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THE

PHILOSOPHY OF COMMON SENSE



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THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMMON SENSE

BY

FREDERIC HARRISON

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE present volume, being the second in a series of collected studies, is a companion to *The Creed of a Layman*, published in April 1907. It is designed to form a summary of the philosophical grounds on which the preceding work was based; and it carries on the autobiographical account of the stages by which the author reached those conclusions. Most of the Essays were papers read at the Metaphysical Society between the years 1871 and 1880, or were founded on discussions that had taken place there. The whole of the Introduction and the Essays numbered iii. iv. vii. viii. x. xi. xvi. xxiii. (about one-third of the volume) are either new, or have been published only in the small organ of the Positivist Society of Clifford's Inn. The remaining Essays were published in the *Fortnightly Review* between the years 1870 and 1892, and in the *Nineteenth Century* between 1877 and 1886, and the author desires to express his thanks to the proprietors of those publications for their courteous permission to allow the re-issue. As these pieces have long ceased to be current, it is believed that the contents of this volume will be found to be practically new to the

modern reader as well as to the younger students of philosophy. And the writer now in his old age submits to all who are seeking some sound basis of life Thoughts formed in his maturity after exhaustive discussions with some of the first thinkers of our time.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMMON SENSE

The function of Philosophy is to form the foundation of Morals, Politics, and Religion. It is not an end in itself: it is the indispensable means of reaching an end otherwise unattainable.—PROFESSOR LÉVY-BRUHL, *after* COMTE.

INTRODUCTION

IN a former book—*The Creed of a Layman*—I set forth the grounds on which I had found peace in a religion of Common Sense—the silent, it may be, unconscious, and too often the unavowed faith of many good and sensible men. I shall now endeavour to show the intellectual basis on which such a faith is grounded; and this I venture to describe as The Philosophy of Common Sense. Rational Philosophy indeed, from the time of the early Greek sages down to Auguste Comte, has never been anything but the Common Sense of the best minds systematised and correlated to a righteous life. For some sixty years I have studied competing systems of Philosophy, finding some truths and much verbiage in all. And long ago I came to see that philosophy, like Religion, is much more simple, more practical, closer to a strenuous life on earth, than philosophers are thought to admit.

At the outset a question may be asked—Why should we trouble about Philosophy at all? What good will it do us? Is it not to waste time on a superfluity of Culture? No mistake could be greater—and indeed more dangerous. All sane and serious men have some general ideas which lie at the back of their brains, whether they are conscious of them or not, whether they ever reduce them to formal propositions, or suffer them silently to influence their lives. This is their philosophy.

Consistent and efficient conduct is impossible without some settled cast of the mind. Many may never have heard of "Differentiation," "The Categorical Imperative," "Monism," or "Pragmatism." But they do believe in certain dominant ideas; and these in the long run determine their conduct. Idle fribbles perhaps, and men and women who have no mind of their own in anything, but are the docile slaves of circumstance, whim, or stronger natures, can hardly be said to have any philosophy, as they can hardly be said to have either mind of their own or will of their own. But even they are dominated by the philosophy of those around them.

In this age, when orthodox doctrines are melting away, a dangerous sophism is coming into fashion that religion is entirely a matter of feeling, not of understanding; so that, when the dogmas of the Gospel are found to fail, Christians are told that faith has no need of creed, that holy emotions constitute a working religion, without any substratum of positive belief. This is in truth the very dry-rot of religion in senile decay. Every form of religion worth the name, Theocracy, Judaism, Polytheism, Christianity, Romanism, Puritanism, Islam, Unitarianism, even modern Theism—all have rested upon a definite, coherent body of doctrine.

For ages this has been the solid power of the Catholic Church; and Rome, at any rate, holds to this still. A religion of bare emotion rapidly degenerates into gross extravagances, and even foul abuses. The fanatics of the Middle Ages—Flagellants, Anabaptists, Mystics, like Antinomians, Shakers, Dukhobors, Mormons, and Revivalists — threw over rational doctrines and flung themselves upon the storm-driven sea of pious zeal. Oriental and African zealots often drifted into ghastly excesses under the influence of irrational emotions. No religion can guide or purify man's life unless it rest upon a solid bed of assured convictions. It would be a wretched apology for the latter days of the Gospel that it has no need of reason for the faith that is in it.

Efficient religion implies a corresponding philosophy of the World and of Man. Not indeed a Metaphysic of Being, a Canon of Reality and Truth, nor an Analysis of Consciousness and the like! But behind every serious and practical mode of religion there must rest, in a more or less conscious form, an intelligible view of the relation of mankind to the world of Nature and Humanity around us, some over-mastering source of Duty, some ground of Hope, some object of Reverence.

To have no ideal of Reverence, Hope, or Duty, to have no sense of relation to Things or Persons around the individual (even as an unconscious habit of mind)—this is to be without any religion. And all the yearning in the world and all possible fervour of spirit, devoid of reasonable belief, can end in nothing but constant change and spiritual confusion. The Philosophy may be nothing but an alembic wherein is distilled solid good sense. But no religion can work for good or endure for a generation unless, as its base and backbone, it hold some theory of the

World it has to live in and the Fellowmen it has to work with.

In the present book I seek to trace how I came by degrees to solve the main problems of Thought, as in a former book I sought to trace the same evolution in problems of Religion. I can promise the reader that I will trouble him with no hard words, psychological ænigmas, or double acrostics in dog-Greek. Metaphysics tend more and more to be carried on in the Unknown Tongues vouchsafed to the elect which require years and years of study to master. The modern Metaphysical Tongue is far more bewildering to the unlearned than either Esperanto or Volapük. In fact Metaphysics are mainly kept alive by the internecine war of the rival Esperantists and Volapückians of Philosophy to obtain recognition of their respective jargon. The so-called science of Metaphysics resembles an elaborate geography of an imaginary and invisible planet, described in an artificial language which no one but the geographer himself can apply. The result of these Nibelungen combats, wherein hero slays hero in some legendary world, is too often the dying sigh of Hegel—that he had but one disciple who understood him—and he misunderstood him.

I must guard my words against being misunderstood myself. I know that Metaphysics have absorbed many of the most profound minds that Humanity can boast. I recognise the imperishable value of their labours. I admit that metaphysicians, even of these latter days, exhibit extraordinary subtlety and intellectual power. I agree with them that no man can pretend to speak about philosophy at all unless he has done his best to master the vast evolution of Metaphysical Thought. I have done this; and over a long life of study I have followed this most fascinating form of the higher meditation.

I claim to have mastered the cryptic, but perhaps indispensable, language in which these subtle theories have to be cast. I claim to have understood these philosophers; I am not blind to their marvellous ingenuity, their heroic patience, their noble detachment from grosser claims. And knowing as I do the impulse in us to face these primordial problems, having given years of life to get to the bottom of these interminable answers to the eternal riddles, acknowledging, as I must, the invaluable service to mankind both of the problems and of the answers, I affirm that the mass of what is called Metaphysics is the fruitless search after insoluble puzzles: a search which it is wise to understand as an intellectual gymnastic, but whereon nothing practical, real, or true can be built.

The word *Metaphysics*, like almost every word used in this study, is so elastic that I must define the sense in which I use it here. It includes Ontology, *i.e.* the knowledge of abstract Being, of Things-in-themselves, of the Real substratum of the Universe, of the Absolute Existence which does, or may, lie behind the sum of Appearance known through the human senses to our conceptions. We say that the search, which for thousands of years has occupied some of the acutest of human brains, has led to nothing and can lead to nothing for reasons which sound Philosophy explains.

Under Metaphysics I include the *ultimate* analysis of Consciousness, the *ultimate* explanation of the relations of Mind and Matter, and the *absolute* form of either. I include also the search into First Cause, Final Causes, or the abstract meaning of Cause. In Metaphysics I include the relation of human consciousness to some imagined Universal Consciousness. I include the search into some imagined substance underlying and over-reaching Life—call it Soul or anything of the kind. Lastly, in Metaphysical im-

potence we include the abysmal problem of Freedom and Necessity. Sound Philosophy will seek to measure the enormous volume of high intelligence that has been exhausted on all these subjects, and then will pass on to practical Knowledge, as it passed on from the Philosopher's Stone or the Elixir of Life.

But sound Philosophy of course does include a rational Psychology, the Laws of Thought, the analysis of the Mental processes, Logic, and the Organum of reasoning and demonstration. It does include a system to explain the practical relations of man to the outer world, of man to his fellowmen, of the evolution of life and of society. But it refuses to be labelled under Materialism, or Monism, or Agnosticism, or Phenomenalism, Realism, Idealism, Panlogism, or Pragmatism. All of these are more or less abortive attempts to solve insoluble problems.

Sound Philosophy has tested a thousand answers. It finds them all equally idle. It does not attempt to show they are false. It admits that they are wonderful feats of building without bricks, or rather of building with mere clouds. They might all be true, if indeed there be a world wherein out of clouds we may fashion "the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, the great globe itself." Philosophic good sense watches this insubstantial pageant fade, this baseless vision dissolve, and leave not a rack behind.

To repudiate Metaphysics is not to disparage the profound achievements of abstract thinkers, ancient and modern, or the canons of a systematic First Philosophy. Plato, Aristotle, and their successors in antiquity, Bacon, Descartes, Leibnitz, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Kant, Fichte, Hegel—all profoundly modified the thought of the world, and each has given us imperishable truths. So far as Positivism is concerned, all of these men are commemorated in the *Calendar of*

Great Men, and have been duly honoured by Comte. Some of them undoubtedly are classed as Metaphysicians, and all of them have laid down as truths much that no one to-day can accept. But the rare value of much that they taught, and the necessity for understanding what they did teach, even for study of their very extravagances and errors, is what no rational student of philosophy can dispute. Their very failures are more illuminating than the accepted truisms of lesser men.

In the permanent residuum of truth left by the speculations of these great thinkers, and in the entire history of Metaphysics from Plato to Mr. Arthur Balfour, there is one profound lesson, one and the same Constant amid a thousand Variables. That truth is the *Limitation of the Human Mind*. There is no paradox in recognising the achievements of metaphysical thinkers, even in admitting the indispensable nature of their work, if we mean that the fundamental lesson of Philosophy is the knowledge of what the Mind can do, and what it cannot do. That essential condition underlies all serious thinking, and is really decisive both in Theology and in Philosophy ; for from the very dawn of religion as a system of beliefs, Theology has been inextricably associated with these ontological problems.

Theology has ever lived upon them, and still lives on them to-day. And it has needed ages of intense meditation and the waste of consummate intellects to convince us that the quest must be abandoned as hopeless, mischievous, irrational. Philosophic Thought could not become truly rational until it had solved the problem of the real laws of the thinking Mind. Religion could not face the modern world until it had freed itself from the insoluble problem of the Quest of the Holy Grail it had long so passionately sought.

The note of every original work of Metaphysics is to correct, qualify, discredit its predecessors. Its criticisms are so convincing that we wonder how the older theory ever held its ground. The critic triumphs like a "strong man armed," until "a stronger than he shall come upon him and take from him all his armour wherein he trusted." Take any Metaphysical treatise which reviews the labours of its predecessors, it matters not from which sect or school, the strength of it lies in its refutation of preceding doctrines. Take any text-book on the history of speculative philosophy, such as those of Zeller, Kuno Fischer, or Lewes, or such excellent summaries of Metaphysics as those in the old and new *Encyclopædia Britannica*, by the former Master of Balliol College, and by the present President of Corpus College, in Oxford. Turn to the latest general *History of Philosophy*, by Arch. B. D. Alexander, Glasgow, 1907. The story, even in impartial hands, is one long tale of error, failure, confusion, and uncertainty. Professor Case's essay, full of learning, judgment, acuteness, as it is, ends with a hope that we may "pass through the anarchy of modern metaphysics," and in the future discover some answer to the great questions. With philosophic courage, one after another, the Metaphysician walks up to the Eternal Sphinx, though he sees round her the whitened bones of those who have gone before him. Why hope? Why ask? Why not turn aside—to some useful and less depressing search?

It has been well said that Metaphysics is "the prolonged impotence of two thousand years." Science, like other solid achievements of the human intellect, advances from step to step, from generation to generation, ever building anew on the assured foundation of previous discoveries. It does not constantly hark

back to the earliest theorems of Copernicus, Galileo, or Harvey. But the Ontologist and the Panlogist is for starting afresh with the data of Plato, Descartes, or Spinoza ; and his greatest triumph is to prove how all his predecessors were wrong. The supreme result of two thousand years of debate is stated in a recent work to be "the potentiality of self-realisation eternally inherent in the world-principle." If we do not accept this dogma, if we even confess that we see no meaning in it, we are told that we are old-fashioned and not up to the high level of modern thought.

For my part I am so old-fashioned as to agree with Thomas Carlyle when so long ago as the year in which I was born he wrote :—

> "The disease of Metaphysics is a perennial one." "It is a chronic malady that of Metaphysics, and perpetually recurs on us." "There is no more fruitless endeavour than this same, which the Metaphysician proper toils in : to educe Conviction out of Negation. How, by merely testing and rejecting what is not, shall we ever attain knowledge of what is ? . . . Consider it well, Metaphysics is the attempt of the mind to rise above the mind ; to environ or shut in, or as we may say, *comprehend* the mind. Hopeless struggle, for the wisest, as for the foolishest ! What strength of sinew, or athletic skill, will enable the stoutest athlete to fold his own body in his arms, and, by lifting, lift up *himself* ? The Irish Saint swam the Channel, 'carrying his head in his teeth' ; but the feat has never been imitated."

I have read in my time whole libraries of metaphysical dialectic—aye, and many of the very latest, and I think I see most of what they mean, or ought to mean, and I am quite alive to their subtlety and their profundity. But I cannot see that in all these seventy-six years since Carlyle wrote, they have advanced the problem one inch. The stone of Sisyphus ever rolls back down the hill. Oxford calls out to Edinburgh ; Birmingham challenges Harvard ;

and Glasgow replies to Cambridge. And one and all appeal to Jena, Berlin, Tübingen, or Bonn. Now the cry is—"Back to Kant!": anon it is—"Hegel to the rescue!": and then there comes to the front Neo-Schopenhauerianism, or the Pan-Pessimism of Nietzsche, and the Pragmatism of Signore Papini. The cry is still they come! and one after another they recede into the distant background, like successive scenes in a modern pageant.

One of the typical characters of Metaphysics is that they are thought to have "fashions" like a lady's sleeve or a dandy's collar, and to revolve in "seasons." As in the modiste's world "every lady now wears electric blue," and not to wear electric blue is to be dowdy, so in the Metaphysical world Neo-Hegelianism becomes all the fashion, and not to care for Nietzsche is to be "Mid-Victorian" and old-fashioned. A *Privat-docent* from Jena or a Dr. Philos. of Chicago publishes an "epoch-making" book wherein the "Unbewusster Wille" of Schopenhauer, or the "Anstoss" of Fichte, and the "*Begriff*" and the "*Idee*" receive some new development—or it might be final annihilation—and forthwith the Metaphysicians of Europe will listen to nothing but the new epoch-making Metaphysic. Examiners in Academies and reviewers in periodicals, who have to be professionally up-to-date, work the new discovery into students and readers. We are all so completely under the harrow of Examiners and Critics that it requires some courage to confess a weakness for what was common sense fifty years ago. But I make bold to say that nothing marks the tyro more than silly conceits about "fashion" in philosophy.

If philosophy changes in each decade with any text-book of the day, with each professor whose lectures fill his class-room, philosophy would be as frivolous a

pursuit as the last "creation" of the Rue de la Paix. It is not so very much that has been permanently added to the solid Philosophy of Mind since Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Fichte, Hegel. All of these established something lasting in the bases of general philosophy, and all of them have since been criticised, corrected, and developed by their successors. I have never closed the windows of my own mind to later ideas—indeed I have derived some instruction and much amusement from some of the latest. But so far as the problems of pure Metaphysics are concerned, I hold that the substantial truth of the matter may be found in the works of Spencer, Mansel, Mill, Lewes, Bain, and Comte, though I am not prepared to swear belief in all that we read in any one of these. The Professors and Masters of Britain, America, Germany, and Europe in general, do not seem to me to have shaken the essential truth of the Philosophy of Experience and the Relative Synthesis of all human knowledge; and I am not to be frightened by the nickname of Mid-Victorian, or of old-fashioned, materialist, and the like, from saying again what I have held all my life—and hold still as firmly as ever.

It would not be of very grave consequence if addiction to Metaphysics stood by itself, and did not affect religion, philosophy, morality, and life. Those who pursue these studies are not so many, apart from the demands of examinations, lectures, and reviews of books. But Metaphysics do not stand alone. They tend to take the place of Revelation, which has been pronounced to be "old-fashioned." Long years ago Carlyle wrote, "The Christian Religion of late ages has been continually dissipating itself into Metaphysics; and threatens now to disappear, as some rivers do, in deserts and barren sand."

Since this terrible indictment of orthodox creeds was written, the process of substituting the fashionable Metaphysic of the day for Revelation, now superseded by modern criticism, has gone on with increasing speed. The Scriptural dogmas whereon the entire scheme of religious faith has so long been thought to rest are quietly surrendered by men who clutch at the nebulous hypotheses of some "Higher Consciousness," or the "Absolute as the highest expression of Reality," whatever that may mean. As any one can put upon either of these phrases, and on many similar phrases, any meaning that he likes, they serve as proofs of "God," "Soul," "Immortality," about which, in the old and real sense, doubts begin to be harboured.

The "Higher Consciousness," "the Absolute," "Intuitional Truth," since they transcend logic and proof, can be made to warrant anything that transcends positive knowledge. The famous maxim of Novalis —"Philosophy [meaning Metaphysics] can bake no bread; but it can procure for us God, Freedom, and Immortality"—has proved a raft of comfort to the theologian in the shipwreck of orthodox dogma. He throws overboard Scripture, Creeds, Church, and Catechism, and rides out the gale on Greek or German ambiguities. Metaphysics do not enable us to realise either God, Freedom, or Immortality; but they wrap them all in a transcendental haze, and enable us to fancy we do know them. The sober truth would be this. Metaphysics can bake no bread and procure no food, physical or spiritual; but they enable us to talk about God, Freedom, and Immortality when we have abandoned the ancient grounds on which we used to believe in them.

It has become, therefore, of prime importance to test the legitimacy of Metaphysical pronouncements, and to have clear convictions about the cardinal problems

they pretend to solve. These pronouncements now take the place of Holy Writ and the truths committed to the Church of Christ. Bible and Church being found "old-fashioned," religion is being underpinned on transcendental sublimities which, though as old as the Bible, are now furbished up with a new gloss.

These are thought to obtain sovereign authority from the support given them by a few specialists in Physical Science. Certain well-known physicists have given more or less encouragement to spiritualist speculations and Latter-Day Theosophies. The illustrious Michael Faraday was a Sandemanian; the living rival of Charles Darwin dabbles in Psychical Research and has published some amazing revelations about other worlds. There is nothing to prevent a chemist or an electrician from being a Musulman or a Buddhist in religious belief. But his views on general philosophy have no higher value than those of any botanist, or geometer, or microscopist.

The public has a somewhat credulous way of looking on deserved reputations in physical research as equivalent to philosophic competence. It is really very often a disadvantage when a specialist is called on to face the ultimate generalisations of thought. In these days of minute subdivision of labour, a man like Dr. Edison spends his life in a series of intricate experiments which almost close his mind from touching on psychological problems or the canons of demonstration. Wonderful discoveries in the world of physics entitle such an one to be called a "man of science," but they certainly do not constitute him a philosopher. And his opinions on the "Higher Consciousness" or "the immanence of God in Nature" have no greater authority that that of any intelligent man who has found no time to study the history of philosophy from Plato to Spencer.

It is the long and complex story of the evolution of metaphysical speculation which is really decisive on these problems. Almost any of the thousand solutions of "Absolute Being," "Ultimate Consciousness," and the "World-Principle" have a fascinating plausibility when stated with all the specious lucidity of the born metaphysician. It is only when the trained student of philosophy, after long years of reading and meditation, comes to realise the eternal failure of every attempt, the weary round in a closed circle from which the victim can find no issue, and is perpetually brought back to the same familiar spot from which he started, it is only by having traversed all the gloomy circles of the Inferno of Ontology, and so through the terraces of the Purgatory of Intuition, that the mind finally issues in the Heaven of clear vision. The only safe way of reaching philosophic clearness is to have paced through the secular stages in the history of general philosophy. The facile guesses of a specialist in Physics can do nothing but "make that darker which was dark enough before."

I am speaking of general tendencies and not of particular persons, schools of thought, or phases of religion. It is notorious that in the English-speaking world, as in Europe generally, there are various schemes of faith which treat the orthodox dogmas of all the Churches as untrustworthy or obsolete, and yet do find a ground in sonorous Metaphysics for as much of Christianity or Theism as they think worth preserving. They cherish consolation in all sorts of spiritualist hypotheses which may mean anything and are incapable of meeting positive refutation. Pantheism, Panlogism, *i.e.* the Infinite and Omnipresent Mind, the Universal Mind, the Impersonal Consciousness, and the like may be stretched to explain anything and to warrant any proposition. That an electrician or an algebraist has toyed with Spooks and Subliminal Con-

sciousness is a very poor title to install him as a Father of the New Theosophy. This novel Patristic Thaumaturgy is as purely imaginary as that of Origen or Chrysostom. Their Materialist or Idealist Book of Genesis is a mere fairy tale, with no more science in it than the Pentateuch. It would be a sad end for the Catholic Scheme of Salvation which has done so much for civilisation and morality if it has to rest on the Revelation of Psychical Research.

It may be convenient if I set down my own reminiscences of how my mind grew under these studies. At school we were familiar enough with some of the shorter Dialogues of Plato, and had much to say about Socrates' last words as he drank the hemlock in prison. But it was at Oxford that I began any serious study of Greek philosophy. There the ordinary courses involved a very close and minute reading of the principal books of Plato and of Aristotle, and a general understanding of the development of Greek philosophy from Thales to Proclus—those ten centuries before and after Christ wherein the history of speculation curiously follows the course of modern Metaphysics from Descartes to Hegel and Jowett.

The essence of the training at Oxford in my time was the exact analysis of the treatises of Plato and Aristotle, sentence by sentence, in the original Greek. I believe this to be the most valuable scheme of philosophical study which can be followed. I would hesitate to lay down any opinion on the use of Greek in general education; but I make bold to say that the hammering out every shred of meaning in the great standard works of Aristotle is the most illuminating mode in which the human mind can be trained. To have absorbed the cardinal conceptions of the profoundest intellect ever given to man is to be securely launched on the road to living Truth.

Like other students I was, of course, first interested in Plato, the fascination of whose language reaches the highest point ever attained in any prose. It is always a struggle with one who loves fine literature to suffer the mellifluous imagination of the Academy to be displaced by the iron-bound good sense of the *Ethics* and the *Politics*. Equally, of course, I took the Metaphysical fever in the usual youthful form, just as when I thought I understood the *Calculus*, I devoted some time to the quadrature of the Circle. My tutor in Logic was a fervent believer in the high-and-dry Oxford Dialectic, and I wrote under his guidance reams of mysterious disquisitions about "Being," "Consciousness," "Noumena," "Categories," and "The Absolute." There is a strange fascination in the pursuit, as to some minds there is in Chess Problems and the Chances of *Rouge et Noir*. But before I quitted Oxford I was a confirmed Aristotelian; and I had learned to apply to the Metaphysics of Plato, and the Platonists old and new, the conclusive judgment of Aristotle in his second book of *Politics*—"All these disquisitions have brilliancy, originality, grace, and profound subtlety—but they settle nothing in the end."

My understanding of the great Greek philosophers was promoted by a diligent study of George Grote, Mill, George H. Lewes, the early essays of Spencer, and Littré's analysis of Comte's Positivism. I read some Hegel, and I knew German Metaphysics at second hand. The modern Metaphysicians I read, and was often tempted by the subtleties of J. H. Newman, F. D. Maurice, Mansel, James Martineau, Jowett, and our modern Hegelians. But all these seemed to me in the end to discredit one another. Each would start *de novo*, as though nothing was really settled as a basis. But I found that the thinkers of

the schools of experience and of the relativity of all human knowledge held common ground and promised an intelligible method of advance.

The ingenious term "Agnostic" was not then invented, and the idea it connotes was not then applied to religious philosophy. But it described Metaphysics —meaning by that Ontology, or the Essence of the Universe, Absolute Being, the Universal Consciousness, the Soul as an imperishable substance, and the unconditioned Freedom of the Will—all this it was finally taught me to regard as Unproven and Unprovable. By the time I was thirty I had become (metaphysically speaking) a pure and confirmed Agnostic.

The whole of my philosophical reading was practically guided by George H. Lewes' Biographical *History of Philosophy*, which I have constantly used in all its successive forms. In its definitive edition of 1880 (two vols. 8vo), I believe it to be on the whole the most illuminating account of the progress of philosophy from Thales to Comte that exists in our language. I am quite aware of Lewes' shortcomings both of mind and of character, and I know all the shallow contempt which pedantic specialists pour on his works. But he has the immense advantage over them—an advantage which is partly shared with Mill and Spencer —that he exhibits the very rare example of a student of Metaphysics who has a competent knowledge of more than one of the physical sciences, and thus he comes to problems of Philosophy with a mind trained to a sense of scientific demonstration. In addition to his biological and psychological studies, Lewes had a wide grasp of general literature and at least the rudiments of Sociology. There was a prejudice against him owing to his singularly lucid style and his brilliant form. Metaphysicians incline to regard everything

lucid to be shallow and frivolous. His literary instincts and his knowledge of men saved him from the futilities of the adepts of Metaphysics who spin endless cocoons of attenuated abstractions which settle nothing, even if they could be reduced to sense.

In saying this I do not mean to pledge myself to all of Lewes' works, nor to the whole even of his famous *History*. He did not at all assimilate Comte's system, and he very imperfectly represented it. I am quite aware that in defending such work as that of Lewes I am open to the charge of being Mid-Victorian and "obsolete," as if everything written thirty years ago is necessarily out of date and worthless. Books are not like battleships, to become "obsolete" directly a foreign Professor has started a new hare to be hunted. The raw girls who do "original research" in the Records are told that Gibbon is "old-fashioned," and the Tariff Reformers on platforms tell working men that Adam Smith was an old humbug. But the whole world has not yet become the prey of journalists or crammers. And we want some better authority than theirs that the metaphysicians of this generation, with all their batteries of patent neologisms—in barbarous Greek, such as they invent for trade advertisements—have finally solved the abysmal problems left open by Kant and Hegel.

The fifteen years of study I gave to the five principal works of Comte, ending in our Translation of the four volumes of the *Positive Polity*, 1875-6-7, confirmed me as a full adherent of the Positive Philosophy. Without pretending to be convinced by everything laid down by Comte, even in abstract Philosophy, the main ideas on which these rest satisfy me as proven for all practical purposes of human life. I limit myself to this condition because the key of the system is just this—that no absolute certainty, no

abstract essence of any kind is possible, or could be of any human utility even if it were possible. At the same time these main ideas of Comte are almost wholly unknown *in the original texts* even to students of Philosophy and serious opponents. And they have been so absurdly travestied by theological polemists and by literary critics that it may be useful to set out some of the real Positivist reasons for passing by the assumed science of Metaphysics as an idle indulgence in dialectical gymnastic.

The Positive Philosophy refuses to be classed under any of the current titles by which other schools seek to distinguish themselves or are labelled by opponents. It vehemently repudiates the name of Materialism, inasmuch as it rejects all physical explanations of human nature as degrading, and insists on referring the spiritual nature of Man's soul to spiritual ideas. For similar reasons it repudiates the name of Sensationalism, or Realism, or Experientialism, for it insists on the dominant power of strictly psychical forces. Nor, on the other hand, can it be classed under Idealism, inasmuch as it will not admit any attempt to identify Thought and Reality, or to regard Mind as the source of the Real.

It is certainly not to be grouped under any form of Monism, inasmuch as dual, or plural, elements contribute to every truth or conception of sound philosophy. Positivism condemns all attempts at any Unification of Science, all theories referring conceptions to any One principle whatever, all schemes that would reduce the Sciences to one master-science, or would derive our World—much less the Universe—from any one source, whether material or ideal. The dominant system of classification preferred by Comte is Dual; he often resorts to the trinal, though far from accepting Hegel's eternal triads; in fact Comte

resorts often to the numbers five, seven, and even thirteen :—perhaps he is inclined to a fanciful use of numbers. But he never inclines to any type of Monism.

The erroneous idea that Positivism rests upon any single principle or idea was encouraged by Mill's misunderstanding Comte's use of the word *Unité*. With Comte, right or wrong, *unité* means synthesis—not *unity*—and the synthesis is necessarily dual, or more often trinal, in idea. With Comte even Humanity did not stand alone as a single object of reverence, as a solitary source of power. In his last work, of 1856, he developed his theory of a Trinity of dominant objects of human regard—Humanity, Earth, and Space. This conception, right or wrong, has been almost wholly ignored in England, and seems to be unknown to the critics of Positivism. But it is conclusive against the idea that Comte's whole mind was obsessed by a passion for Unity. For all purposes, both theoretical and practical, Positivism as a system is much rather Trinitarian than it is Unitarian in any sense. As Dr. Bridges wrote in his masterly exposure of Mill's mistaken criticism—"The repudiation of Unity, in the objective sense of the word, is *the essence of Comte's Philosophy*." *L'unité* with Comte always means *harmony, co-ordination*, as Littré in his Dictionary explains it—*un caractère d'ensemble*,—and he quotes its use, in that sense of consistency, by Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Marmontel. Mill's error was a simple case of mistranslation.

A similar misunderstanding led to the current assertion that Comte repudiated Psychology ; and the mistake of Mill, who read the *Politique Positive* without due care, was eagerly seized upon by Huxley, who did not read the book at all. What Comte repudiated was not Psychology, or the laws of Mind, but

Psychologie—by which he meant the introspective method of observing one's own *intuitions* as taught about 1830 by Victor Cousin and his school. This was a totally different thing from true Psychology, and was rejected alike by Mill, Spencer, Lewes, Huxley, and all modern psychologists. When Comte was composing his treatises about seventy years ago, the term "Psychologie" in France meant the fashionable Idealist Theosophy. It was this which Comte repudiated—not the Laws of Mind in the true sense.

It may be that Comte too rigidly excluded the rational use of self-introspection—of which indeed he made frequent employment by way of memory in his own meditations. He perhaps overrated the difficulty of scientific Introspection, so well stated by Spencer as this—"The mere act of observing the current phenomena of consciousness introduces a new element into consciousness which tends to disturb the processes going on. The observations should be oblique rather than direct; should be made not during but immediately after the appropriate experiences." This is really to repudiate any real, *i.e.* direct, use of Introspection, as also did Hume; and so far both Hume and Spencer agree with Comte. For my own part, after careful study of Spencer's *Psychology* (1870) and of G. H. Lewes' *Psychology* (1879), I am inclined to accept their general analyses as sufficient, and in any case these seem to me to be only modifications of Comte's position, that Psychology as a study must be treated with dependence on Biology and in succession to Biology, but really developed by Sociology.

What Comte did was to repudiate Intuitional Introspection as a treacherous instrument, and to refuse to make Psychology a separate and independent science. In declining to treat Psychology as a separate science he followed his general principle—one most

true as well as illuminating—that a branch of study which combined resort to different sciences should be regarded as a concrete and mixed, not an abstract and simple form of research. Geology, resorting to Astronomy, Physics, Biology alternately, is not a pure science. Economics, for the same reason, resorting as it does to biology, geography, mechanics, sociology, history, politics, and morals, is not a distinct science, but a branch of Sociology. Comte altogether only admitted seven distinct sciences, from Mathematics to Morals, as being distinct in method and data. Other branches of science were to be classified under some of these seven. But all this is a question of classification, of order of study, not of substantial philosophy.

It is now a stale jest to tell the world that Positivism repudiates the study of Psychology. If by Psychology is meant the study of the laws of Mind, the analysis, by every available means, of the moral and intellectual functions of man, Positivism is pre-eminently concerned with Psychology. The trite sneer arose from misunderstanding a French word, and then misunderstanding a very plain and highly scientific doctrine of philosophy. For forty years past Dr. Bridges, Professor Beesly, Professor Ingram, myself, and other Positivists at home and abroad, have insisted that "all the facts of the human will, of Consciousness, of the Imagination, of Conscience—all the laws of man's moral and intellectual nature, ascertainable by human observation and meditation, are in a special degree the subject matter of Positivism." Although Comte did not write any special treatise on Psychology, he treated it continually through all his principal works in its due place; and, in fact, he wrote a great deal more about the laws of Mind than some of his critics. It would be as reasonable to tell us that Adam Smith repudiated Political Economy on the ground that the *Wealth of*

Nations interfuses Plutonomy with much that is Politics, History, Social Statics, and Dynamics.

Another charge, arising out of a verbal misconception, is that Positivism is a "Phenomenal" system, resting on mere "sensationalism," and consequently a form of materialism. In modern philosophy since the time of Hume, the term *phenomenon* describes anything of which the mind can take cognisance, which we perceive, meditate on, are conscious of, or reason on. In common with all modern philosophers, Positivists often employ this generic term to mean the data of observation and meditation, whether presented to the senses or recalled by association, and forming the material of thought. By a device familiar to the pulpit and to the platform, but unworthy of philosophy, an eminent Metaphysician has sought to label Positivism as mere materialism. Years ago we replied that Positivism embraces as its subject matter "all things of which any thinking and sentient being is conscious. All facts of consciousness, all mental impressions and ideas of any kind are just as much its subject matter as they are that of any theologian and metaphysician." "It excludes nothing cognisable or even recognisable by the brain; it does not shut out any hypothesis." "All things thinkable are the common subject of the Positivist and the Metaphysician. The difference lies in their different canons of proof and methods of reasoning."

A great deal is said by modern Metaphysicians who insist on apportioning the intellectual element, not only in the use made by the brain of the observations presented to the senses, but also in the act of sensation itself. They show that there can be no perception of anything external without some kind of mental element concurring in it. This was emphatically the view of Comte, who insists that the very smallest sensation

is ineffective without combination with Mind. And he formulates the dual nature of every external impression in his reiterated dogma that "all laws of nature are constructed by our minds out of materials drawn from without." All our conceptions about Nature, he adds, are "the product of a collaboration between the World without and the Mind within us." And this applied to all our ideas of every kind. They all result from mental powers dealing with external sensations.

But sound Philosophy makes no attempt exactly to apportion the relative amount of objective and subjective elements, nor does it expect ever to arrive at any absolute analysis of either element. Comte adopts "the maxim of Aristotle as corrected by Leibnitz"—*nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu, nisi ipse intellectus.* But he repudiates as idle all attempts to apportion the subjective and the objective elements in the combined process. Organic sensation of some kind, in some degree, cannot be eliminated from any conception whatever. But this is a very different thing from the materialism of Condillac that "the brain secretes thought," and similar theories which would make Thought a bare process of the physical organs. And it is a different thing from the Neo-Hegelianism which would make the objective Universe coincide with subjective Mind.

To sum up the cardinal principles of the Philosophy which this volume is intended to illustrate, they are these. The name *Positive* in the language of Comte means *real, useful, certain, precise, organic, relative,* and *sympathetic.* In other words, it is based on demonstrable knowledge of certain truths and works under right feeling to guide active life. It combines Intellect, Affection, and Energy, having as its constant end the improvement of man's life as a social being on this earth.

It consequently belongs to the philosophy based on Experience, Association, Observation of facts physical, intellectual, and moral, which since the time of Hume has filled so large and fertile a ground in modern Thought. It starts with fundamental axioms such as the universal reign of Law, the Relativity of knowledge, and the conception of Evolution, which are the groundwork of all that is most dominant in modern Science. All of this is common ground with Positivism and so many schools of European philosophy.

1. The fundamental dogma of science and of philosophy is this: "All facts of observation whatever, organic or inorganic, physical or moral, individual or social, are always subject to strictly invariable law." This doctrine is so familiar to all who follow the trend of modern thought, and it is so widely accepted both in theory and in practice, that it need not be further discussed.

2. All knowledge is based upon observation of facts, whether derived directly through the senses or obtained by reflection from antecedent impressions. But, inasmuch as these are all derived from the compound human organism, all man's knowledge must be limited more or less by the compound faculties of the organism and by the conditions under which they work. In ultimate resort, *sensation*, though not the direct or sole source of knowledge and of ideas, cannot be eliminated as contributing to everything we know or conceive.

3. It follows from the preceding laws, that all our knowledge must be *relative*, not absolute. That is to say, it cannot transcend the human faculties, physical, moral, and mental, *plus* the physical and social conditions wherein these faculties operate. The *Relativity* of knowledge, indeed of truth, morality, and life in general, has been carried further by Comte than by

Hamilton, Mansel, Mill, Spencer, or any other philosopher. Comte's epigram is this—*Everything is relative—not absolute, unless it be this axiom itself.*

3. All observation, whether in the material, moral, or social worlds, manifests a continuous development which, in modern phraseology, is known as *Evolution.* Positive philosophy adopts in the fullest sense the doctrine of Evolution in all things terrestrial, whilst declining to accept monistic hypotheses about a Cosmogony of the Universe, and premature hypotheses about vital and animal transformism. But it applies the law of continuous Evolution, on demonstrable evidence, to all known phenomena of the physical world, to human nature, and above all to social, moral, intellectual, and religious Progress. Comte's famous apothegm is *Progress is the development of Order.* By this is meant—all true and effective advance and improvement is the resultant of elements previously co-ordinated and capable of growth. Everything we know in Nature, in Man, and in Society, is *evolved* out of antecedent elements—but is neither transformed into new elements—nor does it ever arise spontaneously, unprepared, or *de novo.*

4. The laws of the human Mind cannot be framed by any process of Self-introspection and must be grounded on a study of the nervous organism generally. Rational Psychology is so far dependent on Biology, and cannot be completed without the study of the Social Organism. All attempts of Metaphysicians to form an independent science of Psychology by "interrogating the consciousness" of the individual thinker are futile and misleading.

5. The evolution of human Society in all its aspects is as much due to intelligible law as is that of the living and material world. The study of the Social Organism accordingly forms a true science which is

known to European thinkers as *Sociology*—the admirable name invented by Comte in 1839. This science from its infinitely greater complexity is far less capable of exact determination than any of the physical sciences of Nature and Life. But its elementary conditions and logic are already sufficiently ascertained. Comte never claimed more than to have *instituted* this science, without having *constituted* it as a whole. And no European thinker of importance treats it as having attained more than a rudimentary plan.

These five propositions are, in a general sense, common ground with all the schools of the philosophy of Experience and are familiar to the students of Mill, Buckle, Bain, Spencer, and Lewes, and many modern philosophers at home and abroad.

I now pass to summarise the cardinal points in the Positive Philosophy which are specially due to Auguste Comte and which this volume is intended to illustrate.

6. The entire scheme of *Sociology*—considered not as a possible science, or as positing a few general doctrines, but as the crown and development of all the natural Sciences that precede it; distinctly and definitively *instituted* in ground plan and dominant method, but far from *constituted* in completeness or in detail. This new science, now accepted by a second and third generation of European thinkers, is described in the four volumes of the *Positive Polity*, Paris, 1851-1854; English translation, London, 1875-1877. It forms the basis of the Science of *Morals*, and of the Religion of Humanity.

7. The law of the Three States of intellectual progress, *i.e.* that all our knowledge begins by supposing *fictitious* explanations, then refers facts to hypothetical "*principles*," and ultimately rests in scientific or *positive* proofs. This law has been enthusiastically approved by Mill, Littré, Lewes, and many

other thinkers. It is fully discussed in the twelfth Essay in this volume.

8. The Classification of the seven Sciences in the order of their increasing complexity of matter and decreasing generality of range. They are Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Sociology, Morals. All admit numerous subdivisions; but no one of these seven can be included in, or explained by, any other. Each science, in the order named, leads up to and forms the indispensable basis of the next above it. All of these are regarded as *abstract*—not as *concrete*—schemes of knowledge. That is to say, these are Sciences stating the laws of independent orders of phenomena, whilst concrete sciences treat of things in practical application and in variable combinations. A complete classification of *concrete* science from its complexity would be an impracticable undertaking. Comte's Classification of the Sciences has been vigorously defended by Mill, Littré, Lewes, Lévy-Bruhl, Dr. Ingram, and others.

9. The *Philosophy of History*—a summary sketch of human civilisation from prehistoric times to the nineteenth century. This is contained in the third volume of the *Politique Positive*, 1853, pp. 625. It has had no rival but that of Hegel, which few unless Hegelians can accept as a substantive explanation of the historic record. Comte's view of general history has been in general terms adopted and warmly defended by Mill.

10. *Psychology*, considered not as an abstract science capable of being systematised independently as the Laws of Thought, but as closely bound up with the Physical science of Biology, both animal and human, and as being largely dependent on Sociology, and explicable only by social analogies and evidence. There is no separable science of the human Mind, for

intellectual processes of all kinds are inextricably mingled with emotions and active impulses, and are to be duly studied by the aid of a multitude of biologic facts and also by the data of social science.

11. Philosophy, in accordance with the immortal dictum of Aristotle, is no bare scheme of intellectual doctrines, but is legitimate only as it aims at guiding and modifying human life. Man is not a thinking machine, but a compound organism wherein intelligence, feeling, and activity are continually working in concert, and wherein these elements can only be distinguished apart, temporarily and in the abstract. Philosophy cannot be detached from morality, society, and religion. All of these imply philosophy and ultimately rest upon it.

12. Religion is the definitive harmony of intelligence, feeling, and activity co-operating to an ideal perfection of human well-being, and satisfying all three sides of human nature by a Creed, a Discipline, and a Cult—which do not conflict with each other, but stimulate and modify each other.

13. As man's intellect can find rest only in realities, not in dreams, as man's feelings crave for a larger humanity, not an anti-human exclusiveness, as man's activity imperiously thirsts for a development of his earthly life—the harmony of intellect, feeling, and activity can be realised only by devotion to the practically perpetual, and relatively great being—the organism of Humanity.

I

ON THE SUPPOSED NECESSITY OF CERTAIN METAPHYSICAL PROBLEMS

The questions which the mind sets itself to solve are determined from time to time by the mental habit, as a whole; and there are no special questions which the mind is naturally forced to consider, or which it is unable to ignore.

In the awful portal of Metaphysics, *vestibulum ante ipsum*, it is said there sits, and will for ever sit, an immovable Sphinx, eternally propounding to all who would enter a problem, which all must attempt to solve, but which none will ever untie. The answers ever vary; yet all are wrong. Those who, weary of a monotonous ænigma, would pass on without attempting a solution, are warned that the answer is one which, if never found, is bound to be for ever sought. They are told that there is a special question—perhaps three or four questions—which the mind, of its own nature, is compelled to ask, however little expectation it may have of obtaining an answer.

There are, it is said, certain ultimate problems in metaphysics, such as these—whence the origin of things, of what sort is the personal government of the

universe, the incorporeal personality of the human animal, its prolongation after death; in other words, the creation, God, the soul, and a future state—these and some similar problems, though ever shifting their solutions, are eternally destined to be asked. They have been discussed, it is true, by various portions of the human race during long epochs of history, not only without anything like agreement, but with the most amazing discord. A portion of the population of Europe is still discussing them; and yet perhaps there has never been a period in which the chaos of thought on this subject has been more profound. To those who apply the tests which suffice for daily life there is not one fixed point, not a scrap of common ground amongst the disputants. The followers of various sects, and they can scarcely be counted, all differ among themselves; and even the authorities in each sect differ among each other.

Within the Church of England, for instance, conceptions of God as different as those of Dean Mansel and Mr. Jowett carry on internecine war. The sects of metaphysical philosophers are as little agreed in their answers. And Hegelians and Hamiltonians reproduce the same metaphysico-theological phantasmagoria. There is this great difference between this branch of mental activity and that immediately concerned with material, social, or logical progress. The discussion never advances. Nothing is ever established as a fixed foundation, on which all can proceed to build. Every thinker starts *de novo*. He does not even accept another man's bricks, wherewith to make his walls: nor does he raise them on another's ground-plan. He must make his own bricks, with or without straw, precisely as he chooses; design his edifice according to his personal fancy; and for a site he has the wide world to choose from, and even

the air. It seems in truth to be the note of a really superior metaphysician in this field that he should begin with a *tabula rasa*, and then evolve his definitions, his postulates, his axioms, his method, his language, for himself; and perhaps after many centuries, there never was a moment when conscientious theologians and metaphysicians were so little inclined as they are now to accept these essential instruments from one another, or from anybody.

Nothing can be in more direct contrast with the course taken by Science. The knowledge slowly won by man over nature and her laws is progressive. The torch is really carried on from age to age, lighting as it passes. In astronomy, physics, physiology, inquiries lead to solutions which are universally accepted; masses of subjects pass from the sphere of problems and enter into that of laws; and in turn they form the basis from which fresh problems are sought and solved. Problems which yield no fruit are abandoned. The trained mind acquires a sense of tact which directs it to the subjects which are most likely to yield fruit, and of which its successors are most likely to be in need. There is no single instance of this filiation of truth in the whole theological department of metaphysics. There is here no torch handed on. We see only rockets which whiz into the sky, crackle, and go out, and all is as dark as it was before, till a fresh rocket lights the gloom, dazzles us,—and drops.

The direct study of man's moral, social, and intellectual nature, it is true, can show far less of solid and common ground, and far less transmission of results, than does physical science. But that is, unfortunately, only because it is less scientific in its method. Still at the worst, there are large groups of discoveries in mental, moral, and social science, which are for every practical purpose common axioms, data

for fresh inquiry. For an example, let us take Mr. Mill's two works on Logic and Political Economy. A good many of his doctrines, both in mental and social science, may fairly be said to be *adhuc sub judice*, but a very large proportion of them are collected from previous thinkers, and are in ordinary use as common ground. The same thing is true of the work of Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Harnack, and Renan.

There are, again, groups of notions as to the general course of human development and historical progress which are also the common material of social science in every school. The progress here is far less accentuated than it is in physical science; but there is real progress. There is a transmission of results, and large common data. No one, for instance, would be listened to who said that the human race as a whole was standing still, or was going back; whereas, on the subject of Creation, for instance, any conceivable proposition would find hearers; and none would surprise any one. There is not a single axiom on the topic which can guide, or need trammel any one. The assertor is as free as air; and so of course is his successor.

Whence this striking difference between theologico-metaphysical and positive scientific labours? In science, if a problem, after centuries of study, yields no solid ground, it is silently abandoned as an unprofitable mine. No scientific inquirer dreams of starting *de novo*, and where he gets no answers, he ceases to put questions. There are, however, certain religious or metaphysical problems where the inquirer contentedly accepts the part of Sisyphus. He toils with his stone up the hill, heaving it over every obstacle, and perfectly conscious that it is destined to roll down when it reaches the top. His greatness appears to consist in

the philosophy with which he accepts the inevitable result of his labours. He works alone, accepting no help, transmitting no result. He has fellow-toilers, but no fellow-workmen. Those around him are Tantali and Danaids, grasping the impalpable, shaping the formless. *Quisque suos patimur manes.* But we do not work in concert. This is not what we call thought and action in the living world, where labour is really associated, and appears to be attended with results.

There is, however, a thought which excludes despair, even in those inquirers who are most conscious of failure of permanent success. We are continually assured that these ultimate mysteries differ in kind from the problems of science. In science, it seems that we are under no necessity to pursue any inquiry in which we reach no hard bottom. If we see no reasonable prospect of an answer, we are not forced to put the question. We are not in science set to certain problems as to a Rhadamanthine task. Whereas, they say the human mind is so constituted that, in metaphysics, whether it finds a solution or not, it is still impelled to busy itself with these particular problems.

We often hear that it is a part of our mental system; that we are not free agents in the matter. We are said to have implanted in us an everlasting query, or a half-dozen of everlasting queries; we experience a sublime curiosity on two or three topics—a divine longing to solve a group of sacred riddles. This hope springs, they say, immortal in the human breast, insatiable, if unsatisfied. These alone of all others, they say, cry aloud in every human being that has not a diseased mind or a depraved nature. It may be, they argue, that no particular answer brings satisfaction, but can you exclude the craving to ask? It

is often summed up in the words of the vulgarest of all the strong minds—"It is all very well, gentlemen, but who made all those stars?" Thus failure teaches no lesson, and breeds no despair. For if each solution is destroyed, the problem is indestructible. Indeed, a great philosopher has tried to make the Unknowable the basis or perhaps the apex of Philosophy, the object and sustenance of the religious sentiment. All altars are to be destroyed save that which is raised "to the Unknown God."

The result is that scientific thought and social activity are alike clogged by a vague, debilitating dream. When it is put into distinct words, which it seldom is, it amounts to this. The mind of man, they say, innately craves an answer to these questions —Of what sort is the Being that has created this universe?—of what kind shall be the future of the Soul after death? These, they urge, are the paramount questions which men never can ignore. No philosophy, no system of life, is worthy an hour's attention, unless it start with these the primary perennial problems of the human soul.

To this I venture to oppose the following propositions:—

1. These questions are not innate in the mind. On the contrary, they are artificial, and result from peculiar habits of mind; and, in fact, they cannot be traced in some of the most remarkable groups and races of mankind, nor in some of the most powerful minds.

2. These particular questions do not differ in kind from many theologico-metaphysical questions which have been often agitated.

3. Many of such long-forgotten questions have appeared to various groups of mankind of transcendent importance, and have occupied in their minds a larger space than do any such problems in ours.

4. But all of these questions, once of primary interest, have disappeared silently under a changed current in general philosophy.

5. The mind, however, will continue to be agitated by a succession of useless problems, even after they have been recognised as insoluble, until its activity is permanently inspired by an overpowering social emotion.

In spite, therefore, of the hypotheses of so many metaphysicians, and the dogmas of so many theologians, I am fain to believe that these particular questions are not indigenous in the human mind. I make bold to say that the natural mind is as well able to ignore them as it is to ignore other questions. I certainly deny that any particular answer is innate, and I doubt if the questions are more innate than the answers. I incline to think the human mind was not sent into the world with an irrepressible mania for putting half-a-dozen particular riddles, of asking a set of questions which never get answered. I believe the mind to have an immense curiosity after an infinite number of problems. What these problems may be from time to time depends upon the natural and acquired bent of the mind. I can conceive no radical difference in kind between the problems mentioned in the outset and many other problems which could be suggested. The particular questions which the mind puts for solution are not instinctive, but artificial. That is to say, they depend on the general diathesis of each mind, which depends partly on its special quality and cultivation, and partly on the social influences around it. The paramount importance of any given problem is determined for each mind by the mental habit as a whole. Where we see a particular problem occupying this paramount importance in any given age or race, it only proves the prevalence of some particular habit

of mind. What I deny is that the history of the human race shows any particular problem uniformly holding the dominant place. And certainly I would say this of the particular problems now under discussion. I can draw no solid distinction between them and many other objects of mental curiosity.

For instance, the origin of the Universe or the creation of this Planet are still prominent subjects of speculation. I should say this is a consequence of the prevalence of certain forms of thought, the development of which it is easy to trace. I cannot see that either problem is (philosophically) a more pressing one than the problem as to the nature of Protoplasm, or if there be any Protoplasm. If meditation could supply us, *à priori*, with a sufficient knowledge of the nature and laws of Protoplasm—that is to say, of the ultimate elements of all life—it would be impossible to overestimate the importance of such knowledge. It would certainly be associated with every thought, act, and feeling of our natures. It would throw a new light over every one of these spheres of life. If the problem is not to all persons one of absorbing interest, it is, perhaps, because the few who expect any sort of solution do not look for it to meditation *à priori*. But I can easily conceive a world—nor need we travel for it as far as Laputa—in which the one primary problem, the one question that never could be shut out, was the existence of a protoplasm, and its primary laws.

Let me a little protect my position by a few disclaimers. I would not say one word in disparagement of the philosophical quality of Curiosity. I am rather defending it against those who would narrow it to a few eternal problems, and stale its infinite variety by condemning it to so monotonous a task. I do not deny that Curiosity is a most excellent

thing; I say its forms are not four or five, but myriads. Then, again, there are many who on philosophical, or on religious grounds, are satisfied that the problems are solved. To those who find these solutions complete, final, and permanent, I have, of course, not a word to say. I have not now a word to say as to any supposed solution; nor do I say that the problems are insoluble in the abstract. Nor do I say one word against the unsuspected benefits which may ensue in the mere course of seeking. Those who feel they have found, those who desire to seek, are all my good friends. All that I desire is to claim the liberty not to feel forced to ask questions of which we have hitherto heard no solution; and to be able to do this without the reproach of violating our inmost natures, or committing any other of the darker metaphysical sins.

I have said that history does not show the human race to be eternally occupied with these particular problems, or indeed any particular problem or group of problems. There have been vast ages and mighty races, which they have troubled as little as they trouble horses or dogs. It is usual entirely to put aside the testimony of all the uncivilised or semi-civilised races. And thus countless myriads of intelligent human beings, as completely our ancestors, as entirely links in the chain of progress as our own parents, are abstracted from the inquiry into the innate qualities of the human mind. Certain half-barbarous tribes have certainly had ideas which may fairly stand as the germs of those now in review. But very large groups of these tribes cannot be said, without violent straining, to have had on such subjects as the creation of the universe, or the soul of man, a spark either of opinion or of curiosity. They are as innocent of any answer to the problem as of the problem itself.

I will not enter on the discussion whether or not they have religious ideas. I should be the last to deny they had. I will not say that they have no conceptions of Divine Beings, or spiritual relations. I limit myself strictly to the statement that their religious ideas and their spiritual problems are certainly not ours, or anything remotely like ours. They do not concern themselves with the creation of the universe or the distinction of soul and body, for the excellent reason that their minds are unable to grasp these ideas. They often show a very high intelligence, and are in practical things progressive enough. But in things spiritual, the problems which profoundly impress them, are how to cheat some kind of devil, or how to avoid some form of taboo. Taboo, in fact, weighs upon their souls precisely as the Judgment weighs upon some Christians. It is the one question which never can be shut out. All this, and at the lowest computation it is the experience of about nine-tenths of the human beings who have probably lived on this planet, it is usual to exclude from the discussion. But why so? They are complete, intelligent human beings, who undoubtedly progress under favourable conditions.

In an inquiry what are the eternal characteristics of the human mind, we ought not to exclude them as being uncivilised. The most barbarous tribes exhibit powers of reasoning, of contrivance, of abstraction, in a word, all the powers really instinctive in the mind, though it may be in a low form. If you say that these ultimate mysteries only assume their importance with mental cultivation, that is precisely what I am urging. I say they only come into prominence with mental training of a certain kind. If they are instinctive tendencies of the mind, how can we explain their absence in great groups of uncultivated minds? If

you say they have other mysteries of their own, I do not deny it. The human mind has an ample curiosity. Only their mysteries are utterly different from ours, and form no proof that these mysteries are eternal and instinctive. They prove the contrary.

But to leave the ruder tribes, it is certain that over enormous periods of time, and in races of remarkable intelligence, the questions under immediate discussion have excited no kind of attention. Other races and ages have had their grand problems, but they have had nothing to do with the creation of the world or the destiny of the soul. The Chinese, from their numbers, their antiquity as a race, and the persistence of their civilisation, form one of the most striking branches of the human family. They show a high intelligence, a profound interest in moral questions, and they have one of the noblest and most ancient of religions. Yet it is certain that the Creation of the Universe, Divine Government of the World, God or Gods, future life, are ideas unknown to them. They have no opinion on these subjects, and they never inquire into them. They worship the sky, the visible vault of Heaven, but they never assume that it made the Earth. They are deeply interested in the Earth and all that is thereon. But they never seek to know, nor do they pretend to know, how it came about. As to the future life of the soul, they have as little curiosity. They have never answered the question, and they never propose it. They are, however, intensely interested in the dead as dead men. They know nothing about incorporeal personality, though they cherish a religious veneration for the corporeal personalities of their own ancestors.

