with them, in that respect, more unfavourably now than at any time during the last three centuries. Granting that she is not yet on a level with them, it does not follow that she has not made equal progress in the same period. And if, as will hardly be denied, she is no longer (for good or evil) in the religious condition of the seventeenth century, why should not the change be attributed, at least in part, to her philosophy? It is no little matter that she should have produced two such writers as Burns and Scott, at once so national, so popular, and so filled with the secular and humanistic spirit of modern civilisation. Surely their appearance, coming when it did, together with that of the numerous minor luminaries who surrounded them, was not unconnected with the triumphs already won by their predecessors in the more abstract spheres of thought. And if Scotch literature cannot truly be said to have exercised no influence on the national spirit, neither can it be said to have received none in return.[1] If the Scotch thinkers, with one exception, let theology alone, this was not from any incapacity on their part to call in question its fundamental assumptions, but because they either shared its beliefs, or were deterred by the strength of public opinion from openly assailing them. And the solitary exception, Hume, differed from his contemporaries not because he employed the inductive method, but because he lived a good deal abroad, and never held a university professorship at home.

We have seen, then, that the philosophy of individualism, when carried from the economics of material industry into the more complex economics of mental energy, gives rise to misconceptions and inconsistencies at every step. After the whole weight of human progress has been thrown on advancing knowledge, the basis of knowledge itself is so isolated, so narrowed, so weakened by internal disintegration, that the resulting strain terminates in a complete collapse. Where the analogy of material industry might have been profitably employed, it is neglected. Where the laws regulating production, distribution, and governmental interference are inapplicable, they are forcibly imposed on the phenomena. Standing by the ruined edifice, we ask ourselves on what other plan it could have been built. The answer is that, first of all, the materials which our architect pushed aside must be properly utilised. We must not isolate from each other forces which are only different aspects of a fundamental unity, inseparable in the completed idea no less than in the living fact. We must overcome these scholastic antitheses of nature and man, morals and intellect, imagination and understanding, emotion and reason, induction and deduction. We must cease to look on the governing classes as eternal blunderers and bullies. In the history of our race, everything is natural, everything is human, everything emotional, imaginative, and moral. I will even say that, using the word "religion" to denote the provisional synthesis of these various agencies, and extending the word "government" to all forms of co-operation, whether spontaneous or permanently organised, everything is religious and governmental. Still more, if possible, must we recognise within each department a necessary consensus of functions. Whatever makes for the accumulation of knowledge makes also for its diffusion, and reciprocally. Without hypothesis there would be no induction, and without experience no deduction. The one process, as Stanley Jevons has shown, is an inversion of the other. Moreover, the generalisations with which our inquiries begin are partial and precarious; their growth in solidity and in sweep is proportioned to the number of particulars successfully explained by their application. Neither can the intellect of any nation continue to advance without perpetual excitement from its neighbours; and it is here, I think, that we can learn the most valuable lessons from Buckle. He was right in assigning a distinct scientific genius to each of the great civilised peoples; but the narrowness of his own economic scheme prevented him from discerning what were, in each instance, the differential characteristics. I firmly believe, however, that such a comparative psychology is possible, and that even now its outlines might be traced. For example, at the beginning of this essay I have attempted to show that there is a unity of composition running through the most divergent manifestations of our modern English philosophy. But this is a vein of thought which cannot be worked out any farther within my present limits.

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[1] II., pp. 586.

It would have been impossible to tell beforehand what view of history would be taken by the studious son of an English merchant, whose opinions were formed during the great agitation for free-trade. But, when we know by experience what view he actually did take, the theory seems to be in perfect harmony with a social environment of which it was the most interesting, though not the most highly organised nor the most enduring expression. In endeavouring to represent Buckle's philosophy as something more than a mere product of individual genius, I have been faithful, amid all differences, to that most general principle which it shares with every philosophy worthy of the name, and which it has contributed so powerfully to enforce. Twenty-five years ago the idea of law, universal and unbroken, was almost a paradox. It is now almost a commonplace ; and among those by whose efforts so vast a change in public opinion was accomplished must be placed the name of this noble thinker, whose learning and eloquence have not often been singly equalled, and, in their combination, have never, to my knowledge, been approached.

THE MORALS OF AN IMMORALIST—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

GERMANY, so rich in every other kind of philosophical literature, has not contributed much to ethical thought. Innumerable *Sittenlehren* have doubtless flowed from the laborious pens of her professors; and her great writers have given utterance to many casual thoughts on the problems of good and evil, virtue and vice. But, with the single exception of Kant's categorical imperative, she has produced nothing that the world in general has accepted as comparable to the achievements in the same field of Greece, Rome, and Britain. Fichte and Schopenhauer come next to Kant for interest and value. They cannot, however, be said to have produced much impression outside Germany; and their morality is, or at least claims to be, so closely bound up with their metaphysics as inevitably to suffer by detachment from their illusive interpretations of existence. And even Kant really did no more than emphasise and precisionise the idea of moral obligation, utterly failing in his subsequent attempt to fill up the blank form with a specific sum of moral prescriptions.

This speculative weakness, assuming it to exist, is not easy to explain. It certainly is not connected with any admitted deficiency on the practical side. The Germans yield to no other great nation in moral seriousness and dutifulness; such triumphs as they have achieved in war and peace would have been impossible to a selfish, a frivolous, or a self-indulgent race. Nor has the disposition to theorise on what they do ever been lacking among them ; if anything, it is present to excess. In fact, what one misses is not ethical theorising, but originality and life in the theories.

It may be that the extreme liberty of theological speculation in Germany, combined with the want of political liberty, accounts for this anomaly, as the reverse conditions account for the extraordinary development of ethical thought in the schools of Athens and in Great Britain. For at Athens always, as among ourselves until quite recently, the popular religion perverted metaphysics into an abstract mythology; while the popular respect for personal liberty gave free play to real or ideal reconstructions of life. Plato is nearly as cautious as Mill when he touches on the ultimate realities of nature ; Mill is nearly as bold as Plato when he sets up ultimate standards of conduct. Whatever freedom of thinking for ourselves in cosmic science we possess is due to Germany. Whatever freedom of social action the Germans possess they owe to us. Their *Frauenbewegung* is there to prove it.

Within our own memory Germany has for the first time produced a truly ethical genius—a thinker with whom problems of conduct constituted from beginning to end the supreme, if not the sole, interest of life. It may seem strange that I should say so much of the dæmonic and tragic figure whose name stands at the head of this study. For Friedrich Nietzsche habitually posed as an immoralist, an emancipator from moral restrictions, speaking of what he called "moralin" as a deadly poison. Nietzsche's friends, however, a most respectable set of people, were not in the least appalled by such language, nor need we take it in very deadly earnest. They saw in it no more than a strong way of saying that much of what passes for absolute right and good is only true within certain very narrow limitations, and that there are impulses, supposed to be very virtuous, which tend on the whole to do mankind more harm than good, as well as impulses, supposed to be vicious, that tend to exalt it in the scale of real value.

In giving this paradoxical form to his morality Nietzsche was merely following the constant tradition of German philosophy. We are accustomed, and for that matter his own countrymen are accustomed, to look on Hegel as a quite exceptional instance of what may be done in the way of setting common sense at defiance. But Hegel, with his immanent dialectic of self-contradictory positions, reconciled in a higher synthesis, only brought to a point what had been more or less the method of all his predecessors, and was destined to be the method of his chief successors also. Kant naïvely supposed that he was dissipating Hume's scepticism by an audacity of negation before which Hume would have shrunk back appalled; and, not content with that performance, he proceeded to integrate Free Will with a system which, literally to all appearances, left Determinism master of the field. Fichte, after reducing the non-ego—that is, the whole objective world—to an assumption of the ego, sets the ego the task of negating its own negation, which is at the same time the condition of its existence, with the comfortable assurance that a consummation which would be fatal to both parties needs all eternity for its achievement. More impatient than his master, Schelling boldly identifies the two under the names of " object " and " subject," and the world goes on as before—indeed, according to him, always has gone on precisely because it always knew that there was no difference between them. Schopenhauer, after disdainfully rejecting the systems of his fellow metaphysicians as so many absurdities, sets up a new absolute, which, after willing itself out of nonentity into existence, learns from sad experience the desirability of willing itself back from existence into nonentity again. And to this contradiction, which lies at the very basis of his system, he adds another not less serious contradiction in working out its details. While asserting the substantial identity of all our individual wills with one another and with the universal will of which they are so many partial manifestations, he yet limits the self-negating power of each will to itself. On entering into Nirvâna I redeem myself alone ; the infinite anguish of the world goes on as before. Yet at the same time the short cut of suicide is barred to me by the solemn warning that self-inflicted death amounts to a rebellious reaffirmation of the will which it seems to deny.

This immanent self-contradiction of German thought, although it first became open and scandalous in Kant's criticism, is older than Kant. To go no further back, it already afflicts the monadology of Leibnitz. Those minute individual existences of which the world consists have no windows opening on the world, nor do they receive influences of any kind from one another; but all go on developing at the same pace, each by virtue of an evolutionary principle peculiar to itself. Thus, although every monad reflects the universe at an angle of its own, it has no reason to believe that this phantasmagoria represents an objective reality, for its whole experience would be the same supposing no such reality to be present; and although, by the hypothesis, solipsism is not true, there seems to be no evidence of its untruth.

It appears, then, that a German moral philosophy, to be thoroughly native and smacking of the soil, must at once affirm and deny morality. We shall, therefore, not be surprised to find that Nietzsche, while offering a brilliant exception to the rule that his country does not breed pure moralists, confirms the rule that her philosophies willingly assume the form of a square circle—that bold construction which Professor Meinong, no doubt on the strength of long experience, has recently declared to be quite conceivable.

Furthermore, it is necessary, or at least traditional, that a German philosopher, to be original, should not only end by contradicting himself, but that he should begin by contradicting another German, preferentially his own master. And we shall find that the author of *Zarathustra* was quite up to the mark in this respect also. The teacher to whose school he first belonged, and who afterwards became the chief object of his attacks, was Schopenhauer. Nietzsche was twenty years of age and a university student when, in 1865, he first came across the great pessimist's writings, at that time only in the first dawn of their popularity. What chiefly attracted him seems to have been their high literary merit and the sincerity of their author—a sincerity displayed above all in his attitude towards theology. Schopenhauer really stood no farther from the central beliefs of Christianity than Hegel, if as far; but he never bowed down in the temple of Rimmon to the extent of passing himself off as an orthodox Lutheran or other Churchman of any kind. He venerated the figure of Christ; but there could be no doubt that his metaphysics excluded the notion of a God and of a future life just as much as they excluded the possibility of a happy life on earth. And that was why the bankruptcy of Hegelianism after 1848 left the system of Kant's rival continuator in a position no better than before. For to the pietistic and obscurantist reaction that succeeded the abortive revolution free thought was as hateful under the form of atheistic pessimism as under the form of optimistic pantheism. We are apt to look on Germany as the great emancipator from superstition, and I have already acknowledged the greatness of our own indebtedness to her delivering example; but in this instance, as in the early eighteenth century, she seems to have been led out of darkness by light from the West, by the influence of Buckle and Darwin, and by Renan's *Vie de Jésus,* followed up as this was by Strauss's second *Leben Jesu.* At any rate, a far more liberal tone prevailed in the sixties than in the previous decade; and Schopenhauer's philosophy profited by the new spirit, which it also stimulated in the highest degree, to achieve a rapid and dazzling success.

Nietzsche was the son of a Protestant pastor, and belonged on his mother's side also to a clerical family. Brought up on strict religious principles, he had learned to set a particular value on veracity, regarding it, rather oddly, as a specially Christian virtue, whereas, in theory at least, it is more Greek than Christian. He also was, or believed himself to be, descended from a noble Polish family exiled on account of their religion early in the eighteenth century; so that in his case the obligation of fidelity to truth was heightened by the consciousness of representing an aristocratic and martyr tradition. Finally, Nietzsche had chosen classical philology for his profession, and had obtained a chair at Basel when still under twenty-four, so that for some years afterwards his life was chiefly devoted to the study of Greek literature and philosophy. Now, while giving, as I have said, more credit to Christianity than it deserves as a discipline in truthfulness, he still acknowledges that "the Greeks had the faithfulness and the veracity of children."[1]

At a much later period our immoralist loved to maintain that the sincerity which, as a religious habit, revolts against the profession of a false religion is, as a moral habit, destructive of the morality which is no more than a convention. And he also maintained, in contemptuous reference to George Eliot, that to believe in Christian morality apart from Christianity is a weak inconsistency.[2] It was both ungracious and unjust to taunt our great ethical novelist with being characteristically English or womanish in this respect; for Schopenhauer, who was Continental and virile, had made the same mistake, if mistake it is, and Nietzsche had at first followed his master's example. Accepting pessimism to this extent, that the search for happiness must be abandoned as a chimera, in his work on *The Origin of Tragedy* (published 1872), he tells us that a chief note of tragic culture is "an attempt to make the sufferings of the world our own by an effort of sympathetic love."[1] Greek tragedy preaches a gospel of universal harmony, whereby everyone feels himself not merely united, fused, and reconciled, but absolutely one with his neighbour.[2] And in a subsequent work on *The Study of History,* among the redeeming representatives of humanity, he names not only those who have passed through existence in pride and strength, or in profound meditation, but also those who have come "to pity and help."[3] Later again he tells us that "there is not enough goodness and love in the world to let them be wasted on imaginary objects."[4] And he had previously made the perfectly sane and sufficiently obvious remark that goodness and pity fortunately do not depend on the decay and growth of religion; although "*practical* morality will suffer by its collapse." At the same time, this dependence of action on religious sanctions deprives it, in his opinion, of all ethical value.[5]

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[1] *WW.*, IX., p. 104; written in 1871. In the references *WW.*=Nietzsche's *Werke,* Leipzig, 1895, 1904, large 8vo ed.; *W. z. M.*=*Wille zur Macht,* Leipzig, 1901, small 8vo ed.; *Leben* =*Das Leben Fr. Nietzsches,* von Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche.