Let us turn to Hindoos, at various times. These have an intense speculative activity, and in many things are curiously assimilated with the European

mind. At times they have undoubtedly thrown up problems bearing some remote resemblance to those in question. They have, in fact, eagerly pursued theologico-metaphysical problems. But Buddhism is the metaphysical product of the Hindoo intellect. During many centuries it held absolute sway over myriads of different races, and after twenty-four centuries it still retains much of its mighty empire. It can boast of great speculative intellects, a sublime morality, and a devotional spirit of a unique kind. Yet it is certain that to the Buddhist, Creation, if intelligible at all, was at most a disorder or a muddle; future life was a horrible dread; the continuance of existence the principle of evil, and the soul the ever-present curse. The pure Buddhist, one of the noblest of all the religious natures, not only did not dread the extinction of his personality, but he thirsted after it and prayed for it with ecstasy. Annihilation is his heaven; God, as the creator and the sustainer of things, is his fiend and his adversary. His Sphinx puts a very different problem from that of Christian philosophers,—not how was it all made, but how shall it all end? He, in his Pilgrim's Progress, borne down by his burden, might be heard crying out, in tones as pathetic as Christian's, "Who shall deliver me from the wrath that is? how can I enter into the world which is not?"

I venture to think that this instance is crucial. Here we have one of the high religious types, with a mind of singular subtlety, and a conscience of strange tenderness, to whom the great problem is not Creation, but Destruction; who never asks for the origin of things, but meditates only on their end; to whom every power which has to do with matter is the principle of evil, whose one hope is eternal Death. After this how can we continue to argue that the soul

cannot contemplate annihilation, nor the mind conceive it; that the conscience never rests till it feels in contact with its Maker? The Buddhist philosopher, who was a metaphysician *pur sang*, no doubt had his own metaphysical problems. But his problems were other than, or rather contrary to, ours. And when we are assured that no system can satisfy the human intellect unless it reveal to us the Creator of the world and the future life of the soul, we may answer that Buddhism, to which Christianity and Mahometanism are neophytes, eliminated both ideas, while remaining the religion of myriads.

The same thing might be said of the Greek and Roman nations. They are of course our close cousins in race, and our immediate ancestors in thought. Much of our philosophy is in cast of thought, as in language, simply Greek. And hence the germs of our metaphysical problems may easily be traced back to Greek sources. But with all these deductions, how little can we say that the practical intelligent Greek and Roman, the heroes of Plutarch, for instance, and the men of their time, were seriously occupied with the questions now before us, in any sense indeed in which we understand them. At times both Greeks and Romans thought about Gods; but these were simply the personifications and emanations of various things themselves; certainly not the beings who created them. Some Greek philosophers busied themselves early about the principle of things; but by that they mean the primitive form of things, not the Creator of that primitive form. They had also a kind of worship of ghosts, distinctly different from the Chinese worship of the dead. But except when under the influence of those special philosophical or religious systems that we are now discussing, which, of course, are found in Plato or Lucretius, the practical Greek

or Roman never showed the smallest vital interest either in the problem of the origin of things, or of his own living personality after death.

It would be very easy, but it is quite unnecessary, to follow out this argument into numerous illustrations. It would soon appear not only that large portions of the human race have been permanently indifferent to questions which we are now told ever present themselves to every human mind, but that the races and the ages in which these questions have held a foremost place form a very decided minority of the whole. Races and epochs under different philosophical influences have been occupied with totally different sets of problems. These were often metaphysical problems, appropriate to their mental state. But they were not ours; and they show that many remarkable societies and philosophies make no account of the so-called instinctive questions. The questions which to us seem instinctive could not even be rendered intelligible to them. Those which to them seemed the eternal interests of the human soul are to us puerile or horrible. And we need both study and imagination to conceive the logical processes which suggested to them hypotheses so strange, and problems so grotesque.

Let us now turn to the converse. We often hear it said that such questions as those under discussion have for every human being an importance so overwhelming that they must always remain apart, while human nature is unchanged. Now, there is no evidence whatever that these problems at all differ in importance from a vast number which have been silently abandoned. Nor is there any reason to think that the mind has any difficulty in abandoning the search of what it is deeply concerned to know, so soon as it has abandoned the hope of attaining that know-

ledge. It is a really gratuitous supposition that these particular questions at all surpass in importance many which have been asked with profound earnestness in many ages.

The problem of the freedom or necessity of the will was once one of the cardinal questions of thought. If that question could have been solved, if the doctrine of Necessity could have secured its logical victories, it is impossible to overrate the enormous importance that its solution must have had on human life. If Kismet were a fact, and not merely a logical fallacy, human nature would take a different turn. It seems difficult to say that any problem as to the origin of the Universe, or the superhuman government of it apart from its laws, is to a man a problem more important than whether or not he has a free moral nature. The problem of Free Will or Necessity is still unsolved. Neither alternative has gained a permanent hold. Here, then, is a problem of transcendent interest to the conscience still unsolved, which is now abandoned by tacit consent, and has passed into the limbo of so many departed questions, where the ghosts of Nominalism and Realism gibber at each other, and the air is heavy with the sighs of those who passed their lives in searching into the origin of Evil.

Here, again, is another problem to a moral conscience of transcendent interest — from whence comes moral evil? It is quite as important to the human soul as the origin of the world, or the other questions at issue. Indeed, in a moral sense, it includes and must determine all the rest. There was an epoch in philosophy when this tremendous question was earnestly attacked. Manichæism in all its forms was a real answer. But Manichæism is out of credit; and yet no other answer has taken its place. No one in philosophy now discusses the origin of evil, yet no

one pretends that the problem is solved. It is but another instance of a transcendent moral problem, about which we have accepted no solution, but into which we are weary of inquiring.

The mere fact that a certain knowledge, if we could get it, would be to us of infinite value, is not sufficient reason for our continuing to seek after we have lost all hope of finding it. How many kinds of inquiry of vital moment to man have been silently abandoned in despair? In various ages and epochs the hope of forming an individual horoscope has held the minds of generations spellbound. It has been thought at times that some means might be hit on of foretelling the events of life, at least, the great turning-moments of it, or its final term. Powerful minds and ingenious generations have clung to this hope. Now, the knowledge, if it could be obtained, would be of vital importance. There is nothing actually impossible in the hope of some approximative forecast of the duration of life. It concerns each of us wonderfully, as they once said, to get such knowledge, if we can. Yet the inquiry has utterly died out, not by being formally proved impossible, so much as because nothing ever came of it. And all its transcendent importance has not, in an altered philosophy, sufficed to give it any longer a hold on our thoughts.

So, too, with the direct influence on human life of the Stars and other objects, and all those strange necromantic inquiries which have absorbed so much intellectual force. Now, it has never been proved, and it never can be proved, that the stars or the dead have no influence on human life, or that the flight of birds or the croaking of a raven is absolutely unconnected with our destinies. The contrary has never been proved; but ages have debated in vain what the influence is, and by what signs we may know it. If

we ever could get to know it, it would be a matter to us of transcendent interest. In other ages it was the ever-present problem of generations. After every failure, they hoped against hope. They would be stopped not even by the melting away of all their results. The question, they said, was one of such overpowering interest, the knowledge, if it could be had, was so precious, that fail as it might to find, the mind must ever seek. And generations of learned pedants lived and died in seeking.

Again, it is said there is an innate consciousness in man that his soul is eternal. Man can never cease, they say, to feel interest in his destiny after death, and cannot conceive his personality to end with death. As we have just seen, this is quite untrue to fact. An interest in the life after death is peculiar to certain races and ages. But why is not life before birth just as interesting? How do we manage to dwell on our post-mundane destiny, and never give a thought to our pre-mundane? Yet if soul is conscious of being this immortal entity, it is, or it should be, as hard for it to realise beginning as end—birth as death. The ante-natal condition of the soul ought to be a question as interesting as its post-mortuary condition. It has never been proved that the soul has no ante-natal existence. How can we shut out this momentous inquiry? An ingenious fabulist described a race whose whole spiritual anxieties were centred on the life before, not the life after, that on earth. And there is nothing in the theory inconsistent with human nature. As a matter of fact, vast races have paid at least as much attention to the one life as the other. Transmigration indeed is at least a consistent handling of the problem of indestructible personality, for past life is at least as important to an indestructible entity as its future life.

The illustrations might be extended indefinitely. At one time to one race the paramount problem of spiritual thought is the past life of the Soul, at another its future life, at another its annihilation. The spiritual problems vary indefinitely with each philosophy, each habit of mind, each cast of character. What have become of the tremendous problems, on which life and thought appeared to depend to the pious generations of Aquinas and Ockham, Duns Scotus and Abailard? Mighty intellects and devout souls fought with passion over questions which we cannot state without a smile. The primæval element, the harmony of the spheres, the providence of the sky, the bounty of the sun, absolute extinction, eternal life, the freedom of the will, the absolute existence of ideas, the locomotive powers of angels, their independence of physical limits, the creative powers of the devil, witchcraft, devilcraft, necromancy, and astrology, with fifty other problems, have in turn enthralled particular ages. The same process holds good for all. Perpetual failure and ever-varied answers in time discredit the problems; they meet with no conclusive answers, and at length they cease to be asked. Nor does the plea of their transcendent importance, if we knew them, preserve any of them as objects of interest long after the conviction has set in that we are not on the road to know them.

Those, therefore, to whom this conviction has arrived, and I again repeat that I have been speaking of no others, may put aside these problems with the same sense of relief with which they have rejected the answers. The mind has an infinite curiosity to solve a vast variety of problems; but there is no spell which binds it to one more than to another. Nor, fortunately, is it condemned to the Tartarean fate of pursuing any task where it is not conscious of fruits, or of asking any

question where it has definitely despaired of arriving at a permanent answer.

In short, it is the function of a complete philosophy, and one of its highest functions, to determine what inquiries are based on solid grounds and may lead to fruitful results. It is the part of the logic of the sciences as a whole, and its tests are numerous and complex, to condemn problems as insoluble, and to stamp inquiries as frivolous. Each branch of science from within its own sphere has eliminated a succession of idle puzzles, and has limited its field to the real and the prolific. The philosopher's stone, the elixir of life, the *primum mobile*, were once the vital problems of ardent minds, and in turn have passed into a jest or a by-word. When science definitely pronounced that these mighty *summa bona* of knowledge were ideas alien to science, and wholly outside of it, they became slowly but surely the toys of the pedant. And the plea of the transcendent value of the answers, if the problems were solved, was met only with a smile.

It was as if a child were to plead that it would be so delightful to take a trip to the moon. Perhaps it might; but as far as science yet sees, the problem of lunar excursions is not within its sphere, and from within its present sphere is distinctly insoluble. The plea is now put forward again. Philosophy each day reiterates anew that all questions of original creation, of personal will in physical law, of incorporeal spirits, are questions wholly alien to its sphere; nay, so far as its resources go, wholly insoluble by it, and indeed unintelligible to it. And the plea of transcendent interest, the plea that the questions are so vital that they cannot be put aside, is as puerile as the plea for an elixir of life, in the midst of a sound physiology.

But whilst philosophy puts by with a smile these

childish appeals to search into the insoluble, and resolves to select its problems for itself, there is a phase of the matter which it would do well to acknowledge. The tenacity with which these insoluble mysteries cling to and cumber the intellectual soil, the passionate yearning of the untaught many after them, the vague hankering of so many minds around these barren wastes, teaches at least this, that a negative logic is in practice not sufficient. The cold sentence of "impassable" or "insoluble" may be graven on portals, round which myriads of pilgrims have crowded, as if they opened into a promised land; but it is written in a language they but half understand, and they still hang round the entrance they may never pass. In a word, in spite of logic and in defiance of science, metaphysical mysteries will continue to live until this vague yearning is absorbed in a great and strenuous emotion. The only true cure for irrational musing over ancient ænigmas is a solid faith in a real religion.

There will always be minds debilitated by hopeless questionings, until a passionate devotion of the soul to a real and active power becomes the atmosphere of general life. A religion of action, a religion of social duty, devotion to an intelligible and sensible Head, a real sense of incorporation with a living and controlling force, the deliberate effort to serve an immortal Humanity—this and this alone can absorb the musings and the cravings of the spiritual man. The self-reliance of the isolated self is in man so slight, the craving after religious communion is in reality so strong, that logic and science alone cannot save the soul from superstition or despair. Rather than be without a theory which can bind the individual close to a moral Providence, which can make his life triumphant over death, man will cling round a theory

which he knows to be a formula, or even a falsehood. And lives will continue to be wasted in listless yearning around the Unreal or the Unknowable, until they have been transfigured into a world of social activity under the impulse of devotion to a Supreme Power, as humanly real as it is demonstrably known.

II

THE SUBJECTIVE SYNTHESIS

"*Notre construction fondamentale de l'ordre universel résulte d'un concours nécessaire entre le dehors et le dedans.*"
—AUGUSTE COMTE.

WIDE as is the acceptance which the doctrine of the Relativity of Knowledge has received, it may well be doubted if we even yet adopt all that it implies. It has been accepted by so many schools of thought for their basis, as almost to have passed into the sphere of subjects which are little liable to question. But on the one hand, this doctrine is itself accepted in a great variety of meanings; and on the other, it is not often prolonged to its legitimate deductions. Its full force is often overlooked in practice. Its philosophical complement is but partially apprehended. In the following pages it is attempted to follow it to its natural conclusions. It is proposed to show that the Relativity of Knowledge, rightly understood, puts it beyond the scope of the human mind to attain to absolute certainty, to objective truth, or to real laws of nature; that the condition of a sound Philosophy is to ask for nothing but a practical certainty and a relative truth. And as a deduction from this, that the only harmony of ideas possible to man, is to be found in a Subjective Synthesis.

It is very necessary to define accurately the phrases which are the first and the last terms of our argument. By the Relativity of Knowledge is here meant the doctrine, that all facts are known to us not as they are in themselves, but as they appear to us through our sensations. That all our reasoning about things is reasoning upon the data of these sensations. That we cannot get free from sensations. That therefore all knowledge comes to us through the medium of the *thinking* and *feeling organism*; and is affected by the states of the thinking and feeling organism—states which we can never look at or ultimately weigh from any independent position, unaffected by these same states. That therefore all knowledge is *relative*, or dependent on the states of the thinking and feeling organism.

By a Subjective Synthesis is here meant a reference of all facts to a harmony of ideas, of which the human point of view is the basis. It is to group our ideas round man as a centre, and to seek for an organisation of knowledge in the bringing it into coincidence with human nature as a whole.

It is simply impossible to put philosophical doctrines into any other but technical language. But as this is a matter with deep practical bearings, it may be as well to attempt to divest the proposition of any of the "terms of art." Language at all times has been to philosophers "a good servant but a bad master." Language is to philosophy what sensations are to knowledge—the sole medium through which it can develop its life, and yet a medium which is continually found to be treacherous. To put the argument, however, in the simplest language, it may run thus. We know only so far as we feel. But we find by experience that we cannot always trust our feelings. Our senses play us false. And then we have no

single or irrefragable test by which to know when our senses are playing us false. Our knowledge, therefore, can never be placed on a basis independent of our feelings; and it must be limited by, and conform to, the modes of our feelings. But the feelings, sensations, consciousness of man (call it what we will), are inextricably bound up with human nature as a whole. Therefore our knowledge, our science, our philosophy, can only be permanently organised by being brought into harmonious relation with the whole composite human nature.

With regard to the philosophy of the Absolute (however short may be the list of the absolute truths) nothing here need be said. Suffice to say that we look on the Absolute as a notion which it is abhorrent to the human mind to assert of anything whatever. It conveys an idea (like non-existent) which neither does nor can correspond to any fact; an idea which the mind cannot, consistently with its own nature, predicate of anything. To assert that any conception whatever possesses absolute truth is like attempting to state a proposition without the medium of language.

But those who recognise certainty only in the domain of law, though they do not distinctly claim for these laws absolute certainty, too often appear to claim for them objective reality. To such it seems logically provable that an Universe really exists externally and independently, and as such can be known to us by discovering its absolutely existing laws. What science has hitherto done they think is to have proved the reality of these laws, to have brought them, like telescopic stars, within the range of vision.

But laws of nature are not objective realities, any more than they are absolute truths. In looking on them as objective realities, there is indeed no such contradiction in terms; there is nothing abhorrent to

the mind in the notion of a thing being objective, as there is in its being absolute. On the contrary, the mind is forced to deal with things which it conceives to be external as being truly objective. But to hold that there really are laws of nature existing apart from and prior to any conceiving human mind, or such as the human mind can grasp in their real modes, is only a variety of the absolute hypothesis.

All laws of nature are subjective generalisations, the threads on which the mind arranges a number of phenomena, the impressions received through the senses. The subjective generalisations may or may not correspond with (probably existing) objective facts. But whether or not they correspond, and how far, the mind by its nature can never absolutely know.

Hence we decline to give the title of absolute truth, not only to many propositions respecting subjects on which innate knowledge is often supposed —such as the self-consciousness of existence, the soul, God, right and wrong, and the like—but also to scientific statements respecting physical laws of nature, and even as to mathematics. Mathematical demonstration is indeed to us the type of all demonstration. But mathematical laws are simply conclusions from experience more or less abstract. To the non-human mind we know not what two and two might make.

To the old ontological metaphysics there has succeeded a new materialist metaphysics, based on assumptions equally gratuitous. Metaphysicians at all times have insisted on some transcendental truth as the attribute of their hypotheses respecting man, matter, and God. There appears to be an order of physicists who substitute for this transcendental truth an objective reality, equally incapable of proof. I know that the Sun attracts the earth; and I know that man has benevolent instincts; and I know that

I exist. And my knowledge of all these facts is a knowledge of equal degree of certainty; but no one of these propositions can be proved to be objective truth, resting on a basis that no conceivable evidence could ever destroy. The Sun might repel, and not attract the earth; man might conceivably have no purely benevolent instincts; and I might be the cell of an animal filling space. And no reasoning can make us *absolutely* certain of the contrary.

It is easy, but hardly necessary, to distinguish this from Scepticism. Philosophical scepticism is the Despair of Philosophy. It undertakes to prove that nothing can be in the truest sense known. Resorting, like the rest of the world, to good sense in practical matters, theoretically Scepticism denies the existence of ultimate philosophical truth, of scientific certainty, of universal and constant laws. The common sense philosophy does precisely the contrary. We insist as fully as any others on the discoverability of philosophical truth. Only we say that philosophical truth is relative, and that which is called absolute truth is no truth at all, but something incongruous to the mind. We base everything on scientific certainty; but then, we say, that scientific certainty means only the highest form of practical certainty; and that any certainty which pretends to be absolute, and incapable of being modified by experience, is not scientific at all; not knowledge, but an hallucination.

We call all scientific knowledge the knowledge of constant laws; but then we say these must be recognised as being the conceptions of human minds, and resting only on the relative certainty proper to human minds. We have and can have no proof that the laws or the things exist outside of the human mind in that mode. In a word, we say that true philosophical knowledge is not concerned with the

relations of things objectively to each other as they exist in space, but is concerned only with the subjective relations of our impressions received from what seem to us to be things. And we should say that any knowledge which professed to be something else than this, professes to be that which knowledge is not, and cannot be.

The truth is, that once accept the conception of the relativity of knowledge in its full sense, then the really subjective character of the whole of our thoughts about the external world, and of our knowledge of the laws of nature follows as a matter of course. It is sometimes supposed possible to say, "We grant that our knowledge of the external world comes to us through our sensations, but when we have rightly ordered our sensations, then we come to the true laws of nature which produce them. The laws are real laws in the things, and we apprehend them just as they are in themselves. We do not pretend to know 'things in themselves,' but we do get to know the laws of things as they (*i.e.* the laws) are."

A little reflection will show that this is without foundation. If we get our knowledge of things solely through the modes in which they affect our senses, then what we call *laws* are our own arrangements of our impressions. And, as has been effectually shown, laws of nature cannot be ultimately resolved into sets less numerous than our distinguishable sensations. We may show some connection between the laws of heat and those of motion; but the sensation of being scorched is not the sensation of moving from one spot to another. Whatever may be the true series of categories, categories of some kind there are in all philosophy. And, except in mere mysticism, our knowledge of the properties of heated bodies can never be the same thing as our knowledge of the properties

of moving bodies. In a word, all rational grouping of our knowledge about external nature depends ultimately on the various powers of sensation we possess, which are intimately associated with our bodily forms.

Is it rational to suppose that an external Universe is objectively cast in these same moulds of our minds —minds which so closely depend on our physical powers? If we find all our knowledge grouped in sets corresponding with our different senses, is it not more likely that the grouping is that of our own faculties, and not the objective grouping of the things? Does the Infinite Universe through Space conform to the modes of mind of the human mites which inhabit this planetary speck? Must not life in other worlds be subject to wholly different physical conditions? Yet if the categories of human logic be the true categories of the Universe, and the laws of human science be the true laws of a real Universe, these categories and these laws would be inconceivable to beings who had a totally different sensory apparatus. The philosophers of Sirius might (for ought we know) be inflammable gases, rays of light, intelligent æthers. How could these gases or æthers assimilate or formulate the deductions of modern science. Suppose that a blade of grass or a grain of sand thinks—what is its view of Geometry? In fact, once admit that our system of the laws of nature is closely related to our bodily organs, and it is impossible to think of these laws of nature as being anything but our methods of grouping our sensations. It was once absurdly proposed to call laws of nature the thoughts of the Divine mind—which is equivalent to attributing to a Divine Being heads, eyes, legs, and arms. The truth is, that laws of nature are rather—the thoughts of the human mind (based upon our own sensations).

But what is it that this doctrine properly involves?

The relative philosophy involves a legitimate deduction from it, which it does not always receive from those who profess that doctrine generally. The philosophy of experience through the external senses rejects any notion of an absolute knowledge of things in themselves. It professes to know phenomena only through the senses, and truths only by processes of inference, and to know nothing of absolute being. But doing and professing this, we find it sometimes ready to invest its laws of nature with very much the same character of absolute truth or objective reality which was claimed for the intuitional truths. We hear language about physical laws as if they possessed, not, indeed, a Divine, but a kind of Material sanction, if not a superhuman, still a kind of Cosmical authority, not given to other truth. To some minds, for instance, the law of Gravitation seems to possess a sanctity formerly reserved to the idea of Creation. It is literally supposed to be a reality in itself; an objective necessity, which the Universe has imposed on it by Fate; something which has a real existence or force of its own. Man, they would say, has simply found it out. It possesses, they seem to imply, a certainty and a reality, an objectivity as truth, totally different from that of the doctrines of Morality, for instance. Now all this is simply to substitute one fictitious Cosmogony for another, the Revelation of the savans for the Revelation of the priests.

The law of Gravitation is, no doubt, a very general law, and rests on an unusual body of evidence, a vast mass of verifications, and a rare consensus of testimony. But, after all, it is only the best explanation which the human mind can give of a number of phenomena. You can never carry it beyond a theory, which appears to fit exactly a vast body of facts, and has been verified

by every available form of test. But still it is only a theory, verified so far as the human mind can verify its theories. It is an hypothesis which has stood all tests, an accepted explanation. Man did not so much find it out, as he created or imagined it. Nor is it in the least more certain, nor has it more objective reality, than a number of moral truths, which most persons would hesitate to call absolute truths. Even to call it a universal law is to attribute to it an objective reality, beyond our experience, for which we have no authority. It has no higher scientific demonstration to rest on, for instance, than the law of social progress, even though its area of operation is infinitely more vast. It is no more worthy of belief. The latter law is just in the same sense a law, just as true, just as authoritative. The law of Gravitation is a law, so far as we can see, of universal application; but it is not a law of any higher rank than the law that man possesses benevolent instincts.

As was before said, no attempt will be made here to reason out in full the doctrine of the relative character of all knowledge, with its various corollaries. It is too wide a subject to attempt to give the grounds for it, depending, as they do, on the entire mental attitude which has become the habit of each particular mind. It is obvious that it rests ultimately on the habit of regarding all that can properly be called knowledge as a process of inference from impressions of the senses. Not much follows if we distinguish "I feel hot" from "I know that I feel hot." These are only varieties of expression for the same fact. In the way of thinking habitual to me, I feel many things; but I do not know anything outside of myself of direct consciousness, that is, by immediate intuition not drawn from any process of inference from my sensations. All knowledge, properly so called, I take to be

derived by processes of reasoning from data supplied by the impressions of the senses.

Thus the double element of doubt in all our knowledge, first, as to the correctness of the reasoning process, and secondly, as to the trustworthiness of the senses, introduces into every idea an inherently relative character; relative as respects its answering to any objective reality, and relative as respects its logical accuracy. All knowledge in this view ultimately rests on the assumption that sensations which have frequently been found together will continue to be found together, an assumption which the mind is prone to make, but does not intuitively know to be true. All knowledge (sensations not being knowledge) is therefore only probable truth; of the very highest degree of probability, no doubt; in fact, passing into practical certainty, that certainty on which we act even in matters of life and death.

After all, it is not absolute, but is always something short of abstract certainty. And all knowledge of the external rests on the assumption that sensations are really caused by something without us, and are not due to mere changes within. And this assumption cannot be logically proved either from without or from within. In a word, we take all knowledge (on grounds in which, no doubt, all the sensation schools of thought agree) to be the picture only which the mind fashions out of its impressions; and a picture which is only a highly probable adumbration of the (probably) external facts.

But if all schools of the Experience philosophy take this as their basis, it may be asked, Why should we insist on this here? No doubt, speaking in the abstract, this view is accepted without more words by all these schools, but it seems important to insist that they bear it in mind in practice. In dealing with an

ontologist, almost every adherent of the phenomenal theory holds this language in its widest sense. But in the sphere of special science does he not often tend to forget that the law of gravitation, for instance, is a subjective creation,—a verified hypothesis,—and is not an objective law of nature, or an absolute certainty? Does he never in practice glide into the tone of mind that these physical laws are solid truth, of a kind more tangible to rest on than moral or social laws, which are at best but theories? Does he not imagine himself often really exorcising the secrets of nature, instead of framing the simplest explanation which will satisfy his mind whilst it meets the facts?

There is reason to fear that this conception of the relativity of all knowledge—entirely accepted as it is in abstract speculation by the whole of the Experience school—is not equally grasped in the practical work of investigation. The truly relative conception of knowledge should make us habitually feel that our physical science, our laws, and discoveries in nature, are all imaginative creations—poems, in fact—which strictly correspond with the limited range of phenomena we have before us, therein differing from true poems, but which we never can know to be the real modes of any external being. We have really no ground whatever for believing that these our theories are the ultimate and real scheme on which an external world (if there be one) works, nor that the external world objectively possesses that organised order which we call science.

For all that we know to the contrary, man is the creator of the order and harmony of the universe, for he has imagined it. The objective order of the real universe may be (probably is) something infinitely more subtle and highly organised than our conceptions. The image of it we frame may be as little like the truth, as rough an emblem of it, as the picture-writing

of a savage. Or again, the objective order of the universe may be something infinitely more simple, and our disparate conceptions may be due not to real differences, but to idiosyncrasies of mind. Or (what is most improbable) there may be no sort of real order at all outside the mind, and our notion of order may be a dream, just as a musician standing beneath Niagara might hear some symphony in the Babel of waters; though the music would be in the musician, and not in the roar of the cataract. But whether the objective order of the universe be something infinitely more subtle than our conceptions, or infinitely more simple, or there be no order at all, and the idea of an order be a figment of our own, or even if there be no objective universe at all, it does not in the least concern us to know. In any of these cases we are by nature incapable of getting at the objective truth; it is idle to speculate on it, and it is waste of time to investigate on the assumption that if we only work hard enough and long enough we shall come at the objective harmony at last.

Now if in all that we know of the world without we must draw all our data from the sensations we have; if all our laws of nature are only the mind's modes of grouping the sequences and the simultaneities of its sensations; and if all our sciences are only systematic arrangements of these generalisations, it follows that the classification of our sciences, their connections, relations, subdivisions, and rank—in a word, the *catena* of our knowledge—must be determined ultimately by our faculties for generalisation, by the capacity of our mental system to throw its ideas into organic relations, and not by any actual classification which may objectively exist in things outside our minds. But every step in our processes of forming generalisations brings into play two sets of faculties—the one

receptive, the other creative; the observations of the facts, and the conceptions by which we give them order.

Man is a composite organism of correlated elements. The intellect is not an independent part of man which functions by itself. It can only be supplied with material by sensations, and it is stimulated to action invariably by emotions. The simplest meditation has some motive, and some end in action. As Aristotle says, mere intelligence (without the motive force of a desire) does nothing. The notion of mind constructing its own conceptions and systematising knowledge independently is an idle fable. The mind is capable of no sustained and coherent effort except when it works in connection and harmony with emotions and energies—*i.e.* with the human being as a whole. But that, again, brings into play the whole range of the conditions in which man is placed, and the whole range of the moral faculties he possesses. Man, in a word, is a system in himself, and his mind cannot normally work except as part of that system, and in complete accord with it. And his mind cannot effectually group its conceptions in any coherent form, unless that order or harmony of conceptions is in true correspondence with the order and harmony of the human being in all its relations, material, active, affective, and intellectual. That is the Subjective Synthesis.

What is the practical utility of the idea here maintained? It is that all independent efforts to wrest her secrets from Nature objectively, and ever more and more secrets, in the general hope that some day all those secrets will unfold and group themselves in their real order and harmony, as they exist in nature —all such efforts are in vain. All efforts must start from the point of view of the human being who is

inquiring, from the intellectual and moral wants of the man. The thing required, the only thing possible, is to bring the man's symphony of conceptions into more and more complete coincidence with his impressions. To catalogue, and co-ordinate, and re-distinguish the impressions for ever, will never lead to anything if the organising idea be forgotten. Out of the multiplicity of impressions will come chaos, and not knowledge. If the impressions do correspond with realities, and if the external realities do contain their own order, both of which we must believe, but cannot know, still we cannot ever get to know that order. The dispersive, the analytic method of study can never give us *knowledge* —for this is an organised order of ideas. If there be an organised order of things without, the mind cannot comprehend it; and if we neglect the conditions of an organised order of ideas within, we shall never get at any order at all. There are profound meanings in Bacon's aphorism —"The subtlety of nature far exceeds the subtlety of man's mind."

The notion from which we start—all knowledge is an inference from sensations—introduces a certain dualism, which extends throughout philosophy: the observations of phenomena, on the one hand; the mental inference from these observations, on the other; or, observations and conceptions. Knowledge, in the truest sense, is the perfect equipoise and correlation of these two. When one or other is developed out of proportion to its fellow, the balance is lost, and knowledge is *pro tanto* diminished. In one form of philosophy—indeed, more or less in all the theological and metaphysical forms—the conceptions are developed at the expense of the observations. Dogmas, theories, and cosmogonies are created, and no corresponding systematisation of observed facts

is accomplished. There is no true verification. Philosophy and science then consist of raw hypotheses, mental creations, which do not fit all the known sensations.

There is the opposite error—and we are in the midst of it now. The facts are multiplied, and observations are exaggerated out of all proportion to the symmetry of the conceptions, without which they must remain chaotic. Of course the simplest observation implies some sort of hypothesis; but observations can be carried on in the almost entire absence of any true and complete harmony of general conceptions. Without this they are worthless, and even injurious. The possible facts, the conceivable observations, are simply infinite. A withered leaf might afford observations which it would occupy a lifetime to record. Man could no more catalogue all the facts in any single branch of science than a caterpillar could construct an exhaustive natural history of this planet.

Where facts around us are infinite, simply to collect the facts is simply to count the grains of sand on the sea-shore, or the breakers as they roll to land. A myriad years of such study cannot give knowledge; and the more of such facts are collected, the more difficult it becomes ever to give order to the chaos. Nay, the thin and inorganic hypotheses which may serve as the ground even of such observations leave the matter no better. Discordant hypotheses, not capable of being built up into the stately fabric of knowledge, are as great an encumbrance as the mass of facts themselves. Science pursued on this objective method still remains, and ever will remain, *rudis indigestaque moles*. Partial, disparate, independent conceptions of laws (however good in the infancy of science) choke the ground of philosophy in its maturity.

When the great work of organising our knowledge is in full operation, all observations become retrograde that are not vitalised by the organic conceptions of the living human whole.

The function of true philosophy is to avoid equally the error of exaggerating the part of the conceptions or the usefulness of the observations. A purely subjective philosophy ends in a dream. A purely objective science ends in a chaos. The function of philosophy is to carry on simultaneously the double task by co-ordinate methods; to order the conceptions in due accord with the collecting of the observations. The phenomena must be selected, co-ordinated, classified; whilst the corresponding conceptions are associated and organised. And just as those conceptions become vicious, which fail, on proper tests, to meet the observations, or which conflict with them; so those observations are worthless which lie out of the field of the organising conceptions, and jar upon their symmetry. And this symmetry, be it remembered, is not purely intellectual, but must include a harmony of the whole of the powers of man in relation to his external necessities. When the whole system of man's observations corresponds with the entire system of human nature, a true harmony is established. And this is a subjective synthesis, in which man is (philosophically) the centre of his world.

Illustrations, of all things, are dangerous in philosophy, but I am tempted to risk one as an explanation. An aphis, or an ant, on a rose-bush in a garden, a house-fly in a room, might conceivably be endowed with intellect equal or much superior to man's. The aphis, ant, and fly would construct its theories, its laws of nature, its sciences; the gardener's hose or spade would form its seasons, showers, earthquakes. Some theories fairly meeting the facts of the garden and the room

the aphis and the fly might construct, but how ludicrously short of the vaster laws of the earth! Yet even there a sensible aphis or fly, wisely renouncing the search after an objective theory of its universe, might make its brief life more complete by observations relatively within its powers, and suggested by its wants.

To what does this tend? To sum up the argument, it runs thus: The belief that our knowledge of the external world is derived by a process of inference from data supplied by the impressions of the senses, involves the relativity of knowledge in its full sense. From the sources of our knowledge, it always remains a system of mental pictures. And it is impossible for us to *find*; we must *create* our synthesis of nature. And as a painter to paint a picture must create his own composition, and however accurate, no photographic copying of parts can succeed in making a composition, so the thinker in his closest study of phenomena must hold on by the *subjective* synthesis which has been created by human philosophy. And this, the true method, condemns the breaking up of subjects into independent studies, for myriads of photographers cannot make a picture, without a subjective conception to group the details around. It condemns all dispersive investigations; for whatever be the real order of the external, this cannot be revealed as such to the human thought. It condemns all studies of inorganic matter not guided by studies of organic matter, and all studies of organic matter not guided by studies of moral nature; for nothing is true knowledge that is not relative to the human nature in its complex whole, that does not tend to perfect the synthesis within man; and this synthesis is not merely intellectual, but is moral also.

Such, as I understand it, is the logical deduction

from relativity of knowledge, and the origin of knowledge in inferences from the data presented by the senses. The continued and systematic specialising of study, the purely intellectual pursuit of truth as truth, and the seeking in the phenomena of nature for objective and real laws of nature, must ultimately rest for its justification on a conception of an objective order of things discoverable by man. But this is only a form of ontology, an attempt to get at things as they are, and is consistent only with a belief in some form of the philosophy of the absolute. The reign of metaphysical problems must last whilst we admit the possibility of absolute certainty, and the attainment of objective truth. Hence, all such (of whom the pure specialist, be the specialism physical or moral, is the type) are radically unable to hold their ground against the ontologist, the intuitionist, and even the theologian. On the contrary, they are at bottom the real feeders of all the metaphysical schools of thought. And since they seek to know nature as she is, they are not of the Relative Philosophy at all, but are in the truest sense Ontologists.

It is obvious that this argument is purely addressed to those who deduce all knowledge from experience, and that it does not touch any opinion resting on an intuitional basis. What have we to say to these? We must freely confess nothing, or rather, nothing but one practical suggestion, which we do not venture to call a philosophical argument. It would be idle in the extreme to attack a view which rests on the whole consensus of logical method which each mind adopts for itself, on the set of a vast current of ideas. Let us offer the homage of respect for a system of thought which we cannot share, but the vitality, if not the potency, of which we profoundly recognise. And the only true respect for it which we can show

is to avoid the appearance of narrow criticism or partial skirmish. When men of high moral and intellectual power assure us that they find rest, unity, and fruit in intuitional truth, and in innate conceptions about themselves, their own natures, the external world, its origin, its construction, and maintenance, the future state of what they conceive to be some part of, or the essence of, themselves, their duty here, and a sense of right and wrong, far be it from us to dispute the value and reality of this knowledge. It would be quite contrary to our own principles to attempt to prove their conclusions mistaken.

If we do not adopt them, it is not because we believe them to be false, but because they fail to interest us. We can get no practical good out of them; and to us they lie out of the sphere of connected thought. The one practical suggestion which is all that we have to submit to any disciple of any intuitional school is this. If this kind of knowledge or this kind of thought be really inborn in human nature, if these problems indeed *must* be asked by the human mind, why is not this knowledge found in all men; how can these problems be habitually absent from any one mind? Of course, we mean trained minds, men mentally and morally competent to test this question gravely. One instance of a mind, which on these questions is a real blank, one instance of a cultivated man who never did, and cannot, feel any interest in these problems, ought to be decisive on the point. One such case ought to establish that these abysmal questions of theology and metaphysics are not implanted in the fibres of human nature, but are artificial, just like the question of the mediæval schoolmen if angels could exist *in vacuo*.

The practical objection to the intuitionist is simply this. We have amongst us those who fail to detect

in themselves the sparks or germs of such knowledge, who do not acknowledge any such problem as ever present to them, save as the vagary of an idle hour. To them (and some of them have been thought to be well equipped both on intellectual and moral grounds for the task, men learned once in all the learning of the Egyptians), to them, these problems, as to how this (apparently) external world came about, or in what kind of way, other than that of this sentient life, the thinking thing may continue to exist, are as the problem if angels can exist *in vacuo*—problems which they neither ask, nor solve, nor busy about, nor think of, except with a smile. It is not the particular answers, but the questions which are matters of indifference. The only whispering which ever makes itself heard within them, when these topics are suggested for notice, is that of the homely phrase,—Never mind. They would as lief think of speculating about the soul—past, present, or future—as of speculating by what mode of death one may come to die, and in what grave, if it be in a grave, one's body may come to lie. We shall all know in time.

There are two provisoes with which it may be well, before ending, to guard our meaning. It will be readily understood that in insisting on a really subjective synthesis—that is, the regarding of systematic knowledge as a mental creation, dealing with sensations, the internal grouping of phenomena, and not as objective truth and real order of external things—we do not for an instant accept as knowledge unverified hypotheses or conceptions which have not been shown by scientific demonstration strictly to correspond with the impressions of sense. No theory, however plausible, belongs to knowledge until it is shown to be capable of fitting all the accessible phenomena.

It may be asked, What is the test of demonstration? how are hypotheses to be verified? There is no absolute test. We never are in the abstract certain that experience may not modify our conceptions. And there is no single test. The sciences are many and disparate; each has its own appropriate tests, its own method, its peculiar logic. If we are asked what is the real canon of sound demonstration, we must answer, It is found in the general logic of the sciences, which is a vast and composite creation. To look for any single and final test of proof in science is as foolish as to expect such a test in practical life. Science is only the systematic form of spontaneous good sense.

Secondly, it will be as readily understood that in insisting on the relativity of knowledge to the extent of denying any mathematical proof that there is any objective existence, or that there really are any objective laws, we do in the practical workshop of Philosophy accept both notions fully. That logic never can establish the reality of an external world is incontestable. Whether in the Idealism of Berkeley, or in the scepticism of Hume, there is no logical answer to their reasoning. The objective reality of the world cannot be proved. It will be seen that in the foregoing pages, whilst this doctrine is admitted, an objective world of phenomena is constantly assumed. As a philosophical artifice, indeed, and whilst dealing with the absolute schools, we may very fairly use the profoundly luminous argument of the idealists to establish the inherently relative character of all our ideas. It is one of the many grounds on which the doctrine rests. All ideas, all thought, all knowledge, are relative, and therefore in one sense subjective.

But having once, as a preliminary axiom of thought, established the complete relativity of all ideas, we cease to follow out a theory which would become a

barren puzzle if pressed into active service. Admitting that logic cannot prove an objective world to exist, we rest nothing on that doctrine, except as it assists us in establishing the relativity of all knowledge. But all ideas once firmly recognised as being relative, the grand eternal contrast of all Philosophy comes in, of the *I* and the *Not I*, the strictly subjective, and the apparently objective, our ideas of what we feel to be ourselves, our ideas of what appears to be without us. And this grand dualism of thought is the condition of all reasoning and all knowledge. We must reason and act *as if* there were an external world, and as if there were, and we could know, general and constant laws. They offer a boundless and a fruitful field, capable of taxing and rewarding all our intelligence and all our energies. But everything depends on our recognising as the substratum of our philosophy, that all knowledge is relative ; relative in respect of its having no absolute certainty, and relative as respects its harmonising with the mental and moral nature of man.

III

SYNTHESIS

THERE are a few, a very few, technical terms, of classical and scientific origin, which Positivism must at any cost force upon public attention till they become quite familiar and natural. Every scheme of thought which presents new ideas that it seeks to popularise must resort to a certain number of new terms. All religious systems have done this: all philosophical and sociological movements, and every new school of opinion; even a little knot of æsthetes who affect the cult of the Decadent—all have their symbolic phrases.

The Christian religionists have inundated language, even popular language, with such terms as Atonement, Trans-substantiation, and Prevenient Grace; till children come to talk about Predestination, Baptism, Confirmation, and Sacraments. Indeed the Christian religion could not be taught or worked without the use of such highly technical terms as *Sacrament*, *Trinity*, and *Grace*. The evolutionists have forced on the public an entire lexicon of special terms, so that Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophy would seem to an unlearned reader of the last generation to be a book written in a learned and unknown tongue. The economists, the socialists, the artists, have their peculiar indispensable phrases. It is a practice which easily

becomes an affectation: but up to a certain degree it is unavoidable. Nothing could be sillier than Mr. Ruskin's obscurantist horror of scientific terms, driving him to use fantastic and unintelligible Biblical and poetical tropes to express, in an obscure rigmarole, an idea which can be accurately connoted by a beautiful Greek compound. Positivism does not require more than a dozen of such terms (and no one of them is strange to scientific thinkers); but these few must be made quite familiar. The most important, the most indispensable, of these is *Synthesis*.

Not that either the term, *synthesis*, or the thing it denotes, are at all novel or strange. It is simply that Positivism must make the term itself as familiar to the unlearned as *sacrament* and *grace*; and that it has to give a very greatly increased force to the paramount value of Synthesis. Indeed, Synthesis is almost Religion; and, if it is not quite equivalent to Religion, it covers the intellectual and theoretical side of Religion, and is Religion, so far as Religion is not expression or action. Positivism claims to be a scientific Philosophy issuing forth into a moral and religious scheme for the entire conduct of life—public and private, personal and social. It aims at establishing a permanent harmony between thought, feeling, and action. That is to say, its key-note is the need for some complete Synthesis of life. This means organic principles adequate to weld into one common life our intellectual, our affective, and our active propensities. The anarchy and the failures we see around us arise from this: that our science is not inspired by religion, that our religion is not founded on science, that our conduct is imperfectly guided either by religion or by science. The paramount conception of Auguste Comte is the Synthesis, or harmonising all these sides of human life.

Since its field is so wide, Positivism is forced to deal with disparate topics side by side and on a common scheme. This forms the main difficulty which it has to encounter, and explains the antipathy which it arouses in the specialist schools of the day. Our age is one of Analysis—of fissiparous research. The Positive scheme is a search for Synthesis—a combination of knowledge with sympathy and with action. The central idea of Positivism is simply this: that, until our dominant convictions can be got into one plane with our deepest affections and also with our practical energies—until our most sacred emotions have been correlated with our root beliefs and also with our noblest ambition,—that is, until one great object is ever present to intellect, and to heart, and to energy —all at once—human life can never be healthy or sound.

They entirely mistake it who suppose Positivism to be merely a novel mode of satisfying man's inherent craving for some object of Devotion—who think that its aim is to replace God by Humanity and to substitute human Saints for Christ—that it is, as some jesters have said, an Atheistical kind of Salvation Army. That is mere ribaldry. All external acts of worship are to the rational Positivist' secondary details and variable conventions, as to which they are content to wait. No scheme of personal Salvation in Heaven can be compared with a synthesis of practical life on this earth.

Nor are they less mistaken who suppose that the end of Positivism is to clear up some philosophical conundrums: to tabulate the sciences to the satisfaction of learned specialists, or to arrive at useful truths in a new and compendious way. It entirely adopts the great maxim of the first of philosophers—"*not to know—but to act.*" This is the practical

motto of Positivism as it was of Aristotle's ethical system.

And it would be as great an error to suppose Positivism to be merely a new phase of Socialism, a mere social economy of any kind; that its business is to supersede existing society by another social organisation warranted to remedy all present evils, and to found a social millennium. Positivism insists that our social economy is the result of defective knowledge, neglect of moral and religious teaching, and anarchical habits of egoistic life. And the only remedy is the consensus of an organised philosophy, a reformed morality, and a permanent religion.

Positivism takes up each of these subjects in turn: spiritual, scientific, political; but it mainly insists on a convergence of them all—*i.e.* on a synthesis. Reformers treat the organism—man, and the organism—society, as if men were nothing but *brain*, others as if they were nothing but *feeling*, others as if human life were only *action*. They treat society as if its sole business were knowledge, or politics, or morality, or industry, or art, or worship. All current, political, all social, all religious movements extant are sectional: avowedly concerned with one side of life.

Positivism aims at being comprehensive, complete, and synthetic. It is at once a scheme of Education, a form of Religion, a school of Philosophy, a method of Government, and a phase of Socialism. To define it in terms of any one of these, or to describe it as being any one more than the others, is to mislead. There is no royal road to its understanding. It cannot be put in a nutshell, or analysed on a sheet of paper. It must grow into our conscience and sink into our conceptions by reflection and by experience. Its strength lies in the correspondence of its parts, and its aptness to meet the most different conditions; in its

power to calm the conflict within man's composite nature; and in its mastery over the storms which sweep across our intricate society. It can be set forth only by presenting it in a great variety of contrasted aspects; and its power to enforce conviction on widely different minds, resides not in any single effect that it produces, but in the convergence which it evolves out of heterogeneous and chaotic elements. This it does by the magic of synthesis.

IV

THE THREE GREAT SYNTHESES

THE controversies which have been aroused by Mr. Balfour's *Foundations of Belief*—especially the reply by Mr. Herbert Spencer in the *Fortnightly Review* 1895—afford a convenient text for stating again in the light of modern philosophical discussion the Positivist scheme of philosophic *Synthesis*, or co-ordination of ultimate principles. There are now before the world three such dominant schemes, each in its way covering the whole field of religious or synthetic philosophy. Each of the three has been sufficiently set forth in recent discussions. The three syntheses are :—

1. The *Absolute* Theological synthesis—*i.e.* the current orthodox religious philosophy, which, for the occasion, is sufficiently represented by Mr. Balfour.

2. The *Absolute* Scientific synthesis—*i.e.* the evolutionary scheme of the Universe—which is adequately represented by Mr. Spencer, its principal exponent and author.

3. The *Relative* Scientific synthesis—*i.e.* the human and planetary scheme of religious philosophy on the basis of positive science, which is exclusively taught by Auguste Comte.

These three syntheses do really cover the whole

field of debate; and all the varieties of religious philosophy may be brought under one or other of these heads. No doubt the Absolute Theology has infinite gradations from that of the Pope to Dr. Martineau's, from that of Islam to that of Mr. Stead. But they all agree in this—that there is some Supreme Will intelligible to Man and in contact with Man, by whom the entire Universe and all things in it physical, mental, and moral, have been from the first ordained, and are, and to infinite time will be, daily co-ordinated and ordered. Again, the Absolute Scientific synthesis covers all the attempts to explain, on scientific bases, the reign of uniform Law throughout the Universe and the co-ordination of things within it. The Positive Synthesis covers all schemes which deliberately limit philosophy and religion to Man and this planet, and seek for a merely *relative* co-ordination of our knowledge and our conduct in the sphere of things that Man can come to know, and to the course of conduct which is useful to man.

There cannot indeed be more than these three general syntheses in the widest sense. For, though there is a Metaphysical Theology, and possibly a Metaphysical Science, Metaphysics, or quasi-scientific hypotheses in an unverified condition, are merely forms of compromise, hybrids, bastard types, as the Athanasian Creed would put it, touching Theology as dispensing with proof, and touching science as pretending to its terms. *Absolute* and *Relative* cover the whole field of logic; and so also do *Theology* and *Science*, if in Theology we include all arbitrary hypotheses, and in Science we include all forms of positive demonstration. There can hardly be a *relative* theological synthesis of a serious kind. For, though negroes and esoteric Buddhists might invent a system of divine emanations and decrees limited to this earth,

or even to particular spots and families, such crude superstitions could hardly be reckoned as a philosophy. There are—and there can only be—three great typical forms of general synthesis: (1) The Absolute Theology of God or Gods creating and ruling the Universe; (2) Some Absolute scheme of scientific generalisations pervading and explaining the Universe; (3) The Relative synthesis of positive science limited in space to the earth and our system, limited in time to the historic record, and limited in aim to human conditions and requirements.

It is not proposed now to discuss Mr. Balfour's book—*The Foundations of Belief*—except as it presents in a convenient form the average type of the looser theology. Mr. Spencer, like Professor Huxley, like Dr. Martineau, has shown what a mere parody of his opinions that book offers to the world under the name of Naturalism. Mr. Balfour is a most graceful writer, a most ingenious debater, and a highly interesting personality of great subtlety and wide culture. But his philosophic level is that of a popular preacher in a University pulpit. As such we may fairly take him as a really authoritative type of modern theological adaptation. Mr. Spencer had no difficulty in showing how completely Mr. Balfour misconceived the Evolution Synthesis, how loose is his own logic in attack, and how vague, and yet preposterous, are the hypotheses which he calls "the certitudes of religion." Mr. Spencer gave us a complete exposure of "Mr. Balfour's Dialectics"; but Mr. Spencer's own Absolute Synthesis has been abundantly explained in his elaborate and voluminous works, and we shall find no real difficulty in stating his conception of Evolution as the pervading law of the Universe.

Mr. Balfour is master of a style of really rare beauty and charm, and his interesting mode of eloquence is

curiously adapted to his mysterious and mighty theme. But the vagueness inseparable from this type of eloquence makes it sometimes difficult to grasp his meaning. Almost every idea he offers us is clothed in metaphor or epigram—the epigram being bright, and the metaphor being suggestive, graceful, and at times almost rising to the level of poetry. But in philosophy metaphors are dangerous resources. It was said of John Austin that he weeded every metaphor out of his *Jurisprudence* until his sentences became repulsively dry. Mr. Balfour's sentences are redolent and brilliant with flowers of metaphor, until we lose sight of the ground beneath them. And in this allusive style it is not quite evident what the terms exactly mean. He uses "natural science" as if it covered sociology, psychology, and even philosophy; he uses "phenomena" as if they were limited to the facts of physical nature; and he uses "perception" as if it meant sometimes the report of the senses and sometimes the sole instrument of scientific knowledge.

As becomes a professional "doubter," he makes so profuse a use of negatives that it is at times difficult to disentangle them, and now and then it looks as if he said the exact contrary of what he means. As in Mr. Henry James's critical essays we have to count the negatives, in order to see if they are odd or even in number. Here is a case. Mr. Balfour writes (p. 292) —"it must *not* be supposed that I intend to *deny*, either that it is our business to 'reconcile' all beliefs, so far as possible, into a self-consistent whole, *or that*, because a perfectly coherent philosophy cannot as yet be attained, it is, in the meanwhile, *a matter of complete indifference* how many contradictions and obscurities we admit into our provisional system." What does this mean? Mr. Balfour must *not* be supposed to *deny*, *i.e.*, he *affirms* two things—the first, that

we have to "reconcile" beliefs — the second he surely means not to affirm, but to disclaim. As the words stand, he asserts, that it is a matter of complete indifference to him how many contradictions and obscurities he admits into his system! This sentence is plainly a merely verbal slip. *Or that* must mean *or to affirm that.* But when one uses a tangle of negatives unintended results will arise. Many of his readers will agree with this curious confession of his: but does it lie in Mr. Balfour's mouth to make so monstrous an admission of confusion and fogginess? This is indeed the scepticism which he so oddly puts into the mouth of "Naturalism," and hence of Positivism, when he says (p. 299) "I cannot either securely doubt my own certainties *or be certain about my own doubts.*" This is verily the Doubter's nemesis!

The essence of Mr. Balfour's argument is one which has great interest for Positivists, and indeed is an argument which they have constantly employed to a very different end. He says that, since "things in themselves" are unknowable and even unthinkable, since the "Absolute" and the "Infinite" are beyond our grasp,—since the law of universal causation cannot help us to a Primal Cause, and cannot prove itself,—since the Spencerian Synthesis rests on a sublime background of Unknowable,—since the Darwinian evolution cannot explain the origin of Duty, or of Beauty, or of Devotion,—since every Absolute Synthesis rests ultimately on a mystery,—since science breaks down in the task of rewriting the Book of Genesis and of expounding the origin of the Universe,—since atheism, materialism, and monism fail to account for the evolution of all that is noblest in the human soul—why not admit (says Mr. Balfour) that the hypothesis of a Creator, the possibility of a Providence, and the divine entity of a human soul "without body parts, or

passions," may be mysteries no more difficult to swallow than Mr. Spencer's Unknowable or Mr. Darwin's evolution of morality? And they are certainly far more soothing to the truly religious spirit of good Churchmen. And having come to this comfortable conclusion of "Scepticism all round," Mr. Balfour goes down to Westminster and fights tooth and nail for that odious remnant of sacerdotal bigotry, the episcopal Church in Wales!

Now this elaborate argument of Mr. Balfour's as to the insoluble mystery of ultimate ideas and of Primal Causes, as to the confusion involved in any materialistic origin of the Universe, is not at all new. Mr. Balfour has restated the old dilemmas with grace, wit, and subtlety, although he has not strengthened them a point. But the curious thing is, that the entire set of these objections, most of which have divided philosophers for a century, was first cast into an organic and consistent scheme, and was first made the basis of a new philosophy by no one but by Auguste Comte himself. It is now just eighty-five years since Comte first published his scheme of a new Positive Philosophy —which rested as its basis on the futility of the metaphysical, and materialistic solutions of the Universe which Mr. Balfour now describes as the creed of Naturalism, and of Positivism. Whether these solutions or any of them are the creed of "Naturalism" does not concern us. True Positivism (much as he may be surprised to learn it) rests upon a profound sense of the futility of those very dogmas of which Mr. Balfour has again very cleverly made mincemeat.

The difference between us, however, is this. Philosophic Doubt "all round" drives Mr. Balfour into the arms of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the transcendent "contradictions and obscurities"—of the

Athanasian creed. There he can revel in "complete indifference" to reason and to sense, neither "securely doubting his own certainties," nor being "certain about his own doubts." It drove Comte, and it drives us, to say—Away with these metaphysical conundrums, with these impotent theogonies and geogonies, with all these yearnings after a knowledge of the Universe, and with all these Absolute philosophies of the All as it is, and the Infinite Cause and Ruler of the All—and let us work out man's salvation upon earth with all the real knowledge about it and about himself which can be proved by practical logic to give us definite results so far as we yet know! That is the Positivist syllogism upon the basis of the very premisses that we are ready to accept quite as fully as Mr. Balfour can. Philosophic Doubt as to "things in themselves" and Absolute Causes leads Mr. Balfour to give a "provisional assent" to theological hypotheses as not more extravagant than those of Mr. Herbert Spencer. It leads us to give a "positive assent" to what philosophy, science, and experience can show us to be proved about "things as they are," about this world and man as we find them. And we prefer this positive knowledge and these practical efforts to merely comfortable hopes and the venerable Mahatmas revealed to Jews and Syrians two thousand years ago.

Comte objected to Ontology in all its forms so violently that he used the term Metaphysician as a reproach, and he said the philosophy of a Congo negro showed more good sense than all the metaphysics of Germany. This may have been an extreme epigram; but such a book as Mr. G. H. Lewes's *History of Philosophy* follows much the same line in its criticism of all ontological speculation as does Mr. Balfour. Now, Mr. Lewes's criticism of

Ontology leads him directly to be satisfied with the Positive Philosophy; and his later works give a more or less positivist answer to the various problems of ontology, causation, and ultimate grounds of belief, now treated by Mr. Balfour. But Mr. Lewes's solution is very far from being an appeal to rally round the Church, which is what Mr. Balfour's book practically ends in being, but it is, that we must learn to acquiesce in the Unknowable Infinite and the insoluble enigmas of all beginnings and of all ends, including those of Earth and of Man, not as being the field of Religion, but as the circumambient æther, in which the solid mass of man's knowledge floats. That is in the main the Positivist conclusion.

Mr. Balfour's whole argument comes to this:—that as the heterodox dogmas have their own dilemmas, why need we stumble over the dilemmas of orthodoxy? But how feeble and how treacherous a weapon is this! That is what Rome has always said to the Protestant—the Trinity is so big a mystery, why need you gasp over Transubstantiation? The Trinitarian says to the Unitarian—If you admit a Creator, why not admit an Incarnation? The Christian says to the Deist, until you have explained the origin of your God, you need not parade difficulties about Miracles. Everybody can use the same argument, everybody does use it—Jews, Mussulmans, Buddhists, Mahdists, Medicine men, Spookists and Theosophists—all say—Our mystery is not more mysterious than Christian Incarnations or scientific Unknowables. Mr. Stead and Mrs. Besant say—If you cannot explain the mystery of revelation, why do you mock at telepathy and Mahatmas? Why indeed?

It is a very queer argument on which to base the Christian creed, that, as we may have grounds for doubting the objective reality of an external world,

may not the creeds be hardly more doubtful? Like a new Athanasius, Mr. Balfour rises up to say, "Since there is not one incomprehensible, but three (and perhaps many) incomprehensibles, not one uncreated, but three (and perhaps many) uncreated, the logical objections to an incomprehensible and to an uncreated now fall to the ground!" He, therefore, that will be saved must feel it "a matter of complete indifference how many contradictions and obscurities" he admits into his creed. But because many irrational answers have been given to irrational questions, it is not open to the rational man *therefore* to adopt that one of the answers which he finds to be most soothing. The Positivist reply is, Leave the irrational question alone, and occupy your energies and thoughts with practicable and rational problems.

As in things intellectual Mr. Balfour falls back upon general scepticism, so in things practical his mainstay is found in a sub-cynical pessimism. Apart from the purposes of creation, mankind is "a race with conscience enough to feel that it is vile, and intelligence enough to know that it is insignificant." This earth will ere long be a lifeless void, and everything will be as if it had never been. What can any one of us do that is truly useful or permanent? Why should we strive in vain; what can matter any earthly achievement? And so forth in the strain of Ecclesiastes the Preacher —Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity! This language was very well in the *fin de siècle* Wertherism of an Alexandrian Jew, or in the *Imitation* of a mediæval monk. But how oddly it sits upon the leader of His Majesty's Opposition! If the human race is so vile, and human effort so futile, why not retire into a hermitage, weep and pray till God vouchsafe to take us to Himself? Even Irish Nationalists can hardly be viler than the rest of us. If the human race be so

contemptible, why should we care for our country, our family, or even this Empire? If it will be "all the same a hundred years hence," why should statesmen, preachers, thinkers, toil and moil at all? If man be this utter Yahoo and earth this speck of dust, why should Mr. Balfour wear himself nightly in doing the dirty work of Irish landlords and London aldermen, and in battling for the privileges of Prelacy in Wales?

And all this scepticism and cynicism is to redound to the honour and glory of God! We are such utter beasts, says Mr. Balfour, that God must have created us in His own image! This life is such a farce that there must be a Heaven, and let us hope a Hell! Since nothing is really true, nothing can be too preposterous to believe, if it gives us consolation to believe it. If the child cries for the Moon, surely it must have it. If men like to go to Heaven, to Heaven they shall go. At any rate, if they still cling to earth, they must be taught that earth is little more than a temporary hell, where we phantoms squeak and gibber till the other place is hot enough. Such are the unspeakable mercies of Omnipotent Goodness!

Well! but this line of argument would equally apply to many creeds and to most schemes of supernatural salvation. If "at the root of every rational process there lies an irrational process" (p. 322), if "the certitudes of science lose themselves in depths of unfathomable mystery" (p. 288), why not revert to Plato's "ideas," to the "music of the spheres," the transmigration of souls, to Transubstantiation, to Mahatmas, to anything we find ingenious or hopeful? Mussulmans, Buddhists, Romanists, and Mormons may all welcome a theory of Revelation based on the radical untrustworthiness of human Reason and the mysterious collapse of human Science. But, since this blight of doubt afflicts the whole field of man's

imaginations and convictions, why is the Archbishop of Canterbury to get the benefit of the doubt, and not the Pope or Mrs. Besant? All things being alike doubtful, and no one of us being even "certain about his own doubts," this new "Analogy" leaves it open to every man to believe just what catches his fancy; he can give "a provisional assent" to anything, however irrational it may seem; he can see "the preferential action" of Providence in strengthening the defenders of the British empire; and, in the communings of his own secret chamber, each of us can please himself in recognising "the halting expression of a reality beyond our reach, the half-seen vision of transcendent Truth" (p. 219). "Half-seen" indeed it is!

We may now bring out some of the contrasts, some of the analogies, the points of contact, of correspondence, of opposition, in these three great types of general synthesis. It will be very instructive, and, to those who know little of Positivism, surprising to see how much the Positive or Human Synthesis goes hand in hand with the Theological Synthesis in moral and spiritual idea, how much it concedes to it in intellectual analysis, and how completely it repudiates those things which Theology has always most passionately urged against Materialism. The Relative Synthesis has none of those over-ambitious, unverifiable generalisations, so incommensurate with Man's limited intelligence, which Theology casts in the teeth of the Absolute Synthesis of Science. The Relative Synthesis cannot be charged with that inhuman, unsympathetic, unspiritual tone which Theology (not unjustly) imputes to the Absolute Synthesis. The religion and philosophy of Humanity do not exhibit "the pitiless glare" of a creed presenting "an universal flux ordered by blind causation,"

and all the other horrid phantoms of atheistic materialism, effectively paraded by the eloquence of Mr. Balfour.

One of the central points of combat between Theology and Science, ever since the age of Galileo, has been that Theology is anthropocentric, whilst Science is daily showing us the infinitesimal littleness of Man in the Universe. Theology, says Mr. Spencer, teaches us that "the Power manifested in thirty millions of suns made a bargain with Abraham," and, he might add, suffered a horrid death as a malefactor to redeem the human mites on one minor planet revolving in the train of one minor sun. What, says Mr. Spencer, is human civilisation two thousand years after that transcendent sacrifice? And what has God done for the million planets revolving round the thirty millions of other suns? Science, he says very truly, can accept no anthropocentric or geocentric view as conclusive, seeing that it has been building up for centuries a mountain of observations about forms of life and of matter having no conceivable relation to Man or being actively injurious to Man.

The answer to this, attempted by Theology, and repeated by Mr. Balfour with a sort of vague quietism, that the mystery of the Incarnation makes all clear: that God has chosen the infinitesimally small to confound the infinitely great—is hardly above the level of a fashionable curate. The *crux* remains insoluble. In face of the infinity of the Universe revealed by science and also of its infinite activity, so sublimely incurious of Man, or so ruthlessly antagonistic to Man, the old tales about the loving fatherhood of the Creator and the Divine Humanity of his Son become a truly comic hyperbole, which no shuffling about "preferential action" and "half-seen visions of transcendent Truth," can commend to honest sense.

On the other hand, the Infinity in space, in time, and in proportion which Science reveals, whilst utterly destructive of any anthropocentric or geocentric scheme of theology, is also alien to the very basis of religion, of duty, and of activity, in so far as it reduces humanity to the level of the worm, and converts his earthly abode into a casual atom. In killing theology, science has paralysed religion: for the noblest attributes of the human spirit, the inspiration to active conduct, and the power to frame synthetic conceptions, are all alike endangered. The scientific specialist says, "That is no affair of mine, see thou to that"—but religion and philosophy both feel the dilemma. Mr. Spencer declares that the object of religion is the Unknowable—a formula at which even agnostics smile. He declares that the basis of philosophy is Evolution—alternate "differentiation" and "integration," and so forth, through his famous root principles.

The ruck of scientific specialists are not concerned with any synthesis; but it can hardly be said that Mr. Spencer's synthesis of Evolution throughout the Universe has obtained any general or even wide acceptance amongst philosophers. Agnostics like Professor Huxley, or Mr. Leslie Stephen, entirely disclaim any systematic religion other than that of moral conduct and honest thought. And Mr. Herbert Spencer himself plaintively admits that the Evolutionary Synthesis of the Universe, though the only one which satisfies his intellect, is far from being a consoling or an inspiring creed. In the close of his reply to Mr. Balfour he says that "*there is no pleasure* in the consciousness of being an infinitesimal bubble on a globe that is itself infinitesimal compared with the totality of things." *There is no consolation in the thought* that we are at the mercy of blind forces, he says. "Contemplation of a Universe which is with-

out conceivable beginning or end, and without intelligible purpose, *yields no satisfaction.*" And it is "a regretful inability" that Mr. Spencer feels, in that he cannot accept the interpretation of Mr. Balfour and his fellow theologians. These very honest, very pathetic, very significant words of Mr. Spencer at the close of his philosophic career deserve profound attention.

Mr. Balfour has only again, for the hundredth time, put into eloquent and passionate form the sense of despair and horror experienced by the ordinary religious man and woman when confronted with this blank, this chaotic, this merciless spectre of a Universe—having no Power to protect us mites, no loving Being to love and revere, no order to trust in, no future to hope for. Now, I say most frankly, that in this, all my sympathies are with Mr. Balfour and religious men and women. I go much further. And I say that this yearning for a Power to revere, a Being to love, for a *πού στῶ* in the moral chaos of these blind forces, is a normal and indestructible instinct of humanity, which no philosophy and no science can ever drive out. Theology meets a spontaneous craving of the human soul which Evolution does not meet, which Mr. Spencer mournfully confesses that it cannot meet. And, therefore, I say it without hesitation or qualification, the absolute synthesis of the Universe as proclaimed by science—any absolute synthesis of the Universe whatever—fails to satisfy me, and even fills me with a sense of moral and spiritual repulsion.

Am I then "on the side of the angels," as Mr. Balfour's party chief used to say? Certainly not! For, the relative synthesis of Humanity offers an exit out of this almost hopeless dilemma, and presents us with a final *eirenicon* between religion and science. We fully adopt the demand of the religious spirit for

a human or anthropomorphic, sympathetic Providence, for a world of order, in which the individual may feel protection, permanence, a being to serve, and a future after death. We utterly repudiate the childish hypotheses which satisfied Arab sheikhs and hysterical monks. On the other hand, we fully adopt the conclusions of science which Mr. Spencer has so often tabulated, as to our being but infinitesimal bubbles on an infinitesimal speck of dust, whirling about in an inconceivable Universe, itself having no intelligible purpose and presenting unfathomable mysteries. But we utterly repudiate the dismal suggestion that the business of man is to contemplate this unfathomable Universe, without pretence of sympathy or hope of ever reaching to its realities. The *relative* synthesis accepts the indestructible spirit of religion and also the irrefragable teaching of science. It rejects the guesses of theology: it rejects the inhuman nothingness presented by a blank infinity of Evolution.

What is the solution? It is this. A *relative* synthesis admits that *absolutely*, *in rerum naturâ*, the Earth is an infinitesimal bubble, and Man a very feeble, casual, and faulty organism. Nothing that science can prove about the Universe and its infinities, or about Man and his limitations, need shock or disturb us. Our reason convinces us that it is as near the real truth as our minds can as yet penetrate—and that is enough. But *relatively*, *i.e.* in relation to our intellectual powers, to our knowledge, to our human wants, to our powers of emotion and of action, *relatively*—this Earth is to us mites the true centre of the World, and Humanity is far the noblest, strongest, most humane, most permanent organism that we can prove to inhabit it. The Universe is all very grand, but it is a mere background; even the Solar System, which is all that we *can* know well, and all that we

need to know at all, is only the environment of our human lives; it gives us the soil on which we stand, the atmosphere we breathe.

We continue to increase our knowledge of Nature, but we feel that the needs of Man are the main ends of knowledge. Philosophy, morality, religion, again resume a geocentric, an anthropocentric basis. Our synthesis is frankly geocentric, our religion is frankly anthropomorphic. A science which is not normally and mainly devoted to problems of this Earth or to problems of human nature, is always in danger of losing itself in idle conundrums. A synthesis which pretends to explain and correlate the Universe, when it as yet transcends man's powers to explain and correlate the solar system—is in danger of degenerating into a pretentious imposture. And a religion which is not truly and earnestly anthropomorphic, or rather entirely human, is in danger of becoming mere dry bones and logical formula—indeed of being no religion at all, but a pretext for having no religion. All these dangers to science, to philosophy, to religion are avoided by the *relative* or human and earthly synthesis —which admits, as freely as Mr. Balfour or Mr. Spencer, that *absolutely, in rerum naturâ*, the Earth is a bubble, and Man is a mote; but which insists that for purposes of human progress and happiness we must think and act as if the world revolved round our globe, and Man was its master and its ruler.

The consequences of this great revolution in thought, the substitution of the *relative* for the *absolute* philosophy, might be indefinitely extended. All the moral and spiritual objections to the contemplation of an Infinity to which we can ascribe no human feeling, and in which we can see no intelligible plan, disappear to men who habitually respect a visible and human Providence, to whom Infinity is a colourless

background. "Blind causation" cannot appal men whose interests are centred in the moral causation of human progress. Human reason has no preponderant part in a world which is to us pervaded with a sense of human love and human energy. The mysteries around us and within us do not paralyse men whose dominant desire is to achieve some practical result in the world of reality and to hand it on better to their successors. There is no difficulty felt by men in turning aside from conundrums, however ancient or fascinating, when they are trained to feel how precious is every hour of active life.

The survival of the fittest, the struggle for existence, the tendency to degenerate, and all the other tendencies which biologists note as incident to organisms in our unstable planetary conditions are true enough as tendencies, and we are perfectly prepared to accept the final demonstrations of real science thereon. We are not ready to jump for joy at every new hypothesis which seems to threaten humanity with an early dissolution. And in any case we are confident that humanity, which has overcome far more ominous antagonists, has ample resources within itself to counteract any tendencies which threaten its progress. And thus it comes about that a *relative* synthesis—which means a philosophy and a religion that has its central field in this Earth and its dominant inspiration in Humanity—has open to it all the solid truths which modern science can establish, free from the sophisms and evasions of Theology, and at the same time has open to it all the elevating thoughts, hopes, consolations, and yearnings which are conferred by a loving and submissive reverence for a sympathetic and mighty Providence.

V

THE HUMAN SYNTHESIS

PHILOSOPHY should mean such a co-ordinated system of thought as may cause the whole mental apparatus to converge. Religion should mean that concentration of belief and feeling on one dominant Power, whereby our whole human nature is purified and disciplined, and so is constantly inspired to the strenuous accomplishment of man's true work.

The older and current forms of Philosophy and of Religion fail precisely at this point: they do not systematise all our ideas; they do not pretend to organise the entire life of man.

The degenerate pupils of Kant and of Hegel who now lay claim to the title of philosophers offer us nothing that even assumes to be a philosophy of science, or of conduct, or of history, or of society. Their so-called philosophy is limited to ontological and psychological enigmas. The evolutionist schools no doubt tread lightly over these metaphysical bogs; but on their side they entirely drop history, and we pass in their pages from prehistoric and half-savage man to the sceptics of the eighteenth century. A philosophy with such enormous voids is not really synthetic.

Those schools of thought which adopt a theological basis, or admit supernatural ideas, whether Catholic,

Neo-Christian, or frankly Deist, have a great deal to say about history, or rather about arbitrary portions of history, explaining them freely by the light of their supernatural hypotheses; and they certainly do understand the great primary truth, that Religion is, and always has been, the dominant principle of man's social life. But then, alas! these theological philosophers have nothing to tell us about the development of modern science, about the statics or the dynamics of that industrial society which forms the complex problem of modern life. None have anything serious to say about secular education, scientific politics, political economy, science, health, poetry, art. All these things, that is, four-fifths of life, lie outside the range of Theology, just as they lie outside the range of Metaphysics.

Many of these subjects are no doubt strongly grappled with by the materialist schools of thought, which deal in a scientific, and often in a philosophic, spirit with science, politics, economy, and the like. But, inasmuch as their history, such as it is, jumps from the Bone Age to the age of Diderot and Hume, they deliberately ignore just those parts of life which Theology, with all its shortcomings, directly takes as its sphere. The instincts of the human soul towards some great Power external to itself, the desire to be brought into communion with the World around us, to rest in some definite conception of the way in which We and the World around us are related to each other, the yearning to know more of that fellowship we feel within us towards the mighty whole of which we are sons and members; finally, the desire to put forth these instincts of sympathy in some common act of adoration—these are things, we say, of vast power, utterly ineradicable from the heart of man, essential to the life of man; nor can they be

disposed of by an unintelligible chapter or by a logical formula or two. They must lie deep as the great fundamental stratum of all philosophy; they must coincide with its entire field. The system in which these things have no place, nay, in which they do not take the first place, may contain many useful things; but it is not a system of human life. That is to say, it is not Philosophy; much less is it Religion.

The conventional answer to this is as follows: Philosophy and religion have each special spheres of their own; philosophy has nothing to do with science, or history, or politics, or devotion; religion has nothing to do with thought, or logic, with worldly wisdom, or physical health, or earthly wealth. The business of philosophy, they say, is with abstract existence; that of religion, with the Soul and its future.

In this answer is revealed the reason why Philosophy and Religion have to-day so little permanent hold over men, why their accepted authority is so small, and the anarchy within them so deep. Philosophies, which profess to give men an ultimate scheme of ideas, leave out of their scheme vast regions of ideas, some of them the most intense and profound that stir men to act. Religions, which profess to concentrate men's spirit on the sole end of life, leave out and profess to despise almost all that, even to the noblest natures, makes life worth living: this, they tell us, belongs to some other sphere, that of science, politics, art, anything but religion. The natural result follows. Human nature soon wearies of metaphysical sublimities and of theological ecstasies, and it deals with life as it best can, framing explanations of it and ideals for it in its own practical way. And this way cannot be reconciled with the philosophies and the religions which strive to eliminate nature. It combats them, baffles them, and finally silences them all.

Philosophy and Religion must remain thus impotent, a byword and a jest to clear-sighted and energetic natures, whilst they thus are content to nibble at separate sides of human nature. One sees at once why they hold themselves restricted to special corners of man's being. Philosophy, in so far as it is metaphysical, cannot consent to surrender itself uniformly to the logic of positive observation, and so cannot touch the real problems of life and of knowledge. Philosophy, so far as it is materialist, cannot bring itself to recognise the spiritual nature of man, and so cannot touch the problems of Veneration, Adoration, and the highest sympathies. Religion again, fondly clinging to the supernatural as if that were its sole *raison d'être*, dreads to be dragged into the real and active world, where everything supernatural is grotesque; and so religion stands to-day, like a pathetic Gothic ruin, soothing and touching the finer natures amongst us still, but quite outside of and apart from the busy life of men.

Philosophy, equally with Religion, is nothing if not *synthetic*—that is, co-ordinating and harmonising—and also *comprehensive*, that is, correlating all sides of thought and life. Leave any sides of thought or life wholly out of sight in your philosophy or your religion, and these introduce conflict, and ultimately confusion. The reason is obvious from the very definition of philosophy or of religion. The one professes to set on an immutable basis the highest generalisations of thought, the paramount ideas of the human mind. The other professes to hold out to us as ever present and eternal verities the highest aims of human life, and the paramount object of our noblest affection. Is it not plain that utter failure must ensue if the paramount ideas of Philosophy, or the paramount ideal of Religion, cannot be got into line with the practical

needs of life, or the general sympathies and instincts of our nature?

Philosophy and Religion are not the same; because Philosophy is a synthesis of knowledge and of ideas, and Religion is a synthesis of nature and of life. But both are the same in this, that they must give a complete harmony, or they give none at all. The one must effect a complete synthesis of the whole intellectual sphere; the other, a complete synthesis of the whole vital energy. Philosophy and Religion, affecting to deal with the highest, and yet knowing nothing of many of the commonest and widest truths that concern man, are mere impostures. Philosophy and Religion must be able to account for the whole of thought, the whole of life, or they do nothing. Now, no one of the current systems of Philosophy or Religion either does account for the whole of thought, the whole of life, or even pretends to do so. When Auguste Comte recalled men to the true question—What must Philosophy explain, what must Religion effect?—he started, even if he had done nothing else, a conclusive revolution in the method of human thought, in the ideal of man's life.

We are persuaded that all these things can be, and must be, reconciled, brought into harmony. We say there is a scheme of thought whereby the religious emotions, the scientific beliefs, the practical energies, may all have their natural play and freedom, yet may all work one with another, not working, as they do now, one against the other. This scheme of thought, to sum it up in a phrase, consists in referring everything human to the continuity of human progress, on a uniform basis of demonstrable law. This is a Human Synthesis, meaning by this term a system at once of thought and of life, coextensive with human nature, omitting nothing that is human or ministers to

humanity, never wandering into the superhuman, or any Absolute Universe; but, on the contrary, consistently grouping everything we know or do round the permanent good of Man, conceived in the highest and widest sense.

This Human Synthesis thus differs from every kind of inquiry that is purely philosophical or scientific, from any that is purely literary. It looks upon research not as an end, but as an instrument to effect some real result, now, presently, or hereafter. Abstract thought we need, special research we need, but no research, no kind of thought is ever to be a mere law, a sole end, to itself: arbitrary, absolute, unhuman, irreligious.

This Human Synthesis differs, too, from every reforming scheme in that it invariably treats the present as a mere continuation of the past, and the future as simply the necessary and destined product of the past and the present. Social philosophers and idealists are wont to talk as if the present were a muddle hardly worthy of attention, as if the future could be recast in new and superior moulds, flinging the rotten past away as dross and rubbish. Even the philosophers of Evolution consistently forget that the generation of men to be are being daily evolved out of the whole of the generations that have been. Evolutionists are the readiest of all to tear up whole regions of human history as wastepaper, or to discharge the product of vast ages of man into the deep, as some dangerous excrement of the race.

There is no test so sure for any claim to treat of things human as this—does it give a complete theory of the whole history of man's past? When we say history, we imply of course more than annals: some things not always included even in the learning of the Gibbons, the Macaulays, and the Freemans. History

means the whole series of the laws and phenomena traceable in the development of the human race, including the prehistoric, the uncivilised, and the oceanic world, and including the history of science, of philosophy, of religion, of industry, of manners, of economy, of mechanics, of art: in short, the history of society much more than the history of war or politics. They who can give us a scientific and consistent theory of history in this sense are alone competent to give us an adequate scheme of philosophy or, I say it advisedly, a complete ideal of religion.

In the early days of Christianity, miraculous power was regarded as the test of a divine mission. We might almost say in these days that the test of a philosophical mission in sociology, that is, power to cast accurately the laws that determine the Present and the Future, is the fact of having given an adequate explanation of the Past.

After five-and-twenty years of continuous study of the historical theory of Auguste Comte, we have come for our part to believe that there is none other with which it can be even compared. I am far from supposing that a theory constructed forty years ago by one who was a man of science and a philosopher, not a specialist in history, is absolutely final or infallible. Such an idea would be laughable to a Positivist, who can smile equally at the petty criticisms of some historical pedant or some political partisan. It is beyond all question more lucid, more complete, more real, more scientific than the general theory of Hegel; and after Hegel's what have we? We turn to the most popular of the philosophic writers of our time. Do we find in Mr. Herbert Spencer, in Mr. Lewes, in Mr. Mill, in Mr. Huxley, or Mr. Darwin, nay, in Mr. Carlyle or Mr. Freeman, historians by profession, anything that can be called a general conception of the entire course

of human evolution, moral, practical, intellectual, and physical?

Every attempt to found a sound conception of Philosophy or of Religion without a real and complete Sociology[1] is futile. And every attempt to form a Sociology on anything short of a complete concrete theory of man's progress in civilisation is an attempt to found Sociology out of one's head, to spin a system out of one's inner consciousness. We hear much nowadays of the necessity for basing our Sociology on principles of Evolution. Precisely so. But what does Evolution, applied to the progressive civilisation of man, imply if it be not a systematic history of human work from the time of the Cave-men and the Lake-men to that of the great Hordes; and thence onward to the Theocracies, the Polytheists, the Greeks and the Romans, and so on to the history of Catholicism, of Feudalism, the dissolution of both, the Revolution, and modern industrial society? What we need is a complete scheme of Evolution throughout this entire series.

Another great difference there is which marks off the Positive Synthesis from all the actual philosophical schemes. It is, or rather it contains, a general Philosophy; but the Philosophy is merely one side of the system. It is an active, doing, changing system. It is not only a philosophy with a theory of what is being done, but it is a polity with a programme of what ought to be done, a society, a working body, one may say a Church, with a set of institutions to put its programme into action.

Positivism, by virtue of this Human Synthesis, never works out a theory, or enters upon a research for

[1] Purists in language will have at length to submit to this indispensable hybrid, which means the science of the elements and of the course of human society.

mere love of research, but in full sense of the vast importance of research wisely directed to contribute to human wants. Not that all speculation is necessarily with a direct and immediate design of present action and use. But it is never purposely idle, consciously aimless, due to mere intellectual curiosity as of boys intent on "odd and even."

To us this perpetual and aimless busying about problems, philosophical, scientific, literary, in mere vacuity or for mere vanity, with no social or intelligible motive but these, is one of the most melancholy spectacles of our time. Thousands of learned and ingenious minds are occupied in incessant re-shifting and re-sorting the infinite materials before us, teaching us nothing, preparing nothing, cumbering the field of knowledge and of thought, wasting good brain in multiplying chaos. For multitudes of these studious men never make up their minds on a single great problem of thought or of life; hardly know what it is that men need to know and need to help them in life; shrinking even from this first duty of a healthy understanding, so long only as they can soothe the itch of their cerebral curiosity.

Without saying that the counting of the pebbles on the sea-shore is an altogether idle and useless employment, we may truly say that interminable and purposeless wandering in the realm of knowledge is a demoralising and humiliating spectacle. Such are like the spirits seen by the Poet in Limbo, "who with desire languish without hope." Things of priceless value need to be known; and they are neglected. The enormous multiplication of minute and detached observations crowd out the really essential problems and truths. Worst of all, the habit of employing the intellect in purposeless researches, like schoolboys writing show verses or competing for a prize, unmans

the character, weakens the intellectual fibre, and lowers the standard of the age.

The work before the intelligence of man is practically infinite; the materials and possible fields of work are infinite; the relative strength of our intellect to cope with this work is small indeed. As Bacon said, the subtlety of nature is ever beyond the subtlety of man. Ten thousand years of the brightest genius, with millions and millions of fellow-workmen, will not suffice to accomplish all that man needs of discovery, knowledge, method, experiment, meditation, recorded observation, to make life all that it might be and ought to be. To accomplish it needs the complex organisation of an army, the discipline, co-operation, patience, division of labour, of a great government. And withal we have capable brains idly exhausting their powers in the meanest of curiosities, in the most contemptible pursuit of personal prizes. Never will philosophy be worthy of its mission till observers and thinkers can set themselves to labour again in that religious spirit in which the mediæval poets or the truly Catholic painters would begin their work with prayer. And if it be little now that the modern biologist or chemist could do with prayer, he might find the real essence of prayer in a heartfelt sense of social duty, of the human future to which his work is dedicated, of the majestic past from which every faculty he has is drawn.

It is here that the Human Synthesis stands in such contrast with the practice of so many schools, scientific, metaphysical, literary. It calls for a real co-ordination of all knowledge; that is to say, in order to bring knowledge to bear on life, it must be made connected and systematic.

Our separate lines of knowledge will go on to indefinite divergence, and will fail to support each

other, until we can weave them into one—form a single fabric of them. We must be able to answer such questions as these :—

1. What is the bearing of Astronomy on our general theory of Duty ?

2. What is the action and reaction of the science of Chemistry (for instance) on Sociology ?

3. What is the practical relation of Biology to Morals ?

Whilst we have no answer to these questions we have no real Philosophy, no synthesis, no stable basis of harmony between our thoughts and our life. Well ! in other words, we have no Religion. For religion (we say) is just that entire harmony between the human nature and the life our human nature leads.

It is the fashion now to dispense with all attempts at convergence, to decry it as a narrowing thing. Synthesis, religion, are words shrunk into a remnant of their old meaning, things that the world leaves to metaphysicians and devotees. But this assumption that all synthesis, any religion, is bad is simply part of the revolt against an incomplete synthesis, imperfect religion. It is against all the great examples of high civilisation in history. It does not rest on a shadow of evidence, or even of argument. The sceptical and revolutionary schools assume it as an *à priori* truth. But is the actual intellectual state and the present social condition the result of that state, so admirable and perfect as to justify its own transcendent origin, to prove itself without evidence ? Do our deepest brains and hearts rest satisfied in the intellectual state of to-day ? Far from it. Conservatives and reformers in thought alike agree that there is much out of joint ; they chafe at the discord of ideas which is ever hindering truth.

The older philosophy, that which grew up with

and out of Theology, has its definite connection between Astronomy and Duty. God, said the pious thinker, made the Sun and the planets to revolve round this earth as we see them, the Sun to give men light by day, the Moon by night; and He too revealed to men their duty and commanded them to fulfil it. And so on throughout all human knowledge. This is, no doubt, a very rude theory, and utterly unsatisfactory, but it is a synthesis of human thought. It is the theological synthesis. Mighty results have been achieved thereby.

Materialism, too, has given some sort of answer to the question (let us say)—What is the relation between Biology and Morals? Materialism asserts that the state of the moral nature is dependent on the state of the nervous system, for this determines the moral condition: in fact, that moral phenomena may be reduced to, and studied as, phenomena of nerve-tissue and the like; not morally, but biologically. This theory will land us in all the evils of fatalism; it will deprave our hearts and muddle our heads in the end. But it is a theory; it is the materialist synthesis; and, consistently worked out, it will effect great things, even if they be evil things.

Every great effort or phase of human civilisation has been due to the fact that there was a correspondence between the moving ideas current at the time and the life that men lived in it. There was always a congruity in men's thoughts; they could be correlated as a series or a system. Those who are content to base their entire existence on Revelation, Church, Authority of any kind, naturally regard any co-ordination of knowledge as superfluous. The Religion, Church, or Creed gives some general unity to men's thoughts and knowledge, and supplies the ground of the life lived. Those, on the other hand, who seek a

real, a scientific, natural basis for their life, who think that, come what may, knowledge and truth must underlie all action and all morality, all such (one would suppose) must insist on the need of having all real knowledge both reduced to order and organically applied to life.

There are many, professing to base themselves on science, who repudiate any idea of reducing science to system, who shrink from it with horror, and would leave science, and indeed life, to free research, that is, to chance. What is this but the Nihilism of philosophy? The Nihilists of Russia, it is said, desire to make a *tabula rasa*, to get rid at once of governments, institutions, religions, and then to start *de novo*. Our philosophical and scientific Nihilists protest against all system, especially any system that is to deal with the relative bearing of special researches. They would leave everything to the infallible inner afflatus of each inquirer's intellectual inspiration. Nihilism in philosophy is just as chimerical as Nihilism in society. All the reasons which apply to coherent institutions in society apply to the necessity for congruous and systematic ideas in thought.

There are undoubtedly some materialists who seriously seek for an intellectual synthesis, or general co-ordination of knowledge. But these, without exception, seem to look for an Absolute Synthesis. By this we understand an arrangement of knowledge in what purports to be the true relations of things to each other as they actually are, some attempt to form a picture of the Universe in its real shape. The synthetic philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer would seem to aim at a co-ordination of laws cosmological, biological, and moral round a common principle of Evolution; and he has worked out this evolution in many branches of science, the most notable things we

miss being the facts of general history, of religion, of churches, of governments, of poetry, of art. A synthetic philosophy should give us some key to a general conception of history. But the history of Evolution has hardly yet explained to us some famous events and persons, amongst whom we might count Moses, St. Paul, Mahomet, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Richelieu, Dante, St. Francis, à Kempis, Angelico, Scott; the Catholic Church, the Crusades, the Revolution.

A Human Synthesis is in direct contrast with any objective unity whatever. Giving up the attempt not only to know things as they really are in themselves, but to arrange our knowledge of things round any external centre, from any absolute standpoint, the Human Synthesis aims only at systematising the knowledge of that which affects man, and of grouping it round the fact of its relation to man. Theological thought referred all knowledge to the Creator and His will, His revealed purposes, and man's future destiny at His judgment-seat. Metaphysical thought, when it attempted any synthesis at all, found a centre in some general hypothesis of Nature, or the eternal fitness of things. A purely materialistic synthesis, or a synthesis based on Evolution, in like manner attempts some Absolute arrangement, conceived as coinciding, in a way more or less complete, with the actual tableau of natural law as we suppose it really energising in space.

It is a necessary result of the relativity of all our knowledge that we can have no Absolute Synthesis, just as we can attain to no objective truth. Even if our knowledge of a thing, passed as it is through the medium of our own untrustworthy senses, does come very closely in each special observation to that reality which we assume to be behind each group of sensations,

still when we attempt to arrange a series of such groups in any order, the human perspective, in which alone we can see them, must show them to us at an immeasurable distance from the real relation of these groups in the Universe, if any such relation indeed they have. The relativity of our knowledge is continuous, the mass of knowable things is truly infinite, the limitation of man's powers in comparison is complete. And so, the attempt of man to co-ordinate his knowledge in terms of absolute knowledge would be as idle as the attempt to reach absolute knowledge. If man cannot really know the objective World, much less can he take the objective World as the field and measure of his knowledge. Omniscience alone can do this.

Positivism, holding on to the necessity for a Synthesis, and abandoning the attempt at an absolute Synthesis, falls back, as the corollary to the relativity of knowledge, on the relative Synthesis, an arrangement of all our ideas, upwards and downwards, from the central point of Man in the widest and grandest conception of this term, that is, in the entire life of the human race in the highest of its ideals and its aspirations.

Let us see exactly what is meant by a relative Synthesis for Thought and Life. It is the real surrender of the attempt to get at things as they are *in rerum naturâ*; the effort to get even at absolute relations is surrendered as completely as we surrender the effort to get at absolute existences. We concentrate all our efforts on the work of getting a knowledge of things in so far as they affect man. No doubt this does not imply any vulgar utilitarianism or simply material interests in men. It means that our intellectual efforts are animated and marshalled by the principle of their ultimate bearing on human life.

This is what we mean by a religious philosophy, a religious tone of thought, a religious ideal of labour. Religion does not begin and end in just worshipping some ideal being or power, in simply holding to this or that doctrine about the origin of the universe, in hoping or fearing some imaginable good or evil in some imaginable after-world—this is not religion: right or wrong, it is the machinery of religion, the elements or instruments of religion. Religion has been strained down into these things by priests and zealots struggling to save something in the crash of orthodoxy, just as Jesuits would narrow Christianity down to the hierarchy or the Papal See. But religion in its proper, full sense means the state of unity and concentration of nature which results when our intellectual, moral, and active life are all made one by the continual presence of some great Principle, in which we believe, which we love and adore, and to which our acts are submitted, so that the perpetual sense of our dependence on that power goes deep down into all we think, or feel, or do. Men may believe in God, or Heaven, and Hell, and yet their souls may be torn with contending passions, and may have the restlessness and incoherence of wild beasts; souls like those of Philip of Spain, or Mary Stuart. To have religion, in any true sense, is to have peace.

This peace, no merely ecstatic and imaginary state of emotion, but a real concentration of all man's varied faculties in one work, has never been completely effected by any scheme whatever. It has been partially effected by certain schemes, religions, systems, or philosophies in special stages of civilisation.

Even Fetichism (the belief that activity in nature around us is due to the emotions and wills of the things that are seen in activity) gives some sort of harmony so far as it goes; so that, in a sense,

thought, feeling, and action are stimulated and disciplined thereby.

Theology, in its long history, has raised human nature to periods of wonderful energy. Polytheism produced prodigies of active intensity. Monotheism has had sublime power over the heart. But what can Monotheism do now to vitalise and discipline the intellect, absorbed as it is in its desperate struggle with science, fact, history, common-sense? Not that one would presume to say that Monotheism is incompatible with intellectual force in given minds, but that on its own confession it is quite unable to systematise the logic of modern thought, to disentangle the accumulated masses of modern knowledge.

A metaphysical creed, such as Pantheism or that gossamer Theism which is real Pantheism, may have some power over the emotional nature in some characters; much possibly over the intellect in the poetic spirits. But how will Pantheism, or any of those nebular hypotheses about God which now amuse subtle men of letters, how are these to concentrate the activity? Pantheism is a meditative, solitary, subjective creed. How can the imaginative sentiment that everything is God, and God is everything (certainly nothing that we immediately see or feel), nerve a man with patience, unbending will, enthusiastic concentration of purpose to work, that is, to change things, to overcome this, to develop that, to assert the supremacy of the human character in the midst of a faulty but improvable world? Pantheism, Neo-Theism, *Nephelo-Theism*, is the religion of scholars, not of men and women with work to do.

Turn to Materialism,[1] in any of its prevalent forms.

[1] It may be convenient to state that Materialism is throughout used for any general philosophy of the world and of man wherein the dominant force is not found in some conception of moral will and the highest sympathy.

Take a theory of an all-sufficing, all-explaining, all-pervading Evolution; it is a creed which may unquestionably stimulate the intellect, give it a central point; it may do the same for the activity. And, now that the development of the intellectual and active powers is treated as the sole end of education, that seems enough to many: so that they find a sort of synthesis in Evolution; it becomes to them a central idea, round which they can imagine a future generation basing its life and thought.

But what can Evolution do to give a basis for the entire man, how can it act on the moral nature and appeal to feeling, to veneration, devotion, love? The heart of man cannot love protoplasm, or feel enthusiastic devotion to the idea of survival of the fittest. Our moral being is not purified and transfigured by contemplating the dynamic potency that lies hid in Matter. Was any one ever made purer, braver, tenderer by the law of Perpetual Differentiation? The scorn which true brains and hearts having the root of the matter in religion launch against this assumption has been far from unjust or excessive. The dream that on the ruins of the Bible, Creed, and Commandments, in the space once filled by Aquinas and Bernard and Bossuet, or by *Paradise Lost*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the English Prayer Book, there might be erected a faith in the Indefinite Persistence of Force and the Potential Mutability of Matter, indeed deserves the ridicule it meets. Evolution will never eliminate the heart out of man so long as Mankind exists; nor will the spirit of worship, devotion, and self-sacrifice cease to be the deepest and most abiding force of human society.

See the dilemma in which the Theological and the Materialist Syntheses fatally revolve. The theological

explanation, starting from profound feeling and rude knowledge, would force under the conception of an anthropomorphic Providence the hard facts of the external world. Now the hard facts of this external world—law, sequence, struggle, imperfection, decay—are so familiar to all minds that they have split the conception of Almighty Benevolence till it bursts and cracks around us. To the theologians succeed the materialists, radiant with the triumph of law, evolution, differentiation, and the like; they extend these conceptions to man, to society, to the soul, and they in turn seek to group all ideas, whether cosmical or moral, round one supreme conception. Some call it Law, some Force, some Evolution, some Matter: all agree in this, that they think they have found one conception, theory, group of ideas, or system of thought, which can be carried through the whole range of phenomena and will explain all facts, cosmical or human, physical or moral, spiritual or social.

They have rushed on the other horn of the dilemma, with consequences even worse than those of theologians. The theologians revolt our understanding when they seek to force into the great moral conception of Providence the immutable world of law, and the waste disclosed by Nature. The Materialists revolt our hearts when they seek to crush the great moral and social forces of man, under conceptions that are physical not moral, by reference to sources that are intellectual not emotional. Against this the noble instincts of the best hearts and brains rebel, and most honourably rebel. Man and our human society, they cry, will be degraded into mere animality, if the sole supreme Power presented to our daily thought is a force such as we can trace in a chemical experiment, applicable to gases and cells just as much as to civilisation and to our human hearts. Well! reply the material-

ists, if the sole supreme Power presented to our daily thought be an omnipotent, ubiquitous Providence of Free Will and infinite Goodness, your science becomes a fairy-tale, your explanation of the world a tissue of mystical sophisms, and your life artificial, hysterical, useless.

Both objections are unanswerable, for both are true. But then both claims are equally inadmissible, equally false. The claim of Theology to make its Providence absolute and ubiquitous, paramount in the physical and moral Universe, is just as hollow as its claim to maintain the idea of fatherly protection and filial reverence is strong. The claim of Materialism to see nothing in human nature but the Reign of Law is as shocking as its claim to maintain the omnipresence of law is unassailable. Theology tries to make our ideas of Nature and Man reducible in the limit to the idea of God. Materialism tries to make our knowledge of the moral and spiritual world ultimately resolvable into our knowledge of the physical and material world. The one theory ends in becoming fantastic and even insincere; the other ends in being unhuman and even bestial. As we get out of the mysticism of Theology, we fall into the slime of Materialism.

No such Monism as either theory presents is possible in philosophy. Monism is a remnant of the old ambition of human thought in its infancy. Providence is an idea that cannot be extended throughout the realm of the External World as well as of Man, any more than the idea of Force and Evolution can be admitted to rule in the moral as well as in the physical world. We shall have eventually to recognise a Dualism, and thus we can save our belief both in Law and in Providence. The world of Law is everywhere visible in the Environment of Man, and, so

far as we can see, is the ultimate principle therein, manifested to the eye of man. The world of Law is traceable also in the world of Man, so far as man shares the nature of his environment, and is made up of it, and works with it. But face to face with the Environment there stands Man, presenting us not only with the phenomena of Law, but also with the phenomena of Will, Thought, and Love. Nor are these phenomena of Will, Thought, Love, of sympathy, and providence, and trust, and hope, at all ultimately reducible to phenomena of sequence and evolution, however intimately associated they be with them.

Thus, then, a Human Synthesis avoids both horns of the dilemma whereon Theology and Materialism strike in turn. It does not seek to extend the reign of Feeling into the Universe. It does not suffer Feeling to be absorbed into the External World and its laws. Man, dependent on his Environment and yet distinct from it, even in a way controlling it, remains a truly human Power, with a sublime ideal, and profound sympathies. Great as he is, he recognises the eternal limits of his power. Aspiring as he is, he does not forget the facts and the immutable conditions of his destiny. The World and Man stand in continuous correlation. And Man, renouncing all ideas of omniscience, as of omnipotence or omnipresence, accepts the bounds of his might; but he is humbly conscious that on certain fields his human heart is supreme, and that in these fields are to be found the solid parts of human happiness.

In the end, Theology, Metaphysics, Materialism, fail to establish any permanent unity in the whole of human life; the first failing to satisfy the full-grown intellect, the second being without any means of influencing the active nature, the third being a blank in the moral sphere.

A Human Synthesis, or central motive, reaches all of these equally, and brings them into harmony one with another. It incorporates and revives all that is solid or permanent in Theology, in Pantheism, in Materialism. If it does not concentrate the whole life of man on the idea of a Divine Being, assumed to be omnipotent, omniscient, and all good, it does concentrate man's life in the visible presence of a being, of surpassing greatness, beneficence, and wisdom, when compared with any single individual life. If it declines to treat seriously the mystical poetry that sees God in everything, and everything in God, still it does observe in the whole environment of man the forces and the potencies on which the great Human Being rests for its existence, and whereout it frames its own continual growth: forces and potencies which that Human Being can frequently control and can perpetually adapt.

In one sense, the Human Synthesis would have an analogy with Pantheism, if we looked only to Man, that is, to one side of the equation, and put aside that continual environment of man, the World, by acting on which man puts forth all his energy and works out his progress. Humanity can be traced indeed in every man and child; and in some sort we can find an incarnation of Humanity in every being of our race.

So, too, if a Human Synthesis does not treat the abstract notion of Evolution as the centre of its faith, it includes Evolution in every rational sense, inasmuch as it puts before our eyes perpetually, not the idea of a materialistic series of cosmical laws, but the real image of our great human whole, itself passing in a course of evolution to a higher state of being, whilst it gains every day a fuller command over that unbroken reign of law which the material world presents, and beneficently applies that command to its own well-being.

A Human Synthesis reaches to all parts of our nature equally. What can be a nobler spur to perseverance in intellectual effort, bracing and tempering it to its duty, than the sense that all we learn and all we teach is but the adding a new stone in the vast cathedral of intellectual combination, the edifice which was begun 10,000 years ago, and grows upward, increasing in completeness and richness with each generation? What better guide need we in the task of giving due correlation to our knowledge than the continual remembrance of the subtle complexity with which the sciences have worked together and reacted each on one another, and have combined together in ways so mysterious, and yet so real, for the practical accomplishment of human good?

The historic side of science, its moral power, its services to human nature, its unwearied and almost logical evolution, its intimate union with all that is stable and real in Humanity—these are all lighted up with a new colour by a Human Creed: these hard cold truths are ennobled by it, moralised, humanised. Science becomes in our eyes (not the godless puffing up of earthly reason), but in a new sense, sacred, beneficent, mighty; for we see it ever clothed in a vesture of great human qualities and high associations with human destiny. Sacred, we may say, by virtue of the great lives that have been given up for it by countless martyrs of science, myriads of unknown martyrs no less than the great known chiefs and captains in the battle: beautiful, by virtue of the exquisite subtlety and invention of its handiwork: beneficent, by virtue of the incalculable blessings that it has shed upon our once puny race: mighty, by virtue of the almost miraculous power with which it has endowed a species that was once as the Bushman and the Fuegian.

If this Human Synthesis show us law wherever we turn, and thereby sheds throughout the whole intellectual system a sense of rest, reality, utility, still it does not leave our hearts for ever in presence of a hard world of logical formulæ and physical sequence. It shows us at once law in Man, and Man himself the dispenser of law—using it for his own purposes, with infinite versatility and command, submitting himself with noble freedom and humility to its inevitable limits, and yet in the end the true master of the fixed conditions within which he finds his life has been cast, overcoming Nature, as Bacon says, by yielding to her wisely : at last, splendidly triumphant, not over law, nor in spite of law, but by means of law—man being himself the most beautiful and sublime illustration of law, and yet with his human will and his human brain and heart having that which is never in all its parts utterly commensurable with law, nor, in its ultimate mysteries, altogether explicable by law.

It is one of the most daring of the modern attempts to harmonise Theology and Science (chimerical and indeed unthinkable as the attempt itself may be judged) that God may be reconciled with the Reign of Law by calling Laws the thoughts of the Divine Mind, so that the physical laws of the world and the laws of human evolution are not protentialities inherent in things and in men, but are themselves the wishes and ideas of Omnipotence. In this way a somewhat sophistical Pantheism has sought to save at once the admitted immutability of law, its omnipresence, and the free will of a Divine Providence. The invariable sequences that science reveals in all things are not, we are told, external to the Creator, but are simply the way in which he chooses to work and to think. They who put this forth have hardly, one would judge, worked out all the consequences of this

somewhat irreverent theology, which would make the Black Death, the earthquake of Lisbon, and the Reign of Terror, some out of many of the less praiseworthy thoughts of the Creator.

Chimerical as this notion is when applied to an All-Good Providence, there is a certain sense in which we may say that the laws we observe in all things are indeed the thoughts of Humanity. Laws of Nature are not so much the expression of absolute realities in the nature of things (of this we know nothing absolutely), but they are those relations which the human intellect has perceived in co-ordinating phenomena of all kinds. They are the apparent connection of things such as we detect them by observation.

Man is most certainly not omnipotent; and therefore he is not responsible for the confusions and imperfections which he sees as results of various laws: but which he cannot remove. He is not all-good, and his goodness is compatible with the social catastrophes of which his imperfect qualities make him the victim. The whole sphere of law is nothing but the outcome of the human intelligence applied to the world of phenomena. It is the intellectual aspect of Humanity. It is Humanity thinking.

On the other hand, Theology, in presenting us with a centre of inscrutable Godhead, really leaves the intellect out of its scheme, or else bids it serve in limits and fetters, for the modern intelligence has no meaning but in extending and consolidating the realms of law. A metaphysical Pantheism presents us with no real centre or motive at all. It leaves the intellect free, but it supplies it with no adequate cause for activity, no source for its inspirations, no object for its efforts. A logical Materialism gives us Law without God, as Theology had given us God without Law; but it leaves us without any lofty affection

whereby the exercise of the intellect can be ennobled, or that of the activity made moral.

A Human Synthesis (that is, Humanity as the centre of Thought and Life) gives us both the Reign of Law and a minister of law in a Human Providence. And this Providence and this Law in no way exclude each other. Far from being incompatible, each is the complement of the other, for they are mutually dependent. The intellect has no check to its freedom in its pursuit of law, and it finds a worthy subject of its reverence in the being which is the real discoverer and subjective author of law. The spirit of worship is called out and stimulated ; but it is never allowed to carry the nature beyond the realities of science. The active instincts of our nature are sanctified and fortified by the splendid intellectual resources which they find in their service, by the noble work of regeneration to which the generous instincts impel them.

Such are some of the relations and the harmonies that result from a human centre to thought. Of necessity it makes philosophy real, organic, useful, and relative. For it puts an end to the eternal search after absolute truth, and to those dissolving views of endless Hypothesis which are the only avenue to Absolute knowledge and to knowledge of the Absolute. Man as the great centre makes everything real. The Philosophy of man *must* be demonstrated, verified, brought to the test of experience. It must have a common purpose running through it ; it is not satisfied with simple speculation ; it has regard to the good of man, will be limited by human powers, and be relative to mundane conditions. In every possible sense of the term, we need to put an end to all philosophies of things in themselves—of *Dinge an sich* : we need to know things as man sees them, and as they affect man.

Thus also Science will feel a new impetus, for science is never really great except in due relation to philosophy, to general theory, and man's real necessities and demands. Nothing was ever done for science greater than what was done by the philosophers, by Aristotle, Descartes, Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Leibnitz, Hume, Kant, Diderot, Hegel, and Comte: the authors these of the great creative ideas in general philosophy. Nor was any period of science so fruitful as that which followed the great resettlements of human society; the Empires of the Macedonians and that of the Cæsars, the formation of modern society, and finally the industrial development of the last century. The claim of some modern men of science to have their studies regarded as the solitary manifestation of individual genius, independent of philosophy and general classification, impatient of any social impulse, and of all synthetic direction, is the last pettiness of pedantic specialism. When a real classification and harmony of the sciences has become an accepted truth, when a sound general philosophy and a vitalising religion has come to pervade and dignify every corner and bypath of science, it will exhibit a breadth and elevation unknown to academies and the competitors for puerile prizes.

All that is needed is for each worker in every science to be filled with a living sense of its relation to the whole scheme of Human Thought and its sacred importance to the future of Human Life. It is a mockery to pretend that this constant association of the daily work of each of us with all that is high in general philosophy and in social duty would be to narrow or to trammel the student in his task. Limitation of the freedom of all human thought by moral oppression is as odious as limitation by legal persecution. We ask only for an adequate education

and an enlightened social standard of labour. The aim of labour that we would see is so big that no sense of narrowness could arise from its constant presence and influence. It demands only this: the habit of looking at the organic spirit of all science, at its relations to the whole of human thought, to be conscious of its high religious value, to bear in mind its magnificent history of continual and correlated effort, to be ready to hear the cry of humanity for the removal of pressing evils, for the discovery of further boons, to be saturated through and through with the belief that the whole career of Science has been one of usefulness, reality, beneficence. Assuredly Science has nothing to lose, everything to gain, by formally and visibly enrolling itself in the service of Humanity.

But the great effect of the acceptance of a Human Synthesis will be on Life as a whole, moral and active life, even more than on the intellectual life. What is it that now lies at the root of all our complaints and our wants? It is the breach of correspondence and common purpose throughout our human society and our individual powers. All schools alike complain. Not one but all cry out for greater co-operation between classes and institutions, greater harmony and unity in our spirits within us. The preachers of all the theologies complain that there is no concord without or within. Ten thousand pulpits bewail the pride and hardness of the intellect, its defiance of God, its indifference to His worship. They complain as much of the active instincts, of self-will and hardness of heart, disregard of duty, mercy, God. The metaphysicians languidly complain of utilitarian aims, sordid indifference to abstract thought, to the fine beauty of a meditative existence. On their side, the materialists complain of the reign of superstition, of the passion for religious excitement, of the nightmares

and the hallucinations that persist in spite of science, in the teeth of truth.

So all are dissatisfied with our intellectual and social state as it is. No school, or Church, or party pretends to undivided sway; all complain that they are checked or baffled by the rest. To a really consistent theology, the eagerness of Science to know, the zeal of the world in its business, are all waste. He to whom the Judgment is intensely real and awfully near cannot but look on research as ungodly trifling; on industry, commerce, manufacture, politics, as perilous distractions from spiritual hopes. To the true theological devotee three-fourths of life are a mistake, a curse, a snare; and if the bulk of professing believers openly ridicule such inhuman extravagance, it is simply that the bulk of professing believers do not believe their own religion. To the metaphysical enthusiast, the activities of life are unworthy of the higher minds, the moral devotions of the pious betray a want of enlightenment. To the materialist, the devotion, the conviction, the consolations, the ecstasies of the pious men and women around him are hallucination, anachronism, degradation.

So each of these leading schools of thought protests how partial is their own grasp over the world of to-day. Each admits that life, as they conceive it, is still marred, wasted, depraved, by the persistence of some other type which undoes so much of their own work, bars the way, baffles their labours, and turns them to a contrary issue.

What a waste is life under this era of cross-purposes, and competing ideals, and rival systems of faith! The intellectual systems scorn the noblest emotions and all schemes of life that are based on them; the active and energetic schemes of life coolly push aside these emotions, and are half suspicious of the practical use-

fulness of the intellectual schemes. The emotional systems, for their part, resolutely turn from the decisions of the intellectual, and persist in adoring, against all the proofs and all the realities, that which they can hardly pretend any longer to believe in.

What a waste, discord, in human life is this! We should suppose that the one thing to which the deeper brains and natures of our race would betake themselves as of one accord would be this: to recover, if it might be, the lost sense of unity in human life, to knit up again together activity, intellect, enthusiasm, so that once more we might each of us feel one, feel that human society was one, as men felt in the days of Abraham, or of Homer, or of Charlemagne, when at least the various faculties and provinces of man's nature were not at open war with each other, seeking each to silence the other. One could imagine almost that we should have heard this nineteenth century calling aloud with groans, like the Pilgrim of the seventeenth century, "What shall I do to be saved? who shall deliver me from the wrath to come?" Why does it not cry aloud to be saved from wasted life on earth, to be delivered from the moral chaos of a society really at war with itself, its best powers counteracting each other?

The nineteenth century did not cry out for salvation, for it was willing to believe that it was saved, and would do well, if only sundry pernicious principles could be suppressed. Each one of the great types of life still holds itself certain to succeed at last, if it can only manage to exterminate the rest. Theology still thinks it will ultimately get the better of Pantheism, and of Materialism, and will yet plant God securely on the throne of a regenerated (*i.e.* a tamed) Thought and Will; but to do this the intellectual and active nature of man must bow to the commands of a devout

and ecstatic spirit. Metaphysics still hope for the ultimate enlightenment of all human minds, and the final overthrow of dogmatic formalism and utilitarian vulgarity. Materialism is confident also that the reign of physical law will ultimately extirpate religion; and having done that, will one day no doubt succeed in making our industrial existence a more human and shapely thing than it is.

The truly Human Synthesis is far from seeking the extinction of any one of these three principles. It would satisfy the spirit of Devotion, the Intelligence, the Energy, equally, and all together. It ends the secular conflict by conciliation, by a true consolidation, not by giving victory to any one. For it holds out to all the real image of an idealised Humanity (that is, the ordered assemblage of all the brains, wills, and labours of the human race past, present, and to come) as the centre whereto all efforts must converge, and the source of man's best attainments. It supplies our intellectual work at once with material and with purpose; our emotional zeal with object and inspiration; our practical labour with a noble function. This unity of being is summed up in the formula—"*Act under the influence of Affection; and think, in order to act.*"

Thus understood, Man thinks by the aid of Humanity, from which the substance of his thoughts is derived; he thinks for Humanity, which alone can give a noble purpose to thought; he orders his thoughts to accord with life by referring all to Humanity. Man can honour and love Humanity, the visible author and minister of all that he possesses and hopes. So too Man works for Humanity, the natural object of all work, the labour which alone is always noble, always useful, and never unhappy.