[2] *WW.*, VIII., p. 120.

Returning to Schopenhauer, it is noticeable that Nietzsche accepted his teaching not only on the ethical, but also on the metaphysical, side. His work on *The Origin of Tragedy* is a bold attempt to read the philosophy of pessimism into the Greek tragic drama. It arose, according to him, from a combination of the worship of Dionysus with the worship of Apollo. The one god represents the element of Will and the other the element of Representation in his master's great work. Dionysus stands for "that original and eternal pain which is the sole substance of the world," "the true reality and primordial One with its eternal suffering and self-contradiction, seeking for deliverance by the creation of beautiful appearance—the Apolline element of Greek tragedy."[1]

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[1] *WW.*, I., p. 128. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 24. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

[4] *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches,* p. 129; *WW.*, II., 133.

[5] *WW.*, X., p. 214.

Schopenhauer had conceived music as a direct interpretation of that suffering Will which is the true substance of the world, whereas the other arts have for their material the series of Platonic Ideas, the forms and forces of nature which are one degree farther removed from its absolute reality. And Nietzsche conceives Greek tragedy as having originated from music precisely because it furnishes such an artistic revelation of the awful secret at the heart of things. Now, Richard Wagner had long before him enthusiastically adopted a theory so flattering to his own art; and, partly, no doubt, on the strength of their philosophical agreement, he and the young professor of philology at Basel had become fast friends, the two frequently spending their week-ends together at the house of the great composer near Lucerne. Indeed, Wagner is so glorified as a modern Æschylus in *The Origin of*

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[1] *WW.*, I., pp. 34 and 35.

Tragedy that, rather to its author's annoyance, the general public regarded that work chiefly as a rapturous panegyric on the music of the future.

As an interpretation of Greek art *The Origin of Tragedy* has no value, and was very properly condemned by one destined to become in after years the foremost Hellenist of his age, Wilamowitz-Möllendorff. With regard to Wagner, no more need be said than that Nietzsche soon came to form a very different opinion of his performances, giving music a much lower place among the means of culture, and a much lower place among musicians to that particular composer. But in a general way Wagner's influence proved of decisive importance for his philosophical development. Combined with the study of Schopenhauer and of the Greeks, it led him to conceive the promotion of genius as the highest form of moral effort. This, as we shall see, was by no means identical with his subsequent theory of the superman, although it led the way to that theory; nor was it at first inconsistent either with pessimism or with the common morality. Assuming that the contemplation of beautiful and sublime objects is the chief, if not the sole, refreshment available in a world of universal and incurable misery, the power of creating beauty, which we call genius, is a valuable asset for humanity, and ought by every means to be encouraged.

Unfortunately, the moral end of genius has, so far, been very imperfectly fulfilled. "Artists undoubtedly create their works for the benefit of other men; and yet none will ever understand and love their works as they did." It would have been a better arrangement had the relation been reversed, so that the effect should far exceed the cause.[1] Such blunders are, however, to be expected. "Nature always wills the common good, but is incapable of choosing the best means for that purpose. She shoots philosophers like arrows at the human race, in the hope that they will strike and stick somewhere"—whereas they are mostly wasted.[2]

Nature, then, must be taught better—she must receive a more intelligent direction; and here morality intervenes, although not quite according to the highest ideals now prevalent. "The goal of human endeavour has hitherto been sought in the happiness of all men or of the majority, or in the development of great communities; and under this false persuasion people will be found ready enough to give their lives for the State; whereas they would hesitate to make the sacrifice were it demanded, not by the State, but by an individual. As if value and significance were to be determined by counting heads!" A much mistaken view, thinks our author, with the old bias of a university teacher. "Humanity must be ever working at the production of great individuals: that, and nothing else, is its task......a consideration suggested by every species of animal and plant."[3] In our case education must supplement nature. Young men should be taught to compensate for their own imperfection and failure by contributing to the development of something higher and more human than themselves.[4] But the hope thus awakened soon droops. "It is hard to produce such a state of mind, for love alone can inspire the consciousness of one's own imperfection; and love cannot be taught."[1] Indeed, things are tending in a directly opposite direction. Writing in 1874, Nietzsche tells us that "the world was never more worldly, never poorer in love and goodness."[2] A common view is to value culture as a means for procuring its possessor the greatest possible amount of earthly happiness.[3] Or again, the selfishness of the State demands that all culture shall be made instrumental to its service and aggrandisement. Christianity in particular, which began as one of the purest expressions of the impulse towards culture, "has been diverted from the production of saints into a means for the manufacture of useful citizens."[4] Science offers no help; it is "cold, dry, loveless; it ignores the deep sense of dissatisfaction and longing."[5] And "such is the hatred for originality now prevailing that Socrates could not have lived among us, or at least not lived to seventy."[6]

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[1] *WW.*, I., p. 467 *sq.*
[2] *Loc. cit.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 442.
[4] P. 443.

It will be seen from the above extracts that, up to the age of thirty at least, Nietzsche still accepted those altruistic ideals which in later life he was never weary of denouncing. In this respect he followed Schopenhauer, who contrived to combine the most absolute disinterestedness in theory with the most absolute selfishness in practice. A really consistent pessimism would remain neutral as between egoism and altruism, since the furtherance of life is of equally little value to myself and to others. But Nietzsche had never been a pessimist in the complete or Hindoo sense of cultivating the will not to live, regarding such an aspiration as self-contradictory, or at least unthinkable. And, apart from logic, his personal experiences were such as to disgust him with the master's ideal of pleasure as what alone makes life worth living. While still a student at Leipzig the Prussian military law obliged him to serve for a time in the artillery. His career as a gunner did not last long, for a rupture of the thoracic muscles, caused by the attempt to mount a restive horse, resulted in an illness that incapacitated him from continued service in the ranks, and a short attendance with the ambulance corps before Metz in 1870 had a still more ruinous effect on his constitution. But even so much of a soldier's life, chiming in well with the aristocratic and fighting instincts of his Polish blood, gave the young professor a new idea of the possible value of life. If existence yielded no happiness, it still afforded the joy of victoriously resisting the assaults of pain; and from that heroic conflict, continued in after years through intense agonies of suffering, he came forth an optimist, continuing in his faith to the end.

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[1] P. 444.
[2] P. 421.
[3] P. 447.
[4] P. 448.
[5] P. 453.
[6] P. 462.

Hellenic studies no doubt contributed to his conversion. In his first work, when still under the influence of Wagner and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche had falsely interpreted Greek tragedy as a pessimistic manifesto, and, by a strangely perverted reading of literary history, he had ascribed its dissolution to the opposite teaching of Socrates and Euripides. We have already come across a passage indicating a much more favourable view of Socrates; and in another passage, written about 1877, a good time is looked forward to when Xenophon's *Memorabilia* will be substituted for the Bible as a manual of rational morality.[1] Earlier still the age had been referred for its models to the old Greek world, "so great, so natural, and so human."[2] It was through the higher power of their moral nature that the Greeks were victorious over all other civilisations.[3]

Familiarity with Hellenic ideals inevitably drew our philosopher away from Richard Wagner's romanticist views of art and life. The breach between them began at the Bayreuth festival of 1876, when some traits of petty vanity and selfishness in the master's character first became painfully apparent to his young admirer. What made it irremediable was a question of morality and religion. Up to 1874 Wagner had been a declared and uncompromising atheist. During the last years of his life he developed a sort of mystical Christianity, in which the ideas of a human fall and recovery through atonement played the most conspicuous part. His opera *Parsifal* was intended to illustrate the new departure, and the plans for its composition formed the subject of frequent conversations between himself and a group of friends at Sorrento in the autumn of 1876. Nietzsche, who was one of these, listened with dismay and disgust to what he considered an insincere betrayal of the convictions they had once held in common,[4] all the more offensive because it was symptomatic of a general pietistic reaction set up by the higher classes in Germany, with a view both to consolidating the new Empire and resisting the spread of Socialism.

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[1] *WW.*, III., p. 248.

[2] *WW.*, I., p. 352.

[3] *Ibid.*, 384.

[4] *Leben*, II., p. 857.

Wagner's apostasy seems to have had the effect of driving Nietzsche into an attitude of more open hostility towards Christianity, and, indeed, towards all theism. Since religion could exercise such a fatal effect on the intellectual integrity of genius, it was not only false, but dangerous, and ought to be destroyed. His next work, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches (So Very Human),* appeared in 1878, the centenary of Voltaire's death, and is dedicated to his memory. It consists of loose critical notes couched in the aphoristic form which the writer afterwards came to handle with such supreme mastery, and which alone suited his disconnected and irresponsible mode of thinking. The general trend of reflection offers a series of striking contrasts to the writer's earlier points of view; although an attentive consideration shows that the transition was already being silently prepared towards the close of the first period. In dealing with so very personal a writer we shall best understand the evolution of his ideas by constant reference to the events of his life.

It will be remembered that in embracing pessimism our moralist had also embraced the ethical ideal of universal benevolence associated with it by Schopenhauer and the Hindoos; and how, under the concurrent influence of Wagner and the Greeks, he had sought to concentrate the passion for disinterested self-devotion on the systematic culture of genius. Unfortunately, the only two great men that he recognised as such in recent history had both proved false guides; and this seems in the first instance to have made him distrust genius as a social danger. Its worship, he remarks, is a survival of the adoration formerly given to gods, and to kings as their representatives. "The elevation of individuals into superhuman beings encourages the idea that large sections of the people are baser and more barbarous than they really are."[1] Genius even "acts as an enemy of truth by keeping up an intense ardour of conviction and discouraging the cautious and modest tone of science";[2] while "never to have changed one's opinions is the sign of having remained in a belated stage of culture."[3]

As a consequence of the new departure, science, so lately denounced for its coldness and dryness, now takes the place of art as the leading means of culture. Before the breach with Wagner signs of a growing preference for pure knowledge had not been wanting. We had been told in a truly positivist spirit that "the proper question for philosophy is to determine how far things are unalterable; the task of improving them, in so far as they can be improved, may then be fearlessly undertaken."[4] The note of moral enthusiasm will not be overlooked. It had already been associated with a higher standard of intellectualism in the reminder that "the most fearful sufferings have been brought on mankind by the impulse to be just without judgment; so that nothing is more requisite for the general welfare than the widest possible dissemination of judgment."[5]

Wagner was intensely German, intensely anti-French; and Nietzsche, when he wrote about the origin of tragedy, shared his patriotic views. He then looked forward to "the regeneration of the German soul by the elimination of every Latin element under the external stimulus of the last war, and inwardly by the example of Luther, together with all our great poets and artists."[1] His expectations were not fulfilled; at any rate, Germany was not regenerated, but the contrary; and it is remarkable that, on looking back in 1878 to the period after the war, what most offended him was the moral corruption of his countrymen. Their notions of right and wrong were unsettled; their rage for luxury and enjoyment knew no bounds; their sensuality was disgusting; nearly every German had become a degree more dishonest, sycophantic, avaricious, and frivolous than before.[2] A general lowering of intellectual standards is also complained of, but this is only another symptom of moral decay. With Wagner the last hope failed, and Nietzsche turned to foreign countries, especially to England and France, for what Germany could not supply.

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[1] *WW.*, II., p. 340.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 411.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 407.
[4] *WW.*, I., p. 514.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 329.

In the writings of the second period the references to England are particularly complimentary. She is "now [1877–1878] unmistakably ahead of all other nations in philosophy, natural science, history, discoveries, and the spread of culture." This is due to the strength of individual character, resulting from a long national inheritance, enjoyed by her great men of science, and from their independence of learned association.[3] Furthermore, "we must allow English writers the credit of having made admirable contributions towards an ideal scientific literature for the people. *Their* handbooks are the work of their most distinguished scholars—men of whole-minded, rich, and generous natures."[1] Nor is it only among men of learning that this strength of character is exhibited. "English artisans work hard at their trade not merely for profit but for power, and not merely for power but for the utmost freedom and individual distinction."[2] Schopenhauer is now praised for the appreciation of hard facts, the determination to be clear and reasonable, that often make him seem so much of an Englishman and so little of a German."[3]

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[1] *WW.*, I., pp. 164–65.

[2] *WW.*, XI., pp. 94–95.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Everything written at this time bears what on the Continent is called a positivist impress. Nietzsche does not seem to have read Comte, but he refers admiringly to him as "that great and honest Frenchman with whom no German or English thinker can compare for comprehension and mastery of the exact sciences," while totally rejecting the religious and constructive element of his teaching.[4] For himself our philosopher professes to know little about the results of science; "but that little has been inexhaustibly serviceable in clearing up obscurities and abolishing former modes of thought and action."[5] As the quintessence of our positive knowledge three propositions are stated: (1) There is no God; (2) there is no moral world—*i.e.*, no retribution for good or evil conduct; (3) good and evil are determined by the ideals and directions of life, the best part of these being inherited, but with a possibility that the resulting judgments may be falsified by the demands of our actual ideals.[1] With the disappearance of theism pessimism ceases to have any meaning. The world is neither good nor bad; such notions apply only to human beings, and in their ordinary acceptation cannot rightly be applied even to these.[2] For "free will is an illusion";[3] "that intelligible freedom" under cover of which Schopenhauer sought to rehabilitate moral responsibility is a fable;[4] and "the thing in itself" an illegitimate inference from phenomena.[5] In fact, Schopenhauer's metaphysic was simply a revival of mediæval Christianity, due to want of scientific knowledge.[6]

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[1] *WW.*, III., p. 102.

[2] *WW.*, II., p. 357.

[3] *WW.*, V., p. 130.

[4] *WW.*, IV., pp. 348–49.

[5] *WW.*, XI., p. 402.

At first the new ardour for destructive criticism extends to morality, which we are told in so many words is annihilated together with religion by our way of looking at things.[7] But the reason given is merely that science can admit no motives except pleasure and pain, usefulness and injury.[8] Such an arbitrary restriction seems itself to be a survival of theology; and, in fact, it is traceable to the French freethinking literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which Nietzsche was now studying with delight. He observes truly enough that "in the metaphysical sense there are no sins, but also no virtues,"[9] without remembering that metaphysical values have been abolished. His aphoristic method had the advantage of making composition easy for himself and fruitful of easy reading for others; but, combined with the passion of the higher German intellect for self-contradiction, it involves him in hopeless confusions of thought.

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[1] *WW.*, XI., p. 334.
[2] *WW.*, II., p. 46.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[4] P. 63.
[5] Pp. 31 *sq.*
[6] P. 44.
[7] *WW.*, II., p. 52.
[8] *Loc. cit.*
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

In accordance with this mental habit the destructive criticism of morality is interspersed with appeals to moral motives and standards, or is even carried on with their aid. As a conclusive argument against unselfishness we are told that "to be always acting for others is almost as mischievous as to act against them: it is a forcible intrusion on their sphere of action.......Not to think of others, but always to be acting most strictly for one's self, is a high sort of morality. The world is imperfect because so much is done for others."[1] An ex-gunner might have remembered that the way to hit a distant mark is not to aim straight at it. A false and fussy altruism is not the alternative to taking exclusive care of number one. "Love mankind! But I say, rejoice in mankind, and therefore help to produce the sort of people in whom we can rejoice! The right morality is to seek out and encourage those who delight us, and to fly from the others. Let the wretched, the misshapen, and the degenerate die out. They should not be kept alive at any price."[2] Our fastidious friend must have come across many unlovely sights when serving in the ambulance corps before Metz; we may assume that they did not impress him as a reason for shirking his duty. It may be said that wounded soldiers are frequently strong, healthy men, capable of returning to their work after proper treatment. But the same is true of many patients in our civil hospitals whose services would be lost to the community but for modern philanthropy. No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between those cases and the case of those whose continued existence is altogether undesirable. What we know is that the passion of pity, on the whole, subserves race-interests, and that it cannot be kept up at full strength unless, as with other passions, there is enough to overflow and go to waste. It is a question whether Nietzsche himself was not a degenerate ; it is certain that he had to give up his work as a professor, owing to ill-health, in a few years ; and that his literary work could hardly have been continued without the help of a small retiring pension from the university. Let me add that he had been a singularly devoted teacher, among other things gratuitously preparing students "from the interior of Switzerland" for their examinations in philosophy. In private life his character was gentle, kind, and sympathetic—to a greater extent, indeed, than he personally would have liked it to be—and his attacks on altruism were, perhaps, inspired by a consciousness of the injury it had done his health. We may also attribute to his unfortunate personal experiences the prophecy that hygienics will be a prime interest in the society of the future.[1]

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[1] *WW.*, XI., pp. 310–11.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 313, 314.

Throughout the second, or scientific period, morality continues a paramount preoccupation. There is no antithesis between increase of knowledge and increase of human welfare ; on the contrary, they are mutually subservient. Faith in the supreme utility of science and of its possessors should take the place of faith in mere numbers.[1] But the observations out of which science is built are themselves conditioned by sincerity and rectitude. "Even in the region of sense-perception there are none but moral experiences."[2] "The history of science exhibits the victory of noble impulses; there is much morality concerned in its pursuit."[3] "It is a mistake to estimate philosophers as artists, leaving out of sight their justice and self-control."[4] "Unfortunately we shall never know the best thing about genius, the self-control and self-discipline exercised in bringing its powers into play."[5] "Hurrah for physical science, and a double hurrah for the honesty that forces us to study it!"[6]

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[1] *WW.*, XI., p. 69.

As may be gathered from some of the passages just quoted, general utility is the end of moral action. But morality need not therefore be impersonal. On the contrary, we best serve our true advantage by moral action.[7] Benevolence and beneficence make up the good man—but they should begin with himself.[8] The greatest wonders of antique morality, Epictetus for instance, knew nothing about that altruism which is so fashionable nowadays.[9] Nietzsche as a professional Hellenist was fascinated by Greek ethics, and the influence of its masters is shown in more than one reference. Epicurus counts among the greatest of men;[10] we have not advanced beyond him, but his dominion has been infinitely extended.[1] Aristotle is not named; but we find his doctrine of moral habit passionately reasserted as against Luther's doctrine of justification by faith.[2] And it is made a charge against our system of classical education that we are exercised in no single antique virtue as the ancients were exercised in it.[3] As the consolations of Christianity evaporate the consolations of ancient philosophy are revived in new splendour.[4]

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[1] *WW.*, III., p. 155.
[2] *WW.*, V., p. 155.
[3] *WW.*, XI., p. 204.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 408.
[5] *WW.*, IV., p. 357.
[6] *WW.*, V., p. 258.
[7] *WW.*, II., p. 96.
[8] *WW.*, IV., p. 336.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[10] *WW.*, III., p. 355.

Ours is, indeed, an age of comparison and selection, an age which, discarding all provincialism in conduct as in art, bids us look round among the historic civilisations with a view to constructing a higher morality from the forms and habits offered to our choice.[5] Now it is precisely the adherence to an unreasoned tradition that mankind have generally regarded as the distinctive note of morality; so that when Nietzsche first called himself an immoralist, what he meant to emphasise was his defiance of tradition as such, his demand for a reasonable basis of action. Such a basis is not supplied by an appeal to our moral feelings, for these are nothing better than inherited judgments. To trust them is to trust your grandmother and her grandmother rather than the gods within you, your reason and your experience.[6]

All this sounds commonplace enough to a reader of Bentham and Mill; just as Descartes and Montesquieu may have sounded commonplace to the readers of Bacon and Locke. And when Nietzsche proclaimed the supremacy of England in philosophy it was probably to English ethics that he referred. Universalistic hedonism is not, I think, anywhere stated in terms, but its elements are freely scattered through his notes. There is, he tells us, no instinct of self-preservation; every action interpreted as evidence of such may be explained by the search for agreeable and the avoidance of disagreeable sensations. Speaking generally, we only wish for objects because they are associated with agreeable states of feeling in ourselves.[1] Men might be estimated by the degree of happiness they are capable of experiencing or communicating.[2] One of the charges brought against "morality" is that it has represented self-delight as offensive, self-torment as acceptable to the deity.[3] On the other hand, culture is an expression of happiness.[4] The joy felt in absorbing new ideas should be carried so far as to outweigh all other kinds of pleasure.[5] Noble and magnanimous natures experience some feelings of pleasure and pain so strongly that the intellect is either silenced or made instrumental to them.[6] Nor is happiness by any means so rare as pessimists would have us believe. The world abounds in good will; and the constant little everyday manifestations of this impulse, taking the form of good humour, friendliness, and unaffected courtesy, contribute enormously to the happiness of life.[7] "It needs a life full of pain and renunciation to teach us that existence is saturated with honey."[8] In short, "there is no life without pleasure; the fight for pleasure is the fight for life."[1] This view does not exclude morality, for each one is called good or evil according to the way in which he carries on the fight; and that depends on the degree and quality of his intellect[2]—a saying elucidated by the remark made elsewhere that no honey is sweeter than the honey of knowledge; so that he who has spent his life in its acquisition first discovers in old age how well he has obeyed the voice of Nature, the Nature that governs all things by pleasure.[3]

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[1] *WW.*, XI., p. 168. [2] *WW.*, IV., p. 30. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 187.
[4] *WW.*, XI., p. 168. [5] *WW.*, II., p. 41. [6] *WW.*, IV., p. 41.

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[1] *WW.*, XI., pp. 253 and 292.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 367.

[3] P. 263.

[4] P. 316.

[5] P. 403.

[6] *WW.*, V., pp. 39, 40.

[7] *WW.*, II., p. 71.

[8] *WW.*, XI., p. 154.

We saw how Nietzsche at first looked on the discovery that action depended absolutely on pleasure and pain as destructive of morality. But he did not long hold to that crude interpretation of ethical science; for we find a passage belonging to the same period, and much more consistent with its general tone, in which he tells us that joy must exercise a healthy and reparative influence on man's moral nature, or why should the moments when we bathe in its sunshine be just those when the soul involuntarily pledges herself to be good and to become perfect?[4] And, as a substitute for religious exercises, he proposes immediately on wakening in the morning to think how we may give pleasure to at least one human being in the course of the day.[5]

Assuming happiness, understood as pleasure and the absence of pain, to be desired by all—to be, indeed, the only thing desirable—it would seem to follow that utilitarianism is the only rational method of ethics; and it might have been expected that Nietzsche, speculating as he did under the combined influence of Greek and English thought, would have frankly accepted its principles, preserving, of course, complete liberty with regard to the adjustment of details. What prevented him from taking that step was the pervadingly sceptical and negative cast of his intellect, aggravated, as in the case of Coleridge, of whom otherwise he often reminds one, by the use of deleterious drugs and by solitary habits. According to him, there can be no moral law binding on all mankind unless we can prove that there is some universal end of action; and such an end does not exist. Pleasure will not supply it, for the pleasures of sensitive beings vary with the degree of their development,[1] and happiness is pursued by opposite paths.[2] Oddly enough, the second of these considerations is directed by name against Spencer, than whom none would have more cordially accepted it. Soon afterwards the most complete development of individuality is proposed as an end, characteristically enough without reference to the priority of Spencer and Mill in this direction. It is true that Mill had certainly, and Spencer probably, taken his cue from Wilhelm von Humboldt; but Nietzsche never betrays any acquaintance with that thinker, and the way in which he associates his own individualism with the theory of evolution seems to place Spencer's leading beyond a doubt.[3]

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[1] *WW.*, II., p. 107.
[2] *Loc. cit.*
[3] P. 267.
[4] *WW.*, III., p. 166.
[5] *WW.*, II., p. 385.

After all, the effort to get rid of a moral law speedily results in its rehabilitation. For, as a means for increasing the number of those happy accidents on which future developments depend, it is recommended that we should maintain the utmost variety of conditions under which human beings can exist;[1] and this would surely necessitate a code of social justice to begin with, as Spencer pointed out long ago in *Social Statics*, and as Professor Juvalta, of Pavia, is never weary of insisting on at the present day, although his theory, unlike Spencer's, is penetrated with socialistic ideas.

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[1] *WW.*, IV., pp. 102 *sq.*

[2] XI., p. 233.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 238 and 330.

Nietzsche himself, when he has to combat socialist demands, is not slow to quote justice as a recognised social obligation. Admitting that the present distribution of property results from innumerable acts of injustice and violence in the past, he deprecates the repetition of similar acts in modern times, setting his hopes rather on a general increase in the sense of justice, and a diminution of violent impulses all round.[2]

As a last homage to the received morality, a note dating from the year 1880 may be mentioned, in which Napoleon is called the greatest of men, if his aim had been the good of humanity.[3]

Not long after abandoning the cultivation of genius as a universal end, Nietzsche seems to have taken up and substituted for it the idea, so prominent in his last period, of breeding a superior race. Here, again, the Hellenic influence is prominent. In a fragment dating from 1876 the Greeks are quoted as an example of what may be done in the way of intellectual stimulation by the self-consciousness of such a race in the midst of a barbarous population.[4] English science and philosophy, for which so much enthusiasm is expressed, would no doubt act powerfully in the same direction through the doctrine of evolution, which is known to have interested Nietzsche intensely at this time. In this connection much has been made of his debt to Darwin; but, as he never understood the theory of natural selection, it seems more likely that the decisive influence came from Spencer, whose psychology he certainly accepted to the extent of describing knowledge as a nervous modification produced by the action of external objects on our organs of sense, without any co-operation from the mind.[1] Now, Spencer from the beginning was interested in evolution much less as an explanation of the past than as a promise of the future—as a pledge that human life might rise to a far more perfect harmony between organism and environment than any yet attained; and on this side his philosophy would appeal strongly to Nietzsche, as also on its individualistic side, with which we have seen him to be in complete agreement. Indeed, he brings the two into direct association by asking: "Is not every individual an attempt to reach a higher species than man?"[2] It is here, rather than in the youthful worship of genius, which his disgust with Wagner led him to repudiate, that we can lay our finger on the genesis of the superman.

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[1] P. 239.

[2] *WW.*, II., pp. 334 *sq.*

[3] *WW.*, XI., p. 387.

[4] P. 33.

It has been disputed whether the superman was intended by his prophet to stand for a new animal species, or for a new and improved variety of human being, or, finally, for a sporadic type of individual excellence, cropping up occasionally in the existing state of civilisation. So far as the name and notion have become popular, it seems to be generally understood in the last sense. The superman is commonly identified with a coxcomb whose opinion of his own superiority to the rest of the species is only equalled by his contempt for the ordinary obligations of morality. Such pretensions are not new ; and it would be strange if Nietzsche had no higher ambition than to re-edit them under a more pompous appellation. In fact, it very much disgusted him to find that the watchword of his philosophy should be used to procure admittance for degenerate types, with whom he sympathised even less than with the unregenerate Philistine. Nothing like the superman had ever turned up in his own experience ; whether history had offered any examples of his ideal remains doubtful. On this point the language of Zarathustra is perfectly explicit, and if taken alone would settle the question. According to the prophet under whose name Nietzsche speaks, when the greatest and the smallest are stripped and compared they show themselves too fatally alike, and both of them all too human. In a later work Napoleon seems to be mentioned as an exception, but an exception that proves the rule, being a combination of the superman with the brute.[1]

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[1] P. 275.

[2] P. 238.

Napoleon, in fact, embodied the formidable alternative confronting us at the present day. The human race represents a transitional stage of unstable equilibrium. We must either go back to the brute or on to the superman.[2] And the choice is not doubtful. Our very first article of faith is the duty of not relapsing into a savage and anti-social state.[1] Therefore, the new beings can only be conceived as a multitude; goodness can only be developed among equals.[2]

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[1] *WW.*, VI., p. 133, and VII., p. 337.