Here is a true Synthesis, or converging point in

life. What other complete Synthesis can we imagine? Let us try by each of these three great faculties of our nature any one of the great ideas which have satisfied men in the Past, and satisfy so many still. Man has honoured and loved God, as he has honoured and loved nothing else. Nay, let us rejoice that the deep human instincts survive in the wreck of Theology, that man still can honour and love God. But where is the man who can honestly say, looking round on the vast accumulation of modern knowledge, that he co-ordinates all his thoughts round the image of God, that the idea of God gives him a rational theory of all his acquirements, that he thinks for the service of God, and can see that service fulfilled in every thought?

Or who can say, in the whirl of our modern industrial activity, that he works and toils for God, that God is the natural object of all human labour, that each product of his hands is a new offering to his Creator's well-being, that it is a comfort and a use to an omnipotent Providence? Who can utter any of these phrases in a literal sense, in any but a sophistical and hysterical way?

Turn to the Metaphysical Synthesis, the philosophy of ultimate being, or any of the cloudy theisms of the day. Who can say that man thinks by the aid of Absolute Reason, or by a First Cause so sublime that does not interfere with mundane laws; that these "defecated" residua of fastidious logic enable a man to co-ordinate his thoughts, group the laws of nature, or give him the mutual relations of the sciences? And further, what mockery is implied in the question —Can any man honestly pretend that he loves the Absolute, or any such essence as he finds remaining after a long course of abstract meditation; much less can any one say that the Absolute is the natural object of all earthly labour?

What a tissue of verbiage and sophistry do these grand "residua" of the philosophers become, when we place them face to face with the other sides of human nature, and ask how they stand to affection, and to work, to industry, to duty!

Let us again turn to the Materialist Synthesis, if Synthesis the materialists permit at all. I mean by a materialist synthesis any central idea, law, force, or tendency which is supposed to be the ultimate reality in the Universe, to which all laws can be subordinated, and to which all phenomena can be referred, but which presents us with no dominant idea of Affection, Sympathy, and Will. Any synthesis that omits these qualities, or fails to place them at the top, is a Materialist Synthesis.

Now there are all kinds of forms of such a synthesis. Evolution is a familiar example. Men of great power and high character tell us that they think the clearer by the light of Evolution, that all their thoughts flow from the centre of Evolution, that Evolution truly co-ordinates their ideas. Accordingly it is to them the real Synthesis, and, excepting an ejaculation to save the Unknowable, it is all the Synthesis they need.

Very good! Evolution may very likely serve as an intellectual Synthesis; but is it a moral and practical Synthesis? Can any man pretend to say that he loves, honours, adores Evolution; that the image of it is about his bed and his path, in his down-sitting and in his up-rising, that it touches his heart, rouses him to noble effort, purifies him with a sense of great Tenderness and great Self-sacrifice? Can any man without laughing thus speak of Evolution, or of the law of Differentiation, or of the Survival of the Fittest? These potent generalisations of cosmical science are discoveries of a high order. But the girl or the child whose tender spirit has drunk deep at the fountains

which gave us the Morning and the Evening Hymn, reaches to heights and depths of human nature, and knows vast regions of truth and power, wherein these potent generalisations can as little enter as a toad or a piece of quartz.

Much less can any say that Evolution, Differentiation, Survival, or any general cosmical principle whatever can be treated as the natural object of all social work, that it can be looked on as the one aim of labour, the sanction of human industry, the guarantee of happiness in labour? Does any such cosmical principle bring us nearer by one jot to the settlement of any single industrial problem? Does it not leave all practical problems to the law of the strongest?

In what sense, then, is Evolution a synthesis, if we desire to embrace in our synthesis the whole of the powers of man? Try any one of the metaphysical or the materialist central ideas, and ask what possible power they can have over the greater outbursts of the human heart? Are we, then, to tear up out of our idea of human nature, and cast aside as an effete tendency, together with slavery, polygamy, and cannibalism, the world-old instincts of men and women for Devotion, Self-sacrifice, Adoration, the overmastering passion of well-doing, and sympathy, and care for others, the humbling of the spirit of self, veneration for great benevolence, gratitude for great services—in a word, the outpouring of the Soul towards a good Providence, which has been known to man since the days of the Cave-men under a thousand forms of religion?

"Then," cry the orthodox, and those who imagine they can save the essence of orthodoxy, by enveloping every scientific difficulty in a cloud of phrases, "theology does give us such a synthesis in the idea of a Creating and Ruling God; accept with us

this centre of affections of which you admit the ubiquity and the power!"

Here, alas! comes in the other part of the dilemma. The theological synthesis is just as flagrantly and hopelessly impotent in the whole mental and practical sphere of man as the materialist synthesis is impotent in the devotional sphere. And that even by the tacit admission of theologians and pietists themselves. In ages when the theological idea was really dominant, it did profess to be a complete synthesis of man's life, and was distinctly accepted as such. The thought of God, the love of God, was honestly taken by powerful brains and characters to be the real centre of all thoughts, and not only of all love and hope, but of all work and of all enjoyment also. Abraham and David, St. Paul and St. Bernard, Mahomet and Luther, perhaps even Fénelon and Ken, did literally in their hearts believe the love of God to be the true explanation of all man's knowledge, and the proper object of every human effort.

But now, since science has surrounded our lives with such a concurrent mass of correlated law, and this sense of law is so widespread and familiar to the daily thought of the most ignorant; now, since our social existence has so developed, and has so clothed with noble colours the free resources of man's manifold powers, now it is simply impossible to find the Creator in every thought, God in every act. The most mystical of theologians, the most austere of devotees, does not ask us to do so. Common sense is too overwhelming to be resisted. Piety itself adopts its language; orthodox authority deprecates the exaggeration of theology. The Pope alone holds out, and discharges a Syllabus now and then. But bishops, priests, and deacons, for the most part, sweep theology away from the whole field of systematic thought and active life. Science, they say, explains the laws of

nature and the laws of society; social motives are an adequate explanation of worldly activity. All we ask, say they, as sensible theologians, is to reserve the idea of God and the Scheme of man's Salvation for the hours that are given to meditation and prayer, to the spiritual sphere alone.

In other words, the idea of God, which, when theology was a Synthesis, filled the whole human sphere, has now, even in the hearts of the most devout, shrunk into one part of human nature, one aspect of life, and that one which all but a Trappist monk or an Indian fakir would admit to be an occasional, not a continuous, aspect of life. It follows that Theology, or the idea of Divine Providence, does not now pretend to supply man with a complete Synthesis for his whole life, even in the minds of those who make the largest claims for Divine Providence, and who feel its power over their hearts most profoundly and most constantly.

This, at length, is the conclusion to which our argument has led us. There is discoverable in human and mundane things no Synthesis but one, and that is a Human Synthesis. A true synthesis must, if it is to concentrate human life, be coextensive with human nature; it must be real; it must perfectly submit to logical verification; it must directly appeal to the whole range of thought, of affection, of energy; it must harmonise all these to one end; and finally, that one end must be such as can inspire our noblest emotions of Love and Veneration. The tests of a true synthesis are these: completeness, reality, truth, unity, sympathy. These tests and qualities are presented, we say, by one ideal alone, the ideal of a transfigured Humanity, in which the Past and the Future are bound up, in which the life of each one of us is incorporated and dignified, by which its fruits may be indefinitely continued.

VI

LEWES' PROBLEMS OF LIFE AND MIND[1]

AMIDST all the dispersive tendencies of the spirit of detail in science we may note a growing anxiety to secure a constructive philosophy. This thirst after an organisation of knowledge is becoming more conscious and more defined, even whilst the daily accumulation of materials seems to make the task more severe. And the sphere which this constructive tendency is claiming for itself grows ever wider, until it sweeps into its domain not merely knowledge, but life. It is towards a Religion as much as a Philosophy that systematic thought is tending, towards a co-ordination of society as well as towards a co-ordination of ideas. It is now a quarter of a century since Auguste Comte declared that the end of true Philosophy was to organise human life in all its aspects collectively, whether intellectual, affective, or active. And a stimulus has thereby been given to all the higher thought of the generation, even amongst those who were willing to accept nothing from the founder of Positivism.

In Germany, Hegel, from a different point of

[1] *Problems of Life and Mind*, by George Henry Lewes. First Series. The Foundations of a Creed, vol. i. Second edition. Trübner. 1874.

view, directed the activity of thought towards an arrangement of all human ideas, at once comprehensive and organic. In all parts of Europe, Philosophy and Science have long been showing a disposition not only to maintain the independence of their specific territory from the invasion of Religion, but to invade and annex the religious kingdom for themselves. In our own country, Mr. Herbert Spencer, in the words of Mr. Lewes, "is now for the first time deliberately making the attempt to found a Philosophy." Students of his system, which he calls "synthetic philosophy," do not forget that it opens with a scheme for the reconciliation of Science with Religion—that "weft running through the warp of human history"—and that he adds a new ecclesiastical, ceremonial, and industrial organisation. On every side this synthetic character of thought is working itself to the front. The higher scientific thought is more and more occupied with problems of the correlation, equivalence, and correspondence of forces, of the evolution, sequences, and homologies of organic and inorganic life. The higher philosophy now everywhere starts with a religion, and ends with a synthesis of society. Philosophy is thus visibly transforming itself. Its business is no longer confined to generalise science. It is seeking to found a system of Life.

This tendency is most strikingly displayed in Mr. Lewes' last work; and in some respects he must be said to carry the religious claim of positive philosophy far higher than has yet been done by any English man of science. Most significant is the title of the book: *Problems of Life and Mind—the Foundations of a Creed.* And it opens with the statement that "the great desire of this age is for a doctrine which may serve to condense our knowledge, guide our researches, and shape our lives, so that Conduct may really be the

consequence of Belief." Mr. Lewes follows those who "consider that Religion will continue to regulate the evolution of Humanity"; occupying a position similar to the one it occupied in the past, and express the highest thought of the time (p. 3). It will be a transformed Religion, "a Religion founded on Science expressing at each stage what is known of the world and of man" (*id.*) The precise bearing of the book before us upon this general conception of Philosophy as the reconciliation or rather consolidation of religion with science, may be gathered from the following passage :—

> In conclusion, I may here simply state my conviction that the philosophy, in the construction of which the efforts of all nations converge, is that positive philosophy which began with Kepler and Galileo, Descartes and Bacon, and was first reduced to a system by Auguste Comte; the doctrine embracing the world, man, and society on one homogeneous method. The extension and perfection of this doctrine is the work of the future. The following pages are animated by the desire of extending positive procedures to those outlying questions which hitherto have been either ignored, or pronounced incapable of incorporation with the positive doctrine (page 86).

In the face of a passage like this, consistent as it is with every word in the volume before us, it was a bold rather than a happy thought to announce to the world, as has been done in more than one quarter, that Mr. Lewes had recanted his empirical philosophy, and had become a convert to the Speculative method of *à priori* Metaphysics. There was joy in the Hegelian heaven over the one Positivist who had repented more than over the ninety and nine just metaphysicians who need no repentance. Such unusual licence even for *à priori* speculation suggested the idea that some serene jest had been evolved among the denizens of that beatific cloudland, but a little collation of pages disclosed the fact that the conversion of Mr. Lewes had been

deduced from a merely empirical confusion of his words. A contemporary, who is wont to treat of the higher philosophy with more than philosophic gravity, announced with all the air of chastened exultation, that Mr. Lewes emphatically renounced what he had himself described as "the cardinal position of the Positive Philosophy," and even gave in his adhesion to the objective logic of Hegel.

Turning to the pages of Mr. Lewes, what we found him asserting was, that "the exclusion of all metempirical questions, and the rejection of the metempirical method, is the cardinal position of the Positive Philosophy" (p. 62). This is of course quite true, but neither in this passage, nor in any word of the entire volume, is there the remotest suggestion that Mr. Lewes himself adopts either the metempirical method, or metempirical questions. His book, from beginning to end, is a protest against both. His first rule of philosophy is this—"*No problem to be mooted unless it be presented in terms of experience, and be capable of empirical investigation*" (p. 89). It is singular how any one who had got as far as page 89 of Mr. Lewes' book could seriously assure us that he had abandoned "the cardinal position of the positive philosophy," by which he tells us that he means the exclusion of all metempirical methods. What Mr. Lewes does say that he abandons is simply the opinion that certain problems—Matter, Force, Cause, etc.—are incapable of being treated on empirical or positive methods. He dissents from Comte so far in believing that there are further grounds available for positive methods to occupy, but this opinion as to the extent of its area is not a "cardinal position of the positive philosophy," nor does Mr. Lewes ever speak of it as such. In a word, when Mr. Lewes tells us that the positive philosophy can solve more questions than even M. Comte

thought it could, we are told that he is thereby abandoning "the cardinal position of the positive philosophy."

In the same way we are assured that Mr. Lewes is a convert to the objective Logic of Hegel, though in page 19 he tells us that Hegel "reverses the principle I am here proclaiming"; and though he cites with approval Trendlenberg's opinion respecting the Hegelian procedure, "that it cannot give us what it promises, because its promises are beyond human scope" (page 26). Our Hegelian friends have as good ground for assuring us that Mr. Lewes has abandoned the positive philosophy and adopted the Logic of Hegel, as the Pope would have for assuring us that he had converted Mr. Lewes to the Syllabus, inasmuch as he found in the book before us, that "Religion will continue to regulate the evolution of Humanity."

But to return to the serious consideration of Mr. Lewes' method. It may be simply stated thus:—Certain metaphysical problems of Matter, Force, Cause, Law, Soul, etc., have been hitherto regarded as outside the pale of Science, and have been treated as insoluble by the Philosophy of Experience. Mr. Lewes himself has long regarded them as insoluble, and his well-known history of Philosophy is a series of refutations of all the solutions offered on unscientific methods. He now thinks that these problems, or certain aspects of them, can be brought within the pale of Science, and can be treated strictly on scientific methods by the canons of the Philosophy of Experience. There is in this proposal no trace of abandonment, either of the method or the canons of positive reasoning. On the contrary, he has never insisted upon these with so much precision or with equal elaboration. He calls it no retreat, but a change of front. Indeed, it is rather a movement forward than a movement back.

That which is new is the attempt to extend the scientific analysis to questions which science has hitherto left to Metaphysics. In his own words, "the novelty of the procedure followed in this work consists in treating these problems on the same method as that followed in science." The object proposed is to clear the ground of the metaphysical obstacles to thought, by bringing them under the terms and methods which extend to all other thought; and to wrest its last ground from the *à priori* philosophy by reducing it to the forms of *à posteriori* reasoning. This claim would amount, as Professor Clifford has said, to a revolution in Psychology. But the novelty, if the claim is made good, consists in the application of an old method of philosophy to a field in which it has not been attempted, and not, as was so crudely suggested, in giving up any part of the method of which Mr. Lewes is a prominent exponent.

The present writer must here pause to express his envy for those accomplished critics who master a new presentation in philosophy or logic along with the morning paper, and have labelled it for ever in a dozen trenchant sentences before they sit down to dinner. When, as it sometimes happens, even in utilitarian England, that a man of rare erudition and acuteness, who has passed the best years of his life *inter apices philosophiæ*, finally resumes in meditated phrases the sum of all his thoughts, when he presents to us a new method of research, or puts old methods to new uses, it is perhaps not a morning's work duly to master his meaning, nor is his place in philosophy to be assigned with the same lordly facility with which a place in the editorial heaven or hell is adjudged to the last new novel.

The present writer will excuse himself from any *ex cathedrâ* judgment how far Mr. Lewes has effected

the revolution in Psychology which he claims; and if he has done so, what is its precise philosophical utility. Whether or not Mr. Lewes has solved the questions which metaphysicians have attacked for so many ages in vain, can indeed be hardly determined until we see the use which he makes of his solutions in the volumes which are yet to appear. Whether he has solved them to the satisfaction of metaphysicians, and thus, as he trusts, has assuaged the thirst which eternally calls for satisfaction, can only be decided when time has shown us if the minds which are eager with these questions are content to rest with the answers that he gives them.

One thing is sufficiently clear. Although Mr. Lewes has retained the name of Metaphysics, and offers his solution of what are universally called the problems of Metaphysics, he shows himself from title-page to colophon an unflinching adherent of the positive methods, and never travels a hair's-breadth from his canons which bind truth to experience. In his claim to have swept metaphysics into the fold of science, he is never found to be using metempirical expedients. Whether or not he has domesticated the untamed metaphysical Pegasus, and harnessed him to the car of terrestrial science, we may leave to the future to decide; but we can say at once that he himself has never mounted the wild charger into the realms of cloudland, and if he has really got Pegasus as completely in hand as he thinks, he himself is certainly safe on mother earth.

With regard to the claim of novelty in the application of scientific procedures to metaphysical problems, it must be taken in all the limitations imposed by the question of what, in Mr. Lewes' hands, these metaphysical problems really amount to. Now, it is certain that Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his Synthetic Philosophy

generally, and in his Psychology in particular, has examined nearly all the problems of Mr. Lewes' present volume, and certainly he has treated them on kindred data and with similar methods. And although Mr. Spencer has relegated in his First Principles certain questions to the insoluble and Unknowable, whilst Mr. Lewes appears to hold them capable of some scientific solution; yet the difference between the two points of view does not appear to be great, when we observe that Mr. Lewes admits in every one of these questions a transcendental and unknowable *element* which he ejects from the field, and this transcendental element is precisely that part of the question of which solution is specially craved.

Again, when Mr. Lewes argues against Comte's rejection of metaphysical problems, and claims to have now for the first time brought them under positive treatment, it will not be forgotten that throughout the *Politique Positive* nearly all the questions treated in this volume by Mr. Lewes have been discussed by Comte, not as is here done explicitly and apart from their application to the sciences, but implicitly and along with their practical working. This is obviously true of the Rules of Philosophising (pp. 88-106), which in some sort answer to the *Philosophie première* of Comte; and so almost the whole of the points noticed in Problem I. (which occupies more than half the volume) are questions which have been more or less distinctly treated by Comte. The real difference between Mr. Lewes' view and that of Comte is not that Mr. Lewes has treated problems which Comte has ignored, but rather that Mr. Lewes, like Mr. Spencer, has placed their treatment in a regularly methodised department, instead of treating them incidentally amongst the sciences, and that Mr. Lewes thinks there should be a special Logic of those highest

generalisations, whilst Comte would leave them distributed throughout the logic of the different sciences. This is, no doubt, a very real and important difference; but it is a difference of philosophical arrangement, not a difference of philosophical aim.

One remark I have to offer to Mr. Lewes' consideration. He asserts a claim to have treated metaphysical problems on strictly scientific methods; and his purpose is to put an end for ever to the disturbance caused to thought by the presence of unsatisfied questions that will not be suppressed. Metaphysics, he says, must be transformed or stamped out of existence. The latter process has not succeeded, and he proposes to try the former. To this end his method is to eject from the field in every problem the unknowable element. He calls this the transcendental element, and the "unexplored remainder"; and he shows how familiar to mathematicians is the procedure of working problems with unknown quantities, whilst taking care that these elements are not allowed to disturb the calculations of the known quantities. In every question presented to us, says Mr. Lewes, there is this transcendental element, "elements lying beyond all possible appreciation, because incapable of being brought within the range of sense and inference"—the unknowable, in fact. These, he says, are to be set aside, *and are not allowed in any way to enter into the explanation.*

These metaphysical problems, he says, Matter and Motion, Force and Cause, have also their transcendental elements; and it is the province of metaphysics to demarcate these from the known and knowable elements. Mr. Lewes' method is to disengage from each of these problems the unknowable element, "the elements that lie beyond all reduction to experience," and then to solve the remainder of the problem.

Every question, he says, when stated in terms of experience, is capable of an answer on the experiential method. And no doubt Mr. Lewes has abundantly satisfied us of this. But will this satisfy the metaphysical minds who are wont to propound these problems? Is it not precisely this transcendental, this irreductible, this supra-experiential, this unknowable element which is the very thing they cherish? The true metaphysician regards it as the function of Philosophy to treat this very transcendental element in its detachment apart from experience. He says if you can state it in terms of experience, that alone shows that you have not got hold of the true problem at all. It is the ungraspable, the unstateable, the unrelated, the un-anything—*das unbegreifliches Geheimniss* —which metaphysicians vindicate as their own. Kant said that "the axioms and principles of Metaphysics must never be drawn from experience." And Hegel places the great problems, Freedom, Mind, God, "on a ground which belongs not to experience," for empiricism, he thinks, only gropes, instead of seeking truth in Thought itself.

The whole line of metaphysicians after them continue to ask what *is* this transcendental element in all questions. They are the daughters of the horse-leech, whose cry is, Give, give; the abysmal maw of your true metaphysician simply gapes after this unknowable element just because it is infinite, because it lies beyond all possible appreciation. In the language of his great master, "you might as well attempt to squeeze water out of a pumice-stone as to get necessary and universal truth through experience." As Mr. Lewes points out, speculation craves a vision of the thing in itself, *i.e. unrelated*, or, in other words, *as it does not and cannot exist.* Of what avail, then, is it to tell a man in this frame of mind to state the problem

in terms of experience, and then to solve it by the canons of experience; to disengage the unknowable element, and then throw it away. That which Mr. Lewes tells him to throw away as so much offal is his choice bit; Mr. Lewes' "unexplored remainder" is precisely his *quæsitum* in its true and pure form. To reduce the problem to terms of experience is just to kill the goose in search of the golden egg of metaphysics.

So long as there is an unknown element, so long the speculative craving will remain unsatisfied. To tell the true metaphysician that the unknown element is an unknowable element, is no satisfaction. It is like telling a man in a fever to eat a mutton chop and not to think about drinking, as no drinking can ever slake his thirst. Mr. Lewes will hardly satisfy the fever patient better than Comte himself. Comte told him that his metaphysical thirst was incapable of being satisfied. Mr. Lewes tells him his metaphysical thirst has an element incapable of being satisfied. Comte said, Leave alone the insoluble problem. Mr. Lewes says, Leave alone the insoluble part of the problem. Ah! cries the metaphysical opium-eater, It is just the unknowable which is the real charm; it is that insoluble which *is* the problem. Alas! it is the old fight between the mammal and the fish. "Come out of that watery element," cries Mr. Lewes to his piscine antagonist, "and we will settle matters on *terra firma* for ever." "It can only be settled *in the water*," croaks the fish; and executes a spiral wholly beyond mammalian resources. "If this is Philosophy, we do not know what Philosophy is!" groaned the *Spectator* out of the depths of its theologico-metaphysical cavern. And it never said a truer word.

At the same time, even if the metaphysical goose be not found to be persuaded to come flapping to be killed at the dilly-dilly call of experience, there is no

doubt of the great value of the process Mr. Lewes has employed in separating the intelligible from the unintelligible part of the metaphysical problem. Both he and Mr. Herbert Spencer have done an inestimable service to minds wavering between scientific and unscientific habits of reasoning, by forcing the unscientific aspect of these questions into the most exact and limited ground, and by pushing the scientific aspect of them to the last possible point that it can reach. Mr. Lewes' singular brilliancy of illustration, and that sympathetic interest of his in the views he cannot share, ought to give him unusual power to reach minds wandering in the transcendental wilderness. His proposal to retain the word metaphysics for "the ultimate generalisations of research," and to coin the word *metempirics* for all that transcends the data of experience, is most useful in his hands, as clearing up ideas and assisting to separate the elements which are soluble from those which are insoluble, even if he does not succeed in imposing them on Philosophy. The poor metaphysician has perhaps never before been so pushed, and hedged, and parried into the exact statement of his problem. And it is hard to say what more can be done. We find him driven back as in a sort of stalemate to his last foothold of metempirics, where, indeed, no one can touch him, but whence he cannot escape, and where he can reach nothing.

An interesting chapter in Mr. Lewes' book is that on the Rules of Philosophising (pp. 88-106), in which he extends the scope and amplifies the use of Newton's famous four rules prefixed to the third book of the *Principia*. Newton was obviously collecting only those generalisations which were immediately required for his purpose, and was not constructing a complete system of philosophic generalisations. Mr. Lewes,

in his fifteen rules, is also preparing the ground for his own logical method with a view to his immediate purpose. Mr. Lewes does not present them as an exhaustive collection of philosophical canons, and several of them, such as those numbered 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, are apparently corollaries from other more general rules. A general comparison of these rules with the fifteen rules of Comte, which he calls *Philosophie première* (*Pol. Pos.* iv. c. 3), some of which Mr. Lewes embodies, throws much light on the purpose and scope of all such rules. Mr. Lewes' rules are apparently those canons of logic and checks upon error which will prove most useful for a given class of researches, and therefore are entirely logical or subjective. Comte's fifteen rules profess to be the most dominant generalisations, both in the results and in the methods of science, and are consequently both objective and subjective, some of them, in fact, being laws of history or social economy. Nothing could bring out more strongly Mr. Lewes' divergence from Comte in making these highest generalisations a special department or discipline. And in fact it would appear to us that this is the main logical difference between Mr. Lewes and Comte, that Mr. Lewes would open the roll of Philosophy with a systematic treatment of the highest generalisations of thought, and an independent organon of proof, whilst in Comte very much the same problems, and very much the same conclusions, may be found embodied in his entire curriculum of the sciences.

With regard to Mr. Lewes' treatment of the question between realism and idealism, how far, that is, does our mental picture of the Cosmos correspond with an objective reality, the question is in what degree Mr. Lewes' conception of reasoned realism differs from that transfigured realism which Mr.

Herbert Spencer has expounded in one of the most luminous arguments of his work,[1] an argument which alone would mark him as one of the greatest masters of English philosophical language. Mr. Lewes' conclusion is that "the world conceived by us, the world in thought, is demonstrably not a picture of the existence lying outside of us, and unrelated to us: it is a transfiguration effected by the ideal construction of real presentation in Feeling." This surely is Mr. Spencer's transfigured realism, or would be if we substituted "symbolical" for "real" presentation, perhaps a very minor difference.

Nor is this view divergent from Comte's notion of the external world being seen transformed and as pictured in a mirror by the human intelligence, so that the laws of science are a representation of the order of the Cosmos only to the degree that we need to know it. As a follower of Comte, perhaps, one might object to Mr. Spencer's transfigured realism, and to Mr. Lewes' reasoned realism, that the one assumes a realism of the external somewhat too absolutely, whilst the other assumes the transformation of the picture somewhat too positively. A more hypothetical realism, or practical realism, still satisfies the present writer, viz. that our scientific conceptions within have a good working correspondence with an (assumed) reality without: it not concerning us, and we having no means of knowing, whether the absolute correspondence between them be great or small, or whether there be any absolute correspondence at all. All that we need is the utmost practical correspondence that experience shows us to be useful.

Mr. Lewes' treatment of the whole question of the relativity of knowledge, and of the sensational and *à priori* hypothesis, is particularly instructive, more

[1] *Psychology*, part vii. c. 19.

especially as it leads us up to a real reconciliation and amalgamation of the two points of view, such as to point to the time when we shall cease to be troubled with further debate. On this and the kindred questions of realism, on the meaning of law, cause, force, and the like, it is cheering to find how steadily the field of divergence is narrowing itself in modern thought. There are points and aspects still in debate, modes of treatment and niceties of language yet unsettled; but for all those who start out from a scientific basis at all, the real convergences are more striking than the minor divergences. Thus Mr. Lewes' very ingenious and interesting chapter on the use and abuse of hypothesis, in which he argues against restrictions imposed on it by Comte and Mill, is suggestive, as showing what are the kind of theoretic differences formulated by men, all of whom in practice follow much the same canons.

But the part of Mr. Lewes' book which he appears to have worked with the greatest animation, and which is certainly the most brilliant, is that which treats of the ideal construction in science. Without asserting that Mr. Lewes has put this view in any new form, it has perhaps never been expounded to the world in so persuasive and telling a manner. And it needed this exposition, for although men of science for the most part are as familiar in theory as they are in practice with the scientific use of the imagination, the idea that positive science and positive philosophy is necessarily materialistic, is still a commonplace not only with theologians and the vulgar, but even with intelligent idealists. An Hegelian who for a wonder can write not only intelligibly but elegantly, Mr. William Graham, has lately spoken of "the Positivism of Comte, which puts its ban on the higher Philosophy, which will feed man's Thought only on

perishing phenomena, and bids his Soul dream only of material comfort."[1] And there are still educated people who honestly believe that the philosophy of experience limits itself to what it can see and touch, and refuses to quit the sphere of the senses.

It may do good to such, if anything can do them good, to go through Mr. Lewes' vindication of the Idealism of Science, as coming from one whom they are wont to call materialist, positivist, sensationalist, and all the other names at the command of the "higher Philosophy." As Mr. Lewes shows, all Science is an ideal construction very far removed from a real transcript of facts. "Its most absolute conclusions are formed from abstractions expressing modes of existence which never were, and never could be, real; and are very often at variance with sensible experience." "Were the whole circle of the sciences to pass before us, each would in turn display the essentially ideal nature of its construction, and wide departure from reality, either in its abstractions or in its hypotheses." And, in Mr. Lewes' view, the first step towards scientific certainty must be taken in a fiction, by an ideal type, or a bare hypothesis. "Science is in no respect a plain transcript of Reality, in no respect a picture of the External Order, but wholly an ideal construction, in which the manifold relations of Reals are taken up and assimilated by the mind, and then transformed into relations of ideas, so that the world of sense is changed into the world of Thought."

A statement like this ought to satisfy the most seraphic of idealists that "sensationalism," as he insists on calling it, is just as ideal in the true sense, just as dependent on true inference in thought, just as far from being bound to the facts of sense, as any

[1] *Idealism*, by William Graham. Longmans, 1872.

metempirics can be. "The philosopher," says Mr. Lewes, "looks away from the Visible and Actual, endeavouring to form a picture of the Invisible and Possible. He strives to discover not what we should see with sharpened faculties, but what would be seen were the constitution of things different from what it is. Philosophy is not an instrument like the telescope or microscope, intended only to magnify the powers of sense, but an organ of Imagination, by which to reconstruct an ideal world of Abstraction." Will not this satisfy even the idealists?

What, then, is the difference, if we have here an experientialist like Mr. Lewes talking Idealism—how does this differ from any metempiricism? The answer, in a word, is this, that the one is verified and constructed out of verified data, and with a view to final verification, and the other is not. "The abstractions and intuitions of science," says Mr. Lewes, "can always be verified; whereas the abstractions and intuitions which play a great part in metaphysics often want this basis." On the one hand, science and scientific, that is experiential, Philosophy builds its abstractions on the real elements of experience; on the other, it is continually resolving its ideal constructions into elements of sensible experience. Science is in one sense just as completely a system of Idealism as metempirics itself, only its data have been first carefully verified by experience, and its conclusions are being perpetually resolved back and verified, and always are resolvable into and are verifiable by experience. In a word, our sciences are *verified poems*.

This is indeed nothing else than that *subjective synthesis* which would appear to be Comte's real answer to the demands of metaphysical speculation. Now, although no one has gone further than Mr. Lewes in

vindicating the truly ideal character of scientific abstraction and the scientific construction, it would appear rather from his attitude than his actual argument that he recognises a subjective synthesis in no such sense as it was used by Comte. Mr. Lewes devotes the last chapter of his book to "the place of sentiment in philosophy," and by admitting it to a place at all, by all that he says of the Logic of Feeling, he has taken a step of great significance. But by both of these terms Mr. Lewes appears to mean something quite different from what they mean in the language of Comte. By "logic of feeling" Comte meant the ordered correspondence between emotion and thought; by the place of sentiment in philosophy, he meant that our conceptions can only be held together and systematised by means of a harmony ultimately satisfying the deepest emotion.

It is in this that will be found the real divergence of Mr. Lewes from Comte, and not in the various arguments pointed out in his book. If our entire scheme of thought is only, as Mr. Lewes has shown, a gradual approach towards an ideal transcript of the external order, and if over the information of that ideal transcript the emotions exercise, as Mr. Lewes shows, so powerful an influence, and if these emotions are so preponderant and continuous in our lives as they undoubtedly are, it would seem that a subjective synthesis of thought is the only one that can be stable or efficient; that is, our ideal construction in thought must correspond not only with the data of experience without, but with the sum total and consensus of the human organism within. That human organism consists essentially of three great elements—feeling, activity, intelligence. Its unity and its efficiency depend on the degree with which all three co-operate and strengthen each other. They co-operate under

certain definite conditions partly arising from their own relations to each other within, partly from the material environment to which they are subject, and partly from the social organism in which and with which they must act. And the relation in which they work truly is that summed up by Comte in the aphorism—

Agir par affection, et penser pour agir.

It follows, then, that feeling in its highest and deepest sense must form the stimulus and sanction of the complete human consensus. That highest feeling has, as its object, an end strictly social. And thus a social destination and a social co-ordination are essential for the stability and efficiency of human conceptions. That is to say, the only real philosophy is that which is organised around a social creed as its basis and centre. Such we conceive to be the subjective synthesis of Comte; and though Mr. Lewes appears throughout his work to touch at points upon this view, it does not appear to us that as yet he makes it a part of his own system.

But the very fact that he calls his book "the foundations of a creed," and the spirit in which he has approached this and kindred problems, make his plan in this, and the promised volumes, one of singular interest to all those who, from any point of view, await the amalgamation of Philosophy with Religion. One fact of no little significance may be pointed out, the difference that Mr. Lewes draws in the outset between his view of a creed and that of Mr. Spencer. Mr. Lewes puts the Unknowable entirely aside, and declines to find any refuge from difficulties or any religious basis, by invoking either the unknown or the unknowable. To leave this open, we have always felt, is to reopen the whole range of Metaphysics in its

worst or metempirical sense, and the whole apparatus of Theology will follow through the breach. Surrounded as we are by the unknown and the unknowable, they can do us no harm and waste no time, except by our allowing them to entangle our lives by our own idle curiosity. They will die out of the consciousness of mankind, like witchcraft and astrology, not by being disproved or reproved, not by being either explained or explained away, but by the intelligence and energies of men being directed to more fruitful and more ennobling ends. The real answer to Metaphysics, if we may trust the title-page of Mr. Lewes' book, the real solution of these problems of Life and Mind, is to be found in the foundations of a Creed. And we will close a volume which has satisfied many of our expectations, and awakens many more, with the words with which it opens—"Deeply as we may feel the mystery of this universe and the limitations of our faculties, the *Foundations of a Creed* can only rest upon the known and the knowable."

P.S. 1907.—The attempt of Lewes to coin the new word Metempirics and to substitute it for Metaphysics has entirely fallen flat. His attempt to revive Metaphysics under a scientific aspect has deservedly failed, and led to the absurd mistake of assuming that he had himself reverted to Metaphysics. But the generation that followed devoted its researches, by experimental and physical methods, to solve the problems of Matter, Motion, Force, and Origin. Lewes' instinct as a physicist led him to see that these elemental problems were destined to pass away from the Metaphysical Ontologist into the hands of the Chemist, the Electrician, the Physicist, and the Biologist.

VII

THE SOCIAL FACTOR IN PSYCHOLOGY

In a very recent work we read as follows: "Who that had ever looked upon the pulpy mass of brain-substance, and the nervous cords connecting it with the organs, could resist the shock of incredulity on hearing that all he knew of passion, intellect, and will was nothing more than molecular change in this pulpy mass? Who that had ever seen a nerve-cell, could be patient on being told that Thought was a property of such cells, as Gravitation was a property of Matter?"

This remark does not sound like anything original. We have often heard, and we continually read protests to the like effect. I quote it, however, solely for the connection in which it occurs, and for the author from whom it comes. The passage is not from the writings of either a theologian or a spiritualist, of a metaphysician of the intuitional or idealist school. It is from the last work of George Lewes, *The Study of Psychology*, 1879, and it is in complete accord with all that he has written on these questions.

It is certain that he regards Psychology as the study of material organisms, not as the study of an immaterial

substance. He says: "In this work, the science will be regarded as a branch of Biology, and its Method as that which is pursued in the physical sciences." He calls Psychology "the science of the facts of Sentience." And, still, he uses (and most consistently uses) an argument which is frequently thought to prove that the knowledge of the human Soul is not *in pari materia* with our knowledge of organic life, and that it must be based on some other foundation.

What he means is, that our study of individual organic life, though giving us the basis and ground-plan of our study of Psychology, cannot give us all we want; we need, as a complement, the study of social life. In other words, the knowledge of Mind and Feeling cannot be complete without the study of Society, without History in its widest sense. True psychology is, therefore, a very mixed kind of inquiry. It cannot be reduced to the study of detached organs in individual bodies. It embraces elements partly biologic and partly sociologic; and Psychology cannot be limited to Biology, properly speaking, unless we give to Biology the extravagant extension of meaning by which it would include History.

This insistence on a social factor in Psychology is not new. It was first urged, as Mr. Lewes shows, by Auguste Comte. It has since, from a different point of view, been expounded by Mr. Herbert Spencer and some others. Mr. Lewes has now given it a fresh emphasis. It seems to me to offer some hope of a solution that may ultimately close the secular battle between Materialism and Spiritualism.

Shortly stated, the importance of the Social Factor in Psychology is this: Thought and Feeling are undoubtedly functions of the Organism; they can only be treated rationally by starting from the same data and with the same methods that we use in treating

other functions of organic life; and lastly, mental state and organic state are always correlative: we have no data for detaching them. So far, we are using almost the language of the older Materialists. But we now know that the rational study of the Organism, Man, is not identical with the special study of the organs: of all the organs, or of any particular organ. The true study of the human organism—it has long ago been seen by all intelligent biologists—rests on the comparative study of animal organisation generally, *i.e.* on general biology; and also upon the relations of animal and human organisation to the external environment in which life is placed, and on which life depends.

Thus, whilst still holding on to the central doctrine that mental and moral phenomena are functions of the organism, rational Psychology passed out of the crude platitude that "the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile," and it enlarged itself in several ways. First, whilst earnest in the analysis and special study of organs, it kept the Organism, as a whole, in view as the key of the position; next, it was vigilant to observe the relations with the external environment, whether of organ or of organism; then it worked out all the consequences of the truth that the human organism must be studied by the light of animal organisation generally. Finally, it enriched and corrected the direct study of organisation by the study of the development of organisation, by Embryology and Evolution. This was, in fact, to call in the aid of the History of Organisation, individual or general.

All this was clearly within the province of Biology, strictly so called. The whole of the data and methods lay within the study of the living Organism. This, however, was not enough. Biology, pure and simple,

could not, under these conditions, vindicate its claim to an exclusive hearing on Psychology. Theologians, metaphysicians, common sense, and the public instinct maintained a continual protest, in all kinds of ways, and with every variety of theory. Amidst wild assumptions and self-contradictory declamation, what they all said in the main came to this: "A science which has not one word to say about the profoundest movements that have ever affected mankind (and, *ex hypothesi*, Biology has nothing to say about the origin of Christianity, the Crusades, the Reformation, or the French Revolution), cannot have an exclusive right to instruct us on the mental and moral phenomena of human nature."

This objection could not be met. Biology, indeed, in that crude form, suffered a rebuff. In vain it cried that an enlarged knowledge of molecular physics and organic processes, a more elaborate analysis of cerebral phenomena, would ultimately enable it to tabulate the conditions of the rise of Christianity. The world only laughed; and Biology—which all the while was right, as far as it went—grievously injured Science and Philosophy, by claiming a field larger than it could defend or control.

A most important point, in truth, had been overlooked. It was not enough to treat the Organism in relation to the external environment, and to study the human organism by the light of animal organisation generally,—to compare man with animals, to trace the development of the human organism and of the human species. All this Biology had done, and had well done; but this was not enough. It was not sufficiently remembered that man was not only an animal, but an animal of a unique kind, and that he had functions and faculties that, for the purpose in hand, were, practically speaking, not found in other animals. Man,

in fact, had powers of mental and moral development so special to man, and of such immense importance to his nature, that man was, literally speaking, not man at all, unless regarded in connection with his whole social environment. Just as it was idle to study animal organisation apart from the inorganic conditions of organisation, or to study human organisation apart from the biological conditions of animal organisation —and these truths had been long felt by all rational biologists—so at last it came to be seen that it was equally idle to study the human organism apart from the social organism. The mental and moral functions of the individual exist so completely in society, and are so enormously affected by society, that the study of the facts of society, and of the history of society, is the only field where the full bearing of mental and moral functions can be traced.

The continuous and traditional life of the human race, its power of growth and mental and moral development, constitute, in fact, the characteristic quality of the human organism. The human organism would not be what we call "Man," if there had never been on the earth any such phenomenon as human society. Man would at most be an anthropoid brute. Consequently, they were wrong who thought they could (psychologically) study the human organism, as an organism, apart from the human society in which and by which its psychological functions operate. To do this was precisely the same error as it would be to study the phenomena of organic movement by inspecting tissues no longer capable of vital action, to study the functions of organs by inspecting the organs without observing them in functional relation to the external world, to construct a theory of respiration without any reference to the chemical constituents of the atmosphere, or to expound the function of hearing

by analysing the auditory organ, apart from the phenomena of external sound.

A rational Psychology, therefore, has to supplement its study of animal organisation, and of the human organism, and of the relations of this organism to the inorganic world, by a study of the social organism, and of the relations of the human organism to the social world in which alone, mentally and morally speaking, it lives and operates. That is to say, no study of the organism, simply as such, can found a complete Psychology. It must rest on the double study, first, of the organism as such, then, of the organism as a unit of the social organism. But this is equivalent to saying that Biology, in the natural meaning of that term, cannot embrace the whole of the elements of Psychology. For it would be a violent abuse of language to call Biology the science of the facts of the social organism. This is the province of Sociology,—for linguistic purists will have to admit that indispensable hybrid, and not the only hybrid, in scientific nomenclature. The result of this is that a rational Psychology can only be completed by the aid of sociologic reasoning and data.

It is hardly necessary to add that, in extending the field of study of the mental and moral phenomena to the study of human society, there is no break with the scientific data and methods which form the biologic study of the simple organism. Sociology is just as much a science as Biology, and is equally rigid in its canons of verification, and equally abhorrent of assuming hypotheses for evidence. There is nothing new in this demand for a social element in the study of Mind and Feeling, nor is it in the least idealist or spiritualist. Comte, Spencer, Lewes, and many others have worked it out in different ways, and on various lines. Perhaps Lewes, in his last work, has given

special emphasis to it, and his definition of Psychology appears to be the most complete we have.[1]

We often remark the deep and burning feelings which these problems of the mental and moral nature of men call out. We all know the storms of moral and intellectual indignation which agitate some of the best and wisest of men, when they are told that every part of human Thought and feeling must be treated, by strict scientific law, as a state of the organism, and must be interpreted by the laws of the organic functions. "What!" they cry, "is the enthusiasm of St. Paul and the meditation of Descartes to be made clearer by the study of animal organisation?"

And their indignation and their heat were most just, so long as the laws of the human organism were offered them on the narrow basis of simple Biology. But a larger basis is now unfolded. Men who could not be dragged one step from the field of scientific law, who held that every mental and moral fact was in necessary relation with a physiological fact, still went on to insist that the laws of the human organism are bound up with, and can only be read by, the laws of the social organism. But this new factor let in at once the direct study of the whole range of human emotion, intelligence, and will, of all the movements, moral, affective, religious, imaginative, that have ever ennobled mankind; of all history, of the whole range of tradition, poetry, art, heroism, and devotion. In a word, we say that the knowledge of man's mental and moral nature, Psychology, if it have its continuous roots in the analysis of nerves and brain-matter, and its body in the science of organic function, has its

[1] "Psychology is the analysis and classification of the *sentient functions and faculties*, revealed to observation and induction, completed by the reduction of them to their *conditions of existence*, biological and sociological."

top in the record of all that is lofty in man's spiritual nature.

We may draw solid comfort from this teaching. Our view of such a subject as Psychology will depend, of course, for each of us, upon the set of his whole mental current, on his knowledge, and partly on his temperament and life. A man will not accept the theory of organic functions in lieu of his life-long spiritualism, simply because the theory of organic functions may have ceased to disgust him, to rank him with the brutes that perish, to force him to abandon all the profound spiritual connotations of the science of the Heart and of the Mind. Yet withal, when we see how profoundly these questions of Spirit and Matter in thought and feeling run into the summits of religion, and in places less illuminated with the dry light that ever burns amidst philosophers, how often they are decided under the influence of disgust or enthusiasm, may we not hope to behold more agreement and mutual approach, if we can eliminate this element of disgust and terror? And why should the most devotional and spiritual nature, the most ideal and the most sympathetic of men, feel anything of terror or disgust towards a theory of human nature which takes for its data every spiritual and emotional fact in human story along with all the other facts human, animal, or cosmical? Those who rest Psychology on strict methods of experience do not affirm that the grey-matter of the brain thinks and feels; we say that the organism thinks and feels, and in order to understand the laws of its thinking and feeling, we say that you must study (along with much else) all that is beautiful and heroic in the record of Humanity. You may not adopt our theory of the organism; but does it disgust you or terrify you? You may not accept our interpretation of the facts; but every one of the facts

of mental and moral life are as much the data of our interpretation as of yours.

And thus it comes about, as we who view these things from the religious point of view unceasingly declare, that the paramount and ever-present conception of Humanity explains, while it co-ordinates, all Science ; and that as man lives only in Humanity, so by Humanity alone can man understand himself, and the divisions of men be hereafter reconciled in one Feeling and in one Faith.

VIII

THE ABSOLUTE

At a Symposium of the Metaphysical Society a distinguished disciple of Hegel read a paper on "The Absolute" as conceived by that school. It affirmed that the Ultimate Cause, which must be causa sui *and* causa causans, *is the ABSOLUTE, or the Unconditioned, or the Infinite Substance, in Hegel's language—"the identity of identity and non-identity." The Absolute, it continued, cannot be subject to the conditions of space and time, or it would not be the Unconditioned: it is Infinite and Eternal. The terms eternal, self-existing, necessary, are positive definitions of the Absolute, and contain no negative element. The Absolute affirms itself and everything else that is.*

To that paper I read the following reply.

SINCE the learned Reader of this paper admits that everything we observe is assumed by us to be the effect of some cause, we cannot think of a cause which is not itself an effect, having its own cause beyond it, and so on infinitely. His paper declares that we cannot think of an *infinite* chain of causes and effects. That may be; but we are just as unable to think of a cause which is not an effect, and has itself no cause. An infinite chain of causes, and a cause itself uncaused are equally unthinkable by man.

The Absolute cannot be a cause at all. A cause is necessarily *related* to its effect, otherwise it would not be a cause. By cause we mean that which is inevitably followed by its effect. But that which is inevitably followed by something else, is *related* to that something. Therefore it is *conditioned*, being under the condition of preceding its effect. Consequently a Cause cannot be *Absolute*, for it is necessarily *conditioned*, and Absolute means that which is neither conditioned nor related.

The Cause is not, and cannot be, the Effect. If the Cause were the Effect, it would be distinguishable under two modes of existence. But the Absolute, because it is absolute, cannot have a dual existence, but can only exist in one absolute mode.

Since the Cause *is* not the Effect, the Effect must have something which the Cause has not. The Effect must be something more than the Cause, and yet something which necessarily follows or accompanies the Cause and is involved in the very conception of Cause. Therefore the Absolute cannot be a cause, nor The Cause, nor the First Cause; for if it were a cause, it would necessarily presuppose something else as necessary as itself, which was not itself.

If you contend that the Absolute is not necessarily the Cause, but *becomes* a Cause, then by becoming a Cause, it ceases to be absolute, for the Absolute would be capable of change and of passing into a new mode of existence.

If the Absolute *becomes* a Cause, it must, by that change from Absolute existence into Causal existence, become either more or less. But the Absolute is held to be Perfect in itself, Eternal, Infinite. Is the Absolute more the Absolute when it becomes a Cause, or less the Absolute? In either case it ceases to be the Absolute, for degree, or change, cannot be predi-

cated of the Absolute. Degree, change, more or less, imply conditions of existence.

If The Absolute was Infinite, apart from its becoming a Cause, it could not be more infinite when it became a cause. And yet if something is added in becoming a Cause, the Infinite would be capable of extension. If nothing is added, The Absolute, apart from Cause, is absolutely identical with the Absolute become a Cause—*i.e.* the Cause equals 0.

When the Absolute has become the Cause, it has become relative, for Cause is necessarily related to Effect. But is the Absolute capable of becoming the Relative? If it is, it is not the Absolute, for it can become that which is not absolute. If it be not so capable, then there is something which limits the Absolute. And if it be limited, then it is not infinite.

For the same reason, if the Absolute be not capable of becoming the Relative, it cannot be the Unconditioned, because it is under the condition of never becoming the Relative.

Absolute in truth means that which is not relative, as Relative means that which is not absolute, because it is conceived as having connection with something else. Hence, *relative* is a positive, not a *negative* conception. *Absolute* is a wholly negative conception, for it merely asserts the absence of relation.

Those metaphysicians and logicians are right who, with Sir W. Hamilton and Mansel, maintained that *absolute* is a negative conception. And the attempt to give a positive meaning to *absolute* is the source of endless confusion.

The learned Reader has cited the unfortunate argument of Herbert Spencer in his *First Principles* to show some positive existence in the Absolute. "To say that we cannot know the Absolute is, by implication, to affirm that there *is* an Absolute." It

is strange that this eminent philosopher should countenance so shallow a mystification. Why *positive*? What *existence*? Why *the* Absolute? Examine this dictum.

He argues—"When we say we cannot know the Absolute, we affirm that there *is* an Absolute." By parity of reasoning, when we say we cannot know Non-Existence, we affirm that there *is* Non-Existence. This may be Hegelism, but it is a contradiction in words. When we say we cannot know the Sea-serpent, do we affirm that the Sea-serpent exists? When we say we cannot know Abracadabra, do we affirm that Abracadabra exists?

What is the meaning of *The* Absolute? *Absolute* is an adjective simply denoting absence of relations, just as *empty* denotes absence of contents. Why The Absolute any more than The Empty? The Equal? The Red? The Unmeaning?

Metaphysicians have debated about the relative and the absolute, using capital letters and putting the definite article before adjectives till they have come to persuade themselves that words of mere description denote actual Things. And then they affirm that, having turned an adjective into a substantive by using the capital letter and the definite article, they have proved the existence of the adjective.

The Relative is an unmeaning phrase just as *The* Absolute is; and rational Philosophy has suffered from the unhappy error of Herbert Spencer in recognising any such verbal windbag. It has led to the deification of the Unknowable as a sort of First Cause and Author of the Universe. The Relative is just as unknowable as The Absolute, or The Red, or The Equal, or The Unmeaning. It would be as wise to fall prostrate in admiration of The Unmeaning as to concentrate religion on the absolute Unknowable.

We are told that we cannot conceive the *relative* unless at the same time we conceive the *absolute*. We might just as well argue that we cannot conceive a man as having a mother, unless we also conceive him as having no mother at all. We can and do conceive every man as under an endless series of different relations—and we take these as positive facts. But, unless for purposes of logic or abstract science, we never conceive any man as entirely bare of any relations of any kind.

Ten thousand intelligent men and women, hour by hour, conceive beings and things around them in all conceivable relations, and they cannot think of them at all except in some one or other of these relations. They do not, and cannot, think of them in an absolute way. Logicians, grammarians, and philosophers, after long mental training, do their best to fix their attention on some thing or being, after eliminating the relations in which the thing or being is inevitably surrounded. But this mental feat is not an innate necessity of the human mind. The ten thousand men and women of the world are right, even philosophically, and the one philosopher meditating on absolute existence is merely performing a dialectical hypothesis.

When the philosopher erects into a law of thought the dialectical hypothesis, of which only one mind in a million is capable, and out of this logical artifice constructs a Self-Existing Entity, he is misled by his own meditations, and is falsifying human nature.

I interrogate my own consciousness: and I cannot find any conception of The Relative, or The Absolute, or of The Unknowable. I can discover no trace whatever in my own consciousness of a positive Something behind the Relative, or of any transcendental Unknowable behind phenomena. I find thousands of things unknown, and I have every reason to think

most of them will remain unknown. But what The Unknown, or the Unknowable, may be I know not; and I believe them both to be unmeaning phrases—as one might say The Red, or The Indefinite, or The Ignorant—if they are meant to denote Entities, or even abstract Ideas.

Nor do I find in my own consciousness any sense of being confronted with a Real behind all phenomena as a positive Entity. I find a consciousness that there may be a Real; and I cannot even exclude the very unlikely possibility that the phenomena may be the Real after all, or that Phenomena and Real may both be phases of my own consciousness. No one of these three possible solutions can be either proved—or disproved. And nothing rational would turn on any one—if proved or disproved. In any case, the Real, the Absolute, the Unknowable, do not force themselves upon my consciousness as objective Existences, or even as intelligible problems of thought.

I well know the answer to all this—an answer to which Herbert Spencer inconsistently gave some countenance. They say—"All this is simply the common sense view of the 'man in the street.' This is the mere practical reason of the ordinary Philistine." "No doubt in Logic, that is intellectually and in *definite* reasoning," they add, "there can be no consciousness of The Absolute, but there is an *indefinite*, undefinable, subliminal consciousness, which is wholly independent of Logic, or strict reasoning; scintillations of thought, quite superior to any reasoning; there is a 'sort of a something' which makes us conscious 'in a kind of way' of a transcendental Absolute, Real, Unknowable. This universal consciousness is not amenable to Time or Space or Reason or Logic. It works in its own non-terrestrial, empyrean way, and mocks at Time, Space, Reason, and Logic."

So far the Metaphysicians ever since Hegel. And after examining all they say, I affirm that the man-in-the-street, the Philistine, has the substance, and the metaphysician grasps at the shadow—the shadow of his own brain cast on the clouds of Non-Entity. If philosophy means that, after the strictest processes of logical reasoning, this transcendentalism is to sweep away all rational conclusions and reveal alogical dogmas of its own, philosophy would descend to the level of vulgar faith-healing or the credulity of a Neapolitan peasant who believes in St. Januarius.

All talk about a "universal consciousness," about "a primordial synthesis of consciousness-in-general, having three elements, of which particular consciousness is only one," about "consciousness-in-general being identical and also non-identical with Reality in the Universe"—this is mere verbiage. And the man of "ordinary common sense" is not only justified in practically turning from it as waste of mental activity, but he is philosophically right in telling the metaphysician that he is juggling with words—and is not using his brain like a sane man.

The learned Hegelian of the paper writes: "The Absolute affirms itself, and at the same time everything else that is." I proceed to examine this proposition.

If the Absolute affirms the existence of something which is not itself, it cannot be infinite, for it would be limited by things which are not itself.

If the Absolute *is* "everything else," what is the thing which it affirms but which is "not itself"?

If the Absolute is "the infinite substance," how can it affirm "everything else that is?" Infinite substance must contain everything *that is*, or it would not be infinite. But if it contains everything else it would not be absolute, for it would contain an infinite variety of things.

The learned Reader adopts Spinoza's dictum "that the Infinite Substance is a *res cogitans*," and also Hegel's dictum "that the Absolute must be conceived as a Subject, because the Absolute *thinks* the universal ideas which form the ultimate bond of coherence of the Universe." Whether he rightly interprets Hegel in attributing Personality to The Absolute is doubtful; but he does so attribute Personality himself.

I proceed to examine these views. The "coherence of the Universe" implies a bond between diverse materials, and the Absolute thinks the *thoughts* which are the bond that causes these materials to cohere. But if so, The Absolute must cause, *i.e.* create, the materials, and also be itself the "bond." That is to say, The Absolute is at once the substance and the form of everything that is. In that case, The Absolute would be cognisable under two distinct aspects, that of substance and of form. But these aspects are contrasted and, if so, related necessarily to each other. Consequently, The Absolute would have a dual existence and not an absolute existence.

Again, The Absolute would be both *res cogitans* and also *res cogitata*. Thought, humanly speaking, implies both Subject and Object—an *Ego* and a *Non-Ego*. Can The Absolute have any *Non-Ego*? Can it *think* without a *Non-Ego*? If it can, it must be "everything" itself, and then it cannot be the *cause* of everything else.

If The Absolute is conscious of a *Non-Ego*, it is conscious of something which is not itself, and which limits it, and then it cannot be infinite. If The Absolute is not conscious of a *Non-Ego*, it is conscious of being the Universal Subject, without an Object. That means that it is conscious of being everything, and its thoughts must correspond with truth. But the paper admits that "to know is to distinguish." If

The Absolute is "everything," everything is absolute. And thought is impossible, where nothing remains to distinguish.

Again, if The Absolute is a Subject, it has a consciousness of Personality, for, "humanly speaking," we cannot conceive that which *thinks* thoughts able to act as bonds, as being devoid of Personality. But we cannot conceive Personality, unless we conceive it as conscious of something not itself, with which it is contrasted or related. That is to say, the idea of Personality excludes the idea of The Absolute. And that seems finally to have been the conclusion of Hegel.