[2] *WW.*, XII., p. 210.

It remains to be decided whether we are to conceive the superman as a new animal species, differing not less from the actual human species than that differs from the anthropoid ape, or merely as a new race, related to the modern European somewhat as the Greeks were related to the barbarians among whom they settled. This seems to be a point on which, as on various others, our prophet had no scruple about changing his mind without caring to acknowledge the change either to others or to himself. To my mind at least, there cannot be the faintest doubt that when he wrote *Zarathustra* his wish was to represent the superman as a new animal species to be evolved by artificial selection from man. I know that his sister and biographer, Madame Förster-Nietzsche, refuses to accept this interpretation; but it is significant that she can only get rid of the relevant texts by explaining them away as poetical metaphors. Unfortunately for her interpretation, when Nietzsche talks in parables he makes them unmistakably parabolical. We find ourselves among a motley assemblage of rope-dancers, lions, adders, tarantulas, kings, beggars, and other mythical properties needless to enumerate. But every now and then this rather wearisome entertainment is relieved by the expression of plain ideas in plain language, quite familiar to us from their recurrence in the author's other works, where, as Cassandra says, the oracle looks out not like a bride behind her veil, but like wind-driven waves against a rising sun. And foremost among these is the idea of a new species, a superman to be evolved from man, or, in the still more telling phrase once let fall, a super-race from the race.[1]

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[1] *WW.*, XII., p. 52.

[2] P. 210.

We have not now to discuss the feasibility of the idea. What has to be pointed out as the most interesting and attractive element in the work where it first appeared is the fire of moral enthusiasm burning through the prophecies from beginning to end. "Zarathustra has found no greater power on earth than good and evil."[2] But as yet this power has been wasted, because it was not directed towards the attainment of a single ideal. "There have been a thousand aims because there have been a thousand peoples. Humanity is still without an aim. And to be without that is to be without itself."[3]

That all men should combine for one end is not hopeless, for they already combine in smaller groups. "Regard for the interest of the herd or the community is older than self-interest. The individual is a most recent creation. So long as a good conscience represents the herd, only the bad conscience says 'I.' Truly the sly and loveless self that seeks its own profit in the profit of others is not the beginning but the end of the herd."[4]

At no time of life did his Hellenism make Nietzsche an admirer of the modern State; and at this period he positively foams at the mouth with hatred for it. The people and the herd may be fit objects of faith and love; never the State, although it impudently claims to be the people, which is not deceived, but hates it as "a sin against morals and rights." There are many languages of good and evil, but it lies in them all. "All that it says is a lie, and all that it possesses has been stolen." Even those who vanquished the old god fall a prey to the snares of the new idol that promises to give them all if they will worship it; "so it buys the splendour of your virtue and the gaze of your proud eyes." The State must cease to exist before real manhood can begin; much more, before the way to the superman can be prepared.[1]

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[1] *WW.*, VI., p. 111.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

[3] P. 87.

[4] P. 86.

What is the justification of this violent language? We may assume that the State discourages the growth of individuality; and as, according to Zarathustra, it was invented for the benefit of the "superfluous classes," it is apparently made responsible for their continued existence, while they in turn naturally support it.

Evidently, however, what Nietzsche most dreads and detests is not the mischief done by the modern State in suppressing individualism and favouring the survival of degenerates, but the fact that as a real, living, visible, attractive unity it enters into formidable competition with the glorified individuality of his imaginary superman. Michelet has pointed out that the giant Gargantua was nothing less than the New Monarchy of the Renaissance; and one has only to think of him as coming into conflict with Cæsar Borgia, whom Nietzsche regards as the highest individual product of that age, to see which party would win. Indeed, the Duke of Valentinois, like another and greater Cæsar, was, from his German admirer's point of view, a traitor to the individualistic cause, the great ambition of his life having been to establish the New Monarchy in the Pontifical States, if not, as Machiavelli hoped, over the whole of a reunited Italy. Neither he nor Alcibiades nor any other of the same class has ever been content to "exist beautifully"; nor do they seem inclined to tolerate the existence of any other such paragons by their side.

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[1] Pp. 69-72.

Here, then, at first starting, we find the idea of the superman afflicted with an immanent self-contradiction in the best Hegelian style. Conceived as an individual, he at once establishes a levelling despotism, thus sublating the very type that he represents. Conceived as a class, he perishes by internecine strife.[1] And close behind this comes a second self-contradiction, afflicting the means proposed, or rather suggested, for bringing the ideal into existence. As already mentioned, they consist in an appeal to moral motives, in the proposal to create a new enthusiasm of humanity, uniting and directing towards a single end all the tremendous forces that now work for a multitude of conflicting ends. Now, this demand assumes the existence in the human race, as a whole, of such passionate self-devotion, combined with such cool, unerring judgment, as no example of has been found in the past. For it must be a devotion capable of sacrificing every other end to the achievement of this one end—an end, too, of which as yet there has been no experience, and an end involving, as no other thing sought after has ever involved, the total disappearance of the race that has brought it about. And the judgment called into play for that purpose must find the means for evolving a new animal species — a task to which human ingenuity, operating on the most passive and plastic materials, has never yet found itself equal. Surely, a race so splendidly endowed with the noblest capacities of intellect, heart, and will as to answer Zarathustra's call would deserve a better fate than such self-annulment, would itself have anticipated the superman, and would require all the running it could make to keep in the same place.

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[1] The condottieri whom Cæsar Borgia treacherously massacred at Sinigaglia were "higher men" of a sort, though not so high as he was.

It so happens that we can lay our finger on the initial error whence these monstrous consequences arose. Much as Nietzsche hated Germany, he hated England more; and with the rather discreditable object, I fear, of depreciating England and her great naturalist, he tries to show that without Hegel there would have been no Darwin. For, according to him, the German philosopher, by teaching that specific notions were evolved out of one another, prepared the scientific intellect of Europe to entertain the idea of organic development.[1] Historically there is, of course, no foundation for such a claim. Evolutionism was hereditary in the Darwin family, and goes back to a time before Hegel; while Hegel himself took the idea of development from Schelling, who in turn owed it to the naturalists of his time. What I wish to point out, however, is not the historical error, but the profound misconception of organic evolution that it betrays. Hegel's theory of logical development is determined by the idea that the lower notion suffers from an inherent self-contradiction, in consequence of which it falls to pieces and spontaneously gives birth to the higher notion. With Darwin, on the contrary, the decay and death of the old species are not the antecedent, but the consequence, of its having given birth to the new species, with which it is unable to compete. And this very internecine strife is another point of distinction between the two processes. Hegel's notions only perish in an ideal sense. In the actual life of logic they survive and continue to play a useful part in the economy of thought.

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[1] *WW.*, V., p. 300.

Applying the result to Nietzsche's philosophy, we now see how, under an illusive show of Darwinian biology, he really evolves superman from man on the lines of Hegelian dialectic. That is to say, the old human species, in awakening to the consciousness of its degeneracy, overcomes and supersedes itself, thus calling the new superhuman species into being. Thus the pessimism of his youth becomes unexpectedly justified as an ideal expression of race-suicide preparatory to a better state of things.

I have said that Nietzsche hated England; and it may be thought that this is inconsistent with the praises he lavished on her in his second or scientific period. But the revulsion merely repeats in a much less excusable form his earlier revolt from

Wagner and Schopenhauer. It belongs to an unpleasant habit he had of kicking down the ladder by which he had climbed up. He could not forgive the English thinkers for what he owed them; and the "profound mediocrity of the English intellect"—represented presumably by Shakespeare, Newton, Chatham, and Byron—is charged with having caused a deep depression of the European intellect as a whole, but more particularly of the French intellect. This very mediocrity, however, enables the English to perform important services for which men of genius are incapacitated by their splendid disregard of facts. Darwin, Mill, and Herbert Spencer, being the men to whom he personally owed most, are particularly mentioned in this connection as examples of useful dulness.[1] Of the three Spencer seems to have had the largest share in ultimately determining Nietzsche's philosophy, and so he is never mentioned without some expression of contemptuous disagreement. English utilitarianism is the foundation of his ethics; and therefore it is savagely denounced as a canting, hypocritical attempt to secure the greatest happiness of England under pretence of pursuing the greatest happiness of all. In England itself the standard of happiness among moral philosophers is comfort, fashion, and a seat in Parliament.[2] Gizicki once congratulated a German critic for having performed the rare feat of attacking utilitarianism without forgetting the manners of a gentleman. This admirable exception could not have been our aristocratic immoralist.

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[1] *WW.*, VII., p. 223.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

Throughout his second period Nietzsche, besides being a utilitarian in the wide sense of judging actions by their consequences, had also been a hedonist—that is, he had considered happiness (or pleasure) as a universally desired and absolutely desirable thing, although at the same time as a thing too indefinite to be made a standard for the unification of human life. The desire of domination, on the other hand, is mentioned in a note bearing the date of 1880 as often a symptom of weakness.[1] Within a year we find the first intimation of his final doctrine, that power is the *summum bonum* and love of power the universal motive, in an aphorism setting forth (for the rest without an attempt to demonstrate it) that, whether we give pleasure or pain to others, it is solely for the purpose of satisfying our love of power.[2] A little later still, Zarathustra proclaims power as a new virtue, a new standard of good and evil.[3] It is not so very new, being borrowed, as usual without acknowledgment, from an English philosopher, Hobbes; and besides that Nietzsche, in his later writings, especially in the uncompleted *Wille zur Macht*, assumes that power is what everyone really wants and has always wanted. Everyone—with a single striking exception. "Men do not strive for happiness—only Englishmen";[4] though elsewhere our people are associated, in this contemptible pursuit, with "shopkeepers, Christians, cows, women, and other democrats."[5] Nevertheless, "every healthy morality is dominated by an instinct of life";[6] "an action imposed by the vital instinct is proved to be right by the pleasure it gives";[1] "everything good is instinctive, and therefore easy, necessary, free";[2] "pleasure is a feeling of power; to exclude the emotions is to exclude those conditions which give the feeling of power, and therefore of pleasure at its highest."[3] Herbert Spencer would not have dissented in principle from this statement; but then he would not, like his critic, have distinguished between happiness and pleasure, which two other Englishmen, Wordsworth and Ruskin, would have identified with "vital feelings of delight." Can Nietzsche have been ignorant that the gospel of health, with its accompanying condemnation of the sickly and helpless, had been preached before him in *The Data of Ethics?*

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[1] *WW.*, XI., p. 405. [2] *WW.*, V., p. 50 *sq.* [3] *WW.*, VI., p. 112.
[4] *WW.*, VIII., p. 62. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 149. [6] P. 88.

On the other hand, Spencer would have emphatically dissented from such a statement as that "egoism belongs to the essence of the distinguished soul; I mean the immovable belief that other beings must be naturally subject to a being like us, and have to sacrifice themselves to it; a relationship which the distinguished soul accepts as founded on the primary law of things."[4] Nor would he have allowed that the conquest and spoliation of the weaker by the stronger was the very principle of society and of life itself.[5] But he might have fairly challenged the Prussian philosopher to reconcile these crudities with the admonition given elsewhere: "Learn betimes to discard the supposed individual; to discover the errors of the ego; to feel cosmically about the me and thee."[1] Or, again, why should Zarathustra compare unfavourably the vulgar who want to live *gratis* with men like himself, who are always thinking what best thing they can give in exchange for the life they have received, and who condemn the wish to enjoy without giving enjoyment in return?[2]

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[1] P. 226. [2] P. 93. [3] *W. z. M.*, p. 240.
[4] *WW.*, VII., pp. 251–52. [5] *Ibid.*, pp. 237–38.

Among his other adventures, Zarathustra falls in with an imbecile hedonistic moralist, who is accosting a herd of kine with the object of inducing them to disclose the secret of their happiness.[3] It does not seem to have struck the prophet that these cows had a logic as well as an ethic, or that, if the pasturing animals were too gentle to toss him on the horns of a dilemma, a savage bull might have been invited in for the purpose. If self-interest is the law of life, with what right can the present generation be called on to sacrifice themselves for the evolution of a superior race? If there is a moral law prescribing self-devotion, how can it be our duty to create what the highest of our contemporaries would call a devil?[4]

If Nietzsche ever contemplated the idea of evolving a higher animal species than man, he soon gave it up. His last work, *The Anti-Christian,* puts the problem quite clearly, as, not "what is to succeed man?" but—"what kind of man ought to be desired and bred as the more valuable, the more worthy of life, the more certain of a future?"[5] And he proceeds to state, in direct contradiction to Zarathustra, that the desirable type has often presented itself in history, but never as the result of a conscious effort, while the effect of prevalent opinions has long been to repress or extinguish it. Two agencies in particular have hitherto worked with fatal effect in this direction—morality and Christianity. He therefore applies himself with a holy zeal to the destruction of both, his intellect being indeed much better fitted for the work of pulling down than for the work of building up.

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[1] *WW.*, XII. p. 74.
[2] *WW.*, VI., pp. 291 *sq.*
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 389 *sq.*
[4] P. 213.
[5] *WW.*, VIII., p. 218.

The attack on morality, by which is meant the doctrine of universal benevolence, proceeds on the lines of the historical method, and rests on the false assumption that a belief is refuted by showing how it came to exist. Such a method, were it generally applied, would ruin every belief without exception, as all beliefs have a history, and even the scepticism that displaced them would share their fate. As it happens, however, the historical explanation offered of the current distinction between good and evil in conduct is entirely false. It is the work of a mere classical philologist, and a very imperfectly informed one at that. His thesis is that the valuations of character and action were originally fixed by the ruling caste in society, those qualities of health, strength, beauty, courage, liberality, and truthfulness which were most conspicuous in its members being approved of, while the distinguishing qualities of their serfs were proportionately despised. In those right-minded ages to be strong and successful was the great merit, to be weak and a failure the great vice. As the subject classes had become enslaved through their weakness, they set up a rival scale of values in which pity, the correlative and consolation of weakness, occupied the highest place, while the virtues of their betters were disparaged, their rightful claims on the labourers treated as wicked spoliation, and their favoured position assailed with vindictive envy.