Metaphysicians seek to escape from these dilemmas —which they call "mere common sense"—by distinguishing between *actual* and *potential* existence—or the "actualised consciousness" and "the potential consciousness-in-general." They say The Absolute is not *necessarily* a Cause, does not necessarily *think*, is not necessarily a Subject, not a Person. But it has the potentiality of becoming all these. *Qua* absolute, it is absolute. All consciousness, we are told, includes actual concrete consciousness and potential consciousness-in-general.

But when The Absolute does anything, becomes anything, acts as "the bond of coherence," or "thinks," or "causes" anything, or becomes at once Universal Subject and Universal Object, the idea of change is involved, and a new mode of existence. That is to say, it ceases to be absolute and becomes The Relative.

But The Absolute is already Perfect and Infinite, apart from ceasing, thinking, or becoming. And, in passing from actual to potential consciousness, it would derogate from its nature of Absolute. The "potential" side of the Absolute would only be a mode of eliminating the idea with which we set out.

If The Absolute were the greater, or the better, or more the infinite, or more absolute, or in any respect more developed when it assumes its "potential" powers than when the potentiality lay dormant—then the Absolute would not be Perfect when they were dormant. If it were less great, less absolute, in any respect different when it passes into energy, The Absolute would be relative. If actual and potential existence involve no difference, then the dilemma remains unsolved.

A learned Prelate suggests that The Absolute must not be taken with too strict logical precision. It may be a First Cause, in the sense that it was not what we commonly mean by a Cause, but a transcendental, super-logical Cause. It has no *necessary* relations: but it may be capable of developing some quasi-relations. Surely all this comes to saying, in the familiar spirit of Anglican compromise, that The Absolute is not quite absolute, that it is a modified Absolute, adapted to our human understanding.

Now, if there be any one thing which is bound to be absolutely the thing it claims to be—it is The Absolute. The Absolute by its nature excludes any degree, compromise, approximation, or qualification. Conceive an Absolute *secundum quid!*—an Absolute which is absolute "in a sense"—which has the nature of the absolute! This may be theology, but it is not Philosophy. An Absolute which "affirms itself and everything else that is" cannot cry for mercy on the ground that it is not a real Absolute, but a modified Absolute, "a sort of an" Absolute:—not a real lion, but only a metaphysical hide.

And the only answer to all this is: "Your objections may be sound Logic, 'humanly speaking'; but we are not arguing logically, but only metaphysically. The Absolute has no relation to Time,

and nothing can be predicated of it in the human terms of Time, or Space, or Change. It is super-sensuous, super-logical, and perceptible only in the unity of the synthesis of identity with non-identity."

The common sense of sensible men is after all the true Philosophy in the matter. We can neither know nor conjecture anything rational about The Absolute, or the Unconditioned, or Consciousness-in-general. The ideas they denote, the very phrases, are unmeaning, cobwebs spun industriously out of infinite subtleties and non-entities—which rest upon nothing, and can lead to nothing.

IX

THE BASIS OF MORALS

A Symposium at the Metaphysical Society.

THOUGH I do not persume to interpose in the principal combat waged by the learned Professor W. K. Clifford and P. C. W., I take the opportunity afforded me of saying a few words upon the paper of the latter, which propounds, I think, a new and dangerous claim. The argument of P. C. W., and it is his central position in the discussion, amounts to this: there can be no morality but one which is based on the design of the Creator of man. He insists that no one has any right to use the words "good" or "bad" of man, "unless we suppose him to have had a maker and to be made with a design." But this is to push the theory of final causes further than it has yet been carried, and to make morality the simple servant of theology.

Merely to *suppose* that the man has a maker, and was made with a design, would be to very little purpose, unless we knew *what the design was*, and how the design is to be carried out by the thing or being made. A savage, for instance (and moral problems must open, as do games of chess with a pawn, by advancing the convenient savage),—the

savage finds a watch. How decide if it be a good watch? If the savage is a disciple of Dr. W. Paley, he will rightly argue that the watch had a maker, and this maker a design. But before he can say if it be a "good" or a "bad" watch, he must be instructed in its purpose and uses, or he will know no more about it than if he took it to be a curious stone.

In the same way, to apply P. C. W.'s argument, before we can pronounce the man to be "good" or "bad," we must know not only that the man had a creator, and the creator a design, but we must know precisely *what the design is*, and some one in the maker's confidence must instruct us how his work is to be used. Otherwise, simply to *suppose* that the maker of man had *a* design, is only to say that every man can form any opinion he pleases.

What precisely is the design on which man was created, and how he may rightly work out that design, is the very question about which all theologies and all religions, and certainly, not the least, all Christian theologians most vehemently contend. Thus, to tell us that there can be no morality but one based on the design of creation, is to adjourn any chance of agreement in morality, and even the commencement of moral truth, until Theology has settled all its controversies, and Revelation has disposed of every criticism. Our sense of right and wrong, conduct and precept, would become corollaries of Divinity; they must wait the issue at stake between Professor Lightfoot and the author of *Supernatural Religion*.

If the Bible be an authentic and genuine revelation, we have indeed that precise and direct account of the design with which man was made. But until this distinct revelation of the Creator's design is established beyond dispute, and for all who do not accept it literally and completely, every man will conceive the

design according to his temper and habits. To the cannibal, the final cause of man will be to eat his neighbour joyfully, until he be himself eaten peacefully. The red-skin will insist that man was created to take and furnish scalps, the Dahomian to celebrate and support "grand customs," and the Nubian to fill slave-markets. As of old, it will be always, *quot homines, tot Dei*; and the designs of these creators will be differently conceived by each tribe. A late ex-Chancellor was once heard to say, after a visit to the Zoological Gardens, that so great a multiplicity of created beings forcibly impressed him with the conviction of a similar multiplicity of creators. So, if we put aside a full and direct Revelation of the design, the past and present races of the world have given so many different answers to the question—what is the purpose of man? that it is plain mankind have attributed to the supposed creator an infinite diversity of designs, if they have not conceived an infinite variety of designers.

What is called Natural Theology, and even that which may be called the substratum of all theologies, are really of no use for the purpose of deciding if a man or an action be "good" or "bad." Vague assumptions that there is a Creator, that his purpose was benevolent, that man has relations to things, beings, or a being outside of himself—all these fall short of what is required. They will not enable us to build up any morality, much less to solve such questions of casuistry as the State support of incurable paupers—the problem we started out to solve. A *basis of morals* must determine the entire current of moral teaching; and it must be, like the axioms of geometry, universal, precise, and indisputable. If all morality is to depend on the question,—how far does it conform to the design with which man was created?—

we must have that design ever before us, defined in all its breadth and its precision. This we can only get from a specific revelation. Natural Theology and the light of Nature give the most opposite conclusions. If we do not mean, by the argument from the design of the Creator, the precise rules of life laid down in the Bible or by the Church, we really mean that every man is to call that "good" which is right in his own eyes; and accordingly the moral scheme of P. C. W. would not differ from that of any heathen moralist, for the "design," and the "Creator," would be used by each reasoner as a dialectic hypothesis, to be modified at will.

It is surely a dangerous ground to take up, thus to insist that there can be no "basis of morals" apart from theology, for this means, as we have seen, apart from some specific presentation by revelation; and if there can be no basis of morals, there can be no coherent morality, and if so, no settled sense of right and wrong, virtue and conduct, except such as comes hap-hazard, or by momentary impulse. Of all the systems affecting the practical problems of life, the moral code is perhaps the one on which there is the greatest agreement, and theology the one on which there is the least. And to insist that we cannot decide if any action be "good" or "bad," until we have a knowledge of the designs of the Creator—nay, that we may not use the very terms "good" and "bad," is to reverse the order in which man has proceeded, and to expose human conduct to prolonged uncertainty. It has always been seen that morality preceded theology, and was earlier fixed and accepted; the design of Providence was a deduction, in fact, from what men thought right, and God was an impersonation of their ideas of "good." It will be a perilous change to tell men that they must call

nothing "good" or "bad," until the contending Churches have finally settled on some one way, in which "to justify the ways of God to man." When Churches tell the world that men may not apply moral epithets to human actions, save in language of some theological scheme, men are very likely to grow indifferent to moral judgment altogether, without advancing any nearer to the particular theological scheme.

My purpose is simply to draw attention to the new, as I think, and alarming doctrine, that no man may use the terms "good" or "bad," except in so far as he claims a knowledge of the design of a Creator; and I shall therefore abstain from comment on one or two matters in the same ingenious paper, in which I think metaphors may be found disguised in the uniform of arguments. But it is worthy of notice that the mode in which the condition A is stated virtually excludes the obvious answer. It is assumed "that there is nothing supernatural in either [? any] of us—*i.e.* nothing in which our nature essentially differs from that of any other known animal—our differences from other animals being purely anatomical," etc., etc. Here the sentence introduced by *i.e.* is certainly not the equivalent of the former. Those who decline to assert any knowledge of anything supernatural in man are far from asserting that there is nothing in which our nature essentially differs from that of any other known animal. It is difficult to see how the one proposition can be assumed for the other; nay, it is difficult to see any connection between the two propositions. All orders of reasoners, however much they disclaim belief in the supernatural, would agree in acknowledging many things in which men essentially differ from brutes, and many differences not at all anatomical.

The differences which separate men from brutes are infinite capacities of intellectual, moral, and practical life—powers of developing thought, religion, sentiment, art, and industry, which other animals have not. It may fairly be said that they who disclaim any supernatural superiority for man are they who best see, and who set most store by, man's natural superiority to the brutes, and who least think of these differences as anatomical rather than as social, moral, and spiritual. To tell those who disclaim any knowledge of the supernatural that they regard man as a mere brute, is an ancient reproach, but a novel argument. It has been used by the controversialists of many religions, but it does not often appear now in philosophical discussion. To the devotee of Brahminism, they who deny his doctrines degrade man to the level of the brute. And the Fuegian whom the missionary implored not to kill and eat his decrepit mother replied that, unless he did so, he should sink to the level of the dogs.

The truth is, that the attempt to limit the basis of morals to the design of creation is entirely needless. All the purposes it serves are easily fulfilled by a simpler condition. Very many schools of moralists will be ready to admit that the true basis of morals may be found in the end which most befits human nature. If we find man, as a fact, best adapted to live in a certain way, we can take that as a test of how man should live, without dogmatising about the design of creation. For the purpose of supplying a basis of morals, it comes to precisely the same thing, whether we say that human nature is adapted to a certain life, or that it was designed by a particular maker to follow that life. The correspondence between man's capacities and a given moral life is just as complete in one case as in the other; and to

encumber this fact with controversies as to its origin, is to raise needless difficulties. One class of reasoners believe that natural development has slowly adapted man to the particular life; another insist that man was created with this particular design; and a third are content to believe that he is so adapted as a fact, and they decline to set up any specific doctrine of creation, or any formal theory of evolution. All three schools will perfectly agree that, as a fact, it is better for man to live in the same way, and they have, in fact, the same basis of morals. Nothing, therefore, can be more entirely gratuitous, or more certainly dangerous, than to convert a plain question of Moral Philosophy into a subordinate doctrine of Theology.

What, if we are to give labels, we may call the functional basis of morals, will really satisfy all conditions, and it practically embraces almost all theories. Human nature, when investigated, proves to be of a certain kind, and capable of certain works. It has tried all kinds of lives, but the sort of life at which it is best to aim is that where its nature is most harmoniously developed, where there is the least waste of power by conflict, and the greatest sustained result. Ages, races, and individuals may differ, more or less, as to what life exactly fills these conditions, but all will agree (it is the basis, and almost all the result of ancient philosophy) that the object of man *ought* to be to develop his nature most completely.

That is to say, the basis of morals is to be found by determining the *function* of human nature. What in the foregoing discussion are called the Mechanical and the Perfectionist bases of morals, are only modes of explaining how this function of human nature came into existence, a question with which I am in no way concerned. The function, *i.e.* the proper action of the human organism, is a thing to be determined by

observation and reflection, and can be determined, and has been determined, by very various methods of reasoning in very much the same way. There is little more to be said, since Aristotle showed, at the outset of philosophy, that the *good* of man and the *happiness* of man may be used interchangeably, and both follow from observing and determining the proper *work* of man.

The ultimate consequences of finding the grounds of duty by observing the capabilities of human nature are, accordingly, almost exactly the same as those of finding them in the supposed designs of a Creator. Both say: This is right, because man is adapted to this. The latter theory only adds the gratuitous and unprovable assertion that man has been adapted to it by a Being who created him with that design. And whilst nothing is gained to morality by this further explanation, everything is risked, by the mind being constantly invited to leave the ground of rational observation for that of arbitrary hypothesis. He who bases duty on observed capacities of mankind has every advantage possessed by him who bases it on the design of creation. He will, moreover, be kept in the sphere of reality; whilst the Duty of the other will be merely his own imaginations. The doctrine of *function* is intelligible science; that of *design* is mere theosophy. The designs of the Creator being limited only by the powers of fancy of the theorist, the theorist has to endow himself with a real power of omniscience, and to rehearse creation itself in his imagination, every time that he attempts to solve a moral problem. It is a curious example of this, that in the case of the cancerous pauper discussed by P. C. W., it is impossible to solve the problem on the theory of design, without first deciding the somewhat formidable question, what is the design of cancer?

As I should approach the problem itself on a moral basis almost identical with that of P. C. W., theological substratum apart, it is not singular if I come to almost identical conclusions. I should look with equal horror both upon desertion and assassination as modes of treating incurable paupers, and I should look on relief and charity as equally a sacred duty. I should do so because I find the rule, To Love one another, written in man's nature; because every man, by the laws of social existence, is the neighbour of every other man, and because the succour of the helpless is the plainest of social duties. Society would be convulsed unless mercy, tenderness, compassion, and self-sacrifice were impressed upon it daily and hourly by system, unless every violation of the duty to practise these virtues were visited by the public horror of brutality.

Every virtue and every grace which private or public life has ever displayed under the teaching of any religion can be really shown to be the following out of man's true nature; and, indeed, they have never had any other source or inspiration. The plain dictates of duty, and the ground of obligation for morality, may equally be found in watching human nature in all its varieties and the vast history of its development; and they stand on a footing far surer than our hesitating interpretation of what we call Revelation, or the vague hypotheses of Natural Theology. The Religion of Fictions may rest assured that a Religion of Science, in whatever form presented, will be lacking neither in the graces, consolations, nor sanctions of a religion. In its own way, it will have its Revelation, its Future, its External Power, and its common Brotherhood; and each of these will be all the more real and the more sustaining in that they will be natural, and not supernatural.

And all this, to me, describes the moral character-

istics, not of the Christian, but of the religious temper. With what has been so finely said in preceding discourses by Dr. Martineau, we ought, I think, most cordially to join. Only for the words "Theology" and "Christian" we must put the wider and more ancient terms "Religion" and "Human"; and again, for the intrinsic consciousness and emotional intuitions, whereby these are said to prove themselves, we must substitute the reasonable proof of science, philosophy, and positive psychology.

We have had before us three distinctive views as to the relations of Religion and Morality. Each of the three has pressed on us a very powerful thought. The reconciliation is obscure, yet I hold on to the hope that it may one day be found; that we shall have to surrender neither Religion nor Science, neither demonstration on the one hand, nor Dogma, Worship, and Discipline on the other; that we shall end by accepting a purely human base for our Morality, and withal come to see our Morality transfigured into a true Religion.

It is the purport of the first of the arguments before us to establish: that morality has a basis of its own quite independent of all theology whatever, but that since morality must be deeply affected by any theology, the morality will be undermined if based on a theology which is not true. We must all agree, I think, to that.

The second argument insists that if the religious foundations and sanctions of morality be given up, human life runs the risk of sinking into depravity, since morality without religion is insufficient for general civilisation. For my part I entirely assent to that.

The third argument rejoins that Theology cannot supply a base for morals that have lost their own; but

that morals, though they have their own base, and are second to nothing, are not adequate to direct human life until they be transfused into that sense of resignation, adoration, and communion with an overruling Providence, which is the true mark of Religion. I assent entirely to that.

We, who follow the teaching of Comte, humbly look forward to an ultimate solution of all such difficulties by the force of one common principle: that we acknowledge a religion, of which the creed shall be science; of which the Faith, Hope, Charity, shall be real, not transcendental, earthly, not heavenly —a religion, in a word, which is entirely human, in its evidences, in its purposes, in its sanctions and appeals. Write the word "Religion" where we find the word "Theology," write the word "Human" where we find the word "Christian," or the words "Theist," "Mussulman," or "Buddhist," and these discussions grow practical and easily reconciled; the aspirations and sanctions of Religion burst open to us anew in greater intensity, without calling on us to surrender one claim of reality and humanity; the realm of Faith and Adoration becomes again conterminous with Life, without disturbing, nay, whilst sanctifying, the invincible resolve of modern men to live *in* this world, *for* this world, *with* their fellowmen.

And this brings us to the source of all difficulties about the relations of Morality and Religion. We place our morality—we are compelled by the conditions of all our positive knowledge to place it —in a strictly human world. But it is the mark of every theology (the name of Theology assumes it) to place our religion in a non-human world. And thus our human system of morals may possibly be distorted —it cannot be supported—by a non-human religion. But, on the other hand, it is dwarfed and atrophied

for want of being duly expanded into a truly human religion. Our morality with its human realities, our theology with its non-human hypotheses, will not amalgamate. Their methods are in conflict. In their base, in their logic, in their aim, they are heterogeneous. They do not lie *in pari materiâ*. Give us a religion as truly human, as really scientific, as is our moral system, and all is harmony.

Our morals, based as they must be on our knowledge of Life and of Society, are then ordered and inspired by a religion which belongs, just as truly as our moral science does, to the world of science and of man. And then religion will be no longer that quicksand of Possibility which two thousand years of debate have still left it to so many of us. It becomes at last the issue of our knowledge, the meaning of our science, the soul of our morality, the ideal of our imagination, the fulfilment of our aspirations, the lawgiver, in short, of our whole lives. Can it ever be this whilst we still pursue Religion into the bubble world of the Whence and the Whither?

That morality is dependent on theology; that morality is independent of religion: each of these views presents insuperable difficulties, and brings us to an alternative from which we recoil. To assert that there is no morality but what is based on Theology is to assert what experience, history, and philosophy flatly contradict, nay that which revolts the conscience and all manly purpose within us. History teaches us that some of the best types of morality, in men and in races, have been found apart from anything that Christians can call theology at all. Morality has been advancing for centuries in modern Europe, whilst theology, at least in authority, has been visibly declining.

The morality of Confucius and of Sakya Mouni,

of Socrates and Marcus Aurelius, of Vauvenargues, Turgot, Condorcet, Hume, was entirely independent of any theology. The moral system of Aristotle was framed without any view to theology, as completely as that of Comte or of our recent moralists. We have experience of men with the loftiest ideal of life and of strict fidelity to their ideal, who expressly repudiate theology, and of many more whom theology never touched. Lastly, there is a spirit within us which will not believe that to know and to do the right, we must wait until the mysteries of existence and the universe are resolved, its origin, its government, and its future. To make right conduct a corollary of a theological creed, is not only contrary to fact, but shocking to our self-respect. We know that the just spirit can find the right path, even whilst the judgment hangs bewildered amidst the Churches.

To hold, as would seem to require of us the second argument, that, though theology is necessary as a base for morality, yet almost any theology will suffice—Polytheist, Mussulman, or Deist—so long as some imaginary being is postulated, this is indeed to reduce theology to a minimum; since, in this case, it does not seem to matter in which God you may believe. To say that morality is dependent on *one* particular theology, is to deny that men are moral outside your peculiar orthodoxy; to say that morality is dependent merely on *some* form of theology, is to say that it matters little to practical virtue which of a hundred creeds you may profess. And when we shrink from the arrogance of the first and the looseness of the second position, we have no alternative but to admit that our morality must have a human, and not a superhuman, base.

It does not follow that morality can suffice for life without religion. Morality, if we mean by that

the science of duty, after all can supply us only with a knowledge of what we should do. Of itself it can neither touch the imagination, nor satisfy the thirst of knowledge, nor order the emotions. It tells us of human duty, but nothing of the world without us; it prescribes to us our duties, but it does not kindle the feelings which are the impulse to duty. Morality has nothing to tell us of a paramount Power outside of us, to struggle with which is confusion and annihilation, to work with which is happiness and strength; it has nothing to teach us of a communion with a great Goodness, nor does it touch the chords of Veneration, Sympathy, and Love within us. Morality does not profess to organise our knowledge and give symmetry to life. It does not deal with Beauty, Affection, Adoration.

If it order conduct, it does not correlate this conduct with the sum of our knowledge, or with the ideals of our imagination, or with the deepest of our emotions. To do all this is the part of Religion, not of morality; and inasmuch as the sphere of this function is both wider and higher, so does Religion transcend Morality. Morality has to do with conduct, Religion with life The first is the code of a part of human nature, the second gives its harmony to the whole of human nature. And morality can no more suffice for life than a just character would suffice for any one of us without intellect, imagination, or affection, and the power of fusing all these into the unity of a man.

The lesson, I think, is twofold. On the one hand, morality is independent of theology, is superior to it, is growing whilst theology is declining, is steadfast whilst theology is shifting, unites men whilst theology separates them, and does its work when theology disappears. There is something like a civilised morality, a standard of morality, a convergence about

morality. There is no civilised theology, no standard of theology, no convergence about it. On the other hand, morality will never suffice for life; and every attempt to base our existence on morality alone, or to crown our existence with morality alone, must certainly fail. For this is to fling away the most powerful motives of human nature. To reach these is the privilege of Religion alone. And those who trust that the Future can ever be built upon science and civilisation, without religion, are attempting to build a Pyramid of bricks without straw. The solution, we believe, is a non-theological religion.

There are some who amuse themselves by repeating that this is a contradiction in terms, that religion implies theology. Yet no one refuses the name of religion to the systems of Confucius and Buddha, though neither has a trace of theology. But disputes about a name are idle. If they could debar us from the name of Religion, no one could disinherit us of the thing. We mean by religion a scheme which shall explain to us the relations of the faculties of the human soul within, of man to his fellowmen beside him, to the world and its order around him; next, that which brings him face to face with a Power to which he must bow, with a Providence which he must love and serve, with a Being which he must adore—that which, in fine, gives man a doctrine to believe, a discipline to live by, and an object to worship. This is the ancient meaning of Religion, and the fact of religion all over the world in every age. What is new in our scheme is merely that we avoid such terms as Infinite, Absolute, Immaterial, and vague negatives altogether, resolutely confining ourselves to the sphere of what can be shown by experience, of what is relative and not absolute, and wholly and frankly *human*.

X

THE ETHICAL CONFERENCE

A Conference of Ethical Societies, European and American, was to meet at Chicago during the month of September. Dr. Felix Adler, of New York, having invited Mr. Frederic Harrison to attend, as representing the Positivist movement, or if unable to attend to communicate a paper, the following address was sent to be submitted to the Conference.

It is a matter of regret that the Positivists of Newton Hall find themselves unable to take personal part in the Conference of Ethical Societies. Primarily and essentially, this body claims to be an Ethical Society; for it seeks to promote the development of moral life on a strict basis of positive sociology and scientific ethics. It would therefore find itself in complete accord with all serious efforts to place the true culture of self and of the community on rational and human grounds.

Whatever differences of view might arise between a Positivist and an Ethical movement would be found —not in the common ground, which would extend over the entire programme of an Ethical Association —but in the further aim of the Positivist movement to add to ethical culture Philosophy and Religion. It

would serve little purpose to enlarge on the ground which is common to both Positive and Ethical movements. It will be more useful to state the grounds which, in the former point of view, make the ultimate extension of the ethical culture to Philosophy and Religion, not only legitimate but indispensable. Right conduct is the true end of a worthy human life. But our conduct is *ultimately* determined—not by what we are taught to do, or by what we should like to do—but by what we believe and what we revere.

In using the word Religion, we are not giving it any theological significance, nor are we limiting it to any special form of belief. The Chinese and the Negroes (not to mention many other races) have a formal religion which is entirely without God; and in all schemes of belief which can be called *religion* there is a common element. That common element is (1) *a belief in some Power* recognised as greater than the individual or even than the community, as able to deal out good and evil, and as interested in the acts of the individual and the community, (2) a sense of reverence, awe, love, and gratitude towards such a Power, and some mode of making that sense manifest, and (3) certain practices, or course of conduct, or rules of life, which are believed to be welcome to that Power, and such as will procure its favour.

It is not proposed to argue for any particular type of creed, worship, or practice. The argument of this paper is simply that ethical conduct is powerfully affected for good or for evil by the type of creed, worship, and discipline current in the society, or ruling the conscience of the individual. It follows that ethical culture, carried to whatever perfection, cannot secure any given course of conduct; for a dominant religious belief may supersede and control the ethical

sense, unless in a society where Religion is inoperative or atrophied.

It is true that, for considerable groups and masses on both sides of the Atlantic, religion seems to have reached this inoperative stage, and acute persons are found to regard this as its final form. But the teaching of history is against this view; for it shows us man over incalculable periods of time, and under a thousand varying conditions, always powerfully stirred and modified by religion in one of its many types. And even in societies such as the working-class of Berlin or Paris, where it may seem that all sense of religion is atrophied, it is difficult to maintain that the practical results of the religious habits of centuries do not still mould conduct.

In order to prove that Religion will not continue to influence conduct in the future, it would be necessary to show that a tendency to recognise some dominant Power, and to feel strong emotions about such a Power, and to act under the control of that belief and those emotions, was not an innate habit of human nature. But philosophy proves no such thing; no philosopher of repute has even attempted such proof; and the best modern psychology of every school concurs in scientific analysis of those qualities of brain and heart which make up the compound religious instinct. Philosophers in turn expose the inadequacy of certain forms of religion; but they are constantly making more definite and positive the common element of religion, and its roots in man's moral and mental structure which the various forms of religion are designed to satisfy.

The same may, indeed, be said of Philosophy, understanding by the word Philosophy, the sum of our knowledge of Nature and Man. So long as our philosophy was limited to physics, and the analogies

of natural with moral and social science were not understood, it might be supposed that ethical conduct was not controlled by our interpretation of the phenomena of Nature, at least for societies which had passed beyond the African, Hindoo, and Chinese types of civilisation. But now that Philosophy has brought Nature and Man into line, and shows us in both correlative laws, and finds a similar evolution in societies and in ethics, it is impossible to doubt that moral conduct is ultimately controlled by the general ideas we hold about the laws of man's moral and social life.

The masses, it is true, are not aware that they have any philosophy, and it would be vain to talk to them about moral and social laws. But, just as they can speak intelligibly without knowing rules of grammar or even the names of parts of speech, so they have dominant habits of mind which affect their daily lives. Men, however ignorant, act differently according as they hold or deny that their acts have some relation to a superior Will. And a practical result is at once visible when men become accustomed to regard events and acts—not as decreed or inspired by arbitrary wills —but as the intelligible consequences of scientific law. See how different is the attitude in an outburst of cholera of the people of Berlin, Paris, or New York to that of the fatalist pilgrim to Mecca and Benares!

The result is that Religion and Philosophy so powerfully affect conduct, that no ethical culture can determine conduct, unless by an alliance with Religion and Philosophy:—Religion meaning deep feeling about a Power believed to be supreme or superior, and Philosophy meaning general ideas about the order of Nature and the evolution of man. At the very basis of ethical culture, at its threshold and on its crown, stands the problem of the relation of the individual to

the society, and the crucial problem, how to harmonise the claims of the individual and of the social ideal. No one can doubt that both Religion and Philosophy have very much to say on this crucial problem, and that the whole ethical solution may be recast, whatever ethical training there may have been, say, under an overmastering religious enthusiasm such as that preached by Buddha or St. Francis. Or suppose a dogmatic scheme of individualism based on a general physical and social philosophy such as that which animated the rigid Political Economy of the last generation, and which sprang from the self-interest doctrines of Bentham.

The difficulties which encompass all human efforts after right conduct amidst the spasmodic forces of appetite and interest are enormous; and civilisation, which on the one hand strengthens the resources of moral culture, on the other hand opens new and subtle modes in which appetite and interest can find gratification. Morality, however pure and elevated, must always remain a somewhat tepid and prosaic stimulus when contrasted with the whirlwind of passion and the subtle phthisis of self-interest. It is certain that man's benevolent instincts never reach the red heat of lust and hate.

History shows us one force, and one only, which has ever successfully contended with these appetites and conquered the promptings of self. That force is Religion, in some form. It may be in a bad form—Moloch-worship; Obeism; the devotion to Tribe, City, Church, Sect, or Prophet. But the passionate submission of self to some dominant Power or Idea, to whom life itself is owed, has in all ages proved strong enough to overmaster the stings of appetite and even the instinct of escaping pain or death. The white heat of religious enthusiasm has proved stronger than

the red heat of selfish desire. And nothing else in the history of mankind has done that. Civilisation, so far as it is limited to mere ethical culture, may somewhat diminish violence, though it makes murder even more diabolically deliberate; but on the other hand it is the soil in which fraud grows like a deadly fungus.

It is quite true that Religion has only done this imperfectly and unsteadily, acting only in certain ages and societies, or on given persons, and in special spheres of human life. And it is true that Religion in the most advanced societies of the Old and the New World seems to have lost its savour, like the salt in the Testament parable. Else, what would be the meaning of an ethical movement outside and independent of the Gospel? But the true explanation is that the salt has lost its savour, because its whole intellectual basis is honeycombed, because it has got into a hopeless conflict with science, and because philosophy has proved that even its ethical standard is crude and misleading. That is the point from which we set out—viz. that ethical culture, religion, and philosophy are really so much interdependent and so organically correlated that it is only possible to treat them as separate for temporary and special purposes. They are not independent institutions which can be applied to the conduct of life without reference to each other. We can no more isolate any one, except for study, analysis, and comparison, than we can cure an ailing human body by exclusive treatment of the digestive, nervous, or vascular system, treating any one of these as being practically independent of the other two. What is needed is a synthesis of human life—not an analytic ethical culture.

On these grounds we who meet in Newton Hall believe that any permanent movement for ethical

culture must be at the same time a movement for religious and philosophical culture jointly. Indeed, the religious and the philosophical problems are really antecedent—must come first. These problems are truly the basis: they govern and determine the ethical problem. Conduct is the *result* of the Ideal that we revere, *plus* the Truth which we know to be supreme. When we have settled on the Ideal as an object of love and devotion—when we have recognised the limit of human knowledge—then we may build up our ethical culture in accordance with our religious emotions and our philosophical beliefs. As we said at the beginning, neither religion nor philosophy can, in our view, transcend this planet, human nature and human life as found thereon, and the sphere of demonstrable science. We will admit nothing super-human in Religion, and nothing supra-scientific in Philosophy. We find both, here on earth and in the domain of verifiable knowledge. Nothing has been said in this communication about Positivism as a system, Auguste Comte as a teacher, or Humanity as an object of reverence. We have argued the question on general grounds. But it will be understood that we find the base of ethical culture in the practical service of Humanity by the light of the general doctrines of Positive Philosophy.

XI

NATURAL THEOLOGY

SUFFICIENT attention has not yet been given to a very acute, very learned, and eminently judicial estimate of Natural Theology by the light of modern science, the last, and, alas! the posthumous work of the late Mr. W. M. W. Call.[1] As so much of Mr. Call's work was given to the *Westminster Review* now more than forty years ago, and to other unsigned organs of free inquiry, the general public which reads so little philosophy was not aware how much learning, acuteness, and truthfulness of nature was covered under the modest and simple life of one who had become a clergyman in the Church some sixty years ago, and, after a long and painful struggle of years, had withdrawn for conscience' sake from a position which he felt to be morally and intellectually unbearable.

This little volume opens with a pathetic and most gracefully written chapter from the unpublished autobiography of the author. It is the story of a deeply religious mind, fascinated by the Bible in childhood, roused in boyhood by Byron and Shelley, half inspired by Coleridge and latitudinarian theology, and ultimately finding a temporary rest in the ministry

[1] *Final Causes—a Refutation.* By Wathen Mark Wilks Call, M.A. Kegan Paul, Trench, and Co. 12mo, 1891.

of the Church of England. Then follows a deeply interesting and candid unveiling of the torments of spirit through which many an acute and conscientious mind in the orthodox fold must have passed in the last generation when hell, inspiration and authenticity of the Bible, and the supernatural machinery of Christianity began to fade away like bad dreams. The simple, truthful, modest story of all that it cost a conscientious priest to retire from his profession and to devote his life to the patient but obscure pursuit of honest and laborious study, makes an impressive introduction to a learned investigation of the scientific grounds of natural theology.

When first relieved from the bonds of an obsolete orthodoxy, Mr. Call found himself in the shifting phases of the vague Theisms of the schools of Bentham, Hegel, Mazzini, or Mill. But the systematic study of physical science, into which he threw himself, and an absorbing interest in the philosophy of evolution, gradually taught him the hollowness of the foundations of theology, apart from revelation. And impressed with all the waste of thought, the shallow inconsequence, and the moral confusion involved in the Theistic hypothesis, he prepared this book with great deliberation and research. And he brings us to the conclusion wherein he at last found rest: "The sole sacred ideal that remains to us is that of humanity; not of the human race indiscriminately, but of the purer, nobler constituents of it, the great collective existence, 'which ever lives and ever learns,' the mystical association of all intellects, of all loves, of all forces, the object of all our efforts, the sovereign to whom we are all responsible. . . . These sentiments, this enthusiasm, this devotedness form, as Mr. Mill acknowledges, a real religion" (p. 159).

Mr. Call begins by examining the great argument, which runs through so many forms of Natural Theology, that the order and harmony discoverable in the world force us to attribute to it a divine origin. But where does this argument rest, when we have once grasped in all its fulness the idea of the relativity of knowledge? We can only know this order and harmony in terms of the human mind. We cannot pierce to any absolute order and harmony. The order and the harmony we perceive, in fact, are simply modes in which the human mind arranges the infinite phenomena of an ever-changing world. Time and space, in which they all seem to us to be conditioned, are forms of the human intelligence. Why do we assume a *divine* origin of an order and a harmony that are conditioned by the laws of our very finite intelligence? The order and harmony then seem to be reflections which the mind itself projects upon the revolving panorama of the external world. So far as they prove anything, they prove the synthetic power of the human spectator. Man is quite conscious that the world has not a human origin; and that is all he knows of origins at all.

More careful examination is ever showing how very imperfect is the order which the science of the last century hastily assumed to be perfect. The moon, we used to be told in childhood, was created to give light to the earth, and was assumed to be the abode of happy beings. The simplest geometry can prove that if such had been the object, it had not been achieved, although it was very easy to accomplish; and that so far as we can see, the moon is a lifeless void. The result of modern science is to multiply the record of waste, ill-adjustment, disorder, and strife through the entire physical universe. "For countless ages, this earth was a dungeon of pestiferous exhalations and a

den of wild beasts." It was all for our good, we are told by theology, and so was the creation of earthquakes, disease, death, and sin. Modern science is far too cautious, and possibly too well-trained, to repeat the ribaldry of the Spanish monarch who spoke so slightingly of creation; but it assures us in every corner of the visible universe, that the apparent order and evolution are not what human science would have recommended, had it been consulted at the origin. It may serve some higher purpose. But, humanly speaking, it is full of disorder.

From general considerations of the "Universal Harmony," Mr. Call passes to special adaptations. He works out the argument that *adaptation* implies limitation. An ingenious artist invents the safety lamp for dangerous mines. He is limited by the antecedent condition of inflammable gas. But why should Providence in its mercy create fire-damp at all? And if it at last gives man the means of counteracting fire-damp, it has subjected millions to cruel death. The whole question of death, of the decay, disease, and destruction which lead to death, the infinite forms of organic suffering and of physical war and waste, are arrayed by Mr. Call in a crushing dilemma. Things around us may be adapted to given ends, but why is man, organic nature—nay, inorganic nature—adapted to meet such agony, such waste, such deadly strife, such appalling destruction? There are some to whom all this has seemed to testify to a diabolic intelligence, or at least to the dualism of a good and evil principle, not unequally matched and waging an eternal war with alternate success and defeat.

The champions of divine adaptation have usually selected a particular organ; and none has given rise to more ingenuity than the form of the eye. The eye is unquestionably a wonderful example of complex

structure adapted to a subtle process. Mr. Call quotes Helmholtz's criticism of the eye as an optical instrument. The defects are very numerous and easily remediable by the contriver of the organ. All kinds of imperfection in every part of the organ are obvious, and are easily avoided in man's own optical instruments. Many of them are quite familiar, even in elementary science. Professor Tyndall quotes and approves Helmholtz's saying, "that if an optician sent him an instrument so full of defects as the human eye, he would be justified in sending it back with the severest censure." The defects of our eye exceed any defects of our telescope. If modern astronomers could design the eye as well as the telescope, what might we not now know! Evolution, or spontaneous adaptation to uses, by gradual and struggling steps, fully accounts for the defects of the eye. It is a witness to evolution —but not to omniscience.

Another favourite argument of Natural Theology is the instinct of animals; and none has been more popular than our old friend the busy bee. It used to be held that the cell of the bee-hive showed mathematical attainments of a high order, as exactly the form best adapted to store the maximum of honey with the minimum of wax. But recent science has greatly diminished both the precision and the mysteriousness of the bee's cell. Darwin found it a simple example of natural selection; and a reverend bee-master observed that the form of the cell was the mechanical result of six bees (the number which could form a ring round one) poking their heads together. The bee is a very interesting animal; but its "instinct" is not more surprising than that of many other animals. And there is nothing more *divine* in its instinct than there is in theirs. And no "instinct" has anything like the *divine* character of the human intelligence.

And this, alas! as we know to our cost, may take a truly diabolic turn for evil.

Theologians and theistical philosophers have long abandoned the syllogisms of Voltaire and Paley, which so greatly delighted our grandfathers, of the Universe being regarded as a work of art, as an intricate mechanism, from which we must infer a Creator, as we infer a watchmaker from a watch. More acute and also more reverent reflection has shown that this is but one of the many types of anthropomorphism. We infer a watchmaker when we find a watch, only because we understand the watch's uses and are familiar with the watchmaker's art. To infer that we can follow the purpose of the watchmaker of the Universe is to attribute to the Absolute and the Infinite our infinitesimal limitations, and to measure Omniscience and Omnipotence by the crude expedients which mortal men employ when struggling with the difficulties of their environment. Art, ingenuity, elaborate mechanism presuppose a hard fight with intractable materials, and a qualified and incomplete result. Logically, the bare idea of contrivance is a contradiction to Creation. And he who is the artist or the mechanic cannot be God.

To meet this dilemma some modern theologians postulate a limited, or as Mr. Call names him, a constitutional Deity. Mr. Mill rejected, almost with indignation, the idea of an Omnipotent Creator; for the moral evils abounding in Creation shocked his sensitive spirit. He argued, as others have done, for some Force, external to the Creator, and outside of Creation, which imposed definite limits on Deity, and compelled him to resort to expedients, as an artificer does, and to accept evils which he might mitigate but could not remove. Mr. Call presses home the irresistible dilemma that a Creator, so limited, is no Creator

at all; that a powerful, but far from omnipotent being, struggling with the obstacles which an External Force has imposed on him, like Prometheus on Caucasus, does not answer to the first idea of deity at all, and satisfies none of the yearnings of the Theistic conscience. The external Force would be the ultimate Cause, after all, the presumed Creator, like the destiny of the ancient Olympus. An idea reconcilable indeed with Polytheism, but assuredly not with Monotheism.

And then, as Mr. Call points out, there is this further difficulty. On what ground do we assume absolute Benevolence with limited power, rather than absolute Power with limited goodness? Our ancestors, who were less sensitive than we are, found no difficulty in accepting fearful moral dilemmas in the mysterious works of Providence; but they would never admit a suspicion of a check on Omnipotent Power. Dante saw the Law of Primal Love graven on the portals of Hell. He would have rent his garments in horror at the idea of a Deity who found himself incessantly baffled and controlled. Mr. Mill, like many sentimentalists, shrank from Hell and from many a moral dilemma, and preferred a struggling Deity to a merciless Deity. But there is not the slightest ground in logic or in general philosophy why we should exalt the Goodness of the Creator at the expense of his Omnipotence, and escape from a dilemma by voluntarily degrading our conception of Godhead. A limited God implies the idea of many Gods; and however much men may love him, they will fail to reverence him. A struggling God and an unjust God are alike contradictions in terms—at any rate to those who think belief in one God to be higher than belief in many Gods.

The most important and interesting part of Mr.

Call's work is devoted to the conception of the "Evolutionary God," *i.e.* the notion of Creation as affected by the scientific theories of the last forty years. Natural Theology, like so many other branches of thought, has had to recast its entire scheme under the pressure of the doctrine of evolution. One resource is, to imagine the gradual and tentative process of evolutionary adaptation (which, it is now impossible to doubt, is stamped upon living Nature) to be but a practical working out of a Type or Idea, the immediate and direct emanation of the Creator. It is curious to see Platonism revived after two thousand years; but the part which Plato had in founding the orthodox creed has been fully appreciated only by Comte, who makes Plato the chief of six of the Fathers of the Eastern Church, including St. John the Evangelist. Mr. Call points out, with unhesitating logic, the weakness involved in this circuitous Teleology, which only puts the difficulty one step further back, and simply divides into two sections the dilemmas that surround all ideas, first, of a First Cause; and next, of the imperfections and strife of Nature.

These dilemmas Mr. Call treats under the five heads of: (1) Destructive action; (2) imperfect execution; (3) useless or mischievous contrivance; (4) arbitrary, capricious, and whimsical treatment; and (5) circuitous procedure. Under each head he gives us a body of striking illustrations from recent scientific authority. The vast mass of the literature of evolution is indeed a record of all these in turn.

1. As to the record of waste and destruction the growth of modern science has enormously increased our conception of its range. Microscopic and embryologic study present us with a world in which waste, destruction, and mutual antagonism appear as

:he law of life, so that what was once recognised as Infinite Creation is now felt to be balanced by an :qually Infinite Destruction. If the cosmos, with ıll its continuous dissolution, be the work of one Omnipotent Force, it would be as logical to attribute t to a Destroyer as to a Creator.

2. Imperfect execution seems rather the rule than he exception, when we study Nature by the light of :volution. The bee's sting which, if it defends the ınimal, cannot be used without causing its death, is a ämiliar example. The whole natural history of the)ee, now more fully understood, is one tale of frustrated :xecution. The enormous waste of drones, who die n the single act of which they are capable, is but one :xample. Though the frustration of purpose is nost conspicuous in the insects, it runs through the vhole of living Nature, where almost every function s liable to lead direct to opposite consequences as the :nvironment determines.

3. Useless or mischievous contrivance is the :ommonplace of the evolutionist. All the "sports" ınd anomalies of Nature are examples. The growth)f organs, tissues, processes, and parts, under conditions vhere they cannot serve their normal functions, and)nly conduce to mischief, is familiar to all pathologists ınd all naturalists. The limbs concealed in the outer ntegument so as to be utterly useless, the rudimentary)arts of man and other animals, the coccyx of man, he concealed eye of creatures which live out of the ight and do not see at all, the whole history of ıermaphroditism and the like—these things form the lelight and pride of the Biologist, inasmuch as they estify to gradual adaptation, whilst they are the lespair and shame of the Teleologist, for they testify o wasted ingenuity in contriving elaborate mechanism hat leads to no result or to a mischievous result.

4. Wanton, capricious, and whimsical treatment is a kindred field of evolutionary observation. Mr. Darwin revelled in following out examples of this. The grotesque forms, habits, and colours of the animal world, their fantastic tricks, childish vanities and amusements, their most indecorous amours, their scoundrelly and murderous propensities, the diabolical ingenuity of the *sphex* which paralyses without killing spiders to form a living food for its grubs when hatched—of all these things Nature is made. They have intense interest for the evolutionist, whatever disgust they excite in the moralist. The dilemma of the teleologist is this: if all these ludicrous and disgusting contrivances are the ideas of Divine Omnipotence, it is difficult to bring it into line with the first postulates of human morality and intelligence.

5. The last head, circuitous procedure, is the most abundant of all. Of course, the entire scheme of evolution is one of circuitous, gradual, laborious transformation, under the pressure of varying conditions. That idea alone was enough to put an end to Teleology. For as the final adaptation to an actual end is fairly complete in large parts of nature, the idea of direct creation with a view to that end was obvious, and far from absurd. But, when every extant organism is found or supposed to have passed through a series of disparate stages, and organic and inorganic Nature is conceived as the composite outcome of infinite transformation, everything on earth is assumed to have an origin so circuitous, multiform, and heterogeneous, that the bare idea of Creation for that end becomes at once repulsive and irrational. And what end?—for in evolution there is neither beginning nor end. And if all things living have slowly emerged out of protoplasm in infinite æons of labour and

change, what is there of divine in a Creation so slow, so laborious, and so unlovely?

Mr. Call concludes his book with a warning chapter to remind us that he is no pessimist, but a true meliorist. He sees far too much waste and horror in the Universe to feel that it is all the work of Omnipotent Goodness. He sees far too much growing improvement on this earth not to hope for an ever better and better world. He is careful also to point out that he has not argued against the existence of God, nor has he touched any single ontological, psychological, or moral argument for the existence of Providence. He has argued only against the vain attempt to prove from science the supposed design of an assumed Creation. Nor, he is careful to add, does he personally refuse to accept the spiritual ideals that are familiar to Christendom, apart from the pretensions of Christian dogma. He would include "the teaching of Jesus and of Paul in one series with that of their predecessors and successors." In a fine conclusion, he sums up the hope of the religion of the Future, when "Humanity will be the sole Ideal Object to which dutiful obligation and exalted sentiment will be referred, and the world of Humanity will be the world revealed, not by divine inspiration or metaphysical intuition, but by Positive Science."

XII

LAW OF THE THREE STATES

A Reply to an article by Bishop Harvey Goodwin in the "Nineteenth Century," October 1886.

ONLY the high office and good name of the Bishop of Carlisle could justify serious notice of his article entitled "Comte's famous Fallacy." His piece is based on a misconception—a typical example, indeed, of *ignorantia elenchi*—nay, a misconception which has often before been made by theologians, and which has been over and over again exposed. Yet such is the persistence of the "theological stage," even in the nineteenth century, that here the old primitive "fiction" about the meaning of Comte's "law of the three states" crops up again after twenty or thirty years, apparently under the impression that it is a new discovery. To any serious student of philosophy it might be enough to cite half a dozen passages from Comte, Mill, Lewes, and others, to show that the "law of the three states" has no such meaning as the Bishop puts into it. But when a writer, who has won in other fields a deserved reputation, gravely puts forth a challenge to his philosophical opponents, although rather by way of sermon and for edification than by way of strict logic, perhaps it is respectful to do

more than cite a few passages from the author whom he attacks.

Two main misconceptions pervade the whole of the Bishop's criticism on Comte's law.

First, he understands the "theological" state to mean, a belief in a Creator; the "metaphysical" state to mean, general philosophy; and the "positive" state to mean, the denial of Creation, or atheism. Now, that never was, and never was understood to be, Comte's meaning.

Secondly, the Bishop assumes Comte to have said, that men, or a generation of men, are necessarily at any given time, in one or other of the three states exclusively, passing *per saltum*, and as a whole, from one to the other; and that one mind cannot combine any two states. Now, Comte expressly said that men do exhibit traces of all three states at the same time, in different departments of thought.

This last remark of his obviously proves that Comte could not have meant by the "theological state," believing in God, and by the "positive state," the denial of God; because no man can believe and deny the same thing at the same time. Again, had Comte said that every man "up to his age" can remember that he believed in God in his childhood, and that he denied his existence in manhood, he would have said something so transparently false, that it would hardly be needful for a Bishop forty years afterwards to write an essay to expose so very "famous a fallacy." Had Comte's law of the three states implied what the Bishop takes it to mean, it never would have received the importance attached to it by friends and opponents of Positivism alike; it never would have been a "famous fallacy" at all; it would have been the "obvious fallacy," and would have called forth no admiration from eminent thinkers.

It must be remembered that the value of "the law of the three states" has been acknowledged by men who have been as far as possible from being "Positivists" in any special sense of the term, and who have been foremost in repudiating Comte's social and religious scheme. Mr. Mill, who wrote a book to that effect, expressed his profound admiration for this particular law of philosophy. So did Mr. G. H. Lewes in his *History of Philosophy*. Miss Martineau, Professor Caird, Mr. John Morley, who have written upon the system of Comte, have given us no criticism upon the principle involved in this "law of the three states." It is, to say the least, unlikely that writers like these would have missed so obvious a criticism as that now put forth by the Bishop, had they understood Comte as he does.

Forty years ago, Mr. Mill gave an admirably lucid account of the "law of the three states," and at the same time expressed his agreement with it, in words that are remarkable as coming from so cautious and measured a mind. He says :—

> Speculation, he [Comte] conceives to have, on every subject of human inquiry, three successive stages ; in the first of which it tends to explain the phenomena by supernatural agencies, in the second by metaphysical abstractions, and in the third or final state confines itself to ascertaining their laws of succession and similitude. *This generalisation appears to me to have that high degree of scientific evidence, which is derived from the concurrence of the indications of history with the probabilities derived from the constitution of the human mind.* Nor could it be easily conceived, from the mere enunciation of such a proposition what a flood of light it lets in upon the whole course of history (*Logic*, vol. ii. chap. x.).

I. By the term "theological state," Comte does not mean the ultimate belief in God. He means, as Mr. Mill says in the words quoted, a state in which the mind "tends to explain (given) phenomena by super-

natural agencies." Comte first put forth his law in an essay published so early as 1822, where he states the theological stage to be one where "the facts observed are explained, that is to say, conceived *à priori*, by means of invented facts." (*Pos. Pol.* iv. App. iii.) In his *General View of Positivism*, he calls the theological stage that "in which free play is given to *spontaneous fictions admitting of no proof*." In the *Positive Polity*, he usually calls it the *Fictitious* stage. The theological state of mind is one where the phenomena we observe are supposed to be directly caused by vital agencies which we imagine, but of the activity of which we have no real proof.

This state is certainly not identical with a belief in God; it includes all forms of Fetichism, of Nature worship, Ghost worship, or Devil worship, and all the habits of mind out of which these forms of worship spring. The nonsense known as Spiritualism, Spirit-rapping, viewing the Dead, and the like, is a typical form of the theological state, in which men give "free play to fictions admitting of no proof." And men, otherwise eminent in science and letters, have been known so to play, even when they have ceased to believe in God.

Not only is Comte's "theological stage" something widely different from ultimate belief in a Creator, but few educated men, however deeply they hold such belief, are now in what Comte calls the "theological stage." To all minds "up to the level of their age," even of theologians by profession, the phenomena of nature and of society are associated with regular antecedents, capable of being explained by known laws, physical, social, or moral. That is in fact the "positive," or scientific state of thought. If a man has a fit, or if small-pox breaks out, or two nations go to war, intelligent Christians do not cry aloud that it

is a special judgment, or the wrath of God, or the malice of the Devil. They trace the disease or the war to its scientific causes, or rather to its positive conditions. Men in the true theological stage attribute ordinary phenomena to the direct and special interposition of a supernatural being of some kind. This was done by devotees in the Middle Ages; is still done by Fetichists everywhere; and by the negroes the other day during the earthquake at Charlestown. But cultivated Englishmen do not so reason. In fact, very few thoughtful men in our age can be said to be, properly speaking, in the theological stage at all. They reason about life and man on the basis of both being amenable to observed laws, and not on the basis that both are directly subject to the caprice of supernatural wills.

The habitual reference of facts to observed conditions of nature, physical or human, does not prevent strong minds from believing in Creation and a Personal Creator. That is a very different thing. They refer all observed facts to observed antecedents; and behind this enormous mass of observations, they assume an ultimate source, as First Cause. Mr. Mill indeed insists that it is quite compatible with the Positive state in Comte's sense, to believe that the Universe is guided by an Intelligence. Comte himself warmly repudiates the atheistical hypothesis of the origin of the Universe from Chance. He calls Atheism a form of Theology: meaning that Dogmatic Atheism, as a theory of the Universe, is "*a spontaneous fiction admitting of no proof.*" He thought that a mind perfectly attuned to scientific habits in all forms of observed facts, would cease to busy itself with any theory of Origins, and would be entirely absorbed in theories of growth. But he would not have regarded as being in the theological stage, any mind which,

taking a scientific view of all observed phenomena, clung to the ultimate solution of their origin in Creation.

II. By the "positive" stage, Comte certainly does not mean Atheism, the denial of a possible Creator. In the first place, he repudiates that hypothesis, as itself a form of Theological figment. And secondly, he says that the Positive stage is that "which is based on an exact view of the real facts of the case." That is what he means: neither more nor less. And the Bishop is quite mistaken in constantly assuming that Positive is either Positivist or Atheist. Comte neither said, nor imagined, that any man who "takes an exact view of the real facts" in each case is a Positivist or a believer in the Religion of Humanity. Dr. Martineau in the passage cited with approval by the Bishop, does indeed make Comte say that every cultivated man is a *Positivist* in his maturity. That, however, is only a bit of careless rhetoric. Comte says nothing of the kind. Comte says that a cultivated man becomes "*a natural philosopher*" in his maturity, —meaning a man whose habit of mind is to accept scientific evidence in each subject.

III. It is no objection at all to the "law of the three states" to argue, as the Bishop does, that many men of science are not atheists, but believers in God. Even if the "theological stage" and the "positive stage" had this meaning (and they have not) Comte has carefully guarded himself by saying that many persons exhibit all three stages at the same time, *on different subject matters*. His law is not that "each human *mind* passes through three stages": but that "each *class of human speculations* does." If that were Comte's meaning, the whole of the Bishop's criticism falls to the ground. And it is easy to show that this was Comte's meaning.

Had the Bishop pursued his study of Comte a little

beyond the opening pages of a translation of one of his works, he would have found this. In the second volume of the *Positive Philosophy* (1st ed. p. 173), we read :—

During the whole of our survey of the sciences, I have endeavoured to keep in view the great fact that all the three states, theological, metaphysical, and positive, *may and do exist at the same time in the same mind in regard to different sciences.* I must once more recall this consideration, and insist on it ; because, in the forgetfulness of it, lies the only real objection that can be brought against the grand law of the three states. It must be steadily kept in view that the same mind may be in the positive state with regard to the most simple and general sciences ; in the metaphysical with regard to the more complex and special ; and in the theological with regard to social science, which is so complex and special as to have hitherto taken no scientific form at all.

Again in the *Positive Polity*, iii. p. 34 :—

Although each class of speculations really passes through these three successive stages, the rate of progress is not the same for all. Hence while some speculations have already become Positive, others still remain Metaphysical or even Theological ; and so it will be till our race has entirely accomplished its initiation. This temporary *co-existence of the three intellectual states* furnishes backward thinkers with their only plausible excuse for denying my law of filiation. Nothing will completely clear away this difficulty but the complementary rule, which lays down that the unequal rate of progress is caused by the different nature of the phenomena in each class.

In the *Positivist Catechism*, he says (Engl. tr. p. 174) :—

Certain theories remain in the metaphysical stage ; whilst others of a simpler nature have already reached the positive stage ; others again, still more complicated, remain in the theological stage.

It is thus abundantly clear that Comte intended his law of the three states to be applied not to the mind as a whole, nor to ages as a whole, but to different

classes of speculation, and to the prevalent tendencies in different ages. And so he has been always understood by his exponents. Mr. Mill in his book *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, to meet an objection such as the Bishop now urges, writes thus:—"that the three states were contemporaneous, that they all began before authentic history, and still co-exist, is M. Comte's express statement" (p. 31).

And so Mr. G. H. Lewes, in his more lively manner, replying to similar objections, tells us in his *History of Philosophy* (vol. ii. p. 715):—

> To these causes of opposition must also be added the licence men permit themselves of pronouncing confidently on questions which they have not taken the preliminary trouble of understanding. Two-thirds of the objections urged against this law of the three stages are based on a radical misapprehension of it; and there is something quite comic in the gravity with which these misconceptions are advanced.
>
> The law does not assert that at distinct historical periods men were successively in each of the three stages, that there was a time when a nation or even a tribe was exclusively theological, exclusively metaphysical, or exclusively positive; it asserts that the chief conceptions man frames respecting the world, himself, and society, must pass through three stages, with varying velocity under various social conditions, but in unvarying order. Any one individual mind, inheriting the results of preceding generations, may indeed commence its thinking on some special topic, without being forced to pass through the stages which its predecessors have passed through; but every class of conceptions must pass through the stages, and every individual mind must, more or less rapidly, in the course of its evolution from infancy to maturity, pass through them.