The aristocratic and chivalrous virtues maintain their ascendancy during that chronic state of war by which they are at once originated and preserved. Prolonged peace, on the other hand, creates a fatal split in the ruling body, and undermines its ideals by favouring the development of a priesthood, and enabling it to dispute the supremacy of the warrior caste. For a priestly life, being conducive to physical degeneracy, breeds all the mental characteristics of a weak race, thus throwing the priests out of sympathy with the warriors, and making them the natural allies of the servile herd whose scale of values they adopt and systematise into a code.

It would seem that, according to Nietzsche's reading of history, which, however, is nowhere given as a connected whole, the first essay towards organising a servile or gregarious ethic was made in Greece by Socrates, himself a man of the people, and afflicted with the characteristic vices of his class, one of these being a morbid disposition to substitute self-conscious reasoning for instinct. Under his corrupting influence Plato, an aristocrat of genius but born with the soul of a Semitic priest, proceeded to work out a theory of values based on supernatural sanctions, in which the right of the stronger, vigorously but vainly defended by those genuine champions of old Hellenic ideals, the Sophists, is subordinated to the interest of the masses; a pestilent doctrine which, in company with an equally morbid asceticism, became more or less current in all the later schools of Greek philosophy.

More, however, was needed than a false philosophy to secure the final victory of servile over seignoral values. The Jews, a race of slaves and priests combined, managed to impose their degrading morality on the civilised world by appealing to the instincts of the lowest classes in the Roman Empire under the name of Christianity. This must not be confounded with the genuine teaching of Jesus, a religion in which supernaturalism had no place, and which perished with its author on Calvary. What carried all before it was Paul's theology, in which the idyllic domestic morality of the Jewish Diaspora is artfully combined with a scheme for giving envious plebeians their revenge on the rich in another world.

In modern times Christianity has transmitted its *moralin* virus to utilitarianism—an essentially gregarious ethical system, first founded by the sickly Jewish artisan Spinoza, and further developed by the plebeian English race, of which Buckle, with his cheap and noisy eloquence, is a characteristic type. For, let there be no mistake about it, what we call "modern ideas" do not come from the essentially aristocratic French people, but from the plebeian English.[1]

As we learn from his letters, Nietzsche was in early youth a careful student of Theognis;[2] and his theory of the two moralities, servile and seignoral, or gregarious and egregious (taking the second word in its Latin or Italian sense), seems to have been suggested, in the first instance, by that aristocratic elegist's bitter complaint of the change in language brought about by the democratic revolution in Megara. An improvement in their condition, he tells us, has turned the ignorant rustics from bad to good ; while reverses of fortune have given an evil name to the quondam nobles. In reference to these passages Welcker, quoted by Grote, observes that the political, as distinguished from the ethical, sense of good and bad, fell into desuetude through the influence of the Socratic philosophy, which, according to the same authority, first popularised those terms as ethical qualifications.[1] However this may be, there is no evidence that the personal revaluation brought a change of moral values in its train, nor that either then or afterwards a change in the relative estimate of the different virtues took place. Least of all does it appear that either pity or vindictiveness was a peculiar characteristic of the lower orders. Theognis is thirsting to drink the blood of his enemies, in what Nietzsche would call a truly plebeian spirit ; and he particularly reproaches his young favourite Cyrnos for not grieving long over the sufferings of his friends. Indeed, Homer alone would prove that tenderness and sympathy were qualities highly valued among the best-born Greeks ; while the oath taken by every member of an oligarchic club during the revolutionary period, "to do the Demos all the harm he could," is evidence that resentment flourished to the full as much among the hawks as among the lambs.

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[1] *WW.*, VII., pp. 224 and 307.

[2] *Briefe*, I., p. 2.

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[1] Grote's *History of Greece,* II., pp. 419 *sq.*

It would be more true to say that different classes have different and contrasted vices than that they have different and contrasted virtues—or values, if the latter term be preferred. And we may admit that insolence and cruelty are more characteristic of a ruling, meanness and mendacity of a servile, class, while contending that the permanent public opinion of both classes makes for the consecration of courage and gentleness all round. Indeed, the very word "gentleness" is a historical lesson in itself, proving that English aristocratic society, at least, discerned a peculiar connection between sweet manners and good birth.

As a young professor at Basel Nietzsche fully accepted Grote's vindication of the Sophists, although he failed to see that a far better case than Grote's might be made out for them as ethical reformers. In his latest phase he peremptorily, and without reason given, goes back on the old view, glorifying them as apostles of brute force.[1] In this connection also he accepts the Melian Dialogue—that masterpiece of tragic irony—as an expression of what Thucydides himself thought about public morality. There is no direct reference to Plato's Gorgias—a wise abstinence; for perhaps it would have involved him in the necessity of finding an answer to the unanswerable Socratic argument against Callicles, the real author of Nietzsche's distinction between gregarious and egregious morality. For, after appealing to natural law in justification of the claim put forward by the superior man to subjugate and despoil the inferior, this cynical aristocrat has to admit that the many, by banding together, may and do gain the upper hand so decisively as to impose their standards on him. Callicles tries to get out of the difficulty by falling back on qualitative distinctions as constituting the right to rule; but this admission readmits moral values into the discussion, with the result that their supremacy over the whole of life has to be conceded.

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[1] *Cf. WW.*, X., p. 129, with *W. z. M.*, p. 235.

Such is also the outcome of Nietzsche's efforts to get beyond good and evil. His objections to the received morality can only be accredited by an appeal to moral considerations of a still higher order. His polemic against pity for degenerates derives its whole strength from the argument that their survival and propagation impairs the life-enhancing qualities of the race. But if anyone chooses to say, "What do I care for the race?" his principles leave him without any answer, beyond a torrent of unconciliatory abuse.

In so far as popular religion is identified with popular morality, the attack on Christianity lays itself open to the same objection. Nor is that all. What gives such lustre to the whole argument and raises it as literature to the first rank among Nietzsche's writings is the moral passion displayed throughout; the constant invoking of truth as a precious thing violated by the Jewish and Christian priesthoods at every step in the propagation of their creed.

Whether his charges have or have not been made out is a question irrelevant to the present discussion. What interests us to observe is that at any rate it did not lie in the mouth of a professed immoralist to make them. For they involve the assumption, to which he is not entitled, that there is such a thing as moral obligation, and that part of it is to speak the truth. Nietzsche had some glimmering of the difficulty; but he never worked out a consistent theory of the subject, and his language when he touches on it is still more illogical than elsewhere. Even before the days of Zarathustra some of his reasonings would have discredited a Conservative speaker opposing Bradlaugh's claim to be sworn.

> Our whole European morality falls to pieces with the death of God. Now, in disclaiming the will to deceive, we stand on moral principle. But supposing, as seems very probable, that all life rests on a basis of deception—what then? Would it not be Quixotic, and even worse to insist on veracity? Let there be no mistake about it; what fires us still, unbelievers and all, is the old Christian belief, which was also Plato's belief, that God is the truth—that truth is divine. How, then, if this should seem every day more incredible, if God himself should prove to be our oldest lie?[1]

At this rate, philosophers, whose chief business it is to investigate truth, might be expected to receive the news of their only guarantor's death with some dismay. On the contrary, they show an exultation which, in the circumstances, strikes one as rather indecent. "Our whole heart overflows with gratitude, wonder, and hopeful expectation."[2] Zarathustra is one of this jubilant band; but, then, he sees no connection between theism and intellectual honesty *(Redlichkeit)*; on the contrary, he describes the latter as the latest born among the virtues, and hated, as knowledge also is hated, by those who have God on the brain. "Good," or what we call "goody," people "never tell the truth."[1] A note dating from the same period suggests the rather awkward compromise that we should have no conscience in respect to truth and error, in order that we may be able again to spend life in the service of truth and of the intellectual conscience.[2]

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[1] *WW.*, V., pp. 271–276. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 272.

In the mass of notes collected for what was to have been his *magnum opus*, the *Wille zur Macht*, an untranslatable title which we may approximately render by *The Will to be Strong*, Nietzsche nearly anticipates Pragmatism. Indeed, it might seem to be completely anticipated in such sayings as that "truth is what exalts the human type";[3] "perhaps the categories of reason express nothing more than a definite advantage for the race or the species: their utility is their truth";[4] "our confidence in reason and its categories only proves that their utility for life has been shown by experience, not that they are 'true'";[5] were they not balanced by other passages of a distinctly intellectualist type, such as the assertion that "it is absolute want of intellectual honesty to estimate a belief by the way in which it works, not by its truth";[6] "intellectual honesty is the result of delicacy, valour, foresight, temperance, practised and accumulated through a long series of generations";[7] "[with Christianity] the question is not whether a thing is true, but how it works—which is an absolute want of intellectual honesty."[1]

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[1] *WW.*, VI., pp. 44 and 293.

[2] *WW.*, XII., p. 63.

[3] P. 153.

[4] P. 274 *sq.*

[5] *Leben*, II., p. 775.

[6] *W. z. M.*, p. 120.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

On the whole, it would seem as if this extreme regard for veracity were only used as a means for discrediting religion, morality, and the Socratic philosophy. And their defenders might plausibly allege that they only used deception—when they used it—for a good end; that is to say, for an augmentation of vital power. "Everything for the army," as Colonel Henry said. It would have been more consistent, not to say honest, on the part of Nietzsche had he attacked the popular creed simply on the ground that it lowered the vitality of the species. Even on so narrow a basis the attack could not have been worked without an appeal to disinterested motives; in other words, without an appeal to morality. For a selfish religionist might well prefer the gratification of his mystical cravings, and a priest his ambition, to the health of the race. But here also our critic has thrown away his whole case by two most serious admissions. We have first a frank acknowledgment that "there is nothing diseased about the gregarious human being as such; on the contrary, he is of inestimable value, but incapable of self-guidance, and therefore in need of a shepherd, a need perfectly understood by priests."[2] "Petty virtues are needed for petty people";[3] and when the lower strata of the population are decadent "a religion of self-suppression, patience, and mutual help may be of the highest value."[4] Therefore, we "require that gregarious morality should be held absolutely sacred."[5] And, secondly, we find a parallel acknowledgment that Christianity deserves great praise as "the genuine religion of the herd."[1] "The continued existence of the Christian ideal is most desirable. My object in making war on that chlorotic ideal was not to destroy it, but to put an end to its tyranny, and to make room for new and robuster ideals."[2] "Common people are only endurable when they are pious."[3] They are not likely to remain pious long where books like *The Anti-Christian* circulate freely.

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[1] *Leben*, II., p. 719. [2] *W. z. M.*, p. 209. [3] *WW.*, VI., p. 246.
[4] *Leben*, II., p. 734. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 809.

In England we have had a good supply of those "robuster ideals," for which the German moralist wishes to find room; nor, by all accounts, are they wanting in America; yet he does not seem to have looked to either country for his models. His enormous self-esteem would have suffered by such a reference. It also affected his conception of the superman, who, in Nietzsche's last writings, no longer figures as a new species destined to succeed and displace the human species, but rather as a superior race, like the Greeks—with himself, one may suppose, as the most conspicuous example of their perfections. At first supermen are thought of, not as ruling over the inferior race, but as living apart from them, "like the gods of Epicurus."[4] But this view was soon found impracticable, and abandoned. Throughout the *Wille zur Macht* nothing is contemplated but a new aristocracy, a ruling race, whose sole business will, however, not be to rule, offering splendid examples of beauty, strength, and intelligence for the delectation of themselves and of the lower orders.[1] Owing, presumably, to their wise administration, the labourers are to live as the middle class live now; but the higher caste above them will be distinguished for its abstinence.[2] This *élite* naturally falls into two divisions: a small body of supremely intellectual men performing the highest functions and leading the most perfect life, and, below them, an executive of soldiers and judges to relieve them of the rough work of government; while men of science and the majority of artists will find their appropriate place among the labouring classes.[3]

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[1] *WW.*, XIV., p. 336.

[2] *Leben*, II., p. 744.

[3] *WW.*, XII., p. 206.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

It has been mentioned how dependent Nietzsche was on the English moralists in his positivist period, and under what studied rudeness his sense of obligation was afterwards concealed. In his last or fourth period the debt to Plato is even more obvious, and his resentment is conveyed in the same way, only, as befits the occasion, with extraordinarily virulent abuse. Plato is "a great Cagliostro," an example of "the higher swindling," "a moral fanatic," a "poisoner of heathen innocence," and, worst of all, "tedious."[4]

It might be asked how a race of born rulers can be called into existence by suspending all the laws of morality, whether the duties of government are likely to be better performed by an aristocracy permanently emancipated from every social obligation, and, finally, whether these "dragon warriors from Cadmean teeth" are likely to keep the peace with each other longer than their fabled prototypes.

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[1] *W. z. M.*, p. 414; *Leben*, p. 798.

[2] *WW.*, XII., p. 214.

[3] *WW.*, VIII., pp. 302 *sq.*

[4] *W. z. M.*, pp. 234 and 244; *WW.*, VIII., p. 168.

But the *Wille zur Macht* opens a question of more practical importance for Nietzsche's philosophy than these. The theory adumbrated in that unfinished work seems to be that nature consists of nothing but energy; that the natural process consists in the appropriation of energy by one body at the expense of another; that the ascending line of organic development is determined by a continual gain, and the descending line by a continual loss, of energy; that, in so far as we can use such expressions as right and wrong, the right morality consists in preferring the qualities that make for vital energy, and wrong morality in preferring those that make for its decay.