Another eminent controversialist, once Regius Professor of History in the University of Oxford, fell into the same error as the Bishop, as long ago as 1861, and he was corrected at the time. This is how the blunder was corrected in the *Westminster Review*, N. S. xl.

The *Review* said :—

Comte invariably insists that the three stages have actually co-existed in nearly all minds. He says that a man takes a theological view of one subject, a metaphysical of another, and a positive of a third ; nor did he ever pretend that one of these methods rigidly excludes the other. Most minds retain traces of all three, even in the same subject-matter. What an objector has really to show is this, that men use other methods of thought, or that they do not in the main use these successively in the order stated, and that in proportion to the complication of the subject-matter.

In considering a law of the human mind such as this is, we should bear in mind the golden rule of Aristotle "to demand that degree of precision that fits the matter in hand." A law of our mental evolution, dealing with a subject so subtle and complex as the reasoning processes, does not admit of absolutely rigid mathematical exactness. Mathematical reasoning alone, partly because pure mathematics spring mainly from laws of the mind itself, and are not inductions from few and imperfect observations, admits of absolute precision. In no physical science, perhaps, is the reasoner at all times strictly employing scientific methods without alloy. Few men of science, however competent, are incapable of error in their reasoning ; and we know how liable they are to slide into dogmatism a good deal short of positive proof. But for all that, a trained physicist, or chemist, is properly said to be in the positive stage of thought *when reasoning about physics, or chemistry.*

A few minds trained in a variety of sciences may remain at a uniformly positive level. If their scientific training embraces history, morals, philosophy, and the entire range of the social, moral, and intellectual laws, then they may be said to have completely attained to the positive stage of thought. Now the Creation of the Universe and the Moral Providence of all Creation

is an ultimate resultant of a man's reflections in the whole range of speculation—physical, social, intellectual, and moral. And to that great assize of human thought, few men in England come with a full positive training in the entire range. Hence the opinions about Creation of men like Herschel, or Faraday, are not the opinions of men in the positive stage of thought, but of men in the positive stage of astronomy, and chemistry, and in the metaphysical or the theological stage, in sociology and in morals.

When Faraday was dealing with gases, he was rigidly working out physical and chemical problems on the basis of physical and chemical laws. If he discovered a new electrical phenomenon, he did not, as a savage or an alchemist might, attribute the flash to some latent god, or an explosion to some bottled-up devil. When Faraday was dealing with the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he deliberately put aside all reference to law, or to science; and he was in the Theological stage. He was in the Metaphysical stage when he was dealing with some big political problem, and then he grounded his opinion entirely on strong prejudices formed in youth, but certainly not tested as he tested his chemical compounds. The "law of the three states" is, like all other logical laws, a law of tendency in a subtle and complex organ; and absolute exactness and rigid exclusiveness is out of place with our imperfect mental resources.

When Comte said that one state of mind excludes the other, he did not imply that a reasoner never makes a slip, or that a mind in the positive stage may not at times "revert" back into a less scientific process. He meant that, in the main, a mind accustomed to true scientific processes in any class of

speculation will adhere to that habit of mind, though it may occasionally lapse in its own subject, and may fail to apply the same scientific process in another class of speculation. The Bishop of Carlisle undoubtedly applies a truly positive process to the science of physics. Though perhaps he would hardly claim to be infallible there, even in method. But in dealing with a philosophy at once "pernicious and dangerous," he collates the original authorities with far less patient scrutiny than when he is tracing the growth of the Baconian induction.

Finally, the Bishop seems to me to err in seeking to test the "law of the three stages" by applying it to exact and real science. He declares that there are no three stages in Mathematics, in the science of Political Economy, and many such branches of our knowledge. Certainly, there are no three stages in any kind of *real knowledge*. Nor, strictly speaking, are there in *any science*—much less in *exact science*. All *real* knowledge, all *science*, truly so named, and certainly an exact science, like pure Mathematics, is already *positive*. Comte never said that there were three stages in *science*. He says there are "three stages in each *branch of speculation*." In many subjects, which are perfectly simple, a really positive state of thought is reached in the very infancy of the individual and the race. No doubt, there is a brief moment in the evolution of thought when fictitious beings, or crude abstractions, are supposed to determine the very simplest and commonest facts. When scarcity of food was thought to be a Divine warning to a King who defied the Pope, or when a strike was supposed to result from some physical law of Supply and Demand beyond human control, Political Economy was in the theological or the metaphysical stage. That merchants, manufacturers, or workmen believe in

Creation, or believe in Adam Smith, or in Mr. Ruskin, has nothing to do with Comte's law.

As to Mathematics something further may be said. Pure Mathematics, according to Comte, are really a branch of Logic, part of the furniture, an analysis of the processes, of the mind itself. There are, of course, not three stages in the "law of the three states" itself, or in any other true logical process. Mathematics are wholly positive, *i.e.* provable, and based on "an exact view of the true facts." Everything that we can call Mathematics, from the first idea of addition, is entirely *positive*. All our definite notions about number, form, and movement are strictly positive. But there was a time before the birth of Mathematics; and then men's ideas about number, form, and movement were in a metaphysical (that is, hypothetical) stage, or even in a theological stage (that is, they are referred to supposed wills). Infants and savages, as the history of language suggests, associate changes in number and form with imaginary vital agents. A child, learning that two and two make four, thinks of a person purposely giving two more things. The counting and measuring of savages is formed out of organic movements. In Mathematics, even in Arithmetic, there is properly none but a positive stage. The proper sphere of the "law of the three stages" is in the observation of phenomena; and to that Comte carefully limits it. Directly any mind attains to *real knowledge* in such observations, there are no further stages to pass. The mind remains in the one stage, the positive, or final.

I shall not follow the Bishop into the analogies to Comte's law, with which his reading furnishes him, or his own substitute for it. I fail to see what the analogies or the substitute have to do with the matter. The "law of the three states" professes to be a theory of *mental evolution*, an account of a set of

successive processes of thought. The Bishop's analogies and his substitute profess to be a *classification of ideas, a grouping of knowledge.* What have these in common? The first is a serial record of *movement*; the second is a co-ordination of *simultaneous* conceptions. One might as well find analogies between history and logic; or suggest that Kepler's laws are a history of astronomy. It is quite true that all men's knowledge can be looked at from different points of view, and may possibly be arranged under three groups. But how does that help us to explain the genesis of thought in the past? So, I fail to see how the citations from Bacon, the *Philosophick Cabbala*, or Mr. Gladstone, advance the matter in hand. The matter in hand is the law of progress in the genesis of science. No one of the three authors cited touches on that subject. And is it likely that Bacon, Henry More, or any one else who wrote before any true science existed and before any social or moral science was imagined, could tell us much about the law of progress in the genesis of science? So I leave Bacon, the *Philosophick Cabbala*, and Mr. Gladstone, who seems to have written something profound on the latter topic.

With the Bishop's proposed substitute for Comte's law I have no wish to quarrel. He says that, instead of a law of the three successive stages, we may have a law of three simultaneous modes of thought. Certainly we may. And the Bishop proposes as his law this:—that "many branches of knowledge may be contemplated from three points of view—the Theological, the Metaphysical (or Philosophical), and the Scientific." With a slight modification of the terms, to which the Bishop ought not to demur, I should most heartily assent to this. Our general knowledge is Religious, Philosophical, or Scientific. Religion, Philosophy, Science, is a threefold co-ordination of ideas, very much used by

Comte: the distinctions between the three, and their harmonies, he is constantly expounding. Positivism, as a system of thought, does not mean Science only. It means Religion—Philosophy—Science: each in their sphere completing and aiding the other. So far Comte is entirely at one with the Bishop. But this eminently Positivist idea is no sort of substitute for the "Law of the three stages."

As to that the Bishop must try again; and I cordially invite him to do so. But he must begin by understanding the law which he is to overthrow. The matter in hand has nothing to do with the belief in Providence, in the sense of a "Great First Cause, least understood," as modern men of science conceive Providence. The law is this:—that in the infancy of thought, the mind attributes changes in phenomena to a will of some kind, which it supposes to be acting, but of which it has no real proof; secondly, that the mind gradually passes to attribute the changes to some abstract principle, which it formulates without true verification; finally, that the mind comes to take an exact view of the true facts of the case. These three modes of thought pass gradually into each other, are applied to different matters in different degrees, and in the early stages are sometimes only traceable in transient prehistoric types. Now what an objector has to do is to show—that the sciences have been built up by some other definitely marked stages, or have passed through these stages in a reverse order, or do not pass through stages at all.

XIII

THE SOUL BEFORE AND AFTER DEATH

This and the following Essays (xiii., xiv., xv.) embodied papers and discussions by the writer at the Metaphysical Society. They were printed in the "Nineteenth Century," vol. I., Numbers 4, 5, 7, and 8 (June, July, September, October, 1877), wherein may be read the other papers by Mr. R. H. Hutton, Professor Huxley, Lord Blachford, Hon. Roden Noel, Lord Selborne, Rev. Canon Barry, Mr. W. R. Greg, Rev. Baldwin Brown, and Dr. W. G. Ward.

ONE of the most eminent members of this Society was once moved to say to me in his impressive way, after a few words of mine about the human soul, "If I thought as you do on these matters, I should go and drown myself forthwith." Now, this remark of our illustrious colleague made me reflect; for, I argued, there must be others who, with him, misjudge the condition of mind in which so many of us find rest, imputing to us dreadful ideas, such as we entirely forswear; and I resolved that, whenever our indefatigable Secretary, with his remorseless caduceus, might summon me to the bar of this tribunal— "*Omnes eodem cogimur, omnium versatur urna serius ocius*

sors exitura"—I would try if I could clear off a little of that gloom which seems to hang over views that so many persist in calling Materialist, and then explain why those who maintain what I prefer to call the rational and satisfying view of human life do not take refuge in the nearest pool.

Not that I am so sanguine as to think it possible, in the few minutes that the patience of this Society allows me, to *argue* such a mighty question as Man's future, or to do anything to advance the issue between the philosophy which rests on experience and that which rests on hypothesis. But I have often observed that the principal value of our discussions seems to lie in the opportunity they afford us of carefully laying antagonistic opinions side by side, of more exactly determining our own and our opponents' position, and in having it forced on us, that our friends do somehow avoid that other horn of the dilemma which to us, arguing for them, seems so truly inevitable. I shall content myself, therefore, with trying only to define our point of view, to guard it from one or two consequences with which it is credited, and to claim for it one or two corollaries which are often denied it. The utmost that can be hoped from discussions of this kind is to lead controversialists sometimes to see that there is more than the one alternative issue possible to the other side, that the question is not simply *Aut Cæsar, aut nullus*, that there is something else to choose beside Mahomet's alternative, "the Koran or Death."

I have said that I shall make no attempt to establish so big a proposition as that from which I start, that our real knowledge rests upon experience; and much less shall I attempt to disprove so big a hypothesis as that which I reject, that there are channels to knowledge of far higher value in our aspirations. I make a courteous salute to the hypotheses—*non ragioniam di*

lor, non guarda, ma passa—but I declare for the philosophy of experience in all its relations, and I shall seek to show that in itself it is in this, as in other matters, morally sufficient, that it leaves no voids in human life, and that the moral and religious sequelæ which have been assigned to it have no real existence. The issue is between the method of looking on man simply as man, and the method of looking on man as man plus a heterogeneous entity. I shall not deny the existence of such heterogeneous entity, and I shall not undertake to prove that man is nothing but man. But assuming that he is so limited, and assuming that the heterogeneous entity is as perfectly extra-human as it professes to be, I say that human nature is adequately equipped on human and natural grounds without the disparate nondescript.

I am careful to describe the method I am defending as that which looks on man as man, and I repudiate the various labels, such as materialist, physical, unspiritual methods, and the like, which are used as equivalent for the rational or positive method of treating man. The method of treating man as man insists, at least as much as any other method, that man has a moral, emotional, religious life, different in kind from his material and practical life, but perfectly coordinate with that physical life, and to be studied on similar scientific methods. The spiritual sympathies of man are undoubtedly the highest part of human nature; and our method condemns as loudly as any system can physical explanations of spiritual life. We claim the right to use the terms "soul," "spiritual," and the like, in their natural meaning.

In the same way, we think that there are theories which are justly called "Materialist," that there are physical conceptions of human nature which are truly dangerous to morality, to goodness, and religion. It

is sometimes thought to be a sufficient proof of the reality of this heterogeneous entity of the soul, that otherwise we must assume the most spiritual emotions of man to be a secretion of cerebral matter, and that, whatever the difficulties of conceiving the union of Soul and Body, it is something less difficult than the conceiving that the nerves think, or the tissues love. We repudiate such language as much as any one can, but there is another alternative. It is possible to invest with the highest dignity the spiritual life of mankind by treating it as an ultimate fact, without trying to find an explanation for it either in a perfectly unthinkable hypothesis or in an irrational and debasing physicism.

We certainly do reject, as earnestly as any school can, that which is most fairly called Materialism, and we will second every word of those who cry out that civilisation is in danger if the workings of the human spirit are to become questions of physiology, and if death is the end of a man, as it is the end of a sparrow. We not only assent to such protests, but we see very pressing need for making them. It is a corrupting doctrine to open a brain, and to tell us that devotion is a definite molecular change in this and that convolution of grey pulp, and that if man is the first of living animals, he passes away after a short space like the beasts that perish. And all doctrines, more or less, do tend to this, which offer physical theories as explaining moral phenomena, which deny man a spiritual in addition to a moral nature, which limit his moral life to the span of his bodily organism, and which have no place for "religion" in the proper sense of the word.

Does it seem to any one a paradox to hold such language, and yet to have nothing to say about the immaterial entity which many assume to be the *cause* behind this spiritual life? The answer is that we

occupy ourselves with this spiritual life as an ultimate fact, and consistently with the whole of our philosophy, we decline to assign a *cause* at all. We argue, with the theologians, that it is ridiculous to go to the scalpel for an adequate account of a mother's love; but we do not think it is explained (any more than it is by the scalpel) by a hypothesis for which not only is there no shadow of evidence, but which cannot even be stated in philosophic language. We find the same absurdity in the notion that maternal love is a branch of the anatomy of the *mammæ*, and in the notion that the phenomena of lactation are produced by an immaterial entity. Both are forms of the same fallacy, that of trying to reach ultimate causes instead of studying laws. We certainly do find that maternal love and lactation have close correspondences, and that both are phenomena of certain female organisms. And we say that to talk of maternal love being exhibited by an entity which not only is not a female organism, but is not an organism at all, is to use language which to us, at least, is unintelligible.

The philosophy which treats man as man simply affirms that *man* loves, thinks, acts, not that the ganglia, or the sinuses, or any organ of man, loves and thinks and acts. The thoughts, aspirations, and impulses are not secretions, and the science which teaches us about secretions will not teach us much about them; our thoughts, aspirations, and impulses are faculties of a man. Now, as a man implies a body, so we say these also imply a body. And to talk to us about a bodyless being thinking and loving is simply to talk about the thoughts and feelings of Nothing.

As I began by saying, I am not presuming to offer any argument for this fundamental position. I am well aware that each one determines it according to the whole bias of his intellectual and moral nature.

I am only trying to state our side of the question, and then to suggest that, supposing it, there is ample scope for the spiritual life, for moral responsibility, for the world beyond the grave, its hopes and its duties; which remain to us perfectly real without the unintelligible hypothesis. However much men cling to the hypothesis from old association, if they reflect, they will find that they do not use it to give them any actual knowledge about man's spiritual life; that all their methodical reasoning about the moral world is exclusively based on the phenomena of this world, and not on the phenomena of any other world (if any there be). And thus the absence of the hypothesis altogether does not make the serious difference which theologians suppose.

To follow out this into particulars: Analysis of human nature shows us man with a great variety of faculties; his moral powers are just as distinguishable as his intellectual powers; and both are mentally separable from his physical powers. Moral and mental laws are reduced to something like system by moral and mental science, with or without the theological hypothesis. The most extreme form of materialism does not dispute that moral and mental science is for logical purposes something more than physical science. So, the most extreme form of spiritualism gets its mental and moral science by observation and argument from phenomena; it does not, or it does not any longer, build such science by abstract deduction from any proposition as to an immaterial entity.

There have been, in ages past, attempts to do this. Plato, for instance, attempted to found, not only his mental and moral philosophy, but his general philosophy of the universe, by deduction from a mere hypothesis. He had the courage of his opinions, and

he imagined immaterial entities, the ideas, of things inorganic, as much as organic. He thought that a statue or a chair were what they are, by virtue of an immaterial entity which gave them form. The hypothesis did not add much to the art of statuary or to that of the carpenter; nor, to do him justice, did Plato look for much practical result in these spheres.

One form of the doctrine alone survives,—that man is what he is by virtue of an immaterial entity temporarily indwelling in his body. But, though the hypothesis survives, it is in no sense any longer the basis of the science of human nature with any school. No school is now content to sit in its study and evolve its knowledge of the moral qualities of man out of abstract deductions from the conception of an immaterial entity. All without exception profess to get their knowledge of the moral qualities by observing the qualities which men actually do exhibit or have exhibited. And those who are persuaded that man has, over and above his man's nature, an immaterial entity, find themselves discussing the laws of thought and of character on a common ground with those who regard man as man,—*i.e.*, who regard man's nature as capable of being referred to a homogeneous system of law. Spiritualists and materialists, however much they may differ in their explanations of moral phenomena, describe their relations in the same language, the language of law, not of illuminism.

Those, therefore, who dispense with a transcendental explanation are just as free as those who maintain it, to handle the spiritual and religious phenomena of human nature, treating them simply as phenomena. No one has ever suggested that the former philosophy is not quite as well entitled to analyse the intellectual faculties of man as the stoutest believer in the immaterial entity. It would raise a smile nowadays

to hear it said that such an one must be incompetent to treat of the canons of inductive reasoning, because he was unorthodox as to the immortality of the Soul. And if, notwithstanding this unorthodoxy, he is thought competent to investigate the laws of thought, why not the moral laws, the sentiments, and the emotions?

As a fact, every moral faculty of man is recognised by him just as much as by any transcendentalist. He does not limit himself, any more than the theologian does, to mere morality. He is fully alive to the spiritual emotions in all their depth, purity, and beauty. He recognises in man the yearning for a power without to venerate, a love for the author of his chief good, the need for sympathy with something greater than himself. All these are positive facts which rest on observation, quite apart from any explanation of the hypothetical cause of these tendencies in man. There, at any rate, the scientific observer finds them; and he is at liberty to give them quite as high a place in his scheme of human nature as the most complete theologian. He may possibly give them a far higher place, and bind them far more truly into the entire tissue of his whole view of life, because they are built up for him on precisely the same ground of experience as all the rest of his knowledge, and have no element at all heterogeneous from the rest of life.

With the language of spiritual emotion he is perfectly in unison. The spirit of devotion, of spiritual communion with an ever-present power, of sympathy and fellowship with the living world, of awe and submission towards the material world, the sense of adoration, love, resignation, mystery, are at least as potent with the one system as with the other. He can share the religious emotion of every age, and

can enter into the language of every truly religious heart. For myself, I believe that this is only done on a complete as well as a real basis in the religion of Humanity, but I do not confine my present argument to that ground. I venture to believe that this spirit is truly shared by all, whatever their hypothesis about the human soul, who treat these highest emotions of man's nature as facts of primary value, and who have any intelligible theory whereby these emotions can be aroused.

All positive methods of treating man of a comprehensive kind adopt to the full all that has ever been said about the dignity of man's moral and spiritual life, and treat these phenomena as distinct from the intellectual and the physical life. These methods also recognise the unity of consciousness, the facts of conscience, the sense of identity, and the longing for perpetuation of that identity. They decline to explain these phenomena by the popular hypotheses; but they neither deny their existence, nor lessen their importance. Man, they argue, has a complex existence, made up of the phenomena of his physical organs, of his intellectual powers, of his moral faculties, crowned and harmonised ultimately by his religious sympathies, —love, gratitude, veneration, submission, towards the dominant force by which he finds himself surrounded.

I use words which are not limited to a particular philosophy or religion—I do not confine my language to the philosophy or religion of Comte—for this same conception of man is common to many philosophies and many religions. It characterises such systems as those of Spinoza or Shelley, as much as those of Confucius or Buddha. In a word, the reality and the supremacy of the spiritual life have never been carried further than by men who have departed most widely from the popular hypotheses of the immaterial entity.

Many of these men, no doubt, have indulged in hypotheses of their own quite as arbitrary as those of theology. It is characteristic of the positive thought of our age that it stands upon a firmer basis. Though not confounding the moral facts with the physical, and establishing a moral and mental science distinct from biological science, it will never lose sight of the correspondence and consensus between all sides of human life. Led by an enormous and complete array of evidences, it associates every fact of thought or of emotion with a fact of physiology, with molecular change in the body. Without pretending to explain the first by the second, it denies that the first can be explained without the second. Thought and emotion are simply powers of a material organism, and to talk to us of thought and emotion as powers of an immaterial entity, is to talk of the Function of Nothing. But no philosophy is so careful as is this to keep always in view the organic correspondence of man's faculties, harmonised by his finest sympathies. We call this consensus his Soul.

Nothing is more idle than a discussion about words. But when some deny the use of the word "soul" to those who mean by it this consensus, and not any immaterial entity, we may remind them that our use of the word agrees with its etymology and its history. It is the mode in which it is used in the Bible, the well-spring of our true English speech. It may, indeed, be contended that there is no instance in the Bible in which Soul does mean an immaterial entity, the idea not having been familiar to any of the writers, with the doubtful exception of St. Paul. But without entering upon Biblical philology, it may be said that for one passage in the Bible in which the word "soul" can be forced to bear the meaning of immaterial entity, there are ten texts in which it cannot possibly refer to

anything but breath, life, moral sense, or spiritual emotion. When the Psalmist says, "Deliver my soul from death," "Heal my soul, for I have sinned," "My soul is cast down within me," "Return unto my rest, O my soul," he means by "soul" what we mean,—the conscious unity of our being culminating in its religious emotions; and until we find some English word that better expresses this idea, we shall continue to use the phraseology of David.

It is not merely that we are denied the language of religion, but we sometimes find attempts to exclude us from the thing. There are some who say that worship, spiritual life, and that exaltation of the sentiments which we call devotion, have no possible meaning unless applied to the special theology of the particular speaker. A little attention to history, a single reflection on religion as a whole, suffice to show the hollowness of this assumption. If devotion means the surrender of self to an adored Power, there has been devotion in creeds with many gods, with one God, with no gods; if spiritual life means the cultivation of this temper towards moral purification, there was spiritual life long before the notion of an immaterial entity inside the human being was excogitated; and as to worship, men have worshipped, with intense and overwhelming passion, all kinds of objects, organic and inorganic, material and spiritual, abstract ideas as well as visible forces. Is it implied that Confucius, and the countless millions who have followed him, had no idea of religion, as it is certain that they had none of theology; that Buddha and the Buddhists were incapable of spiritual emotion; that the Fire-worshippers and the Sun-worshippers never practised worship; that the pantheists and the humanists, from Marcus Aurelius to Fichte, had the springs of spiritual life dried up in them for want of an

Old or New Testament? If this is intended, one can only wonder at the power of a self-complacent conformity to close men's eyes to the native dignity of man. Religion, and its elements in emotion—attachment, veneration, love—are as old exactly as human nature. They moved the first men, and the first women. They have found a hundred objects to inspire them, and have bowed to a great variety of powers. They were in full force long before Theology was, and before the rise of Christianity; and it would be strange indeed if they should cease with the decline of either. It is not the emotional elements of Religion which fail us. For these, with the growing goodness of mankind, are gaining in purity and strength. Rather, it is the intellectual elements of Religion which are conspicuously at fault. We need to-day, not the faculty of worship (that is ever fresh in the heart), but a clearer vision of the power we should worship. Nay, it is not we who are borrowing the privileges of theology: rather it is theology which seeks to appropriate to itself the most universal privilege of man.

XIV

HEAVEN

(*See the Introductory Note to Essay XIII*)

How many men and women continue to give a mechanical acquiescence to the creeds, long after they have parted with all definite theology, out of mere clinging to some hope of a future life, in however dim and inarticulate a way! And how many, whose own faith is too evanescent to be put into words, profess a sovereign pity for the practical philosophy wherein there is no place for their particular yearning for a Heaven to come! They imagine themselves to be, by virtue of this very yearning, beings of a superior order, and, as if they inhabited some higher zone amidst the clouds, they flout sober thought as it toils in the plain below; they counsel it to drown itself in sheer despair or take to evil living; they rebuke it with some sonorous household word from the Bible or the poets—"Eat, drink, for to-morrow ye die"—"Were it not better not to be?" And they assume the question closed, when they have murmured triumphantly, "Behind the veil, behind the veil."

They are right, and they are wrong: right to cling to a hope of something that shall endure beyond the grave; wrong in their rebukes to men who in a different spirit cling to this hope as earnestly as they.

We too turn our thoughts to that which is behind the veil. We strive to pierce its secret with eyes, we trust, as eager and as fearless; and even, it may be, more patient in searching for the realities beyond the gloom. That which shall come *after* is no less solemn to us than to you. We ask you, therefore, What do you *know* of it? Tell us; we will tell you what we hope. Let us reason together in sober and precise prose.

Why should this great end, staring at all of us along the vista of each human life, be for ever a matter for dithyrambic hypotheses and evasive tropes? What in the language of clear sense does any one of us hope for after death: what precise kind of life, and on what grounds? It is too great a thing to be trusted to poetic ejaculations, to be made a field for Pharisaic scorn. At least be it acknowledged that a man may think of the Soul and of Death and of Future Life in ways strictly positive (that is, without ever quitting the region of evidence), and yet may make the world beyond the grave the centre to himself of moral life. He will give the spiritual life a place as high, and will dwell upon the promises of that which is after death as confidently as the believers in a celestial resurrection. And he can do this without trusting his all to a *perhaps* so vague that a spasm of doubt can wreck it, but trusting rather to a mass of solid knowledge, which no man of any school denies to be true so far as it goes.

I

There ought to be no misunderstanding at the outset as to what we who trust in positive methods mean by the word Soul, or by the words "spiritual," "materialist," and "future life." We certainly would

use that ancient and beautiful word Soul, provided there be no misconception involved in its use. We assert as fully as any theologian the supreme importance of spiritual life. We agree with the theologians that there is current a great deal of real materialism, deadening to our higher feeling. And we deplore the too common indifference to the world beyond the grave. And yet we find the centre of our religion and our philosophy in Man and man's Earth.

To follow out this use of old words, and to see that there is no paradox in thus using them, we must go back a little to general principles. The matter turns altogether upon habits of thought. What seems to you so shocking will often seem to us so ennobling, and what seems to us flimsy will often seem to you sublime, simply because our minds have been trained in different logical methods; and hence you will call that a beautiful truth which strikes us as nothing but a random guess. It is idle, of course, to dispute about our respective logical methods, or to pit this habit of mind in a combat with that. But we may understand each other better if we can agree to follow out the moral and religious temper, and learn that it is quite compatible with this or that mental procedure. It may teach us again that ancient truth, how much human nature there is in men; what fellowship there is in our common aspirations and moral forces; how we all live the same spiritual life; whilst the philosophies are but the ceaseless toil of the intellect seeking again and again to *explain* more clearly that spiritual life, and to furnish it with reasons for the faith that is in it.

This would be no place to expound or to defend the positive method of thought. The question before us is simply, if this positive method has a place in the spiritual world or has anything to say about a future

beyond the grave. Suffice it that we mean by the positive method of thought (and we will now use the term in a sense not limited to the social construction of Comte) that method which would base life and conduct, as well as knowledge, upon such evidence as can be referred to logical canons of *proof*, which would place all that occupies man in a homogeneous system of *law*. On the other hand, this method turns aside from *hypotheses* not to be tested by any known logical canon familiar to science, whether the hypothesis claim support from intuition, aspiration, or general plausibility. And again, this method turns aside from ideal standards which avow themselves to be *lawless*, which profess to transcend the field of law. We say, life and conduct shall stand for us wholly on a basis of law, and must rest entirely in that region of science (not physical but moral and social science) where we are free to use our intelligence in the methods known to us as intelligible logic, methods which the intellect can analyse. When you confront us with hypotheses, however sublime and however affecting, if they cannot be stated in terms of the rest of our knowledge, if they are disparate to that world of sequence and sensation which to us is the ultimate base of all our real knowledge, then we shake our heads and turn aside. I say, turn aside; and I do not say, dispute. We cannot *disprove* the suggestion that there are higher channels to knowledge in our aspirations or our presentiments, as there might be in our dreams by night as well as by day; we courteously salute the hypotheses, as we might love our pleasant dreams; we seek to prove no negatives.

We do not pretend there are no mysteries, we do not frown on the poetic splendours of the fancy. There is a world of beauty and of pathos in the vast æther of the Unknown in which this solid ball hangs

like a speck. Let all who list, who have true imagination and are not merely paltering with a loose fancy, let them indulge their gift, and tell us what their soaring has unfolded. Only let us not waste life in crude dreaming, or loosen the knees of action. For life and conduct, and the great emotions which react on life and conduct, we can place nowhere but in the same sphere of knowledge, under the same canons of proof, to which we entrust all parts of our life. We will ask the same philosophy which teaches us the lessons of civilisation to guide our lives as responsible men; and we go again to the same philosophy which orders our lives to explain to us the lessons of death. We crave to have the supreme hours of our existence lighted up by thoughts and motives such as we can measure beside the common acts of our daily existence, so that each hour of our life up to the grave may be linked to the life beyond the grave as one continuous whole, "bound each to each by natural piety." And so, wasting no sighs over the incommensurable possibilities of the fancy, we will march on with a firm step till we knock at the Gates of Death; bearing always the same human temper, in the same reasonable beliefs, and with the same earthly hopes of prolonged activity amongst our fellows, with which we set out gaily in the morning of life.

When we come to the problem of the human Soul, we simply treat man as man, and we study him in accordance with our human experience. Man is a marvellous and complex being, we may fairly say of complexity past any hope of final analysis of ours, fearfully and wonderfully made to the point of being mysterious. But incredible progress has been won in reading this complexity, in reducing this mystery to order. Who can say that man shall ever be anything but an object of awe and of unfathomable pondering to

himself? Yet he would be false to all that is great in him, if he decried what he already has achieved towards self-knowledge. Man has probed his own corporeal and animal life, and is each day arranging it in more accurate adjustment with the immense procession of animal life around him. He has grouped the intellectual powers, he has traced to their relations the functions of mind, and ordered the laws of thought into a logic of a regular kind. He has analysed and grouped the capacities of action, the moral faculties, the instincts and emotions. And not only is the analysis of these tolerably clear, but the associations and correlations of each with the other are fairly made manifest. At the lowest, we are all assured that every single faculty of man is capable of scientific study. Philosophy simply means, that every part of human nature acts upon a method, and does not act chaotically, inscrutably, or in mere caprice.

But then we find throughout man's knowledge of himself signs of a common type. There is organic unity in the whole. These laws of the separate functions, of body, mind, or feeling, have visible relations to each other, are inextricably woven in with each other, act and react, depend and interdepend one on the other. There is no such thing as an isolated phenomenon, nothing *sui generis*, in our entire scrutiny of human nature. Whatever the complexities of it, there is through the whole the solidarity of a single unit. Touch the smallest fibre of the corporeal man, and in some infinitesimal way we may watch the effect in the moral man, and we may trace this effect up into the highest pinnacles of the spiritual life. On the other hand, when we rouse chords of the most glorious ecstasy of the soul, we may see the vibration of them visibly thrilling upon the skin. The very brutes about us can perceive the emotion. Suppose

a martyr nerved to the last sacrifice, or a saint in the act of relieving a sufferer, the sacred passion within them is stamped in the eye, or plays about the mouth, with a connection as visible as when we see a muscle acting on a bone, or the brain affected by the supply of blood.

Thus from the summit of spiritual life to the base of corporeal life, whether we pass up or down the gamut of human forces, there runs one organic correlation and sympathy of parts. Man is one, however compound. Fire his conscience, and he blushes. Check his circulation, and he thinks wildly, or thinks not at all. Impair his secretions, and moral sense is dulled, discoloured, or depraved ; his aspirations flag, his hope, love, faith reel. Impair them still more, and he becomes a brute. A cup of drink degrades his moral nature below that of a swine. Again, a violent emotion of pity or horror makes him vomit. A lancet will restore him from delirium to clear thought. Excess of thought will waste his sinews. Excess of muscular exercise will deaden thought. An emotion will double the strength of his muscles. And at last the prick of a needle or a grain of mineral will in an instant lay to rest for ever his body and its unity, and all the spontaneous activities of intelligence, feeling, and action, with which that compound organism was charged.

These are the obvious and ancient observations about the human organism. But modern philosophy and science have carried these hints into complete explanations. By a vast accumulation of proof positive thought at last has established a distinct correspondence between every process of thought or of feeling and some corporeal phenomenon. Even when we cannot explain the precise relation, we can show that definite correlations exist. To positive methods, every fact of thinking reveals itself as having functional relation with molecular change. Every

fact of will or of feeling is in similar relation with kindred molecular facts. And all these facts again have some relation to each other.

Hence we have established an organic correspondence in all manifestations of human life. To think implies a corresponding adjustment of molecular activity. To feel emotion implies nervous organs of feeling. To will implies vital cerebral hemispheres. Observation, reflection, memory, imagination, judgment, have all been analysed out, till they stand forth as functions of living organs in given conditions of the organism, that is in a particular environment. The whole range of man's powers, from the finest spiritual sensibility down to a mere automatic contraction, falls into one coherent scheme: being all the multiform functions of a living organism in presence of its encircling conditions.

But complex as it is, there is no confusion in this whole when conceived by positive methods. No rational thinker now pretends that imagination *is* simply the vibration of a particular fibre. No man can *explain* volition by purely anatomical study. Whilst keeping in view the due relations between moral and corporeal facts, we distinguish moral from biologic facts, moral science from biology. Moral science is based upon biological science; but it is not comprised in it: it has its own special facts and its own special methods, though always remaining within the sphere of law. Just so, the mechanism of the body is based upon mechanics, would be unintelligible but for mechanics, but could not be explained by mechanics alone, or by anything but a complete anatomy and biology. To explain the activity of the intellect as included in the activity of the body, is as idle as to explain the activity of the body as included in the motion of solid bodies.

And it is equally idle to explain the activity of the will, or the emotions, as included in the theory of the intellect. All the spheres of human life are logically separable, though they are organically interdependent. Now the combined activity of the human powers organised around the highest of them we call the Soul. The combination of intellectual and moral energy which is the source of Religion, we call the spiritual life. The explaining the spiritual side of life by physical instead of moral and spiritual reasoning, we call materialism.

The consensus of the human faculties, which we call the Soul, comprises all sides of human nature according to one homogeneous theory. But the intuitional methods ask us to insert into the midst of this harmonious system of parts, as an underlying explanation of it, an indescribable entity; and to this hypothesis, since the days of Descartes (or possibly of Aquinas), the fine old word Soul has been usually restricted. How and when this entity ever got into the organism, how it abides in it, what are its relations to it, how it acts on it, why and when it goes out of it—all is mystery. We ask for some evidence of the existence of any such entity; the answer is, we must imagine it in order to explain the organism. We ask what are its methods, its laws, its affinities; we are told that it simply has none, or none knowable. We ask for some description of it, of its course of development, for some single fact about it, stateable in terms of the rest of our knowledge; the reply is—mystery, absence of everything so stateable or cognisable, a line of poetry, or an ejaculation. It has no place, no matter, no modes, neither evolution nor decay; it is without body, parts, or passions: a spiritual essence, incommensurable, incomparable, indescribable. Yet with all this, it is, we are told, an entity, the most

real and perfect of all entities short of the divine. Nowadays they tell us that it is an emanation of the World-principle.

If we ask why we are to assume the existence of something of which we have certainly no direct evidence, and which is so wrapped in mystery that for practical purposes it becomes a nonentity, we are told that we need to conceive it, because a mere organism cannot act as we see the human organism act. Why not? They say there must be a *principle* within as the cause of this life. But what do we gain by supposing a "principle"? The "principle" only adds a fresh difficulty. Why should a "principle," or an entity, be more capable of possessing these marvellous human powers than the human organism? Besides, we shall have to imagine a "principle" to explain not only why a man can feel affection, but also why a dog can feel affection. If a mother cannot love her child—merely *qua* human organism—unless her love be a manifestation of an eternal soul, how can a cat love her kittens—merely *qua* feline organism—without an immaterial principle, or soul? Nay, we shall have to go on to invent a principle to account for a tree growing, or a thunderstorm roaring, and for every force of nature. Now this very supposition was made in a way by the Greeks, and to some extent by Aquinas, the authors of the vast substructure of *anima* underlying all nature, of which our human Soul is the fragment that alone survives.

One by one the steps in this series of hypotheses have faded away. Greek and mediæval philosophy imagined that every activity resulted not from the body which exhibited the activity, but from some mysterious entity inside it. If marble was hard, it had a "form" informing its hardness; if a blade of grass sprang up, it had a vegetative spirit mysteriously

impelling it; if a dog obeyed his master, it had an animal spirit mysteriously controlling its organs. The mediæval physicists, as Molière reminds us, thought that opium induced sleep *quia est in eo virtus dormitiva*. Nothing was allowed to act as it did by its own force or vitality. In every explanation of science we were told to postulate an intercalary hypothesis. Of this huge mountain of figment, the notion of man's immaterial Soul is the one feeble residuum.

Orthodoxy has so long been accustomed to take itself for granted, that we are apt to forget how very short a period of human history this sublimated essence has been current. From Plato to Hegel the idea has been continually taking fresh shapes. There is not a trace of it in the Bible in its present sense, and nothing in the least akin to it in the Old Testament. Till the time of Aquinas theories of a material soul, as a sort of gas, were never eliminated; and until the time of Descartes, our present ideas of the antithesis of Soul and Body were never clearly defined. Thus the Bible, the Fathers, and the Mediæval Church, as was natural when philosophy was in a state of flux, all represented the Soul in very different ways; and none of these ways were those of a modern divine. It is a curious instance of the power of words that the practical weight of the popular religion is now hung on a metaphysical hypothesis, which itself has been in vogue for only a few centuries in the history of speculation, and which is now become to those trained in positive habits of thought a mere juggle of ideas.

It is true that in this age, or rather in this country, we seldom hear the stupid and brutal materialism which pretends that the subtleties of thought and emotion are simply this or that agitation in some grey

matter, to be ultimately expounded by the professors of grey matter. But this is hardly the danger which besets our time. The true materialism to fear is the prevailing tendency of anatomical habits of mind or specialist habits of mind to intrude into the regions of religion and philosophy. A man whose whole thoughts are absorbed in cutting up dead monkeys and live frogs has no more business to dogmatise about religion than a mere chemist to improvise a zoology. Biological reasoning about spiritual things is as presumptuous as the theories of an electrician about the organic facts of nervous life. We live amidst a constant and growing usurpation of science in the province of philosophy; of biology in the province of sociology; of physics in that of religion. Nothing is more common than the use of the term science, when what is meant is merely physical and physiological science, not social and moral science. The arrogant attempt to dispose of the deepest moral truths of human nature on a bare physical or physiological basis is almost enough to justify the insurrection of some impatient theologians against science itself. It is impossible not to sympathise with men who at least are defending the paramount claim of the moral laws and the religious sentiment.

The solution of the dispute is that physicists and theologians have each hold of a partial truth. As the latter insist, the grand problems of man's life must be ever referred to moral and social argument; but then, as the physicists insist, this moral and social argument can only be built up on a physical and physiological foundation. The physical part of science is indeed merely the vestibule to social, and thence to moral science; and of science in all its forms the philosophy of religion alone holds the key. The true Materialism lies in the habit of scientific specialists to neglect all

philosophical and religious synthesis. It is marked by the ignoring of religion, the passing by on the other side, and shutting the eyes to the spiritual history of mankind. The spiritual traditions of mankind, a supreme philosophy of life and thought, religion in the proper sense of the word, all these have to play a larger and ever larger part in human knowledge ; not as we are so often told, and so commonly is assumed, a waning and vanishing part. And it is in this field, the field which has so long been abandoned to theology, that Positivism is prepared to meet the theologians. We at any rate do not ask them to submit religion to the test of the scalpel or the electric battery. It is true that we base our theory of society and our theory of morals, and hence our religion itself, on a curriculum of physical, and especially of biological science. It is true that our moral and social science is but a prolongation of these other sciences. But then we insist that it is not science in the narrow sense which can order our beliefs, but Philosophy ; not science which can solve our problems of life, but Religion. And religion demands for its understanding the religious mind and the spiritual experience.

II

The rational view of the Soul (as we have seen) would remove us as far from a cynical materialism as from a fantastic spiritualism. It restores to their true supremacy in human life those religious emotions which materialism forgets ; whilst it frees us from the idle figment which spiritualism would foist upon human nature.

We entirely agree with the theologians that our age is beset with a grievous danger of materialism. There

is a school of teachers abroad, and they have found an echo here, who dream that victorious vivisection will ultimately win them anatomical solutions of man's moral and spiritual mysteries. Such unholy nightmares, it is true, are not likely to beguile many minds in a country like this, where social and moral problems are still in their natural ascendant. But there is a subtler kind of materialism of which the dangers are real. It does not indeed put forth the bestial sophism, that the apex of philosophy is to be won by improved microscopes and new batteries. But then it has nothing to say about the spiritual life of man; it has no particular religion; it ignores the Soul. It fills the air with pæans to science; it is never weary of vaunting the scientific methods, the scientific triumphs. But it always means physical, not moral science; intellectual, not religious conquests.

It shirks the question of questions—to what human end is this knowledge—how shall man thereby order his life as a whole—where is he to find the object of his yearnings of spirit? Of the spiritual history of mankind it knows as little, and thinks as little, as of any crazy sort of Asiatic devil-worship. At the spiritual aspirations of the men and women around us, ill at ease for want of some answer, it stares blankly, as it does at some spirit-rapping epidemic. "What is that to us!—see thou to that"—is all that it can answer when men ask it for a religion. Its formula is that it is of the religion of all sensible men, the religion which all sensible men never tell. With a smile or a shrug of the shoulders it passes by into the whirring workshops of science (that is, the physical prelude of science); and it leaves the spiritual life of the Soul to the spiritualists, theological or nonsensical as the case may be, wishing them both in heaven. This is the materialism to fear.

The theologians and the vast sober mass of serious men and women who want simply to live truly are quite right when they shun and fear a school that is so eager about cosmology and biology, whilst it leaves morality and religion to take care of themselves. And yet they know all the while that before the advancing line of positive thought they are fighting a forlorn hope; and they see their own line daily more and more demoralised by the consciousness that they have no rational plan of campaign. They know that their own account of the Soul, of the spiritual life, of Providence, of Heaven, is daily shifting, is growing more vague, more inconsistent, more various. They hurry wildly from one untenable position to another, like a routed and disorganised army.

In a religious discussion years ago I once asked one of the Broad Church, a disciple of one of its eminent founders, what he understood by the third Person of the Trinity; and he said doubtfully "that he fancied there was a sort of a something." Since those days the process of disintegration and vaporisation of belief has gone on rapidly; and now very religious minds, and men who think themselves to be religious, are ready to apply this "sort of a something" to all the verities in turn. They half hope that there is "a sort of a something" fluttering about, or inside, their human frames, that there may turn out to be a "something" somewhere after Death, and that there must be a sort of a somebody or (as the theology of Culture will have it) a sort of a something controlling and comprehending human life. But the more thoughtful spirits, not being professionally engaged in a doctrine, mostly limit themselves to a pious hope that there may be something in it, and that we shall know some day what it is.

Now theologians and religious people unattached

must know that this will never serve—that this is paltering with the greatest of all things. What then is the only solution which can ultimately satisfy both the devotees of science and the believers in religion? Surely but this, to make religion scientific by placing religion under the methods of science. Let Science come to see that religion, morality, life, are within its field, or rather are the main part of its field. Let Religion come to see that it can be nothing but a prolongation of science, a rational and homogeneous result of cosmology and biology, not a matter of fantastic guessing. Then there will be no true science which does not aim at, and is not guided by, systematic religion. And there will be no religion which pretends to any other basis but positive knowledge and scientific logic. But for this science must consent to add spiritual phenomena to its curriculum, and religion must consent to give up its vapid figments.

Positivism in dealing with the Soul discards the exploded errors of the materialists and the spiritualists alike. On the one hand, it not only admits into its studies the spiritual life of men, but it raises this spiritual life to be the essential business of all human knowledge. All the spiritual sentiments of man, the aspirations of the conscious soul in all their purity and pathos, the vast religious experience and potentialities of the human heart seen in the history of our spiritual life as a race—this is, we say, the principal subject of science and of philosophy. No philosophy, no morality, no polity can rest on stable foundations if this be not its grand aim; if it have not a systematic creed, a rational object of worship, and a definite discipline of life. But then we treat these spiritual functions of the Soul, not as mystical enigmas, but as positive phenomena, and we satisfy them by philosophic and historic answers and not by naked figments. And

we think that the teaching of history and a true synthesis of science bring us far closer to the heart of this spiritual life than do any spiritualist guesses, and do better equip us to read aright the higher secrets of the Soul: meaning always by Soul the consensus of the faculties which observation discovers in the human organism.

On the other hand, without entering into an idle dispute with the spiritualist orthodoxy, we insist on regarding this organism as a perfectly homogeneous unit, to be studied from one end of it to the other by rational scientific methods. We pretend to give no sort of *cause* as lying behind the manifold powers of the organism. We say the immaterial entity is something which we cannot grasp, which explains nothing, for which we cannot have a shadow of evidence. We are determined to treat man as a human organism, just as we treat a dog as a canine organism; and we know no ground for saying, and no good to be got by pretending, that man is a human organism *plus* an indescribable entity. We say, the human organism is a marvellous thing, sublime if you will, of subtlest faculty and sensibility; but we, at any rate, can find nothing in man which is not an organic part of this organism; we find the faculties of mind, feeling, and will, directly dependent on physical organs; and to talk to us of mind, feeling, and will continuing their functions in the absence of physical organs and visible organisms, is to use language which, to us at least, is pure nonsense.

And now to turn to the great phenomenon of material organisms which we call Death. The human organism, like every other organism, ultimately loses that unstable equilibrium of its correlated forces which we name Life, and ceases to be an organism or system of organs, adjusting its internal relations to its

external conditions. Thereupon the existence of the complex independent entity to which we attribute consciousness, undoubtedly—*i.e.* for aught we know to the contrary—comes to an end. But the activities of this organism do not come to an end, except so far as these activities need fresh sensations and material organs. And a great part of these activities, and far the noblest part, only need fresh sensations and material organs in other similar organisms. Whilst there is an abundance of these in due relation, the activities go on *ad infinitum* with increasing energy.

We have not the slightest reason to suppose that the consciousness of the organism continues, for we mean by consciousness the sum of sensations of a particular organism, and the particular organism being dissolved, we have nothing left whereto to attribute consciousness, and the proposal strikes us like a proposal to regard infinity as conscious. So, of course, with the sensations separately, and with them the power of accumulating knowledge, of feeling, thinking, or of modifying the existence in correspondence with the outward environment. Life, in the technical sense of the word, is at an end, but the activities of which that life is the source were never so potent. Our age is familiar enough with the truth of the persistence of energy, and no one supposes that with the dissolution of the body the forces of its material elements are lost. They only pass into new combinations and continue to work elsewhere.

Far less is the energy of the activities lost. The earth, and every country, every farmstead, and every city on it, are standing witnesses that the physical activities are not lost. As century rolls after century, we see in every age more potent fruits of the labour which raised the Pyramids, or won Holland from the sea, or carved the Theseus out of marble. The bodily

organisms which wrought them have passed into gases and earths, but the activity they displayed is producing the precise results designed on a far grander scale in each generation. Much more do the intellectual and moral energies work unceasingly. Not a single manifestation of thought or feeling is without some result so soon as it is communicated to a similar organism. It passes into the sum of his mental and moral being.

But there is about the persistence of the moral energies this special phenomenon. It marks the vast interval between physical and moral science. The energies of material elements, so far as we see, disperse, or for the most part disperse. The energies of an intellectual and moral kind are very largely continued in their organic unities. The consensus of the mental, of the moral, of the emotional powers may go on, working as a whole, producing precisely the same results, with the same individuality, whether the material organism, the source and original base of these powers, be in physical function or not. The mental and moral powers do not, it is true, increase and grow, develop or vary within themselves. Nor do they in their special individuality produce visible results, for they are no longer in direct relations with their special material organisms. But the mental and moral powers are not dispersed like gases. They retain their unity, they retain their organic character, and they retain the whole of their power of passing into and stimulating the brains of living men; and in these they carry on their activity precisely as they did, whilst the bodies in which they were formed absorbed and exhaled material substance.

Nay, more; the individuality and true activity of these mental and moral forces is often not manifest, and sometimes is not complete, so long as the organism

continues its physical functions. Newton, we may suppose, has accomplished his great researches. They are destined to transform half the philosophy of mankind. But he is old, and incapable of fresh achievements. We will say he is feeble, secluded, silent, and lives shut up in his rooms. The activity of his mighty intellectual nature is being borne over the world on the wings of Thought, and works a revolution at every stroke. But otherwise the man Newton is not essentially distinguishable from the nearest infirm pauper, and has as few and as feeble relations with mankind. At last the man Newton dies—that is, the body is dispersed into gas and dust. But the world, which is affected enormously by his intellect, is not in the smallest degree affected by his death. His activity continues the same; if it were worth while to conceal the fact of his death, no one of the millions who are so greatly affected by his thoughts would perceive it or know it. If he had discovered some means of prolonging a torpid existence till this hour, he might be living now, and it would not signify to us in the slightest degree whether his body breathed in the walls of his lodging or mouldered in the vaults of the Abbey.

It may be said that if it does not signify much to us, it signifies a great deal to Isaac Newton. But is this true? He no longer eats and sleeps, a burden to himself; he no longer is tarnishing his great name by feeble theology or querulous pettiness. But if the small weaknesses and wants of the flesh are ended for him, all that makes Newton (and he had always lived for his posthumous, not his immediate fame) rises into greater activity and purer uses. We make no mystical or fanciful divinity of Death; we do not deny its terrors or its evils. We are not responsible for it, and should welcome any reasonable prospect of eliminating

or postponing this fatality, that waits upon all organic nature. But it is no answer to philosophy or science to retort that Death is so terrible, therefore man must be designed to escape it. There are savages who persistently deny that men do die at all, either their bodies or their souls, asserting that the visible consequences of death are either an illusion or an artfully contrived piece of acting on the part of their friends, who have really decamped to the happy hunting-fields. This seems on the whole a more rational theory than that of immaterial souls flying about space, as the spontaneous fancies of savages are sometimes more rational than the elaborate hypotheses of metaphysics.

But though we do not presume to apologise for death, it is easy to see that many of the greatest moral and intellectual results of life are only possible, can only begin, when the claims of the animal life are satisfied; when the stormy, complex, and chequered career is over, and the higher tops of the intellectual or moral nature alone stand forth in the distance of time. What was the blind old harper of Scio to his contemporaries, or the querulous refugee from Florence, or even the boon-companion and retired playwright of Stratford, or the blind and stern old Puritan of Bunhill Fields? The true work of Socrates and his life only began with his resplendent death, to say nothing of yet greater religious teachers, whose names I refrain from citing; and as to those whose lives have been cast in conflicts—the Cæsars, the Alfreds, the Hildebrands, the Cromwells, the Fredericks—it is only after death, oftenest in ages after death, that they cease to be combatants, and become creators. It is not merely that they are only recognised in after-ages; the truth is, that their activity only begins when the surging of passion and sense ends, and turmoil dies away. Great intellects and great characters are

necessarily in advance of their age; the care of the father and the mother begins to tell most truly in the ripe manhood of their children, when the parents are often in the grave, and not in the infancy which they see and are confronted with. The great must always feel with Kepler,—"It is enough as yet if I have a hearer now and then in a century." John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave, but his soul is marching along.

We can trace this truth best in the case of great men; but it is not confined to the great. Not a single act of thought or character ends with itself. Nay, more; not a single nature in its entirety but leaves its influence for good or for evil. As a fact the good prevail; but all act, all continue to act indefinitely, often in ever-widening circles. Physicists amuse us by tracing for us the infinite fortunes of some wave set in motion by force, its circles and its repercussions perpetually transmitted in new complications. But the career of a single intellect and character is a far more real force when it meets with suitable intellects and characters into whose action it is incorporated. Every life more or less forms another life, and lives in another life. Civilisation, nation, city, imply this fact. There is neither mysticism nor hyperbole, but simple observation in the belief, that the career of every human being in society does not end with the death of its body. In some sort its higher activities and potency can only begin truly when change is no longer possible for it. The worthy gain in influence and in range at each generation, just as the founders of some populous race gain a greater fatherhood at each succeeding growth of their descendants. And in some infinitesimal degree, the humblest life that ever turned a sod sends a wave—nay, more than a wave, a life—through the

ever-growing harmony of human society. Not a soldier died at Marathon or Salamis, but did a stroke by which our thought is enlarged and our standard of duty formed to this day.

Be it remembered that this is not hypothesis, but something perfectly real,—we may fairly say undeniable. We are not inventing an imaginary world, and saying it must be real because it is so pleasant to think of; we are only repeating truths on which our notion of history and society is based. The idea, no doubt, is usually limited to the famous, and to the great revolutions in civilisation. But no one who thinks it out carefully can deny that it is true of every human being in society in some lesser degree. The idea has not been, or is no longer, systematically enforced, invested with poetry and dignity, and deepened by the solemnity of religion. But why is that? Because theological hypotheses of a new and heterogeneous existence have deadened our interest in the realities, the grandeur, and the perpetuity of our earthly life.

In the best days of Rome, even without a theory of history or a science of society, it was a living faith, the true religion of that majestic race. It is the real sentiment of all societies where the theological hypothesis has disappeared. It is no doubt now in England the great motive of virtue and energy. There have been few seasons in the world's history when the sense of moral responsibility and moral survival after death was more exalted and more vigorous than with the companions of Vergniaud and Danton, to whom the dreams of theology were hardly intelligible. As we read the calm and humane words of Condorcet on the very edge of his yawning grave, we learn how the conviction of posthumous activity (not of posthumous fame), how the con-

sciousness of a coming incorporation with the glorious future of his race, can give a patience and a happiness equal to that of any martyr of theology.

It would be an endless inquiry to trace the means whereby this sense of posthumous participation in the life of our fellows can be extended to the mass, as it certainly affects already the thoughtful and the refined. Without an education, a new social opinion, without a religion—I mean an organised religion, not a vague metaphysic—it is doubtless impossible that it should become universal and capable of overcoming selfishness. But make it at once the basis of philosophy, the standard of right and wrong, and the centre of a religion, and this will prove, perhaps, an easier task than that of teaching Greeks and Romans, Syrians and Moors, to look forward to a future life of ceaseless psalmody in an immaterial heaven. The astonishing feat was performed; and, perhaps, it may be easier to fashion a new public opinion, requiring merely that an accepted truth of philosophy should be popularised, which is already the deepest hope of some thoughtful spirits, and which does not take the suicidal course of trying to cast out the devil of selfishness by a direct appeal to the personal self.

It is here that the strength of the human future over the celestial future is so clearly pre-eminent. Make the future hope a social activity, and we give to the present life a social ideal. Make the future hope personal beatitude, and personality is stamped deeper on every act of our daily life. Now we make the future hope, in the truest sense, social, inasmuch as our future is simply an active existence prolonged by society. And our future hope rests not in any vague yearning, of which we have as little evidence as we have definite conception: it rests on a perfectly certain truth, accepted by all thoughtful minds, the truth that

the actions, feelings, thoughts of every one of us—our minds, our characters, our *souls* as organic wholes—do marvellously influence and mould each other; that the highest part of ourselves, the abiding part of us, passes into other lives and continues to live in other lives.

Can we conceive a more potent stimulus to rectitude, to daily and hourly striving after a true life, than this ever-present sense that we are indeed immortal; not that we have an immortal something within us, but that in very truth we ourselves, our thinking, feeling, acting personalities, are immortal; nay, cannot die, but must ever continue what we make them, working and doing, if no longer receiving and enjoying? And not merely we ourselves, in our personal identity, are immortal, but each act, thought, and feeling is immortal; and this immortality is not some ecstatic and indescribable condition in space, but activity on earth in the real and known work of life, in the welfare of those whom we have loved, and in the happiness of those who come after us.

And can it be difficult to idealise and give currency to a faith, which is a certain and undisputed fact of common sense as well as of philosophy? As we *live for others* in life, so we *live in others* after death, as others have lived in us, and all for the common race. How deeply does such a belief as this bring home to each moment of life the mysterious perpetuity of ourselves! For good, for evil, we cannot die; we cannot shake ourselves free from this eternity of our faculties. There is here no promise, it is true, of eternal sensations, enjoyments, meditations. There is no promise, be it plainly said, of anything but an immortality of influence, of spiritual work, of glorified activity. We cannot even say that we shall continue to love; but we know that we shall be loved. It may well be that we shall consciously know no hope

ourselves; but we shall inspire hopes. It may be that we shall not think; but others will think our thoughts, and enshrine our minds. If no sympathies shall thrill along our nerves, we shall be the spring of sympathy in distant generations; and that, though we be the humblest, and the least of all the soldiers in the human host, the least celebrated and the worst remembered. For our lives live when we are most forgotten; and not a cup of water that we may have given to an unknown sufferer, or a wise word spoken in season to a child, but has added (whether we remember it, whether others remember it or not) a streak of happiness and strength to the world. Our earthly frames, like the grain of wheat, may be laid in the earth—and this image of our great spiritual Master is more fit for the social than for the celestial future—but the grain shall bear spiritual fruit, and multiply in kindred natures and in other selves.

It is a merely verbal question if this be the life of the Soul when the Soul means the sum of the activities, or if there be any immortality where there is no consciousness. It is enough for us that we can trust to a real prolongation of our highest activity in the sensible lives of others, even though our own forces can gain nothing new, and are not reflected in a sensitive body. We do not get rid of Death, but we transfigure Death. Does any religion profess to do more? It is enough for any creed that it can teach *non omnis moriar*; it would be gross extravagance to say *omnis non moriar*, no part of me shall die. Death is the one inevitable law of Life. The business of religion is to show us what are its compensations. The spiritualist orthodoxy, like every other creed, is willing to allow that death robs us of a great deal, that very much of us does die; nay, it teaches that this dies utterly, for ever, leaving no trace but dust. And

thus the spiritualist orthodoxy exaggerates death, and adds a fresh terror to its power. We, on the contrary, would seek to show that much of us, and that the best of us, does not die, or at least does not end. And the difference between our faith and that of the orthodox is this: we look to the permanence of the activities which give others happiness; they look to the permanence of the consciousness which can enjoy happiness. Which is the nobler?

What need we then to promise or to hope more than an eternity of spiritual influence? Yet, after all, 'tis no question as to what kind of eternity man would prefer to select. We have no evidence that he has any choice before him. If we were creating a universe of our own and a human race on an ideal mould, it might be rational to discuss what kind of eternity was the most desirable, and it might then become a question if we should not begin by eliminating death. But as we are, with death in the world, and man as we know him submitting to the fatality of his nature, the rational inquiry is this—how best to order his life, and to use the eternity that he has. And an immortality of prolonged activity on earth he has as certainly as he has civilisation, or progress, or society. And the wise man in the evening of life may be well content to say: "I have worked and thought, and have been conscious in the flesh; I have done with the flesh, and therewith with the toil of thought and the troubles of sensation; I am ready to pass into the spiritual community of human souls, and when this man's flesh wastes away from me, may I be found worthy to become part of the influence of humanity itself, and so

> Join the choir invisible
> Whose music is the gladness of the world."

That the doctrine of the celestial future appeals to

the essence of self appears very strongly in its special rebuke to the doctrine of the social future. It repeats, "We agree with all you say about the prolonged activity of man after death, we see of course that the solid achievements of life are carried on, and we grant you that it signifies nothing to those who profit by his work that the man no longer breathes in the flesh: but what is all that to the *man*, to you, and to me? we shall not *feel* our work, we shall not have the indescribable satisfaction which our souls now have in living, in effecting our work, and profiting by others. What is the good of mankind to me, when I am mouldering unconscious?"

This is the true materialism; here is the physical theory of another life; this is the unspiritual denial of the soul, the binding it down to the clay of the body. We say, "All that is great in you shall not end, but carry on its activity perpetually and in a purer way"; and you reply, "What care I for what is great in me, and its possible work in this vale of tears; I want to feel life, I want to enjoy, I want my personality"—in other words, "I want my senses, I want my body." Keep your body and keep your senses in any way that you know. We can only wonder and say, with Frederic to his runaway soldiers, "Wollt ihr immer leben?" But we, who know that a higher form of activity is only to be reached by a subjective life in society, will continue to regard a perpetuity of mere sensation without any power to act or any being to love as the true Hell, for we feel that the perpetual worth of our lives is the one thing precious to care for, and not an eternity of vacuous consciousness.

It is not merely that this eternity of psalmody is so gross, so sensual, so indolent, so selfish a creed; but its worst evil is that it paralyses practical life, and throws it into discord. A life of vanity in a vale of tears to be

followed by an infinity of celestial rapture, is necessarily a life which is of infinitesimal importance. The incongruity of the attempts to connect the two, and to make the vale of tears the ante-chamber or the judgment-dock of heaven, grows greater and not less as ages roll on. The more we think and learn, and the higher rise our social philosophy and our insight into human destiny, the more the reality and importance of the social future impress us, whilst the fancy of the celestial future grows unreal and incongruous. As we get to know what thinking means, and feeling means, and the more truly we understand what life means, the more completely do the promises of the celestial transcendentalism fail to interest us.

We have come to see that to continue to live is to carry on a series of correlated sensations, and to set in motion a series of corresponding forces; to think is to marshal a set of observed perceptions with a view to certain observed phenomena; to feel implies something of which we have a real assurance affecting our own consensus within. The whole set of positive thoughts compels us to believe that it is an infinite apathy to which your heaven would consign us, without objects, without relations, without change, without growth, without action, an absolute nothingness, a *nirvâna* of impotence,—this is not life; it is not consciousness; it is not happiness. So far as we can grasp the hypothesis, it seems equally ludicrous and repulsive. You may call it paradise; but we call it conscious annihilation. You may long for it, if you have been so taught; just as if you had been taught to cherish such hopes, you might be now yearning for the moment when you might become the immaterial principle of a comet, or as you might tell me, that you really were the ether, and were about to take your place in Space.

This is how these sublimities affect us. But we know that to many this future is one of spiritual development, a life of growth and continual upsoaring of still higher affection. It may be so; but to our mind these are contradictions in terms. We cannot understand what life and affection can mean, where you postulate the absence of every condition by which life and affection are possible. Can there be development where there is no law, thought or affection where object and subject are confused into one essence? How can that be existence, where everything of which we have experience, and everything which we can define, is presumed to be unable to enter? Besides, this is not the orthodox, not the popular view. To us these things are all incoherences; and in the midst of practical realities and the solid duties of life, sheer impertinences. The field is full; each human life has a perfectly real and a vast future to look forward to; these hyperbolic enigmas disturb our grave duties and our solid hopes. No wonder, then, whilst they are still so rife, that men are dull to the moral responsibility which, in its awfulness, begins only at the grave; that they are so little influenced by the futurity which will judge them; that they are blind to the dignity and beauty of death, and shuffle off the dead life and the dead body with such cruel disrespect. The fumes of the celestial immortality still confuse them.

It is only when an earthly future is the fulfilment of a worthy life on earth, that we can see all the majesty as well as the glory of the world beyond the grave; and then only will it fulfil its moral and religious purpose as the great guide of human conduct.

XV

REPLY TO CRITICISMS

(*See the Introductory Note to Essay XIII*)

WHETHER the preceding discussion has given much new strength to the doctrine of man's immaterial Soul and Future existence I will not pretend to decide. But I cannot feel that it has shaken the reality of man's posthumous influence, my chief and immediate theme. It seemed to me that the time had come, when, seeing how vague and hesitating were the prevalent beliefs on this subject, it was most important to remember that, from a purely earthly point of view, man had a spiritual nature, and could look forward after death to something that marked him off from the beasts that perish. I cannot see that what I urged has been in substance displaced; though much criticism (and some of it of a verbal kind) has been directed at the language which I used of others. My object was to try if this life could not be made richer; not to destroy the dreams of another. But has the old doctrine of a future life been in any way strengthened? Mr. Hutton, it is true, has a "personal wish" for a perpetuity of volition. Lord Blachford "believes because he is told" in Holy Writ. And Professor Huxley knows of no evidence that "such a soul and a future life exist"; and he seems not to believe in them at all.

Philosophical discussion must languish a little, if, when we ask for the philosophical grounds for a certain belief, we find one philosopher believing because he has a "personal wish" for it, and another "believing because he is told." Mr. Hutton says that, as far as he knows, "the thoughts, affections, and volitions are not likely to perish with his body." Professor Huxley seems to think it just as likely that they should. Arguments are called for to enable us to decide between these two authorities. And the only argument we have hitherto got is Mr. Hutton's "personal wish," and Lord Blachford's *ita scriptum est*. I confess myself unable to continue an argument which runs into believing "because I am told." It is for this reason that the lazzarone at Naples believes in the blood of St. Januarius.

My original propositions may be stated thus.

1. Philosophy as a whole (I do not say specially biological science) has established a functional relation to exist between every fact of thinking, willing, or feeling, on the one side, and some molecular change in the body on the other side.

2. This relation is simply one of correspondence between moral and physical facts, not one of assimilation. The moral fact does not become a physical fact, is not adequately explained by it, and must be mainly studied as a moral fact, by methods applicable to morals—not as a physical fact, by methods applicable to physics.

3. The moral facts of human life, the laws of man's mental, moral, and affective nature, must consequently be studied, as they have always been studied, by direct observation of these facts; yet the correspondences, specially discovered by biological science between man's mind and his body, must always be kept in view. They are an indispensable, inseparable, but subordinate part of moral philosophy.

4. We do not diminish the supreme place of the spiritual facts in life and in philosophy by admitting these spiritual facts to have a relation with molecular and organic facts in the human organism—provided that we never forget how small and dependent is the part which the study of the molecular and organic phenomena must play in moral and social science.

5. Those whose minds have been trained in the modern philosophy of universal Law cannot understand what is meant by sensation, thought, and energy, existing without any basis of molecular change; and to talk to them of sensation, thought, and energy, continuing in the absence of any molecules whatever, is precisely such a contradiction in terms as to suppose that civilisation will continue in the absence of any men whatever.

6. Yet man is so constituted as a social being, that the energies which he puts out in life mould the minds, characters, and habits of his fellow-men; so that each man's life is, *in effect*, indefinitely prolonged in human society. This is a phenomenon quite peculiar to man and to human society, and of course depends on there being men in active association with each other. Physics and biology can teach us nothing about it; and physicists and biologists may very easily forget its importance. It can be learnt only by long and refined observations in moral and mental philosophy as a whole, and in the history of civilisation as a whole.

7. Lastly, as a corollary, it may be useful to retain the words Soul and Future Life for their associations; provided we make it clear that we mean by Soul the combined faculties of the *living* organism, and by future life the subjective effect of each man's objective life on the actual lives of his fellow-men.

I. Now I find in Mr. Hutton's paper hardly any attempt to disprove the first six of these propositions.

He is employed for the most part in asserting that his hypothesis of a future state is a more agreeable one than mine, and in earnest complaints that I should call his view of a future state a selfish or personal hope. As to the first, I will only remark that it is scarcely a question whether his notion of immortality is beautiful or not, but whether it is true. If there is no rational ground for expecting such immortality to be a solid fact, it is to little purpose to show us what a sublime idea it would be if there were anything in it. As to the second, I will only say that I do not call *his* notion of a future existence a selfish or personal hope. In the last paragraph of my second paper I speak with respect of the opinion of those who look forward to a future of moral development instead of to an idle eternity of psalm-singing. My language as to the selfishness of the vulgar ideas of salvation was directed to those who insist that unless they are to *feel* a continuance of pleasure they do not care for any continuance of their influence at all. The vulgar are apt to say that what they desire is the sense of personal satisfaction, and if they cannot have this they care for nothing else. This, I maintain, is a selfish and debasing idea. It is the common notion of the popular religion, and its tendency to concentrate the mind on a merely personal salvation does exert an evil effect on practical conduct. I once heard a Scotch preacher, dilating on the narrowness of the gate, etc., exclaim, "O dear brethren, who would care to be saved *in a crowd*?"

I do not say this of the life of grander activity in which Mr. Hutton believes, and which Lord Blachford so eloquently describes. This is no doubt a fine ideal, and I will not say other than an elevating hope. But on what does it rest? Why this ideal rather than any other? Each of us may imagine, as I said at the outset, his own Elysian fields, or his own mystic rose. But is

this philosophy? Is it even religion? Besides, there is this other objection to it. It is not Christianity, but Neo-Christianity. It is a fantasia with variations on the orthodox creed. There is not a word of the kind in the Bible. Lord Blachford says he believes in it, "because he is told." He admits that natural philosophy gives him no evidence at all of future life. But it so happens that he is not told this, at any rate in the creeds and formularies of orthodox faith. If this view of future life is to rest entirely on revelation, it is a very singular thing that the Bible is silent on the matter. Whatever kind of future ecstasy may be suggested in some texts, certain it is that such a glorified energy as Lord Blachford paints in glowing colours is nowhere described in the Bible. There is a constant practice nowadays, when the popular religion is criticised, that earnest defenders of it come forward exclaiming: "Oh! that is only the vulgar notion of our religion. My idea of the doctrine is so and so" —something which the speaker has invented without countenance from official authority. For my part, I hold Christianity to be what is taught in average churches and chapels to the millions of professing Christians. And I say it is a very serious fact when philosophical defenders of religion begin by repudiating that which is taught in average pulpits, and tell the world that Christianity really means—something the speaker has just devised himself.

Perhaps a little more attention to my actual words might have rendered unnecessary the complaints in all these papers as to my language about the hopes which men cherish for the future. In the first place, I freely admit that the hopes of a grander energy in heaven are not open to the charge of vulgar selfishness. I said that they are unintelligible, not that they are unworthy. They are unintelligible to those who are

continually alive to the fact I have placed as my first proposition—*that every moral phenomenon is in functional relation with some physical phenomenon.* To those who deny or ignore this truth, there is doubtless no incoherence in all the ideals so eloquently described in the papers of Mr. Hutton and Lord Blachford But once get this conception as the substratum o your entire mental and moral philosophy, and it is a incoherent to talk to us of your immaterial develop ment as it would be to talk of obtaining redness without any red thing.

I will try to explain more fully why this idea of a glorified activity implies a contradiction in terms to those who are imbued with the sense of correspondence between physical and moral facts. When we conceive any process of thinking, we call up before us a complex train of conditions; objective facts outside of us or the revived impression of such facts; the molecular effect of these facts upon certain parts of our organism, the association of these with similar facts recalled by memory, an elaborate mechanism to correlate these impressions, an unknown to be made known, and a difficulty to be overcome. All systematic thought implies relations with the external world present or recalled, and it also implies some shortcoming in our powers of perfecting those relations. When we meditate, it is on a basis of facts which we are observing, or have observed and are now recalling, and with a view to get at some result which baffles our direct observation and hinders some practical purpose.

The same holds good of our moral energy. Ecstasy and mere adoration exclude energy of action. Moral development implies difficulties to be overcome, qualities balanced against one another under opposing conditions, this or that appetite tempted, this or that

instinct tested by proof. Moral development does not grow like a fungus; it is a continual struggle in surrounding conditions of a specific kind, and an active putting forth of a variety of practical faculties in the midst of real obstacles.

So, too, of the affections, they equally imply conditions. Sympathy does not spurt up like a fountain in the air; it implies beings in need of help, evils to be alleviated, a fellowship of giving and taking, the sense of protecting and being protected, a pity for suffering, an admiration of power, goodness, and truth. All of these imply an external world to act in, human beings as objects, and human life under human conditions.

Now all these conditions are eliminated from the orthodox ideal of a future state. There are to be no physical impressions, no material difficulties, no evil, no toil, no struggle, no human beings and no human objects. The only condition is a complete absence of all conditions, or all conditions of which we have any experience. And we say, we cannot imagine what you mean by your intensified sympathy, your broader thought, your infinitely varied activity, when you begin by postulating the absence of all that makes sympathy, thought, and activity possible, all that makes life really noble.

A mystical and inane ecstasy is an appropriate ideal for this paradise of negations, and this is the orthodox view; but it is not a high view. A glorified existence of greater activity and development may be a high view, but it is a contradiction in terms; exactly, I say, as if you were to talk of a higher civilisation without any human beings. But this is simply a metaphysical afterthought to escape from a moral dilemma. Mr. Hutton is surely mistaken in saying that Positivists have forgotten that Christians ever had any meaning in their hopes of a "beatific vision."

He must know that Dante and Thomas à Kempis form the religious books of Positivists, and they are, with some other manuals of Catholic theology, amongst the small number of volumes which Comte recommended for constant use. We can see in the celestial "visions" of a mystical and unscientific age much that was beautiful in its time, though not the highest product even of theology. But in our day these visions of paradise have lost what moral value they had, whilst the progress of philosophy has made them incompatible with our modern canons of thought.

Mr. Hutton supposes me to object to any continuance of sensation as an evil in itself. My objection was not that consciousness should be prolonged in immortality, but that nothing else but consciousness should be prolonged. All real human life, energy, thought, and active affection, are to be made impossible in your celestial paradise, but you insist on retaining consciousness. To retain the power of feeling, whilst all means and object are taken away from thinking, all power of acting, all opportunity of cultivating the faculties of sympathy are stifled: this seems to me something else than a good. It would seem to me, that simply to be conscious, and yet to lie thoughtless, inactive, irresponsive, with every faculty of a man paralysed within you, as if by that villanous drug which produces torpor whilst it intensifies sensation: such a consciousness as this must be a very place of torment.

I think some contradictions which Mr. Hutton supposes he detects in my paper are not very hard to reconcile. I admitted that Death is an evil, it seems; but I spoke of our posthumous activity as a higher kind of influence. We might imagine, of course, a Utopia, with neither suffering, waste, nor loss; and

compared with such a world, the world, as we know it, is full of evils, of which Death is obviously one. But relatively, in such a world as alone we know, Death becomes simply a law of organised nature, from which we draw some of our guiding motives of conduct. In precisely the same way the necessity of toil is an evil in itself; but, with man and his life as we know them, we draw from it some of our highest moral energies. The grandest qualities of human nature, such as we know it at least, would become for ever impossible, if Labour and Death were not the law of life.

Mr. Hutton again takes but a pessimist view of life when he insists how much of our activity is evil, and how questionable is the future of the race. I am no pessimist, and I believe in a providential control over all human actions by the great Power of Humanity, which indeed brings good out of evil, and assures, at least for some thousands of centuries, a certain progress towards the higher state. Pessimism as to the essential dignity of man and the steady development of his race, is one of the surest marks of the enervating influence of this dream of a celestial glory. If I called it as wild a desire as to go roving through space in a comet, it is because I can attach no meaning to a *human* life to be prolonged without a human frame and a human world; and it seems to me as rational to talk of becoming an angel as to talk of becoming an ellipse.

By "duties" of the world beyond the grave, I meant the duties which are imposed on us in life, by the certainty that our action must continue to have an indefinite effect. The phrase may be inelegant, but I do not think the meaning is obscure.

II. I cannot agree with Lord Blachford that I have fallen into any confusion between a substance

and an attribute. I am quite aware that the word Soul has been hitherto used for some centuries as an entity. And I proposed to retain the term for an attribute. It is a very common process in the history of thought. Electricity, Life, Heat, were once supposed to be substances. We now very usefully retain these words for a set of observed conditions or qualities.

I agree with Mr. Spencer that the unity of the social organism is quite as complete as that of the individual organism. I do not confuse the two kinds of unity; but I say that man is in no important sense a unit that society is not also a unit.

With regard to the "percipient" and the "perceptible" I cannot follow Lord Blachford. He speaks a tongue that I do not understand. I have no means of dividing the universe into "percipients" and "perceptibles." I know no reason why a "percipient" should not be a "perceptible," none why I should not be "perceptible," and none why beings about me should not be "perceptible." I think we are all perfectly "perceptible"—indeed some of us are more "perceptible" than "percipient"—though I cannot say that Lord Blachford is always "perceptible" to me. And how does my being "perceptible," or not being "perceptible," prove that I have an immortal soul? Is a dog "perceptible," is he "percipient"? Has he not some of the qualities of a "percipient," and if so, has he an immortal soul? Is an ant, a tree, a bacterium, percipient, and has any of these an immortal soul; for I find Lord Blachford declaring there is an "ineradicable difference between the motions of a material and the sensations of a living being," as if the animal world were percipient, and the inorganic perceptible? But surely in the sensations of a living being the animal world

must be included. Where does the vegetable world come in?

I used the word "organism" advisedly when I said that will, thought, and affection are functions of a living organism. I decline exactly to localise the organ of any function of mind or will. When I am asked, What are *we*? I reply we are *men*. When I am asked, Are *we* our bodies? I say no, nor are we our minds. Have we no sense of personality, of unity? I am asked. I say certainly; it is an acquired result of our nervous organisation, liable to be interrupted by derangements of that nervous organisation. What is it that makes us think and feel? The facts of our human nature; I cannot get behind this, and I need no further explanation. We are men, and can do what men can do. I say the tangible collection of organs known as a "man" (not the consensus or the condition, but the *man*) thinks, wills, and feels, just as much as that visible organism lives and grows. We do not say that this or that ganglion in particular lives and grows; we say the *man* grows. It is as easy to me to imagine that we shall grow fifteen feet high, when we have no body, as that we shall grow in knowledge, goodness, activity, etc., etc., etc., when we have no organs. And the absence of all molecular attributes would be, I should think, particularly awkward in that life of cometary motion in the interstellar spaces with which Lord Blachford threatens us. But as the poet says:—

> Trasumanar significar per verba
> Non si porria—

"*If*," says he, "practical duties are necessary for the perfection of life," we can take a little interstellar exercise. Why, practical duties are the sum and substance of life; and life which does

not centre in practical duties is not Life, but a trance.

Lord Blachford, who is somewhat punctilious in terms, asks me what I consider myself to understand "by the incorporation of a consensus of faculties with a glorious future." Well! it so happens that I did not use that phrase. I have never spoken of an immortal Soul anywhere, nor do I use the word Soul of any but the living man. I said a man might look forward to incorporation with the future of his race, explaining that to mean his "posthumous activity." And I think at any rate the phrase is quite as reasonable as to say that I look forward, as Mr. Hutton does, to a "union with God." What does Mr. Hutton, or Lord Blachford, understand himself to mean by that?

Surely Lord Blachford's epigram about the fiddle and the tune is hardly fortunate. Indeed, that exactly expresses what I find faulty in the view of himself and the theologians. He thinks the tune will go on playing when the fiddle is broken up and burned. I say nothing of the kind. I do not say the man will continue to exist after death. I simply say that his influence will; that other men will do and think what he taught them to do or to think. Just so, a general would be said to win a battle which he planned and directed, even if he had been killed in an early part of it. What is there of fiddle and tune about this? I certainly think that when Mozart and Beethoven have left us great pieces of music, it signifies little to art if the actual fiddle or even the actual composer continue to exist or not. I never said the tune would exist. I said that men would remember it and repeat it. I must thank Lord Blachford for a happy illustration of my own meaning. But it is *he* who expects the tune to exist without the

fiddle. *I* say, you can't have a tune without a fiddle, nor a fiddle without wood.

III. I have reserved the criticism of Professor Huxley, because it lies apart from the principal discussion, and turns mainly on some incidental remarks of mine on "biological reasoning about spiritual things."

I note three points at the outset. Professor Huxley does not himself pretend to any evidence for a theological soul and future life. Again, he does not dispute the account I give of the functional relation of physical and moral facts. He seems surprised that I should understand it, not being a biologist; but he is kind enough to say that my statement may pass. Lastly, he does not deny the reality of man's posthumous activity. Now these three are the main purposes of my argument; and in these I have Professor Huxley with me. He is no more of a theologian than I am. Indeed, he is only scandalised that I should see any good in priests at all. He might have said more plainly that, when the man is dead, there is an end of the matter. But this clearly is his opinion, and he intimates as much in his paper. Only he would say no more about it, bury the carcase, and end the tale, leaving all thoughts about the future to those whose faith is more robust and whose hopes are richer; by which I understand him to mean persons weak enough to listen to the priests.

Now this does not satisfy me. I call it materialism, for it exaggerates the importance of the physical facts, and ignores that of the spiritual facts. And the object of my paper was simply this: that as the physical facts are daily growing quite irresistible, it is of urgent importance to place the spiritual facts on a sound scientific basis at once. Professor Huxley implies that his business is with the physical facts, and the spiritual

facts must take care of themselves. I cannot agree with him. That is precisely the difference between us. The spiritual facts of man's nature are the business of all who undertake to denounce priestcraft, and especially of those who preach Lay Sermons.

Professor Huxley complains that I should join in the view-halloo against biological science. Now I never have supposed that biological science was in the position of the hunted fox. I thought it was the hunter, booted and spurred and riding over us all, with Professor Huxley leaping the most terrific fences and cracking his whip with intense gusto. As to biological science, it is the last thing that I should try to run down ; and I must protest, with all sincerity, that I wrote without a thought of Professor Huxley at all. He insists on knowing, in the most peremptory way, of whom I was thinking, as if I were thinking of him. Of whom else could I be thinking, forsooth, when I spoke of Biology? Well! I did not bite my thumb at him, but I bit my thumb.

Seriously, I was not writing at Professor Huxley, or I should have named him. I have a very great admiration for his work in biology ; I have learned much from him ; I have followed his courses of lectures years and years ago, and have carefully studied his books. If, in questions which belong to sociology, morals, and to general philosophy, he seems to me hardly an authority, why need we dispute? Dog should not bite dog ; and he and I have many a wolf that we both would keep from the fold.

But if I did not mean Professor Huxley, whom did I mean? Now my paper, I think clearly enough, alluded to two very different kinds of Materialism. There is systematic Materialism, and there is the vague Materialism. The eminent example of the first is the unlucky remark of Cabanis that the brain

secretes thought, as the liver secretes bile; and there is much of the same sort in many foreign theories—in the tone of Moleschott, Buchner, and the like. The most distinct examples of it in this country are found amongst phrenologists, spiritualists, some mental pathologists, and a few communist visionaries. The far wider, vaguer, and more dangerous school of Materialism is found in a multitude of quarters—in all those who insist exclusively on the physical side of moral phenomena—all, in short, who, to use Professor Huxley's phrase, are employed in "building up a physical theory of moral phenomena." Those who confuse moral and physical phenomena are indeed few. Those who exaggerate the physical side of moral phenomena are many.

Now, though I did not allude to Professor Huxley in what I wrote, his criticism convinces me that he is sometimes at least found among these last. His paper is an excellent illustration of the very error which I condemned. The issue between us is this:—We both agree that every mental and moral fact is in functional relation with some molecular fact. So far we are entirely on the same side, as against all forms of theological and metaphysical doctrine which conceive the possibility of human feeling without a human body. But then, says Professor Huxley, if I can trace the molecular facts which are the antecedents of the mental and moral facts, I have *explained* these mental and moral facts. That I deny; just as much as I should deny that a chemical analysis of the body could ever lead to an explanation of the physical organism.

Then, says the Professor, when I have traced out the molecular facts, I have built up a *physical theory of moral phenomena*. That again I deny. I say there is no such thing, or no rational thing, that can be called a physical theory of moral phenomena; any more than

there is a moral theory of physical phenomena. What sort of a thing would be a physical theory of history—history *explained* by the influence of climate or the like? The issue between us centres in this. I say that the physical side of moral phenomena bears about the same part in the moral sciences that the facts about climate bear in the sum of human civilisation. And, that to look to the physical facts as an explanation of the moral, or even as an independent branch of the study of moral facts, is perfectly idle; just as it would be if a mere physical geographer pretended to give us, out of his geography, a climatic philosophy of history.

Again, Professor Huxley has not been deterred from the astounding paradox of proposing to us a *physiological theory of religion.* He tells us how "the religious feelings may be brought within the range of physiological inquiry." And he proposes as a problem —"*What diseased viscus may have been responsible for the 'Priest in Absolution'*?" I will drop all epithets; but I must say that I call that materialism, and materialism not very nice of its kind. One might as reasonably propose as a problem—What barometrical readings are responsible for the British Constitution? and suggest a congress of meteorologists to do the work of Hallam, Stubbs, and Freeman. No doubt there is *some* connection between the House of Commons and the English climate, and so there is no doubt *some* connection between religious theories and physical organs. But to talk of "bringing religion within the range of physiological inquiry" is simply to stare through the wrong end of the telescope, and to turn philosophy and science upside down. Ah! Professor Huxley, this is a bad day's work for scientific progress—

ἦ κεν γηθήσαι Πρίαμος, Πριάμοιό τε παῖδες.

Pope Pius and his people will be glad when they read that fatal sentence of yours. When I complained of "the attempt to dispose of the deepest moral truths of human nature on a bare physical or physiological basis," I could not have expected to read such an illustration of my meaning by Professor Huxley.

Perhaps he will permit me to inform him (since that is the style which he affects) that there once was —and indeed we may say still is—an institution called the Catholic Church; that it has had a long and strange history, and subtle influences of all kinds; and I venture to think that Professor Huxley may learn more about the *Priest in Absolution* by a few weeks' study of the Catholic system than by inspecting the diseased *viscera* of the whole human race. When Professor Huxley's historical and religious studies "have advanced so far as to enable him to explain" the history of Catholicism, I think he will admit that "Priestcraft" cannot well be made a chapter in a physiological manual. It may be cheap pulpit thunder, but this idea of his of inspecting a "diseased viscus" is precisely what I meant by "biological reasoning about spiritual things." And I stand by it, that it is just as false in science as it is deleterious in morals. It is an attempt (I will not say arrogant, I am inclined to use another epithet) to explain, by physical observations, what can only be explained by the most subtle moral, sociological, and historical observations. It is to think you can find the golden eggs by cutting up the goose, instead of watching the goose to see where she lays the eggs.

I am quite aware that Professor Huxley has elsewhere formulated his belief that Biology is the science which "includes man and all his ways and works." If history, law, politics, morals, and political economy are merely branches of biology, we shall want new

dictionaries indeed; and biology will embrace about four-fifths of human knowledge. But this is not a question of language; for we here have Professor Huxley actually bringing religion within the range of *physiological* inquiry, and settling its problems by references to "diseased viscus." But the differences between us are a long story; and since Professor Huxley has sought me out, and in somewhat monitorial tone has proposed to set me right, I will take an early occasion to try and set forth what I find paradoxical in his notions of the relations of Biology and Philosophy.

I note a few special points between us, and I have done. Professor Huxley is so well satisfied with his idea of a "physical theory of moral phenomena," that he constantly attributes that sense to my words, though I carefully guarded my language from such a construction. Thus he quotes from me a passage beginning, "Man is one, however compound," but he breaks off the quotation just as I go on to speak of the direct analysis of mental and moral faculties by mental and moral science, not by physiological science. I say: "philosophy and science" have accomplished explanations; I do not say biology; and the biological part of the explanation is a small and subordinate part of the whole. I do not say that the correspondence between physical and moral phenomena is an *explanation* of the human organism. Professor Huxley says that, and I call it materialism. Nor do I say that "spiritual sensibility is a *bodily* function." I say, it is a moral function; and I complain that Professor Huxley ignores the distinction between moral and physical functions of the human organism.

As to the distinction between anatomy and physiology, if he will look at my words again, he will see that I use these terms with perfect accuracy. Six

lines below the passage he quotes, I speak of the human mechanism being only explained by a "complete anatomy *and biology*," showing that anatomy is merely one of the instruments of biology.

"He might be surprised to hear" that he does not himself give an accurate definition of physiology. But so it is. He says: "Physiology is the science which treats of the functions of the living organism." Not so, for the finest spiritual sensibility is, as Professor Huxley admits, a function of a living organism; and physiology is not the science which treats of the spiritual sensibilities. They belong to moral science. There are mental, moral, affective functions of the living organism; and they are not within the province of physiology. Physiology is the science which treats of the *bodily* functions of the living organism; as Professor Huxley says in his admirable *Elementary Lessons*, it deals with the facts "concerning the action of the *body*." I complain of the pseudo-science which drops that distinction for a minute. He says: "The explanation of a physiological function is the demonstration of the connection of that function with the molecular state of the organ which exerts the function." That I dispute. It is only a small part of the explanation. The explanation substantially is the demonstration of the laws and all the conditions of the function. The explanation of the circulation of the blood is the demonstration of all its laws, modes, and conditions; and the molecular antecedents of it are but a small part of the explanation. The principal part relates to the molar (and not the molecular) action of the heart and other organs.

"The function of motion is explained," he says, "when the movements of the living body are found to have certain molecular changes for their invariable antecedents." Nothing of the kind. The function

of bodily motion is explained when the laws, modes, and conditions of that motion are demonstrated ; and molecular antecedents are but a part of these conditions. The main part of the explanation, again, deals with molar, not molecular, states of certain organs. "The function of sensation is explained," says Professor Huxley, "when the molecular changes, which are the invariable antecedents of sensations, are discovered." Not a bit of it. The function of sensation is only explained when the laws and conditions of sensation are demonstrated. And the main part of this demonstration will come from direct observation of the sensitive organism organically, and by no molecular discovery whatever. All this is precisely the materialism which I condemn ; the fancying that one science can do the work of another, and that any molecular discovery can dispense with direct study of organisms in their organic, social, mental, and moral aspects. Will Professor Huxley say that the function of any Symposium is explained, when we have chemically analysed the solids and liquids which effect molecular change in the digestive apparatus ? If so, let us ask the butler if he cannot produce us a less heady and more mellow vintage. What irritated *viscus* is responsible for the *Materialist in Philosophy* ? We shall all philosophise aright, if our friend Tyndall can hit for us the exact chemical formula for our drinks.

It does not surprise me, so much as it might, to find Professor Huxley slipping into really inaccurate definitions in physiology, when I remember that hallucination of his about questions of science all becoming questions of molecular physics. The molecular facts are valuable enough ; but we are getting molecular-mad, if we forget that molecular facts have only a special part in physiology, and hardly

any part at all in sociology, history, morals, and politics; though I quite agree that there is no single fact in social, moral, or mental philosophy that has not its correspondence in some molecular fact, if we only could know it. All human things undoubtedly depend on, and are certainly connected with, the general laws of the solar system. And to say that questions of human organisms, much less of human society, tend to become questions of molecular physics is exactly the kind of confusion it would be if I said that questions of history tend to become questions of astronomy, and that the more refined calculations of planetary movements in the future will explain to us the causes of the English Rebellion and the French Revolution.

There is an odd instance of this confusion of thought at the close of Professor Huxley's paper, which still more oddly Lord Blachford, who is so strict in his logic, cites with approval. "Has a stone a future life," says Professor Huxley, "because the wavelets it may cause in the sea persist through space and time?" Well! has a stone a *life* at all? because if it has no present life, I cannot see why it should have a future life. How is any reasoning about the inorganic world to help us here in reasoning about the organic world? Professor Huxley and Lord Blachford might as well ask if a stone is capable of civilisation because I said that man was. I think that man is wholly different from a stone; and from a fiddle; and even from a dog; and that to say that a man cannot exert any influence on other men after his death, because a dog cannot, or because a fiddle, or because a stone cannot, may be to reproduce with rather needless affectation the verbal quibbles and pitfalls which Socrates and the sophists prepared for each other in some wordy symposium of old.

Lastly, Professor Huxley seems to think that he has disposed of me altogether, so soon as he can point to a sympathy between theologians and myself. I trust there is great affinity and great sympathy between us; and pray let him not think that I am in the least ashamed of that common ground. Positivism has quite as much sympathy with the genuine theologian as it has with the scientific specialist. The former may be working on a wrong intellectual basis, and often it may be by most perverted methods; but in the best types he has a high social aim and a great moral cause to maintain amongst men. The latter is usually right in his intellectual basis as far as it goes; but it does not go very far, and in the great moral cause of the spiritual destinies of men he is often content with utter indifference and simple nihilism. Mere raving at priestcraft, and beadles, and outward investments is indeed a poor solution of the mighty problems of the human soul and of social organisation. And the instinct of the mass of mankind will long reject a biology which has nothing for these but a sneer. It will not do for Professor Huxley to say that he is only a poor biologist and careth for none of these things. His biology, however, "includes man and all his ways and works." Besides, he is a leader in Israel; he has preached an entire volume of Lay Sermons; and he has waged many a war with theologians and philosophers on religious and philosophic problems. What, if I may ask him, is his own religion and his own philosophy? He says that he knows no scientific men who "neglect all philosophical and religious synthesis." In that he is fortunate in his circle of acquaintance. But since he is so earnest in asking me questions, let me ask him to tell the world what is his own synthesis of philosophy, what is his

own idea of religion? He can laugh at the worship of Priests and Positivists: whom, or what, does he worship? If he dislikes the word Soul, does he think man has anything that can be called a spiritual nature? If he derides my idea of a Future life, does he think that there is anything which can be said of a man, when his carcase is laid beneath the sod, beyond a simple final *Vale*? Has he made such testamentary directions?

Space fails me to reply to the appeals of so many critics. I cannot enter with Mr. Roden Noel on that great question of the materialisation of the spirits of the dead; I know not whether we shall be "made one with the great Elohim, or angels of Nature, or if we shall grovel in dead material bodily life." I know nothing of this high matter: I do not comprehend this language. Nor can I add anything to what I have said on that sense of personality which Lord Selborne and Canon Barry so eloquently press on me. To me that sense of personality is a thing of somewhat slow growth, resulting from our entire nervous organisation and our composite mental constitution. It seems to me that we can often trace it building up and trace it again decaying away. We feel ourselves to be *men*, because we have human bodies and human minds. Is that not enough? Has the baby an hour old this sense of personality? Are you sure that a dog or an elephant has not got it? Then has the baby no soul; has the dog a soul? Do you know more of your neighbour, apart from inference, than you know of the dog? Again, I cannot enter upon Mr. Greg's beautiful reflections, save to point out how largely he supports me. He shows, I think with masterly logic, how difficult it is to fit this new notion of a glorified activity on to the old orthodoxy of beatific ecstasy.

Canon Barry reminds us how this orthodoxy involved the resurrection of the body, and the same difficulty has driven Mr. Roden Noel to suggest that the material world itself may be the *débris* of the just made perfect. But Dr. Ward, as might be expected, falls back on the beatific ecstasy as conceived by the mystics of the thirteenth century. No word here about moral activity and the social converse, as in the Elysian fields, imagined by philosophers of less orthodox severity.

One word more. If my language has given any believer pain, I regret it sincerely. It may have been somewhat obscure, since it has been so widely arraigned, and I think misconceived. My position is this. The idea of a glorified energy in an ampler life is an idea utterly incompatible with exact thought, one which evaporates in contradictions, in phrases which when pressed have no meaning. The idea of beatific ecstasy is the old and orthodox idea; it does not involve so many contradictions as the former idea, but then it does not satisfy our moral judgment. I say plainly that the hope of such an infinite ecstasy is an inane and unworthy crown of a human life. And when Dr. Ward assures me that it is merely the prolongation of the saintly life, then I say the saintly life is an inane and unworthy life. The words I used about the "selfish" view of futurity, I applied only to those who say they care for nothing but personal enjoyment, and to those whose only aim is "to save their own souls." Mr. Baldwin Brown has nobly condemned this creed in words far stronger than mine. And here let us close with the reflection that the language of controversy must always be held to apply not to the character of our opponents, but to the logical consequences of their doctrines, if uncorrected and if forced to their extreme.

XVI

THE FUTURE OF AGNOSTICISM

THE central and pressing problem that awaits Christianity in the future, if we are to trust its official and orthodox teachers, is how shall it overcome that paralysis of religious faith which passes under a convenient solecism as *Agnostic*. Agnosticism is a vague and elastic phrase to describe the state of mind of large and growing sections of all cultured and thoughtful minds. It is almost assumed that the philosopher, the man of science, the man of great practical experience, is more or less an Agnostic, until he declares himself a convinced Christian, and then the fact is widely proclaimed and heartily welcomed. I propose to ask whether a phase of mind so largely prevailing in the higher intellectual ranks is permanent, creative, final. Is Agnosticism a substantive religious belief at all? Can it grow into a religious belief? Can it supersede religious belief?

It is not at all necessary to frame an exact definition of Agnosticism, a task that is far from easy. It may embrace a variety of different opinions, ranging through many types of Pantheistic and humanitarian belief, to the religion of the Unknowable, and so on down to a convenient screen for cynicism or a simple state of mere indifferency. The forms of Agnosticism

may be almost as many as the forms of Theism, for it includes in the widest sense all those who consciously avow *Ignorance* to be the sum of their reflections on the origin of the Universe, the moral government of the world, and the future of the spirit after death.

In one sense this represents the conclusion of Auguste Comte; it was that of Charles Darwin, as he says, in a far less steady way; it is certainly that of Herbert Spencer, and of most of those who rest in a philosophy of evolution. An eminent politician who was once pressed by an equally eminent critic to formulate his views on these, as most think them, all-important problems, replied: "My dear fellow, those are matters whereon I never could feel the slightest interest!" But this is not the true faith of the Agnostic—indeed, this eminent politician counted himself a Churchman. Thousands of busy men, men of pleasure, of ambition, the selfish, the vicious, and the careless, have no definite opinion and no perceptible interest. But they are not properly Agnostics. To be undecided, indifferent, or callous is not to be convinced of one's own ignorance. The Agnostic proper is one who having honestly sought to know, acquiesces in Ignorance and avows it as the best practical solution of a profound but impenetrable problem.

Such is the mental attitude of a very powerful and growing order of intelligences; who, if far from a majority in numbers, include a heavy proportion of the leaders of thought. Is this mental attitude a religious creed in itself? Can it become the substitute for all other religious creeds?

The true Agnostic by conviction puts forward his ignorance as the central result of his views about religion. A man may incline to the agnostic frame of mind, or he may be agnostic with respect to given

metaphysical problems, without being fairly and truly an Agnostic by profession. The Agnostic takes his stand by principle on ignorance, just as the Protestant takes his stand on protesting against the errors of Rome, and makes that the badge and test of religious belief. Many other churches, schools, and creeds abjure and reject the errors of Rome quite as much as Protestants can, without becoming Protestants. Deists, Atheists, Jews, Positivists, Buddhists, Mussalmans, and Brahmins reject the Pope and all his works quite as thoroughly as any Protestant. But it would be ridiculous to class them as Protestants, because they do not make the differing from the Church of Rome the central result of their views about religion. They are each properly described by the name which connotes the main body of their positive beliefs and practices. The Protestant is a Christian who protests against the Roman Catholic form of Christianity. The Atheist is one who protests against the theological doctrine of a Creator and a moral providence. The Agnostic is one who protests against any dogma respecting Creation at all, and who takes his stand deliberately on ignorance. All these put some specific denial into the forefront of their deepest convictions.

But the Agnostic is far more distinctively a denier than the Protestant. In spite of this unhappy name, of which large sections of the Protestant world are heartily ashamed, the term Protestant still means something substantive, something more than one who protests. Protestant still means Evangelical Christian. And so the name Dissenter implies much more than one who dissents from the Established Church. In spite of all the gibes and flouts of a great Agnostic, the "dissidence of Dissent" marks those who hold to a Biblical and Presbyterian type of Christianity, much as "the protestantism of the

Protestant Religion" includes all types of Christians who look to the Bible rather than the Church of Rome as the source of faith. The Agnostic, as such, has no positive religious belief apart from the assertion of his ignorance, for if he had, he would be named from such belief. He is rather in the position of the Atheist, whose religious position is based on a denial of God, or of the Anarchist, whose political aim is directed towards the suppression of all government, not the establishment of any new government, socialistic or otherwise. The Agnostic, the Atheist, and the Anarchist concentrate their opinions respectively on opposition to creeds, opposition to Providence, and opposition to governments.

Whatever the logical strength of Agnosticism as a philosophical position, as a moral and social creed, it must share the inherent weakness of every mere negation. In the realm of ideas, quite as much as in the realm of action, it is for ever true:—"he only destroys who can replace." The reaction in living memory against all forms of mere unbelief such as, from Voltaire to Richard Carlile, awakened the passions of our ancestors, shows no signs of abatement. The net result of the whole negative attack on the Gospel has been perhaps to deepen the moral hold of Christianity on society. Men without a trace of theological belief turn from the negative attack now with an instinctive sense of weariness and disgust. Just as even radicals and revolutionists look on the mania of pure anarchism as the worst hindrance to their own causes, so all who have substantive beliefs of their own, however unorthodox, find nothing but mischief in militant atheism. Auguste Comte found not only mischief, but folly, in accordance with his profound aphorism, "atheism is the most irrational form of metaphysics"; meaning that it propounds as

the solution of an insoluble enigma the hypothesis which of all others is the least capable of proof, the least simple, the least plausible, and the least useful. And although Comte, in common with the whole evolutionist school of thought, entirely accepts the Agnostic position as a matter of logic, he is as much convinced as any Ecumenical Council could be, that everything solid in the spiritual world must rest on beliefs, not negations; on knowledge, not on ignorance.

So clear is this now that Mr. Herbert Spencer, the most important leader of the pure Agnostic school, has developed the Unknowable, about which nothing can be conceived or understood, into an "Infinite and Eternal Energy, by which all things are created and sustained." As every one knows, he has tried to make out the Unknowable to be something positive and not negative, active and not indifferent. So much so that his most important follower, Mr. John Fiske, of America, has declared that this Energy of Mr. Spencer's "is certainly the power which is here recognised as God" (Fiske's *Idea of God*, p. xxv.). This, however, is a subject which there is no need to pursue farther, at any rate until some one has appeared on this side of the Atlantic to contend that Mr. Spencer's idea of the Unknowable is certainly the power which is here recognised as God. I shall not farther argue this point. But this abortive paradox of an eminent thinker suffices to show how sterile a thing he recognises a bare Agnosticism to be.

What is the source of all religion? Religion means that combination of belief and veneration which man feels for the power which exercises a dominant influence over his whole life. It has an intellectual element and a moral element. It includes both faith and worship—something that can be believed and something that can be reverenced. These two are

fundamental ineradicable facts in human nature. And what is more they are the supreme and dominant facts, which will ultimately master or absorb all others in the long run. For this reason what men ultimately believe and venerate—their religion—is very rightly assumed to be the characteristic fact in every phase of civilisation. We talk of the Mahometan, the Buddhist, the Catholic, the Pagan world; of the years of the Hegira, of *Anno Domini*.

Our deepest and our widest thoughts, our earliest and our latest, about human nature, life, and the visible world, bring us always back to this:—"Here am I, and millions such as I am, surrounded, as it seems, in a huge universe of outward activity, distinct from it, but unable to exist an hour without it, able in many ways to act upon it, being acted upon by it in ways far greater and more constant. What is it? Is it well disposed to me, is it ill disposed? Is it disposed at all? Has it any will or any feeling at all? Is it the instrument of any being with will and feeling, and if so, of what being? What is that relation between Man and the World?"

Our hearts, like our brains, are ever stirring us with wonder, fear, love, admiration, and awe as we watch the forces around us, sometimes so cruel, so terrible, so deadly, sometimes so lovely, so beneficent, so serene. All we enjoy, and love, all we can produce, or look for, all we suffer, and fear: pain, death, bereavement, life, health, and protection from torture, all alike come to us through the visible forces of the earth, or of beings on the earth. Our entire existence, material, emotional, practical, depends on them. Do they seek to help us or do they seek our ill, or are they absolutely indifferent? The individual by himself is as absolutely powerless in their presence as the minutest winged thing before the summer breeze

which may gather into a tornado. But man in his helplessness and his blind terror or keen hope turns ever to the reason, and those who seem to reason best, saying—"Tell us something about this World in its relation to Man: tell us something of the living Spirit which is within it, or above it, or behind it: or if there be no such Spirit, tell us something about the workings of this world and how to get the good from it and avoid the evil."

There is, however, much more than the World. There is Mankind, the most powerful, the most numerous, the most noble, the most universal living force visible upon the planet, through whom and in whom alone real life is possible for an individual. The individual man, when we think out the real meaning of civilised life, is just as completely dependent on mankind for everything he has, or does, or knows, or hopes for, as the infant is dependent on its parent or nurse for every hour of existence. Withdraw them and it perishes in a day. Withdraw from the mightiest intellect or the most potent character the co-operation of men past and present, and it sinks to the level of the fox or the tiger; and being neither so fleet nor so strong, would perish in less than a week. At every turn of human life, in activity, in thought, in emotion, there are always three powers perpetually in contact—the living soul which is thinking, acting, or feeling; the mass of the world outside man, touching him at every point; and between these two the sum of mankind past, present, and to come, through which alone he lives and acts. Whether the universe be itself living and conscious (Pantheism), whether it be self-existent and purely material (Atheism), or whether it be created and directed by a Supreme mind (Theism)—all this is a matter of religious and philosophical speculation. But in any case there are

always at least three elements—the man, mankind, and the world.

The most profound thought, like the experience of every day, always comes back to this, for it is a matter of morality and of conduct quite as much as of intellect and sympathy. Morality, the very possibility of morality, depends on this: that a man feels the pressure over him of conditions. There can be no true duty without a sense of the limits, possibilities, and aim of human life. Life is an endless caprice, where there are no definite lines of duty, recognised as set by the order of things, and a possible end which effort can reach. And so the bare knowledge of the laws of nature, with no supreme conception of what nature means, such as can fill the imagination, with no dominant idea whereon the sympathy and the reverence can expand itself, is mere dust and ashes, wholly incompetent to sustain conduct or to give peace. The Agnostic is willing to trust to science as an adequate answer to the intellect, to ethics as a sufficient basis for conduct. He might as well trust in the rule of three and the maxims in a copybook to deal with the storms and trials of life.

All that has been said by preachers and prophets from Moses and Isaiah down to Keble and Cardinal Newman as to the importance of religion to life, as to the paramount necessity of a central object of reverence, devotion, and faith, is not by one word in excess of the truth. On the contrary, it is still lamentably short of the truth, for it has been based by all theological preachers on a very narrow and imperfect conception of religion. Not one word of all this has ever been shaken by the infidel or Agnostic schools. It is true that they have not only shaken to their foundations, but in our opinion finally annihilated, the particular type of religion which theology

presents, the actual doctrines, the assertion of supposed historic fact, the gratuitous assumptions which theological religion teaches under a thousand contradictory forms. But criticism has never shaken, nay, has never even addressed itself to weaken, the dominant place of religion in life. For some two centuries criticism has exhausted itself in battering down the doctrines and methods of the current religion. But not a rational argument has ever been put forward to show that religion of some kind is less necessary than before, less inevitable, less dominant. Agnosticism says to the Churches: "I decline to believe in your religion." But the necessity for some religion remains just as it did before. And until Agnosticism has told us what religion we are to believe, or why religion is henceforth superfluous, it will remain the private opinion of isolated and cultivated minds in more or less comfortable surroundings.

This explains the mysterious fact that, in spite of the hailstorm of destructive criticism which is incessantly poured on every bastion, fort, and outwork of the churches, they still continue to reply to the fire of the enemy, and are still full of enthusiastic defenders. "He only destroys who can replace." And the Agnostic position is *ex hypothesi* a pure negation. The profound instinct of all healthy spirits recognises that a state of no-religion, of deliberate acquiescence in negation, of non-interest on principle in these dominant questions, is weak, unworthy, even immoral. It is in vain that the man of science and the man of affairs ask to be left alone, to do their own work in their own way, to leave these ultimate problems to those whom they concern, or to those who care for them. The instinct of all good men and women feels that a man without a genuine religion—a man to whom the relation of Man to the World, Man to his fellow

Men, is a mere academic question, a question to be put aside—is a source of danger and corruption to his neighbours and the society in which he lives; that selfishness, caprice, anti-social self-assertion, or equally anti-social indolence are his sure destiny, and his besetting weakness. The appeals and reproaches of the older religious creeds as to the folly and danger of stifling the eternal religious instincts, are as true and as powerful now as ever, though every single dogma of religion were shivered to dust.

It would be idle indeed to attempt to repeat in the feeble tone of a far-away echo, the arguments, the appeals, the yearning cry of the great religious minds for thousands of years as to the hollowness of life, the feebleness of man, without an object of awe and love. The sayings of an army of preachers crowd upon the memory as we think upon this, from Job, David, Solomon, and the prophets. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." And so on, through the prophets to the words of the Gospel and of Paul, of Augustine's vision of the City that cannot be destroyed, and down to Gregory, and Bernard, A Kempis and Bunyan, Bossuet and Taylor, Wesley and De Maistre, from countless voices, Jewish, Christian, Mussalman, Confucian, and Buddhist, Protestant, and Catholic, and Deist. However much they differ in the form, they all agree in this—the supreme importance of religion to man. Not a word of all this has ever been shaken: not a word of it has even been impugned. All that Agnosticism has done is to assert that Theology has not solved the religious problem. It has not offered a shadow of a suggestion as to what the solution is, nor has it cast a doubt on the urgency of the problem itself.

Agnosticism is consequently a mere step, an indispensable step, in the evolution of religion, though, by its very nature, a step on which it is impossible to rest. Intellectually it is quite as impossible to remain an agnostic as politically it would be to remain an anarchist. And for precisely the same reason. Society is such that only the most vapid and uneasy spirit can permanently acquiesce in the negation of all government. And society is likewise such that only a dry mechanical soul can permanently rest in the negation of all religion. A thousand commonplaces have shown that unless the first place in the imagination and the heart be duly filled, the mind and character are perpetually prone to improvise worthless ideals of love and reverence, under the force of which mind and character are liable to be violently carried away.

The orthodox and the Agnostic view of religion are not at all the true antithesis one of the other. The only true antithesis to a religion of figments is a religion of realities, not a denial of the figments. The Agnostic reply to the theologians is but half a reply, and a reply to the least important half. Orthodox theology asserts, first, the paramount need for religion, and next it asserts that this need is met by a particular creed and a specific object of worship. To the first of these assertions Agnosticism has no reply at all; to the second it replies "not proven." The question is a double one, and no single answer can at all cover the ground. It is quite possible that the orthodox view might be partly right and partly wrong, and the Agnostic view may be partly right and partly a mere blank. And this is just what has happened. The theologian is on ground unshaken whilst he contends that true religion is the sole guide of human life. The Agnostic is on ground as firm when he contends that theology concerns itself with a world where

knowledge is impossible to man. But the Agnostic has yet to carry the argument to a world where knowledge is possible to man.

The positivist point of view thus stands midway between theology and Agnosticism, recognising the strength of each and offering to both a *modus vivendi*, a basis of conciliation. It not only earnestly maintains all that theologians have ever urged as to the paramount place of religion, as to the universal part of religion in every phase of life, as to its power to transfigure the individual man and human society, large or small, but it vastly extends the scope of religion beyond the wildest vision of theology. On the other hand, it adopts without reserve the whole of the Agnostic logic as against the theological creeds, very greatly reinforcing it by making this Agnostic logic the outcome of a complete philosophy of science, and an organised scheme of morality and society. No Agnostic reasoner can more inexorably insist on eliminating from thought and life whatever philosophy and science reject as "not proven." No theologian can more passionately insist on the wilderness that is left in the heart of the man and the life of society which is without the guidance of religion.

Strangely enough, it is this latter point which theology in our day most miserably neglects. It is so strictly absorbed in its own special creed, that it abandons the defence of the infinitely greater cause, the meaning of religion, the relation of religion to life, conduct, happiness, and civilisation. All this is totally distinct from any particular creed, and may stand untouched by the downfall of a dozen creeds. So completely have theologians identified this eternal truth with their own formularies, that the Agnostic is allowed to suppose that when the formularies are disposed of the religious problem is at an end. And

the result of it is, that the cause of religion as an institution is to-day seriously jeopardised by theologians, who are far more concerned about particular Books and sectarian dogmas than about the central principle of human life.