So far there is nothing in this philosophy incompatible with the assumption that great individualities are the highest products of nature, and that their production is the worthiest object of human endeavour. Of course, it always remains open for Socrates, Plato, the present reviewer, or any other wretched decadent, to ask why we should scorn delights and live laborious days in order to promote the evolution of some future Cæsar Borgia. Supposing, however, that we accept the transvaluation of all values to that extent, a remorseless logic will impel us to go further, and make a united Italy, which was Borgia's own ambition, or a united Europe, which, according to Nietzsche, was Napoleon's ambition, or, finally, a united world, the object of our activity. I can quite imagine and sympathise with a valuation that counts human personality as the supreme thing, that says with Heracleitus, "one man is worth ten thousand if he be the best." Only Nietzsche bars himself out from that valuation by his repeated assurances that personality is an illusion.[1] And it was by no freak of paradox that he took up this position. It was an essential part of his antitheistic polemic. According to him, the ascription of phenomena to a personal cause arises from the fallacious grammatical abstraction of subject and predicate, noun and verb. There is really no such break in the continuous stream of becoming. Nor is theism the only result of this mischievous error. By a still more fatal perversion, gregarious and Christian moralists, in their vindictive hostility to the rich and powerful, coined the false notion of personal responsibility, on the strength of which their oppressors were to be visited with everlasting punishment.[2]

If I may borrow an illustration from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche is like the magician who sent his familiar spirit to draw water, but knew no spell that could stop him, with the result that he and the whole country were drowned. Our modern Callicles has reformed himself, discarding the brutal licentiousness of his prototype, and even adopting the passwords of Plato's *Republic*. But it is all in vain. The terrible Socratic dialectic works on and on to his utter and overwhelming confusion. He appeals to Power, and to Power let him go. He invokes a superman, who will be found in the modern State; that State so decried by Zarathustra as the stronghold of the weak and defenceless. "By value is to be understood the conditions under which complex vital structures are maintained and exalted."[1] So says morality also; but above the individual, however gifted, she places the State, and above the State a universal society whose object is the greatest good of all its members; a good which for purposes of convenience may be variously expressed in terms of pleasure, of life, of health, or of power, but in which the good of the parts ultimately coincides and identifies itself with the good of the whole.

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[1] See, among other passages, *W. z. M.*, p. 369.

[2] *WW.*, VII., pp. 327-31.

I think something of this had begun to dawn on the noble spirit, to whom I have tried to be more just than he was to my teachers, before it went down under the waves of insanity. For among his later utterances this passage occurs: "In the whole process I find living morality, impelling force. It was an illusion to suppose I had transcended good and evil. Freethinking itself was a moral action, as honesty, as valour, as justice, and as love."[2] And this confession might have been extended with equal truth to his whole polemic against morality, involving as it did the re-affirmation of moral values in their full binding authority at every step in the evolution of the dialectical process by which they were to be undone.

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[1] *Leben*, p. 790.

[2] *WW.*, XIV., p. 312.

WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM?

To many—perhaps to most—readers it may seem as if the question "What is Agnosticism?" admitted of an obvious and easy answer. They will say that the term for which an explanation is asked was created by a master both of language and of thought, the late Professor Huxley; that he took pains on more than one occasion to define its significance, and that we ought to abide by his ruling.

If there are any such persons, I must demur to their contention. Words have a life of their own quite independent of their author's intentions, and they frequently come to bear a meaning very remote from that to which they were originally restricted. This is especially true of party names and controversial terms. The mere evolution of opinion is enough to carry them through an ever-changing series of associations. Many who now call themselves Protestants hold few beliefs in common with the confessors of Augsburg; and, within a far shorter period of time than that which separates us from the Reformation, the word "Opportunism" has come to designate a political attitude almost precisely the reverse of that adopted by its first great sponsor, Gambetta.

Thus, even if Professor Huxley had supplied a definition briefly and satisfactorily indicating the position of the school of thought to which he belonged, and if he had steadily held to that definition through life, the question, "What is now meant by Agnosticism?" must sooner or later have come up for reconsideration. And I will proceed to show, from Huxley's recorded utterances on the subject, that such a definition is, unfortunately, not forthcoming.

According to the late Mr. R. H. Hutton, as quoted in the *New English Dictionary* (better known as the *Oxford Dictionary*), the following definition of "Agnostic" was suggested in his hearing by Professor Huxley "at Mr. James Knowles's house ......one evening in 1869": "One who holds that the existence of anything beyond and behind material phenomena is unknown and (so far as can be judged) unknowable, and especially that a First Cause and an unseen world are subjects of which we know nothing." It was taken, Mr. Hutton adds, from St. Paul's mention of the altar to "the Unknown God."

Hutton was not remarkable for the accuracy of his printed statements; and one might hesitate to make Huxley responsible for such slovenly phraseology as is here put into his mouth, had not the quotation been published during his lifetime, and suffered to pass uncontradicted as recording in a monumental work the exact expression of his opinion. Anyhow, the definition will not hold water. A leak is sprung by the introduction of the qualification "material" affixed to "phenomena." No one knew better than Huxley that there are non-material phenomena also—mental, spiritual, or whatever we are to call them; in short, thought, feeling, and volition. Are we, then, to conclude that an Agnostic may admit the existence of something "beyond and behind" these? And, if so, what are his reasons for drawing a line of distinction between the two classes of phenomena? Again, limiting ourselves to material phenomena, does an Agnostic, as such, necessarily exclude the atomic theory and the undulatory theory from the domain of knowledge, or does he count the supposed atoms and ether among phenomena? As to the altar at Athens, of course anything may suggest anything else; but one cannot help noting that Huxley went a long step further than the Athenians. They gave practical evidence of their conviction that the god to whom the altar was dedicated existed, although of his attributes they were wholly ignorant. Our Agnostic, on the contrary, does not know, and holds that there is no possibility of knowing, whether a First Cause exists or not. And, what is still more remarkable, Herbert Spencer, the acknowledged chief of the Agnostic school, could not, under this definition, claim to be considered an Agnostic at all. So far from declaring the existence of anything behind material phenomena to be unknown and unknowable, Spencer proclaimed, as our supreme certainty, the existence of "an Unconditioned Reality without beginning or end," from which all phenomena are derived.[1]

While Huxley's definition excludes certain persons calling themselves Agnostics, it comes perilously near to including others who would repudiate the name. How are we to class thinkers who say with Nietzsche that the apparent world is the real world—there being no other; or with Mr.

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[1] *First Principles*, p. 192.

F. H. Bradley, that the Absolute has no assets but appearances? If we identify the existent with the knowable and the knowable with phenomena, then, indeed, we neither do nor can know anything behind phenomena, simply because no such thing exists.

Turn we now from Huxley's reported conversation to the printed declarations of his later years. Writing to defend his philosophy against a number of attacks proceeding from various quarters, he says:—

> Agnosticism is not a creed, but a method, the essence of which lies in the rigorous application of a single principle......the great principle of Descartes......the fundamental axiom of modern science. Positively the principle may be expressed: In matters of the intellect follow your reason as far as it will take you without regard to any other consideration. And negatively: In matters of the intellect do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable.[1]

It will be seen that, logically, this definition has not a note in common with that reported by Hutton. There is here no reference to phenomena, material or otherwise, or to a First Cause, or to the unknown and unknowable. The author may well call his principle one "of great antiquity"; the wonder is that he should have gone out of his way to invent for it a new-fangled name—a name, moreover, which does not by its etymology give the slightest hint of its meaning. Huxley had quite enough Greek scholarship to be aware that the word ἄγνωστος in Greek philosophy bears the sense of "unknowable" as well as of "unknown"; and this was just what made the name derived from it so felicitous a designation for the metaphysical theory recently set forth in the introduction to *First Principles*, and what speedily won for it the unanimous acceptance of the educated classes in England. Assuredly it was accepted as designating—to reverse its author's claim—a creed rather than a method, the extreme application of a principle rather than the principle itself.

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[1] From an article on "Agnosticism" originally published in the *Nineteenth Century* for February, 1889, and reprinted in *Essays on Controverted Questions* (London, 1892), p. 362.

For that method, for that principle, proclaimed by Huxley in his later days as what Agnosticism really designated, a name already existed, or at least there was a name which, with a couple of explanations, might have been made to fit it exactly. I mean the word "Rationalism," which certainly has the disadvantage of connoting a certain hostility to theology, but a hostility by no means amounting to that complete rejection which Agnosticism has been supposed to imply. I say "disadvantage," not because I am writing as an advocate of theology—whose pretensions I am not now concerned either to uphold or to impugn—but because it seems to me that principles, from which opposite conclusions continue to be drawn with complete sincerity by thinkers of equal ability, ought not to be given names committing their supporters to either side of the controverted issues. Huxley himself seems to have felt that, in proportion as he widened the meaning of the word "Agnostic," he raised it to a new eminence above the disputed dogmas of the hour. "Agnosticism," he assures us, "has no quarrel with scientific theology."[1] What, then, becomes of his own famous epigram, penned only a few months before: "If Mr. Harrison, like most people, means by 'religion' theology, then in my judgment Agnosticism can be said to be a stage in its evolution only as death may be said to be the final stage in the evolution of life."[1] If the Agnostic has no quarrel with the scientific theologian, it is only in the same sense in which we say that the executioner has no quarrel with his victim.

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 452.

It need hardly be observed that Huxley's rather weak attempt to back out of his earlier and far more characteristic attitude of mortal enmity to all theology, "scientific" or otherwise, remained without influence on the common use of the word originally created to express that attitude. Launched at first starting in a negative direction, it soon received a new impulse in the same sense, from a steadier, and in this instance a more powerful, hand. In truth, its great success as a party name first dates from an essay entitled "An Agnostic's Apology," contributed by Leslie Stephen to the *Fortnightly Review* in June, 1876. In that deliverance of conscience there was a note of poignant experience that riveted attention, and an accent of sincerity that commanded respect. Here was evidently one to whom, at a supreme crisis, the consolations of theology had once more been offered, and who had angrily flung them aside as not merely illusory, but as adding a new sting to the anguish of bereaved affection. For the rest, Leslie Stephen put the Agnostic case in a nutshell. There are limits to the human intelligence, and theology lies outside those limits. Mansel, in his Bampton Lectures on *The Limits of Religious Thought,* had adopted this position, but had used it to screen the mysteries of orthodox Christianity against Rationalistic criticism. The same principles were then taken up and pushed to their logical conclusion by Herbert Spencer, whom Stephen seems to regard, with justice, as the founder of modern English Agnosticism, and whose presentation, I may add, remains the most complete and systematic form of the doctrine. It must be observed, however, that with Spencer, as with Mansel, though not to the same extent, Agnosticism has a positive side, to which Leslie Stephen does not call attention. The object of his "apology" was not, in fact, to give an exhaustive view of the subject, but rather to retort on believers the charge of giving up the attempt to solve the riddles of existence.

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 366.

To say that man's intelligence has limits is not to say that within those limits it is impotent. To declare that certain problems are insoluble is not to deny that other problems have been solved, and that many more may be attacked with good hope of success. These are truisms, but apparently they are truisms that need to be occasionally restated and enforced. The vulgar are not quick to draw distinctions; and, hearing that Agnosticism had something to do with not knowing, they took it to imply not so much ignorance of the Absolute as absolute ignorance. Richard Hutton, with his usual inaccuracy, translated it into "a sort of know-nothingism"; and Laurence Oliphant makes a very modern young man, in his novel, *Altiora Peto,* say to the heroine: "We neither of us know anything or believe anything; in other words, we are both Agnostics." So, also, a very recent writer of high philosophical pretensions, Dr. Percy Gardner, in the opening pages of his *Exploratio Evangelica,* seems to use "Agnostic" and "Sceptic" as synonymous terms. What was said of Huxley's definition may be repeated in this connection. There is no need to coin a new word when there is an old word of the same value in general circulation. But the popular confusion may be turned to good account. From one point of view nothing throws a more vivid light on the meaning of Agnosticism than to contrast it with Scepticism. The ancient Sceptics doubted everything, and were at last driven to the pass of doubting that they doubted. This paradox helps us to understand the logical difficulty of their position. The very notion of doubt would be impossible without the correlative notion of certainty to serve as a standard of comparison. But the notion of certainty can be acquired only by the experience of knowledge. It may be said that our certainties have often turned out to be illusory; but that is only because the standard of knowledge has been raised: our very disillusionment proves that we have a standard still. Here is a law which the Agnostic, unlike the Sceptic, has recognised. He claims to possess knowledge within the limits of experience so abundant in quantity and so good in quality that it furnishes sufficient material for an exhaustive analysis, by which he succeeds, at least to his own satisfaction, in determining the nature and conditions of all knowledge — in framing a concept of knowledge in general. Briefly stated, the result is this: The whole content of consciousness resolves itself into groups of phenomena arranged according to certain laws of resemblance, difference, co-existence, and succession. These groups and their component parts severally become associated with particular signs, generally called names; and a group is said to be known when the order of its components is accurately reproduced by the order of the signs that denote them.

Agnostics contend that something exists independently of phenomena—that is, independently of our states of consciousness—but a something that cannot be known. Their arguments may be conveniently distributed under three heads. First as regards the material world. Modern science leads us to the conception of multitudinous invisible atoms attracting and repelling one another in various ways, or, as some would prefer to state the case, of minute masses moving towards, or away from, one another. But it seems to be generally admitted that when we talk of forces and atoms, or of mass and motion, we are only using convenient fictions for the purpose of making the phenomena amenable to our methods of calculation. Even supposing force and matter, as we conceive them, to exist independently of our conceptions, we should not know what they are in themselves, nor the reason of their behaviour. We cannot get inside them, nor can our analysis extract anything from their mutual relations, but sequences and co-existences, which, for aught we can tell, might have been of an altogether different description. Still less, if possible, can we explain the existence, as a whole, of the material world. It can neither be conceived as having been there from all eternity, nor as having had a beginning before which there was nothing, nor as having been created out of nothing by an immaterial cause. Finally, our ignorance on these points altogether precludes the question for what purpose the world exists—excludes even the assumption that it has any purpose whatever.

If material phenomena consist for us in some of the fleeting shows of consciousness, it is inconceivable, according to the Spencerian Agnostic, that they should be the mere product of our mental activity. They come and go in complete independence of our volition; they have an order which is not that of our thoughts and feelings; we are convinced that they stand for a reality which is older than our consciousness, and which will survive when we are no more.

Passing from the objective to the subjective sphere, from material to mental phenomena, the limitations to knowledge make themselves still more painfully felt. Experience shows that our only data, the processes of consciousness, are discontinuous. Never was a more unwarrantable dictum than that "The soul always thinks." *I,* at any rate, do not always think; nor am I interested in an assumed something that vicariously performs that office for me in the hours of unconsciousness, and that, to use Fichte's illustration, is no more myself than is a piece of lava in the moon. If, then, we assume an enduring substance as the supporter of thought and feeling, it must have a possible and very frequently an actual existence apart from these manifestations; that is to say, considered in its absolute self-existence, it must be unconscious, and therefore inconceivable to us. Equally inconceivable is the materialistic theory that thought and feeling are the products of molecular changes in the nervous tissue; and, even were it conceivable, we should, by accepting it, be thrown back on the ultimate impossibility of interpreting physical phenomena in terms of absolute reality. And, as the essence of mind is unknown, so neither is any complete explanation of its processes forthcoming. Our analysis ends with empirical sequences for which no reason can be given. Equally hopeless is the attempt to account for the origin of consciousness in time. So far as the inhabitants of this planet are concerned, we know that consciousness had a beginning; but we know nothing else. That it came out of mechanical movements, or that it was created by another consciousness, or that it was uncaused, seem to be equally inconceivable alternatives. Thus, if there is a reality behind and beyond consciousness, it must be unknowable; but for the existence of such a reality we have the strongest testimony of consciousness itself.

The third argument for Agnosticism is drawn from considerations of a highly metaphysical character, counting, I think, for much less at the present day than in the middle decades of the last century. We used to be told that the Finite implied an Infinite, the Relative an Absolute, the Conditioned an Unconditioned; that we could not have a distinct consciousness of the one without a vague consciousness of the other; that, while knowledge involves the antithesis of subject and object, it also involves their synthesis in a higher unity. Perhaps these abstractions will not look so alarming if we approach them from a less dialectical point of view. What we know we know by thinking; and to think is to condition, to limit, to bring into relation. The most universal of all relations is that of subject and object, the knower and the known. The subject-matter of knowledge is the whole content of consciousness; and this, as we have already seen, comes to be arranged under various forms which it is the business of the intellect to recognise, some states of consciousness being referred to an external world, and the remainder to our own mind. If by an effort of abstraction we think away the forms of thought, their content does not disappear. There remains an indestructible reality which we cannot conceive (for to conceive would be to condition and relationise), but of which we are vaguely conscious—without which, indeed, the developed consciousness called knowledge would be impossible. Being without relations, this pure existence may be spoken of as absolute; being without limit, it may be spoken of as infinite; being common to object and subject, it may be said to transcend their distinction. That ultimate reality, whose presence and pressure we have already felt before and behind phenomena, now floods the barriers of the outer and inner sense, penetrating and filling the phenomenal sphere itself.

This is the unknown and unknowable that Agnostics confess—at least, all Agnostics of the Spencerian persuasion; and, since Huxley devised a name that so admirably hit off their doctrine, I submit that his restriction of it to a method which might conceivably lead to quite different results is not justified by the ordinary usages of language, or by the exigencies of scientific phraseology. Indeed, the frank admission, contained in one of his later essays, that he did "not very much care to speak of anything as 'unknowable,'"[1] although he certainly did so speak at the outset of his philosophical career, seems to show that his metaphysical attitude had undergone a change that made the word under discussion no longer the fittest to express it.

If, as is very possible, some of my readers do not find the above arguments very convincing, I must beg them to believe that I am not writing as an advocate of Agnosticism, and that its professed adherents might very well be able to put their case in a stronger manner. Those who wish for a complete and authoritative view, presented in the best possible light, will, of course, find it in the opening chapters of *First Principles*. The word "Agnostic" does not there occur; but Herbert Spencer adopted it in subsequent publications as a suitable designation for the school which he represented. My present purpose, however, is to fix attention on the results to which the reasonings of the school have led rather than on the reasonings themselves. And I now propose to consider those results in reference to the claims of theology on belief.

The group of controversial essays in which Huxley set forth his latest opinions on this question with so much vigour, but, as I have tried to show, with so little precision, was called forth by the angry utterances of some English divines, who seemed to be irritated and dismayed by the general acceptance of a party name which could be applied to their opponents without giving them offence. Judging with perfect accuracy that Agnosticism implied the rejection of Christianity, and being interested in it only to that extent, they declared that Agnostics were, in plain language, infidels, and should without ceremony be branded as such. The demand showed a certain want of urbanity, and still more a want of discrimination. Even granting that the rejection of the Christian faith—or, rather, of all the somewhat discordant creeds clustered together under that appellation—is a deplorable error, it has ceased to be regarded as a crime; and therefore it should not be confounded under the same denomination with what *is* criminal—the violation of a plighted troth. But, waiving the question of good manners and the undesirability to a logical understanding of classing Agnostics with adulterers and fraudulent trustees, there is, perhaps, something to be said for the propriety of countenancing the distinctions set up by Freethinkers among themselves. If all Agnostics are "infidels," all "infidels" are not Agnostics; and some would abjure communion with that particular sect as heartily as any Churchman, nor would they meet with very respectful treatment from its devotees. Carlyle and Francis Newman, Emerson and Theodore Parker, perhaps even James Martineau, certainly Clifford, were all, to the Anglican mind, "infidels"; yet not one of them was an Agnostic. Hegel, who was never weary of denouncing the current acquiescence in ignorance of things in themselves, used to pass, I think with reason, as a formidable enemy of Christianity; and the English neo-Hegelians may be the next foe with whom orthodoxy will have to reckon. There is, I know, a good deal of coquetry going on just now between the dialectic philosophy and the higher Catholicism;[1] but something of the same sort happened at Berlin before the advent of Strauss and Feuerbach.

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[1] "Agnosticism and Christianity," *op. cit.*, p. 451.

As a philosophical system Agnosticism has much that is unobjectionable, or even acceptable, to the religious believer. Cardinal Newman, in defending the reasonableness of transubstantiation, urged that we do not know what matter is in itself; and doubtless he would have avowed the same ignorance about the essence of mind. Of course, no Christian, and, indeed, no theist, will admit that the origin of the world or of our own consciousness is unknown; but if he is candid he will admit that to adduce the will of a divine Creator as a sufficient cause for either is merely to push the difficulty a step further back. That a self-conscious intelligence, with power to make a world out of nothing, should have existed from all eternity is not in itself a proposition of axiomatic evidence, nor intrinsically more conceivable than its contradictory; and nothing that is not a self-evident axiom can be taken as ultimate in philosophy. Without going into the question of origins, the incomprehensibility of God has long been a theological commonplace. Like Huxley, the religious believer may "not much care to talk about the 'Unknowable'" (with or without a capital); but he would hardly refuse to admit that the divine nature, being infinite, can never be fully understood by a finite intelligence. He may appeal to revelation, either the revelation of his own conscience or the revelation given by inspired writers, as affording some certain knowledge of God's will; but, so far, his knowledge of divine things amounts to no more than the knowledge of nature that an Agnostic professes to derive from the study of material and mental phenomena. This also may, without much straining, be called a revelation; and the truth of each revelation is relative, to the extent of being conditioned by the capacity of its recipient. A Christian may plead that to have the same assurance of God's existence that a Spencerian Agnostic has of the existence of an objective world, or of his fellow-men, or, if it comes to that, of his own existence, is a sufficiently solid basis for his Theistic faith. He may, if he chooses, draw out a further parallel between the workings of the Power manifested to us through all existence[1] and the workings of God as manifested in the scheme of redemption.

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[1] Written in 1900.

Agnosticism and Christianity do not, then, as some seem to suppose, form a sharply contrasted and mutually exclusive couple; still less are they alternatives exhausting the possibilities of serious belief. An Agnostic may become convinced by reading Hegel that "the universe is penetrable by thought," and yet have moved to a greater distance from faith in a personal God; and a Christian may

[1] *First Principles*, p. 112.

let fall every article in his creed but that one, holding it as a truth given by experience and induction. The one will have ceased to be an Agnostic, and the other will have ceased to be a Christian; but their positions will not have been exchanged. Indeed, this whole system of alternatives is a fiction invented by brow-beating controversialists, and accepted by a public too lazy or too impatient for the exercise of that private judgment which it professes to prize so dearly.

The truth is that the Agnostic rejects Christianity on grounds quite distinct from the metaphysical considerations by which he has become convinced that things in themselves cannot be known. A course of logical and ethical analysis has led him to think that the doctrines held in common by all the Churches are inconsistent with themselves and with the morality that they profess to teach. A course of historical criticism has led him to think that miracles do not happen; that there never was a revelation; that the advent of Christianity can be explained, like any other phenomenon in the evolution of religion, by natural causes. The whole process is well exhibited in that masterpiece of mental autobiography, Francis Newman's *Phases of Faith*—a work, in my opinion, far superior to his brother's more celebrated *Apologia*.

But the modern Agnostic does not find rest, where the younger Newman found it, in the creed of ethical Theism. Starting in early youth from a much more advanced position, and enjoying much greater liberty of thought than was possible in the first half of the last century, he attacks the supreme questions of theology with a more open and a more active mind. What is of still greater importance, he finds himself supplied, by the advance of positive knowledge, with a new set of ideas—above all, with the idea of evolution.

Much has been written about the relations between evolution and theology, and the subject is still far from being exhausted. Only a few leading points can be touched on here. The Darwinian theory, so far as it went, was adverse to natural Theism because it tended to substitute mechanical for teleological causation. In more familiar language, it did away with the argument from design in a field where that argument had hitherto reigned supreme. At one stroke a single volume made large libraries obsolete. Even if it could be shown that natural selection had not the efficacy attributed to it by Darwin, and still more by Weismann, the old methods of reasoning would not recover from the shock they received when it was first promulgated ; for here was a totally new explanation of the mechanism by which organisms are adapted to their environment, and none could tell how many more such explanations the science of the future holds in reserve, " one sure if another fails." Hence the rule, now generally admitted, that appeals to supernatural intervention do not lie in the region of physical phenomena.

Evolution is not, however, limited to the region of physical phenomena. Under the influence of the new doctrine, mental phenomena also—feeling, volition, and reason—came to be interpreted as part of the vast mechanism by which organisms are adapted to their environment, and as having, like every other part, grown up gradually in response to the demands of life. How, then, could such obviously relative qualities be legitimately ascribed to the absolute cause or substance of things? Our moral nature in particular, which had long been claimed by religious teachers as a peculiar revelation of the transcendent realities, became an adaptation like any other—a social instinct, a racial heritage, secured by the survival of the fittest. The spiritual experiences confidently appealed to by believers could be explained away by the evolutionist as survivals of the hallucinated states known to occur with far more intensity among primitive men.

Behind the dynamic law of evolution our Middle Victorian inquirer found another and a greater law, more luminous in its evidence, more sweeping in its applicability, more inflexible in the severity of its control—the static law of conservation, the principle that the quantity of energy in the universe remains unaltered and unalterable, without increase or diminution, through all time. This principle enabled him to arrive by a more summary process at the results already detailed. Miracles, which historical criticism had shown to be fictitious, were fictitious because they were impossible—because their performance would involve a creation or a destruction of energy.[1] And the same principle might be applied to the whole range of religious experiences still maintained by natural Theism, including the efficacy of prayer and the very existence of human free-will. Theologians might call this reasoning in a circle. They might say that to assume that the law of conservation held without exception was to assume the very point at issue, whether supernatural intervention was possible or not. Herbert Spencer and his disciples would reply that the conservation of energy, or, as they preferred to call it, the persistence of force, was, like the axioms of geometry, a truth known *à priori*, and verified by the inconceivableness of its contradictory. Thinkers of a more moderate school would be content to argue that a principle found to prevail over the whole field of phenomena accessible to exact observation and experiment showed the highest probability of being true without exception.

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[1] In view of the ignorance still prevalent on this subject, I must mention that to give energy a new direction, not determined by pre-existing energy, involves either the creation or the destruction of energy.

Another point remains to be noticed as illustrating the latent hostility between Theism and the law of conservation. I refer to what is known as the order of nature and its implications. The subject was a favourite theme with the Rev. Professor Baden Powell, famous for his epoch-making contribution to *Essays and Reviews*, and, what now seems forgotten, a fervent evolutionist before Darwin. This very liberal divine, while frankly abandoning miracles, insisted on the order of nature, the unbroken supremacy of law, as the one all-sufficient proof that the world was ruled by a personal God. But, according to Herbert Spencer, order and law simply mean that the quantity of matter existing always remains the same, that its properties are constant, and that the variations in the movements of its particles are mutually compensatory—all consequences of the conservation of energy.[1] What we call the order of nature is merely another expression for that ultimate self-identity of the universe which reason is not needed to explain, for it first makes reasoning possible to us.

It will be observed that, so far, the case has been conducted on behalf of our supposed free inquirer, without any reference to Agnostic principles. His appeal has not been to the new nescience, but to the new science. A point has been now reached where the intervention of Agnosticism can be explained. Left alone on what Carlyle calls the shoreless fountain-ocean of force, to what stars shall we turn for guidance? The position was not new. The philosophers who met round Baron D'Holbach's dinner-table, the English Benthamites, the German materialists, had reached very similar conclusions, and had called them "Atheism." The disciples of Nietzsche would call them so still. With a little ingenuity they could equally well be fitted into the creed of Pantheism more or less openly professed by Goethe and Herder at Weimar, by Schelling and Hegel at Jena, by Coleridge and Wordsworth at Alfoxden. But it so happened that England, in 1860, was under the dominion of the Kantian criticism; not that many students read Kant for themselves, but the chief results of his philosophy had been presented in what, as compared with the original, might be called a popular form by Hamilton and Mansel. Now, it is interesting to note that these two writers, both strong supporters of the received opinions, were particularly earnest opponents of German Pantheism, at that time a great bugbear to the orthodox. Hamilton, for all his boasted learning, was not very deeply read in German philosophy, and his acquaintance with Schelling and Hegel, the latter especially, seems to have been superficial; his attack is directed chiefly against a flashy combination of their theories, put together, with more rhetorical skill than sincerity, by the Parisian sophist, Victor Cousin. Mansel, on the other hand, knew a good deal about Hegel, and seems to have anticipated with singular prescience the future ascendancy of Hegelianism at Oxford, although he probably did not foresee that it would be converted by some professors into a bulwark of Anglican theology. To him Hegel was the master of Strauss and Baur, the author of a method for dissipating dogma into mist; and he turned for salvation, as Hamilton had already turned, to Kant, with whose help Atheism also could be refuted.

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[1] This argument was pressed against Baden Powell by G. J. Romanes in his non-theistic days.

To some persons Pantheism and Atheism are indistinguishable; to others they stand for the widest possible contrasts of belief; but it will be generally admitted that on one important point they are agreed. Both alike assume that things in themselves can be known. The philosophy of Atheism is, as a rule, materialistic or monadistic. Mass and motion are intelligible conceptions apart from our consciousness, and from mass and motion all phenomena are derived. The absolute, in Dühring's phrase, is under our feet. In the more modern refinements of the system a certain amount of sensibility is supposed to accompany each material particle or centre of force; and consciousness is explained as resulting from the joint action of innumerable monads; or, by a still nearer approach to idealism, the elementary sensibilities are conceived as the only true realities, what we call matter being a mere objectivation of feeling. In any case, a plurality of substances is the primary fact beyond which we need not go.

Pantheism is much less easy to define; and perhaps no definition can be framed wide enough to embrace the various forms under which it has been professed throughout history and all over the world. For our present purpose only the most recent aspects need be taken into account; and of these it is enough to say that, starting from a supreme animating principle, the centre and soul of things, they work down to the particular modes of existence, explaining the parts by the whole rather than, as in the materialistic method, the whole by the parts. Those who wish to avoid what they consider confusing theological associations may call the result spiritualistic monism. For us the important thing to note is the attempt here also to render existence into intelligible terms, to make thought conterminous with things.

Agnosticism regards both attempts, the pluralistic and the monistic, as alike chimerical. It applies the Kantian or Hamiltonian criticism to their logic, and finds it wanting. Not from any lack of moral courage, but from sheer intellectual honesty, does the Agnostic refuse to call himself an Atheist or a Pantheist. In truth, it is against Atheism and Pantheism, rather than against Theism, that the point of his philosophy is turned. As has been already observed, he may have much in common with the Theist, who generally shares his contempt for dogmatic metaphysics. Of course, he has no mercy on *à priori* attempts to "construct" a personal God; but of these we hear less and less every day. It is true that the *à posteriori* or inductive argument, which leads up from the contemplation of nature to the recognition of divine intelligence and will before and beyond nature, fails to convince him; but his objections to it are based, as I have said, on scientific grounds in the widest sense of the word "scientific," using it so as to include psychology and historical criticism. At the same time, the Spencerian Agnostic admits, or rather contends, that Theism, and, indeed, all forms of ontology, whether monistic or pluralistic, spiritualistic or materialistic, contain a certain measure of truth. He agrees with them in admitting that phenomena are not everything—that they are the index to an absolute reality; but Kant has taught him that this reality is beyond the reach of our knowledge.

If the foregoing analysis is correct, the late Bishop Fraser was not justified in saying that "the Agnostic neither denied nor affirmed God," but "simply put him on one side." If the Bishop meant by "God" what most of his co-religionists mean, then the Agnostic certainly denies the existence of such a being, if only because, like Darwin, he "does not believe that there ever was a revelation"; and the Christian God is essentially self-revealing. If by "God" is meant a Power whence all things proceed, then the Agnostic no more puts him on one side than Spinoza did. Of course, it was open to Bishop Fraser to contend that Spinozism amounts to a denial of God; and, if words are to retain their ordinary meanings, I am by no means sure that he would not have been right; but such a denial differs widely from the lazily contemptuous attitude implied by the Bishop's phrase.

After all, the final issue will centre in the question of personality. Evidently the Agnostic, refusing to predicate anything of the absolute reality, cannot positively say that it is a person; but can he positively say that it is not a person? It seems to me that he is logically bound to go that far; for the notion of personality seems to involve the notion of a subject and object, related to and conditioning one another, which excludes the notion of an absolute. Accordingly, the chiefs of the Agnostic school, if I am rightly informed, take refuge in the supposition that there may be something infinitely higher than personality, and free from its limitations. But I must confess that to me at least such an hypothesis conveys no meaning whatever. Inconceivable is not the word for it. The category of quantity is out of relation to personality. We may talk about being "intensely self-conscious" or the reverse; but that is said only in reference to our concrete individuality as apparent to others. Pure self-consciousness admits of no degrees. When Jean Paul, at five years old, thought to himself "*Ich bin ein Ich,*" he had won that to the perfection of whose reality no experience or imagination or philosophy could add any more than the centre of a circle can be modified by enlarging its circumference. My present business, however, is not criticism, but exposition; and to that I return.

To some minds what a philosopher thinks about human immortality marks his attitude towards religion even more decisively than what he thinks about the existence and nature of God. To others, on the contrary, it is a mere matter of curiosity, possessing little or no religious value. At any rate, religious history and the course of recent speculation have made it abundantly clear that there is no necessary association between the belief in a personal God and the belief in a future life. An eminent religious genius, Leo Tolstoy, holds the latter doctrine to be incompatible with true Christianity. A very independent thinker, the late Edmund Gurney, seems to have rejected God while keeping immortality; and there are probably many who more or less openly hold the same opinion. Theoretically at least there seems no reason why a similar latitude should not prevail among Agnostics. I should say that, in practice, nearly all who call themselves by that name hold that consciousness becomes extinct with the destruction of what our ordinary experience shows to be its physiological conditions; but they hold this conviction as Rationalists rather than as Agnostics. An Agnostic will no doubt subject the alleged phenomena of spiritualism to a more severe scrutiny than the ordinary religious believer, and, even if he accepts them as genuine, will be more cautious about making them the basis for wide inferences; but, even if he accepts them for what they profess to be, they must always remain *phenomena*—that is, products of a reality the absolute nature of which is unknown and unknowable. However dazzling the prospects of futurity opened out to him may be, there is one assurance from which he remains debarred. He cannot say, like a confident young friend of mine, "I *know* that the soul is immortal." Not only can he not say it in this life, but in no circumstances conceivable to us could he say it. Supposing his individual consciousness to be prolonged for any length of time, the fatal antithesis of subject and object would still remain, shutting him out from a real knowledge of things in themselves and of the possibilities of a catastrophe that infinite time may contain.

I have said that the quarrel of the Agnostic is rather with the Pantheist and the dogmatic Atheist than with the Christian Theist, whose belief he rejects on grounds common to all Rationalists. Still, one quite understands the peculiar animosity with which Agnosticism is regarded by orthodox champions, for it occupies a very much stronger, because less assailable, position than that held by their ancient opponents. Theological controversialists like to carry the war into the enemy's country, to lay him prostrate with a *tu quoque,* or to explode his magazines with a well-directed sneer. The Atheist is asked whether he can compose an epic poem by shaking up a quantity of type in a box. The Pantheist is taunted with believing that the table is God, or that he himself is God. The Agnostic offers no such handle for attack. He has, to use Huxley's expression, "made a desert of the unknowable," so that it will not support an invading army. Asked what explanation, then, *he* gives of the origin of things, he calmly replies that he has none—that the problem is insoluble. "What! have you not a theory of the universe?" said a clerical friend in mild surprise to Professor

Tyndall. "I have not even a theory of magnetism," was the answer of the great physicist. It must add to the discomfiture of polemical divines if they bear in mind that the trick was taught by one of themselves. It is almost pathetic to re-read those wonderful Bampton Lectures of Dean Mansel, masterly, brilliant, and overwhelming, and then to remember how, only two years after their delivery, his positions were outflanked by Herbert Spencer, his batteries seized, and his artillery turned with destructive effect on the retreating ranks of orthodoxy.

The Agnostic, however, gives away this immunity from attack when, with Spencer, he exchanges a purely critical for a constructive attitude. It then appears that, in endeavouring at once to reconcile and to supersede the various forms of theology, he has borrowed a principle from each, with the result of putting together a somewhat heterogeneous and unstable edifice. The idea of a necessary antithesis between appearance and reality, of a hidden power which at once produces phenomena and radically differs from them, comes from natural Theism, and repeats the dualism that has always been its reproach in the eyes of philosophy, which, in Emerson's phrase, is essentially centripetal; while the manner in which phenomena are spoken of as manifesting the power behind them sounds like a reminiscence of Christian revelation. When the ultimate reality figures as an infinite and absolute, or, what comes to the same thing, a non-relative existence, a substance for ever extricating itself even in our consciousness from the conditions and limitations of thought, the debt is still more obvious to Pantheism, to the indestructible tradition of Parmenides and Spinoza. When the unknowable, of which assuredly neither unity nor plurality should be predicated, is habitually spoken of as one, Theism and Pantheism have contributed in equal proportions to that extreme definiteness of statement. Finally, when in the theory of evolution the teleological method is altogether superseded by mechanical causation, we have a procedure running parallel to the atheistic materialism from which Agnostics are most sincerely anxious to dissociate their cause.[1]

There is, then, some truth in the dry remark of a subtle critic, the late Father Dalgairns, that it seems we know a good deal about the unknowable. At any rate, what may be called the positive and dogmatic Agnosticism of *First Principles* seems to contain germs of decomposition inherited from parent systems which must eventually lead to its dissolution. But the philosophy of knowledge (or ignorance) represented by Spencer is older than his system, and will survive it. He would himself have been the first to admit that differentiation must go on; and an attempt to indicate roughly the divergent lines along which Agnostic speculation will move in the immediate future may not be premature.

First of all, we may expect that the conceptual proofs of an infinite and absolute existence beyond consciousness will be given back to the exclusive keeping of the Pantheism whence they were derived. Agnostics will content themselves with insisting that the phenomena of consciousness must be produced by causes beyond consciousness, and therefore unknowable; but they will drop the somewhat mystical phrase "the Unknowable," if only to avoid the appearance of assuming, what seems highly improbable, that the endless varieties of sensible existence proceed from a single self-identical Power; and they will abandon the chimerical idea that the recognition of such indefinite and indefinable forces can be made the basis of a final religion, or has anything to do with religion at all, seeing that religion is nothing if not the revelation of a supersensual world. Such a course would involve no new departure; it would be merely a return to the principles of Auguste Comte, of Mill's *Logic*, and of Lewes's *History of Philosophy*.

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[1] In the profoundly interesting chapter on "The Dynamic Element in Life," added to the last edition of his *Principles of Biology*, Spencer himself insists on the insufficiency of mechanical causation as applied to the explanation of vital phenomena; and some will probably interpret this as a concession to teleology. *Cf.* vol. i., pp. 573–574, of the same edition.

Others, again, may plausibly maintain that to postulate causes of phenomena which certainly exist, and as certainly cannot be known, is a somewhat self-contradictory proceeding, savouring of the old metaphysics, and that a true Agnostic will decline to commit himself one way or the other. He will observe that our notion of causation, whether derived from the sense of muscular effort or from the observation of invariable sequences among phenomena, is essentially subjective, and cannot legitimately receive a transcendental application. When asked how phenomena are to be explained without assuming an external cause, he will answer: "I don't know. Perhaps phenomena as a whole are uncaused, or self-caused, or caused by something in the future. If I am talking nonsense, it is your fault in asking nonsensical questions about things to which our categories do not apply. Keep your catechism for the Sunday school."

Finally, there will be, or rather there are even now, a few patient and temperate inquirers who, convinced of their own ignorance, convinced also that in no school, past or present, is the enlightenment they desiderate to be found, will yet refuse to restrict the future development of thought. In their opinion, the possibilities of knowledge are themselves among the things that cannot now be known. With Taine, they see the limits of their own mind, but not the limits of the human mind. With Huxley, they do "not much care to speak about anything as 'unknowable.'" Yet none better deserve the name of "Agnostics," if Agnosticism implies the irrevocable condemnation of what has been proved false, coupled with the resolute refusal to set up a still more fragile image in its place. Theirs is not the facile philosophy which, shamed out of its old via-mediaism, instead of saying that truth lies between the two extremes, pronounces with a still more oracular air the dictum that contradictories are equally true. They hold that to be always turning back is the worst possible way to reach the goal, and that rubbish-heaps are the weakest possible foundations for a new building.

I have no great faith in abstract definitions. Experience shows that the best of them are open to exception, and that they have hampered pure speculation with the difficulties of legal draughtsmanship, without the excuse of those practical necessities by which lawyers are hemmed in. But, for the comfort and relief of those persons who read only the beginning and end of an essay, I conclude with a summary, as short and as exact as I can make it, of the results to which the foregoing exposition has led.

Agnosticism is the philosophy of those who hold that knowledge is acquired only by reasoning on the facts of experience; that among these facts supernatural events have no place; that facts, if any, lying beyond experience are inconceivable; and that no theory, theological or otherwise, professing to give an account of such facts has any legitimate claim on our belief.

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