It is therefore quite natural, however much it may surprise some, that the first task of Auguste Comte was to show how religion was a force, deeper, wider, and more omnipresent than theology had ever described it ; what are the eternal bases of religion in the heart and in society ; and what are the indestructible elements of religion, and function of religion. It is not in the least a paradox, but a truth capable of easy proof, that no theologian in ancient or modern times, neither Paul nor Mahomet, neither Aquinas nor Bernard, neither Bossuet nor Calvin, neither Hooker nor Butler, have ever penetrated so profoundly into the elements, the function, and the range of religion in the abstract as does Auguste Comte. All this, his philosophical analysis of what religion can do for life and society, is entirely detached from any given religious creed, and it is quite as much applicable to Pagan, Mussalman, Catholic, or Calvinistic theology, as it is to the religion of the Fetichists, Buddhists, or Confucians. It is so because Comte was the first who exhaustively considered religion apart from any creed, on a social analysis of human nature and society, by the light of history, and social philosophy at once. When so viewed religion is found to have a meaning far more varied and certain than appears in the sacred writings of any confession, and to be capable of infinite applications to life, undreamt of yet by the most ecstatic mystics and the most ardent spirits of the Catholic or Protestant communions.

It is not, however, the purpose of this essay to put forward Comte's answer to Theology, but merely to

consider the Agnostic answer and the future of Agnosticism. The question of the place of religion as an element of human nature, as a force in human society, its origin, analysis, and functions, has never been considered at all from the Agnostic point of view. What eminent Agnostic has ever attempted to grapple with the problem, except by the unmeaning phrase of Mr. Spencer, that the business of religion is with the consciousness of a mystery that cannot be fathomed? This meagre formula about a very real and vast power is obviously only the flourish of a man who has nothing to say and who wishes to say something. Apart from this, what Agnostic has ever told us what religion is, what it ought to be, what part it plays in life and in civilisation? Agnosticism has not, in fact, carried out its own principles. Both Agnosticism and Atheism are still so completely under the glamour of the older Theology and its creeds, that they take it enough has been done for religion when some definite assertion has been formulated about the central theological dogmas, even though that definite assertion be a negation, as the Atheist contends, or a mere assertion of ignorance, as the Agnostic contends. But when these have been asserted, the whole question of religion still remains open as a factor in human existence. If the Agnostic and the Atheist would fairly face this problem from the solid ground of human history, social philosophy, and moral analysis, and would entirely put aside all further thought of smashing theology hip and thigh, they would come to see that everything yet remains to be said and done in the matter of religion, assuming their specific denials to be perfectly logical and finally proved.

In other words, Agnosticism as a religious philosophy *per se*, rests on an almost total ignoring of history and social evolution. History and social evolution force

all competent minds which grasp them to frame some positive type of religion, and to recognise the indestructible tie between religion and civilisation. A strong mind, really saturated with the historical sense, turns from Agnosticism and Atheism, with the same weariness and pity with which it turns from the Law of Nature and the Rights of Man. They are all as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. History and a theory of social evolution based on history of social statics, compels us to think upon the past of religion, the need for religion, and the future of religion.

Agnosticism is thus found to be simply the temporary halting-place of those scientific men who have not yet carried their scientific habits of mind into the history of humanity as a whole. It marks indeed the physicists, and the thinkers about physics, using physics in the widest sense as the study of Nature rather than of Man. It would be difficult to name a single known Agnostic who has given to history anything like the amount of thought and study which he brings to his knowledge of the physical world. The Darwins, the Huxleys, the Tyndalls, have been absorbed in other labours which have left them no opportunity to enter on the vast field of universal history. They would, of course, admit that social science is quite as legitimate, quite as indispensable to the human intellect, as is natural science; though they recognise its present condition as far less advanced and far more obscure. But the field of natural science is itself so gigantic that they may very fairly claim to limit their labours to that. In so doing, and missing in social science and in historical evolution the precision of proof which they justly seek for in physical studies, they are somewhat inclined to overrate the proportion which natural science bears to the whole field of knowledge and to forget that physical laws are

only a part, and the smaller part, of science in the sum.

Nothing is more common than to hear an eminent savant say—"so far as I understand anything of science," meaning by science our knowledge of nature exclusively, when perhaps he has given as little attention to social science, to history, and social evolution as the first man he meets in the street. As to the great discoverers in the physical realm, from the Darwins, the Huxleys, the Tyndalls, the Lyells, the Hookers, it would be preposterous to expect them to withdraw precious hours from their special pursuits; as Aristotle says, it would be ridiculous to ask a geometrician to reason persuasively, or to ask an orator to prove his points by geometry. Mr. Spencer, on the other hand, is not a specialist observer, but a philosopher, and no English philosopher before him has ever so forcibly insisted on the supreme place held in the intellectual synthesis by social science. This, therefore, is all the more a disappointment to those who most admire his genius and most carefully study the development of his "Synthetic Philosophy," that he has not been able to turn his extraordinary powers of co-ordinating ideas to the systematic study of universal history. It is difficult, indeed, to recall a passage in which he has contributed to this grand task of the future a single reflection that does justice to his eminent position. Yet, without a systematic conception of history, a synthetic philosophy of human nature is as utterly futile as a synthetic philosophy of physical nature would be without biology.

We may now form some general forecast of the future course of Agnosticism. Agnosticism is a stage in the evolution of religion, an entirely negative stage, the point reached by physicists, a purely mental conclusion with no relation to things social at all. It is a

stage as impossible for a social philosophy to rest in as it is for a statesman to proclaim his policy to be "no law" and "no government." But if Agnosticism cannot rest as it is, there is not the slightest reason to suppose that it can go back. Agnosticism represents the general conclusion of minds profoundly imbued with the laws of physical nature, minds which find the sum of the physical laws to be incompatible with the central dogmas of theology. And since the physical laws rest on an enormous mass of experimental demonstration, and the dogmas of theology upon the unsupported asseverations of theologians, the Agnostic, as at present advised, holds by the former, and, without denying the latter, treats them as "not proven." But the laws of physical nature show no signs of becoming less definite, less consistent, or less popular as time goes on. Everything combines to show that natural knowledge is growing wider, more consolidated, more dominant year by year; that the reign of law becomes more truly universal, more indefeasible, more familiar to all, just as the reign of supernatural hypotheses retreats into regions where the light of science fails to penetrate.

Whatever, therefore, has fostered the Agnostic habit of mind in the past seems destined to extend it enormously in the future. And, when the entire public are completely trained in a sense of physical law, the Agnostic habit of mind must become the mental state, not of isolated students and thinkers, but of the general body which forms public opinion. There is no weak spot about the Agnostic position *per se*, no sign of doubt or rift in its armour, as a logical instrument. All that is objected to is, that it is simply one syllogism in a very long and complex process of reasoning, not that the syllogism itself has any vestige of error. The result is that the Agnostic logic shows every sign not of failure, but of ultimately

becoming an axiom of ordinary thought, almost a truism or a commonplace, as minds are more commonly imbued with the sense of physical law. But to accept the Agnostic logic is not to be an Agnostic, any more than to accept the protest against the Papal infallibility or the Council of Trent is to be a Protestant. Hence, the more universal becomes the adoption of the Agnostic position, the more rare will Agnostics pure and simple become, and the less will Agnosticism be looked on as a creed. When Agnostic logic is simply one of the canons of thought, Agnosticism, as a distinctive faith, will have spontaneously disappeared.

As social science and the laws of social evolution more and more engross the higher minds, and become the true centre of public interest, Agnosticism, the mere negation of the physicists, will have left the ground clear for the rise of a definite belief. That belief, of course, like everything destined to have a practical influence over men, must be positive, not negative. It must also be scientific, not traditional, or fictitious. And it must further be human, in the sense of being sympathetic and congener to man, not materialist and homogeneous with the physical world. Its main basis obviously must be social science, the larger, more noble, and dominant part of science in the sum. And its main instrument and guide will be the history of human evolution, which is to physical evolution all that man himself is to the animal series. To collect these suggestions in one, what we have is this. Agnosticism must be absorbed in a religious belief, for which it will have cleared the ground. That belief will necessarily have these characters. It will be at once *positive*, *scientific*, *human*, *sociologic*, and *evolutionary* or *historical*.

These five characteristics are all, it is plain, distinctive marks of the system for the future that Auguste

Comte propounded as the religion of Humanity. Indeed taken together they would be a very good description of it. But it is no part of my present purpose to pursue that topic further, or to insist on Positivism as the inevitable solution of the problem. The object to which this essay is confined is to examine what, upon the principles of Agnosticism itself, would be the natural development of Agnosticism in the future, when its protest against the assumptions of theology shall have done its work, when antagonism to theology has become an anachronism, and when the world has realised how completely religion has yet to create its future. There is no reason to think that thoughtful Agnostics would very much dispute the general line of this reasoning. Very many Agnostics already have recognised in a general way, and for a distant future, some kind of humanitarian ideal as the ultimate basis of the religious sentiment. And this has been done most definitely by those Agnostics who are the most interested in social science, and especially by those who have the keenest grasp on the laws of historical evolution. Every student of social philosophy, who combines a knowledge of physical laws with a dominant interest in history, is already a humanitarian in embryo, though he choose to maintain an attitude of mental suspense on the religious problem as a whole.

Further than this I have no wish now to carry the argument. I am not in this essay advocating Positivism, but am examining the future of Agnosticism. Agnosticism, indeed, has no future, unless it will carry out its scientific principles to their legitimate conclusion. It offers no *locus standi* by itself. As Charles Darwin so pathetically tells us in his diary, it affords no permanent consolation to the mind,

and is continually melting away under the stress of powerful sympathies. It destroys but it does not replace.

That which alone can take the place of the mighty mysteries and the grand moral drama created by the imagination of the prophets and priests of old is the final scheme of moral and social life which social science shall finally elaborate for man, which shall be the fruit of science as a whole, with physical science for its foundation and social science for its main gospel, a scheme which shall be entirely positive and entirely human ; and its main characteristic will be, that it explains the history of humanity as a whole and points to the future of humanity as the inevitable sequel of its history. In whatever form such a view of religion may approve itself to the ages to come, it will only be Agnostic in the sense that it is ready with the Agnostic answer to all idle and irrelevant questions.

XVII

MR. HUXLEY'S CONTROVERSIES

THE publication by Mr. Huxley in one handsome volume of the controversial essays he has given to the world within seven years[1] will delight all admirers of his refreshing logic, and it affords to students of philosophy a satisfactory account of Scientific Agnosticism, a most interesting type of thought. As one who very deeply shares in that form of thought (though regarding the name Agnostic to be inadequate as a label), I have looked with expectation for this striking volume. With nine-tenths of its conclusions I am myself in sympathy, though I think there is more to be said on the same subject, and perhaps in another tone. But, so far as it goes, it could not be better said, and it will carry ultimate conviction to many minds which were only irritated or alarmed by Mr. Huxley's isolated raids on the orthodox camp.

There are passages in the volume in which I am myself most strangely misrepresented ; and as to this I shall ask and obtain from Mr. Huxley (when he hears me) handsome amends. But as an old comrade-in-arms of his for some thirty years, I am far more interested in the success of his own agnostic position,

[1] *Essays upon Some Controverted Questions.* By Thomas H. Huxley, F.R.S. Macmillan and Co., 1892. 8vo, 625 pp.

so far as it deals with theology and metaphysics on the negative side. Let it not be supposed that, because he does me some injustice personally, I fail to rejoice over the great service he renders to rational thought. Some years ago, when my old friend Sir J. Fitzjames Stephen and I had a round or two (with regulation gloves), he said to me, in his jolly way, "I meant to have had another turn with you, but I called to mind the old proverb—*Dog should not bite dog.*" If Mr. Huxley sometimes forgets this first duty of the well-trained collie, I do not forget it. And so far from wishing to bite him, I shall show him presently that the substantial agreement between us is far larger than he imagines. Indeed, on the purely intellectual ground, the agreement, so far as he goes, is complete; nay more, I would claim him as in a fair way to become —I will not say a Positivist, for he hates that and all such names—but I will say a colleague with me and my friends in the work of popular scientific teaching to which we have long devoted ourselves.

As evidence of this, we may cite the two elaborate and suggestive essays, the "Prologue," and the "Evolution of Theology," essays which together occupy more than a fifth of the whole volume, and which are not controversial. In the latter essay there are some most striking studies in the history of theology, treated simply as a "natural product of the operations of the human mind." All this is excellently worked out in the sense of the fundamental positive law of the passage of human conceptions from the theological into the positive stage, and is very much in the sense of those speculations on the rise of the theological spirit to which Comte first gave a philosophical basis. The whole of the essay on the "Evolution of Theology" is full of keen logic and ingenious learning; and it happens to interest me

the more that it has a curious analogy to a course of *Lectures on the Bible*, given by Dr. Bridges, at Newton Hall, and ultimately published (in 1885). The two series of Mr. Huxley and Dr. Bridges entirely coincide —in the plea for the high place given to the Hebrew literature called the "Bible," along with resolute treatment of it as the equal of other bibles and books; in the critical analysis of the Mosaic and Samuelistic chronicles; in the explanation of the Jahveh and Elohistic cults; in the lessons drawn from the *Book of the Dead*, and other Egyptian sacred writings. The "Evolution of Theology" is a sterling piece of modern historical philosophy, enriched by Mr. Huxley's personal experience when he was serving at sea amongst savage islanders. And he may be surprised to learn that, some time before his own pieces were published, our colleague, Dr. Bridges, had been teaching at Newton Hall, and had printed a volume of lectures containing almost precisely the same argument directed to the same end, that end being to show that theology is an evolutionary phase of the human mind, which fades away before positive science.

The "Prologue," a piece of fifty-three pages, which has not been previously printed, is one of the very best essays in the volume which explains the origin and purpose of the rest. There is an eloquent and wise passage (pp. 36-37) which puts in a nutshell the fundamental idea of Positivism, that, whilst it is an impertinent sophism to deny the possible existence in the universe of Omniscience and Omnipotence, yet, until human life is longer, and our duties here are less pressing, mankind had better occupy itself with those things of which it has real demonstrative knowledge. That is all we ask; and it is the centre of Mr. Huxley's position, as it is of ours. And he proceeds to lay down twelve cardinal propositions as axioms of all

future philosophical and theological speculations. These axioms form together a basis for the doctrine of evolution, and they are framed in a thoroughly cautious and comprehensive spirit. We, for our parts, hail them as essential truths; for, as Dr. Bridges well says in the *Lectures* I have just quoted (p. 18)—"The whole of Comte's philosophical structure is based on the conception of evolution."

The two eager evolutionists, who show us in twenty pages how the entire animal world was evolved from a primordial cell, may be rebuked by seeing the caution of Mr. Huxley, who says (in axiom 8), "I think it a conclusion, fully justified by analogy, that, sooner or later, we shall discover the remains of our less specialised primitive ancestors in the strata which have girdled the less specialised equine and canine quadrupeds." And, again, he says (axiom 2), "It is a probable conclusion that, if we could follow living beings back to their earliest states, we should find them to present forms similar to those of the individual germ, or, what comes to the same thing, of those lowest known organisms which stand upon the boundary line between plants and animals. At present, our knowledge of the ancient living world stops very far short of this point." And he speaks with the same caution in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. viii. How different is the scientific reserve of this from the wild guesswork of some who call themselves disciples of Darwin and Haeckel!

It is a minor question, on which we need not enlarge, whether Mr. Huxley does not somewhat overestimate the probability of our one day having full demonstration of the actual evolution of species, on any scale adequate to make it the general law of our planetary life. No doubt Comte, whose scientific knowledge was that of sixty years ago, and who

knew the theory only in the form presented by Lamarck, underestimated the probability of our obtaining any evidence about the mutability and origin of species. We have often at Newton Hall shown that Comte's language was far too absolute on this and many such points. But this granted, and it being understood on all hands that, for purposes of human history, species are practically permanent, the probabilities as to the origin of species are matters of degree only, which do not affect the principle of evolution. All that I am now concerned with is this, that no Agnostic, no Darwinian, no Huxleian, no physicist of any school, can hold on to the doctrine of Evolution as the key to the changes, not only of Nature, but of Man, more stoutly than does the Positivist.

As to this point, it may serve to make our position clearer if I remind Mr. Huxley that, as early as the year 1860, I hailed C. Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) as "the latest triumph of science"; and from that day to this I have treated the absolute permanence of species as an untenable dogma. It makes no difference to me that Comte, with scientific data twenty or thirty years older, and absorbed as he was in the human rather than the cosmic history of our planet, considered the dogma (say in the period 1840-45) to be unshaken. But my friends and myself speaking at Newton Hall have on many occasions shown what has been done in science since then; and I find that, lecturing in 1888, I said for myself that I was not aware of any scientific bar to the hypothesis that all organic forms (including men) may have been evolved out of some perfectly simple type or types—however little able we are at present to trace either the steps or the conditions of the process. So I can see nothing that need divide us on that point.

I shall not touch on the Biblical and ecclesiastical polemics with which this volume is so largely occupied. The crushing and braying in a mortar of Biblical geology, Mosaic cosmogony, Gospel miracles, mediæval superstition, clerical arrogance, casuistical unveracity, and orthodox muddledom, is most diverting and highly instructive. Some may think that the untying of this knot was hardly worth the intervention of Mr. Huxley's superior powers. And some may doubt if it were worth while to make mincemeat of such poor old idols. But perhaps the work has still to be done. The hold upon the public mind of venerable superstitions must be shaken. And the fact that bishops, statesmen, Church congresses, eminent Catholics, principals and other dignitaries, should stake the future of Christianity upon some cosmical myth or the illegality of a herd of swine, is conclusive proof that these incredible delusions still have to be pricked. The pricking of these mythic bubbles and illicit swine is a very amusing business. And many readers will find it as pleasant a pastime as it evidently was to Mr. Huxley.

But to me and my friends the central interest of Mr. Huxley's book lies in his explanation of what he means by Agnosticism. The account he gives of it is clear, complete, and from a philosophical point of view, quite satisfactory. He has every right to put his own meaning on the phrase, since he invented it himself for his own position (p. 356). And that position is, the habit of mind to profess belief in such conclusions only as are demonstrable by adequate evidence. So far this is simply the scientific habit of mind. But Mr. Huxley goes on and explains that he formed and used the term Agnostic to describe his own attitude of mind with regard to such questions as the origin of the universe, Providence, the nature and

immortality of the soul, and the like. Upon these high questions, on which theologies and metaphysics dogmatise so much, the Agnostic makes no profession, because he has no evidence. He can find nothing of a scientific kind to justify a conclusion. He neither asserts nor denies; he simply suspends his judgment; *he does not know*; and therefore he says nothing.

This is undoubtedly the attitude of true philosophy and real science; but it is also the attitude of honesty, morality, and spiritual truthfulness. It is hardly needful to say that it is the attitude uniformly insisted on by myself and my colleagues, for it is simply one side of the medal of Positivism itself. Positivism to me and to the rest of us simply means, as logic, the habit of resting on those conclusions which are demonstrable by adequate evidence. Of course, this involves the refusal to profess any conclusion which is not so demonstrable. And thus Agnosticism, in Mr. Huxley's sense, is merely the converse or complement of scientific Positivism in Comte's sense. Both amount to the same thing; the difference is simply in the side from which we view it. The one teacher says: "Believe that which you can scientifically prove." The other says: "Do not profess to believe what you cannot so prove." The difference in these two is simply one of tone, manner, or form. So that, as a simple matter of logic, I can claim to be an Agnostic as complete as Mr. Huxley, and indeed for upwards of forty years and long before the term was invented.

Why then do I not accept the name of Agnostic myself? For precisely the same reason that Mr. Huxley does not accept the name of "Infidel." I have no particular objection to the name, except that it is inadequate as a description; nor have I the least hesitation in saying that, on the great theological problems, the Agnostic attitude is that which I adopt.

I protest against the errors of Rome, but I greatly object to be called a Protestant. I dislike all spiritualistic nonsense; but I object to be known as an Anti-Spiritualist. I cannot profess any form of theology; but I refuse to be called an Atheist. If I am to bear a label, I prefer it to connote something which I do believe rather than something which I do not believe —something about which I feel sure rather than something about which I have no opinion. When Mr. Huxley is called "Infidel," he very properly asks —"Disbeliever in what?" So when we are asked to call ourselves "Agnostic," we may fairly ask—"As not knowing what?" On the whole, it is far better to describe ourselves positively rather than negatively. When Mr. Huxley speaks with his clerical antagonists in the gate, he says: "I do not know anything certain about these high matters, and so I do not profess any belief." When we Positivists are in the same place, we say: "We profess belief in a creed which we can fairly prove." The difference is not great; but I much prefer the Positive to the Agnostic formula.

Mr. Huxley is very careful to explain that Agnosticism is not a creed; that Agnostics have no creed, and by the nature of the case, cannot have any, for Agnosticism is a method, the rigorous application of a single principle. It is not, he says, a distinctive faith; it has not the least pretension to be a religious philosophy. And, controverting an article of mine, he banters me, with some humour, for having pointed out how very little Agnosticism has to offer either as a distinctive creed, or as a religious philosophy, or even as a stage in the evolution of religion. I am afraid that I did suppose Agnosticism to be generally adopted as the symbol, or label, of a certain religious philosophy, or at least as the equivalent of a religious

philosophy; that it amounted to a substitute for certain theological dogmas, and formed a sort of rough solution of the theological problem.

I still believe that this is the meaning of prominent Agnostics, as it apparently was that of C. Darwin in his autobiography. But I am very happy to withdraw any such suggestion in the case of Mr. Huxley. Let me point out that in treating of Agnosticism, I did not specifically deal with Mr. Huxley. He has rather an odd controversial trick of crying out too often, "That's me!" If a preacher happens to say, "These men of science say so and so," Mr. Huxley starts up and cries, "No, I did not!" If the preacher says, "Evolution asks us to believe this or that," Mr. Huxley interrupts him with the remark, "I don't ask you to believe anything!" However, I very willingly agree that, in Mr. Huxley's own view, Agnosticism is not a creed, not a distinctive faith, not a religious philosophy, not a stage in the evolution of religion. And I beg to tender him my handsome apologies for having suggested something about Agnosticism which it seems does not apply to Agnosticism as understood by Mr. Huxley; and as we are both agreed that such a claim, if made by Agnostics, would be a very poor claim, there remains no more to be said.

Agnosticism is not a patent medicine on which Mr. Huxley has a royalty; but it suits me perfectly to adopt his version. But then I would point out what a limited field this Huxleian Agnosticism covers; how essentially negative, jejune, and provisional a resting-place it is in the wide field covered by the eternal problems of religion, philosophy, morality, and psychology. Preachers, moralists, philosophers, poets, educators, men, women and children, parents and kinsfolk, those who are trying to comfort, those who are seeking to amend, those who mourn, and those

who fear—all around us are ever crying out: What is the relation of Man to the Author of the world? Is there, or is there not a moral Providence on earth? Is there a supreme power here; is it good, is it wise, is it loving, or is it indifferent to man and alien to man? Have I an immortal soul and what becomes of it when I die? Does right conduct on earth concern any Unseen Power at all: will our good or bad done in the flesh be counted to any of us beyond the earthly life? These questions are being asked in public and in secret, hour by hour, by all our fellow-beings, often with tears and groans and agonies of hope, fear, and yearning. And the one answer of the Agnostic is, "I have no evidence on the subject, and I believe nothing of which I have no evidence."

A very sensible answer so far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. A good resting-place for an inquirer, for one who is learning, forming his opinion, and gathering knowledge. But it is not wide enough for a teacher in Israel, for a leader of men and the founder of a school of thought, for the vanquisher of bishops, cardinals, principals, and all kinds of theologians, lay and clerical. A man who sweeps away with such trenchant logic and varied learning so many ecclesiastics and their formularies, so many theological dogmas, who cuts down so much philosophical common form, so many popular traditions and prejudices very dear to millions, and with so rich and pathetic a history,—such a man is expected to have something positive to supply as well as something negative to destroy. A review in a philosophical organ wound up its notice of this book with the saying that, "Agnosticism is an exhausted receiver." And when this victorious analysis has cut down churches, creeds, articles, sacred books, and hopes of heaven, men and women ask for something more than "an exhausted receiver."

Let me make my meaning quite clear. Of course on these matters we give the same answer, that we know nothing; and if Mr. Huxley has nothing more to say than that he knows nothing, he is quite right to say no more. Indeed, he would be most blameworthy if he allowed it to be supposed that he would or could say more. But then he is taking up a very limited and subordinate ground in this mighty debate, a ground which, as I told him before, he cannot expect to hold long. Agnosticism, he says, has no creed, no philosophy of religion, has nothing to do with religion more than with painting. But the great issue now is: What is to be our creed? What is the philosophy of religion? What is religion to be? That is the issue faced by all Mr. Huxley's opponents, by bishops, cardinals, statesmen, dignitaries, and in my humble way by myself. And it is the issue on which guidance is asked by millions and millions, and on which guidance will continue to be asked for generations to come. And Mr. Huxley's answer to all is simply, "Go to, I am an Agnostic: I tell you I know nothing!" That may satisfy, for a season, some learned men, occupied in special research, but it cannot satisfy the body of mankind.

Mr. Huxley has a good deal of his harmless fun about my "tripod" and the "prophetical business" and so forth. I can assure him, it needs very humble prophetical gifts to see that this will not do. So I tell him again, as I told him before, that Agnosticism is a stage, a negative stage, in the evolution of religion —a sound, essential, inevitable stage, just as was the agnosticism of Descartes and of Bacon, when they swept away the cobwebs of scholastic and Aristotelian metaphysics, before they reached the *tabula rasa* for their own constructions. But they did not stop at the *tabula rasa*. And the world will never rest at a

tabula rasa or any negation, or profession of *ignorance*. The world wants something positive; profession of knowledge; a creed if you like, a religion, a theory and a practice of religion. It needs very little familiarity with history, and social institutions, and the spiritual and moral problems of society, to be profoundly convinced that these eternal problems can never be put off until they are satisfactorily answered, till the moral and spiritual demands of the human soul receive intelligible assurance, until the great teachers, the moral guides, the spiritual censors of society can provide us with certain and searching truths in which we can trust with complete enthusiasm, until they cease to put us off with blank professions of ignorance.

It was all very well for Mr. Darwin to say quietly that he thought he was on these matters an Agnostic. But Charles Darwin did not deal with the philosophy of religion, nor engage in trenchant theological and biblical controversies. He never set his back against the rock like Roderick Dhu, and with his single claymore and target met a score of enemies—premiers, dukes, cardinals, bishops, preachers, doctors, and lay critics of all churches and every school. To have done this implies the obligation of finding some final solution to problems of which the doughty chief has destroyed so many accepted answers. Is there not some consciousness of this when Mr. Huxley accepts and uses the term Agnosticism? To call oneself an Agnostic may be reasonable enough when challenged on some specific point. If asked to translate a passage of Genesis from the original, not having Mr. Huxley's knowledge of the Semitic languages, I should admit myself to be an agnostic as to Hebrew. But "Agnosticism"—with a big A—implies something much more. It suggests a scheme of belief on a set of fundamental dogmas of human life;

and so Mr. Huxley seems to admit when he says (p. 450) that the application of it results in the denial or suspension of judgment on sundry great ecclesiastical propositions. It is so taken in popular language. And, therefore, it does seem inconsistent to say that Agnosticism is not a creed, and has no more to do with religion than it has with painting, when we find the author of the term admitting that it results in the denial of, or at least suspension of, judgment concerning all the really crucial problems of religion and of religious philosophy.

Here is a portly octavo volume of 625 pages, almost the whole of which is occupied with the Agnostic view concerning the Scriptures, Church doctrines, miracles, and theology. Throughout it we cannot find any distinct and positive assurance as to a moral Providence, as to the will or nature of any supreme Power or Force, as to the state of man or any part of man after death, as to the nature of sin, or as to any punishment or reward beyond those of this life. Yet these are the grand and perennial questions which the thinking world to-day is asking, and which Mr. Huxley's clerical antagonists profess to answer. Now I should like to ask him a few questions thereon myself, and I challenge him to give me a straightforward answer with as little chaff about "tripods" and "pontiffs" as he can command.

1. Has Mr. Huxley himself any mental bias, *pro* or *con*, with reference, let us say, to Creation, Providence, Immortality, and Future Punishment?

2. Does he think it of no consequence to human life or to society, whether people have any formed opinion on these problems or not? Are the questions themselves idle and trivial from the point of view of morality and civilisation?

3. Does he think that mankind will cease to ask

these questions, simply by being told that Mr. Huxley and other men of science can give no answer?

It will not do for him to reply, "I am merely a 'man of science' [by which, by the way, he seems always to mean a physicist]; and I am not to be questioned about my personal beliefs." On the contrary, he is a teacher in Israel, the founder, as he claims, of "Agnosticism," with a big A; the Thomas Aquinas of modern Agnosticism; the Charles Martel of bishops, priests, and deacons; the *Athanasius contra mundum ecclesiasticum.* Before his mighty battle-axe down go churches, creeds, articles, bibles, and the venerable superstitions of the people. And they cry aloud with one accord to him, "What, then, do you believe about these things; what are we to believe?" His answer is, "Nothing, nothing!" That is to say, Mr. Huxley has for many years past devoted much of his great powers to instruct the public on vital problems which, above all others, concern the happiness and virtue of mankind and the progress of society, without having any conclusion to offer himself, and without making known even the bias of his own mind. It needs neither a prophet nor a conjurer to assure us of this: first, that so purely negative a proceeding can have but a very partial success anywhere; and secondly, that in the long run the world will turn to those who have conclusions. The future must lie with those who have the patience to work out something that they can know, and will turn aside from those whose religion is summed up in this—that they do not know.

No reader of mine, I hope, will fall into the trap of imagining that Positivists have no more to say on these questions than Agnostics, for that would be an entire misconception. In the first place, the essence of Positivism is:—Put your trust in that of which

you have scientific evidence; which is a different maxim from the converse. Beware of the superstitions for which you have no such evidence. It is a different thing from the moral, social, and philosophical point of view, though, logically, it is the converse of it; and it is a more soul-satisfying and restful maxim. The Positivist maxim includes and implies the Agnostic maxim. But the Agnostic maxim does not imply the Positivist; for sundry Agnostics have got so much into the habit of bewaring of all superstition that they put their trust in little evidence but that of their own senses. But more than this. The entire scheme of Positivist education, scientific, moral, and religious, is directed to increase the sense of the paramount importance of positive knowledge and human and mundane interests, which are vastly more than can fill all our possible hours of life. Up to this point, of course, the Agnostic may be willing also to go. But the Positivist offers a real and demonstrative answer to these questions in what is at once a scientific and also a religious scheme—(1) as to the relation of Man to the World; (2) as to a real and (relatively) supreme Power over his life; (3) as to a human and moral Providence, truly guiding the destinies of mankind and of each human being; (4) for a real and rational worship; and (5) as to a subjective life after death. All this I need not here enlarge upon, for after all I refer to it merely to guard against a possible *argumentum ad hominem*, and it does not affect one way or the other the Agnostic position. And for any further explanation of the Positivist view thereon, I will simply refer to my own published writings, and in particular to my former volume, *The Creed of a Layman*.

Now I shall not take up space in noticing sundry verbal fallacies in which Mr. Huxley seeks to entangle

me (pp. 364-377, etc.). Here all his charming humour breaks out; and, as I love a jest myself, I do not grudge him any fun that he can derive from chaffing me about pontiffs, Comtists, Church of Comte, popedoms, adoring idols, and the like. It is all merely his ignorance of all that I have been doing and saying. And no doubt he will be surprised to learn that no one has repudiated the name of Comtist, or the pontifical business, or adoring anything more than I have done myself at Newton Hall. It is not misrepresentation—such a stickler for veracity could not misrepresent—but pure ignorance; regrettable, singular ignorance, and, as I shall presently show, not altogether excusable ignorance. As to the fallacies, I cannot find that I have made any. My phrases may not have been quite so exact as they ought to have been. But then I am not a master of language as Mr. Huxley is, and he should make allowances for us inarticulate bipeds, if our meaning is fairly clear.

I think he could have understood me if he had tried. He quarrels with me for speaking of Agnosticism as "a purely mental conclusion," and asks triumphantly, Are any conclusions not mental? Of course, I meant to say that Agnosticism was a logical process, and not a social creed—and it seems this is exactly what Mr. Huxley says it is. I said that Agnosticism was "the mere negation of the physicist." No! says Mr. Huxley; it also destroys superstitious ideas about Roman history and the Homeric poems. It is surely a novel idea that Wolf and Niebuhr were the founders of Agnosticism. The world is hardly prepared for such an extension of the term. But Agnosticism in Mr. Huxley's hands seems to include everything that is wise, just, true, beautiful, or good. I spoke of "Agnostic logic" becoming a "canon of thought," as I certainly think it will. But the phrase

has "bewildered" Mr. Huxley, who begs me to clear up this enigmatical sentence. Well, then, it means that the reasoning called *Agnostic* by him, and called *positive* by me (viz. of trusting only in scientific demonstration), will become a universal rule of thinking to everybody. I quite agree that it ought, and that it will; and I hold my sentence to be sound in thought and clear in expression. But enough; Mr. Huxley and I have both much better things to do than to engage in bouts of idle word-chopping.

A far more useful thing will be to show him how very much nearer together we are in substantial things than he supposes and represents us to be. The churchmen and dissenters have lately been meeting at Grindelwald, under the shadow of the Monk, the Giant, the Horn of Darkness, and the Peak of Horror, to vow eternal love and peace and to cement an alliance with a holy kiss. Dogmatism and Bibliolatry have kissed one another; and a beautiful Christian Eirenikon has been effected. Why cannot we Agnostics (for on the negative side we are all as good Agnostics as Mr. Huxley), why cannot we kiss and be friends? I can assure him that our underlying religious ideas are the same; we have the same ideals, the same hopes, and the same ends; and his fears about our ritualism, our popery, our Comtism, our idolatry, are figments without any foundation at all. I have hitherto been trying to show how negative, arid, and entirely uninspiring a thing Agnosticism must be, when regarded as covering the field of religious beliefs and hopes. Mr. Huxley replies to us that Agnosticism, as he understands it, is simply a logical process and does not pretend to cover the field of philosophy or religion. So be it! But in the present volume we may trace indications of some positive belief of his own on the religious problems. They are put in rather a guarded,

tentative, almost a shy manner, but still they are distinct enough. Now it may surprise him, but it is true, that these essential ideas of his about religion are practically those of myself and my friends. We put them in a somewhat more systematic way. Our evolution has reached a stage beyond Agnosticism. But (I say it as a bond of peace and union and not in any spirit of offence) Mr. Huxley is a rudimentary Positivist.

Of course he is more than a rudimentary Positivist on the scientific and philosophical field; but I mean that on the religious ground he is a rudimentary Positivist, inasmuch as he professes at bottom our own essential beliefs. His twelfth canon ("Prologue," p. 48) is this, "The highest conceivable form of human society is that in which the desire to do what is best for the whole, dominates and limits the action of every member of that society." That is simply what we mean by the Religion of Humanity: neither more nor less. And the canons 9, 10, 11, and 12 are simply propositions in the same sense. *If all this is pure Agnosticism, then surely Agnosticism is something more than a logical process, and it has more to do with religion than it has with painting.* He says (p. 366) that religion "ought to mean simply the reverence and love for the ethical ideal, and the desire to realise that ideal in life, which every man ought to feel." Well, that is exactly what I mean by religion. Worship of Humanity has to me no other sense or meaning. I mean no more than reverence and love for all that is good and great in the social organism. A page or two further on comes this remarkable passage (p. 371):—

That a man should determine to devote himself to the service of humanity—including intellectual and moral self-culture under that name; that this should be, in the proper sense of the word,

his religion—is not only an intelligible, but, I think, a laudable resolution. *And I am greatly disposed to believe that it is the only religion which will prove itself to be unassailably acceptable so long as the human race endures.*

But this is simply all we ask or profess. The service of humanity, including mental and moral self-culture, is the only religion which will permanently endure. So says Mr. Huxley the Agnostic—so say we all. This is precisely how we describe the religion of humanity—the Service of Man, as our colleague, J. Cotter Morison, well named it. We mean nothing further; we have no reserve, or *arrière pensée*. This is the belief and the resolution which we Positivists, in Newton Hall or in Paris, profess, explain, teach, and practise. Mr. Huxley poked some mild fun at me for expressing an opinion about the future of Agnosticism, and talked of my "tripod" and prophetic assumption. And here he mounts the tripod with a vengeance and prophesies as to the future of religion "so long as the human race endures." I have never gone so far as that. I simply say that the service of humanity will serve as the religion of many generations to come. Saul is indeed amongst the prophets! And when the "pontiff" of Agnosticism mounts his evolutionary tripod, it is to proclaim in prophetic strain that the Religion of Humanity will triumph, whilst the human race endures.

Mr. Huxley's characteristic modesty leads him to undervalue his own gifts of prophecy. When he introduces (in the "Prologue," p. 40) his own twelve canons or "body of established truths," as he calls them (and I think the propositions are all sensible and useful enough), he tells us "that *all future philosophical and theological speculations will have to accommodate themselves to some such*." Surely that is a little bold, though I say it as a partisan of his views myself.

Comte has been charged (and I am free to admit not without reason) with excessive confidence in his own predictions. But I doubt if there is anything in Comte's most astounding claims that quite comes up to the tremendous prophecy that *all future* philosophical and theological speculations will have to lie on the Procrustean bed of Mr. Huxley's twelve canons about primordial germs, the Mesozoic epoch, Quaternary man, the evolution of morality, and so forth. The twelve canons are good; but I bow my head in awe before such sublime confidence in their future.

We will hold in Newton Hall a special conclave, wherein I will abdicate and cede to him my prophetic tripod and my triple tiara.

No doubt he thinks that a gulf separates him from us; but that is his mistake. He does not know us, and he has run off with some ribbald jest he has read in a journal. After the passage I have just cited (from p. 371) comes this, "But when the Positivist asks me to worship Humanity—that is to say, to adore the generalised conception of men as they ever have been and probably ever will be—I must reply that I could just as soon bow down and worship the generalised conception of a wilderness of apes," and so forth. Well, no Positivist ever did ask anybody *to adore* anything or anybody, to bow down to anything or anybody, to worship any generalised conception of men. The whole idea is a hallucination, a piece of horseplay or caricature invented by ubiquitous press jesters, and swallowed as truth by the stern Agnosticism of Mr. Huxley.

And he talks about "deifying" men, about "divinity hedging no man," about no spark of "divinity" in an individual, the "god-like splendour" of humanity, the "vacant shrine" of Christ, etc., etc. All this is mere caricature. For years and years, so

far as I am concerned, I have publicly abjured and protested against the name of "Comtist," such phrases as "the religion," or "Church," or "doctrines" of Comte, any idea of "adoring" anything or anybody, anything about the divinity, or divine attributes, or ideal perfection of humanity or anything human, and, in particular, against the idea that we are expected to believe a thing because it is so said in Comte's books. I have said a thousand times that by "religion" I mean (as Mr. Huxley does) the service of humanity: by "humanity" the permanent and collective power of the human organism: by "positivism" the habit of trusting to scientific demonstration and the general good of the race: by "worship" the sense of gratitude, love, and reverence which men feel for their country, their family, their benefactors—somewhat higher in degree, but not differing in kind. All this nonsense about "adoring" Humanity is merely the sneer of some idle curate in the *Saturday Review*.

I will now take leave to prove this by citing chapter and verse; and I am forced to follow Mr. Huxley's example of troubling the reader with some autobiographic facts and extracts from my own published discourses. I cannot help it. Mr. Huxley constantly criticises me by name, cites pieces of mine, argues against them, and then holds me up to public ridicule as pontiff, prophet, general humbug, and counterpart of Joe Smith, the Mormon. When I wrote on Agnosticism I did not address Mr. Huxley; but in his essay with that title he names and he quotes me, and I believe I am the only Positivist whom he does name or quote throughout his present book. It is consequently my teaching, my words, and my writings which are attacked, and it is I who am supposed to behave in the grotesque way he describes.

It will not do for him to cite Comte, because, as I say, I am not bound by Comte's books, nor by his injunctions. Nor will it do to quote others whom he may choose to call "Comtists." He has charged me with doing and saying certain absurd things. And I shall now proceed to convince him, as he is an honourable and veracious man, that he therein unwittingly does me grievous wrong.

I am no "Comtist." I wholly repudiate the phrase, and regard it as an unfair nickname. And that because I and those who work with me refuse to be bound by Comte's writings as such, much as we value the principles they contain. For instance, in 1885, I was asked to prepare an address for the Positivists of New York, and these are some sentences extracted from that which I sent :—

Positivism means the acceptance, upon conviction, of positive truths, all, at any time, capable of demonstration. *Positivism* is a French word, meaning the habit of trusting to what has been and can be proved. To translate it freely, it means the scientific faith ; the habit of resting our lives and our beliefs on solid, provable certainties that we can understand and teach to others. Hence it excludes all blind trust in authority, and all cut-and dried formulas.

Now I ask Mr. Huxley if this "allocution" has "the Papal flavour" about it. Again, I wrote further on :—

We do not ask a convinced Positivist to accept all that may be found in Comte's writings. *That, we think, would be treason against* Positivism and scientific proof. It will be enough if a convinced Positivist intelligently accepts the great Positivist precepts, with all that they imply. In the moral and essential sphere, "Live for others," live in active employment of your social faculties and instincts. In the intellectual world, rest in "Order and Progress,"—that is, rest in demonstrative knowledge and in view of human improvement. In the political and social sphere, "Live without concealment," *i.e.* make your life a pattern to your neighbour, and seek to guide him through his reason and never to effect a good end by secrecy, fraud, or conspiracy.

Does Mr. Huxley object to this teaching, does he find nothing but Comtism and "eviscerated papistry" therein? Now let him note that this of mine was written before the earliest of those controversial essays of his; it was signed by me as President of the Positivist Committee of London, and it has been printed and sold at Newton Hall by our body, and has been scattered broadcast up and down the country.

Again, I was asked in 1889 to address the Positivists of Manchester. I said:—

> Our movement is very far from taking Comte's abstruse works in some fifteen volumes and treating them as a new revelation with a verbal inspiration and biblical authority. Nothing could be more contrary to the Positive spirit than to accept anything on the authority of any man, apart from scientific verification. As we cannot pretend to have scientific verification for all that may be read in these fifteen volumes (a large part of which I, myself, regard as mere illustrations of a theory), we are very careful to limit ourselves at present to that which we feel we can adopt on conviction; and that amounts, in my case, to a set of general leading ideas.

I said it was an impudent quackery to pretend that Positivism was a discovery of the nineteenth century; that, on the contrary, it was and had long been the practical faith of millions, and that it sought merely to systematise the inevitable tendency of human evolution. I went on to say:—

> We do not believe in Auguste Comte: we believe in the assurances of philosophy and science. We do not worship Positivism. We worship, or to use plain English, we submit ourselves reverently to Humanity. When science has established the real position of Humanity on earth, and has indicated the tendency of its progress and the conditions of its advance, we will cheerfully adopt them. In the meantime our Positivism teaches us (in the intellectual sphere) to accept no verity for which demonstration is not offered, and (in the moral sphere) to profess no worship for any power which we cannot with our brains understand, and which we cannot with our hearts honour, sympathise with, and in a human sense love and feel for.

I have now been for very many years President of the Positivist Committee of London; and such is the language I have uniformly held to our body at Newton Hall, and especially in a series of annual addresses on the first of each year. For instance, I said (1st January 1887):—

> How vain are the criticisms and prophecies with which Comte's teaching was met years ago! Cut and dried systems, arid formulas, fantastic rites!—they used to say. Where is there anything fantastic, obscurantist, cut and dried here? There is nothing like a *sect* here. We repudiate the very name of Comtists; assuredly we do not swallow down Comte's voluminous writings in the bulk. Four times in these last years, on the anniversary of his death thirty years ago, four of us, one after the other, have tried to sum up the meaning of his teaching, the value of his life. Four times the speaker has said that Comte's life is in no sense perfect, not at all to us an object of worship and imitation, that it is the soul and essence of his teaching which binds us together, and not a servile acceptance of his words, or a lifeless caricature of his Utopia. Comte was a poet and an idealist, as well as a philosopher, and we are not going to turn his poetry into formulas, and his ideals into a Pharisaical Targum

In 1888 I tried to explain what I meant by a religion of Humanity. I said that it would be wholly unlike orthodox Catholicism or orthodox Puritanism, but in some ways more like the religion of the ancients, *i.e.* more what we call morality, more social than personal, more civic than domestic, more practical than mystical. It would savour more of the tone of mind taught by Socrates, Confucius, and Marcus Aurelius, than that taught by Augustine and Aquinas, Luther and Calvin. In 1890 I protested against any one attempting to place Positivism "on a purely Comtist basis," and against any sliding into a Pharisaical attention to the "mint and anise of the formal Comtist ritual." Again, in 1891, I pointed out that "the service of Man does not mean the adoration of

Man, nor the substitution of a human God for a celestial God, any more than the essence of religion implies the worship of a Supreme and Perfect Being at all." "It is mere ignorance or perversity," I said, "which imagines that our sole object here is to set up the worship of a human God." I explained what is meant by the word *worship*. Of course, Comte's word is *culte*, which implies "regard for," as *culte des morts*, *culte de la mère*, *de la femme*, etc., etc. I said, "What by a misleading Gallicism is sometimes spoken of as the 'Worship of Humanity,' means simply to us, not the mystical adoration of an abstract idea, but the *constant cultivation of an intelligent reverence for all that has been good and great on earth.*" This is almost exactly what Mr. Huxley says (p. 366) is his own idea of religion, "reverence and love for the ethical ideal." And it is this which compels me to claim Mr. Huxley as a (rudimentary) worshipper of Humanity. He does not like the phrase, but he and I mean the same thing.

In my discourse of 1891 I went on to say :—

> We have here no head, no director, no ritual, no test of orthodoxy, no rigid scheme of belief or of worship. We ask no formal submission to any book, or to any single teacher whatever. . . . Where, in the ten years that this hall has been at work, has any sign of such things [as priestcraft, or revised Popery] been seen ? Has any one from this platform ever held out to you the writings of Comte as a new Bible ? Has any one of us aspired to the spiritual tyranny of a priest ? Has any one of us ever presented our faith to you in the light of *Comtism*—I mean the deification of any man, or the rigid acceptance of any set of doctrines and practices ? Has any one who frequents this hall ever been expected to avow his conformity to any articles of any creed ? Has any man, or any woman, ever been pressed to submit to any order, to conform to anything that they did not heartily believe, to keep silence when they wished to speak, or to do what they did not approve ?

Now, that is the language I have held to our body in Newton Hall. Where is the "Papistry," where

the "pontiff," where the "allocutions," where is the "ecclesiasticism," the Mormonism, the "Anthropolatry," with which Mr. Huxley charges me? Do monks, Catholics, or ecclesiastics of any Church use this language? Could any theological Church venture on it? Where is "Pope and pagan rolled into one" in these addresses? And let me point out that what I have quoted are all formal addresses to various Positivist groups, given by me as President of the Committee, published and distributed broadcast at Newton Hall as expositions of our views. They are perfectly consistent with all that I have ever uttered for years past, and I challenge Mr. Huxley to point out discourses of mine to the contrary. These published pieces of mine are all long anterior to his present book, and many of them were anterior to his reprinted attack on me, first made in February 1889. And I will add that my discourses are collected in volumes in several public libraries, and certainly in two frequented by Mr. Huxley.

And what is Mr. Huxley's defence for so strangely misrepresenting me? I cannot say; but I hope he will not attempt to quote Comte, or some obscure "crank" who may call himself a "Comtist." Comte's writings, for the present, have nothing to do with it; for, as I show, they are no gospel for me or my friends. I have publicly protested against any "mint and anise of a Comtist ritual"; I have never held any other language. How does he know I am a "Comtist," or have anything to do with any "Church of Comte"? I hope he will not say that I am angry, as he usually does if one of his opponents objects to being called a bad name. Would he be angry if I wrote a book about him as an orthodox "Haeckelist," and suggested that he kept in his back-yard a stuffed gorilla, which he was wont to reverence as his primordial ancestor?

The question for the moment is not what Comte has said, but what I have said. Mr. Huxley charges me with these things, and the body to which I belong. Why am I a "pontiff" more than he is? I express my views; so does he. Why are my essays in *The Fortnightly Review* "allocutions," whilst his are *Essays on Some Controverted Questions*? Why am I a prophet for saying that Agnosticism as a religious scheme will fail, whilst he can lay down twelve canons for all future speculations?

Need he trouble himself about the number of my "disciples"? Have I "disciples," am I a "disciple," more than he? How many score of Huxleyites are there in the three kingdoms? How many disciples has Mr. Herbert Spencer? I trust that we all of us exercise some influence in spheres wider than we see or know. But the number of persons to-day inclined to group themselves into schools or followings of any kind is small. And as to Positivists, we care for influence, not for disciples. The ceaseless grinning of the comic and clerical press, and the bow-wow of great controversialists does rather terrify quiet people from the doors of Newton Hall. But, putting aside the mere hacks who cadge about the Royal Society and the science press, I daresay we can show as many "disciples," if that is needed, as Mr. Huxley. When will he preside at the next grand consistory of the Agnostic Church?

I do not imply that Mr. Huxley had any wish to present me to the public in a light so utterly untrue; but I do feel that he has been somewhat careless, and has not kept in view all the twelve canons of Agnostic veracity. What did he know, what did he try to find out about my sayings and doings at Newton Hall? Little, I fear, but what he picked out of casual and usually malicious paragraphs in the press. Newton Hall is open

to all men ; piles of literature lie on its tables at cost price. The annual reports of the body and our own addresses are collected in volumes, and are in many public libraries ? Did Mr. Huxley read these before he came forward to hold me up as a sort of Mormon prophet and Comtist hierophant ? When, in 1889, he first attacked me, I was so much pleased by his gallant onslaught on superstition, and so thankful to note his latent profession of a human and ethical religion, that I let any public reply stand over. I spoke to him privately, told him that he had mistaken my attitude, and he seemed glad to recognise that we were not so far apart after all. And now I find him, in 1892, reprinting all these preposterous caricatures about myself, though I showed him how much he was mistaken in his facts, and he has had abundant opportunity to learn that he had been. Oh ! Agnosticism, with thy ethical ideal of veracity, what things are done in thy name !

I know Mr. Huxley does not mean to be unkind—indeed, for thirty years past we have been on most friendly terms, and he prefaces his annihilation of me with some very handsome words. And I am sure that he could not willingly be unfair. But with all his noble qualities he has his antipathies, and there are one or two names which seem to send him dancing mad. Worse than Mr. Gladstone—worse than General Booth — is Auguste Comte. He has a standing quarrel with this philosopher ; and the idea of any one having part or parcel in his opinions affects Mr. Huxley so acutely that he can barely control himself within the twelve canons of scientific agnosticism. Now I am not going to argue with him about Comte. I should like to do so, and if he will name place and time, I will gladly attempt to convert him ; but for the moment there is neither

space nor opportunity. Comte was a philosopher, not a scientific specialist, and his knowledge, of course, was that of fifty years ago. But his philosophic power was recognised by his greatest contemporaries, and has been fully admitted by hostile critics in England, such as Mill, Herbert Spencer, G. H. Lewes, John Morley, and others of philosophic competence, far greater than Mr. Huxley's. But into whatever blunders Comte may have fallen, and he could not have fallen into bigger blunders than did Aristotle, Bacon, Descartes, or Leibnitz, in their own day, and however extravagant to Agnostics may seem his Utopia of 1852—the point now in issue is, How do I and those I am associated with present Positivism to-day; and is it a more scientific, more rational, more philosophic scheme than Agnosticism pure and simple?

Mr. Huxley seems to think the matter is concluded by citing French books forty years old, by which I say I am not bound; and when he has found some statements in Comte which do not square with the assumed discoveries of modern physicists, he proclaims to the world that Positivists are sworn enemies of science, and practise a mixture of mummery and Papistry. I invite the most rigorous application of agnostic canons to the following facts. M. Pierre Laffitte, a well-known teacher of science in Paris, was the pupil and is the successor of Auguste Comte, recognised as such by the only organised body of Positivists in France. For thirty years he has taught the sciences to large audiences in Paris. Recently the Government, on the advice of M. Renan, founded a new chair in the Collége de France for the History of the Sciences. M. Laffitte was appointed the Professor. There was much opposition to the foundation of the chair, and to filling it with an avowed Agnostic; but not one word was uttered to dispute

the eminent scientific attainments of M. Laffitte. The founding of such a chair was challenged in the Senate, wherein sit many men of high academic position, more or less alien to any religious teaching of Positivism. The Minister in the Senate read a long letter from M. Renan, and declared that, by the advice of eminent scientists, he had appointed M. Laffitte as being the most competent man he could find. And there was a chorus of approval of his choice, M. Laffitte being recognised as the man naturally fitted for such a post, and, indeed, as the only person specially qualified or suggested. M. Laffitte for years continued his teaching in science along with his colleagues—such as Dr. Robinet, Dr. Delbet, Dr. Dubuisson, Dr. Hillemand, Dr. Clement, all well-known physiologists and men of science in Paris, and with scores of other men of high academic reputation. Does this look like being the enemies of science? Or are the Government, Senate, and academies of France bent on promoting "bad science and eviscerated Papistry"?

I turn to our English body. The person who preceded me as Chairman of the Positivist Committee is Dr. Bridges, formerly a physician of the highest promise, and subsequently an important public servant. The speaker chosen in 1892 by the College of Physicians to deliver the Harveian oration was Dr. Bridges. He has been for years one of our principal teachers at Newton Hall, along with others, physiologists, chemists, mathematicians, whose profession it is to teach one or other of the sciences in different institutions in this country. We have lately published a biographical work on a purely positivist basis, a book of which I have myself taken a share and am general editor. I am not about to say anything in its behalf; but I call attention to this, that of the

contributors to that volume, at least a quarter were men of special scientific training, men teaching or practising science as their profession. The collection of biographies includes the lives of five hundred and fifty-eight persons; and of these about one hundred are men of special science. As I had no hand in these, I may be permitted to say that very many of these studies have been thought to be amongst the best contributions to science of our time. The Merry Andrews of the anonymous press made mouths at us as usual; but I am not aware that any one has discovered either bad science or eviscerated Papistry in our aggregate labours. The notion that Positivists in England or in France are "enemies of science," or anything but teachers of science, is a wild figment.

I daresay that Mr. Huxley, who so often teaches bishops theology, would like to teach me Positivism. He will be ready to tell me that if I do not profess ecclesiastical obscurantism and practise grotesque rites, I ought to do so, and am no orthodox Positivist if I do not. That is my affair. If, as he seems to think, there is a Positivist Vatican, syllabus, inquisition, and index, I will take the risk; it is not for him to denounce me. My profound conviction of the central ideas of the religion of humanity, and my reverential gratitude to the philosopher who first gave it a systematic basis, are beyond suspicion and deeper than words can express. But when I show the world how thin and transitional a thing is Agnosticism as a religious philosophy, I am not answered by repeating stale jeers about Comte's ritualism or Comte's mistakes. I have listened patiently to these now for years; for I am a man of peace, a poor hand at controversy, and a great admirer of my critic. But the worm will turn at last. And now that Mr. Huxley republishes all his absurd charges against me by name,

it is due to myself and my colleagues to show what we do hold and what we practise. Our doings and sayings at Newton Hall are open to all men, and may be read in many pamphlets and books. I hear there are in South America some people who take all they find in Comte literally, and they may have a few confederates elsewhere. But I know nothing of them, and they have nothing to do with me or with us. All that I am concerned with is this, that at Newton Hall there will not be found anything but sound science, a free appeal to reason, and rational and ethical religion.

But let me part from Mr. Huxley with friendly feelings. We are on the same side, and I know that he wishes me well. We are all proud of him, and that pride has received very notable expression from the Government and Sovereign of this country. For my part, I have been for thirty years, ever since I used to attend with the keenest delight his lectures on physiology, one of his warmest admirers. No one living has a finer command than he has of nervous English, a more inborn instinct to make alive everything he touches, or a more honest contempt for humbug. Of old we were colleagues in the Metaphysical Society, where to hear Mr. Huxley bait a theologian, or prick a metaphysical bubble, was more exciting than a bull-fight. With the reasoning of nine-tenths of this book I am, as I say, in complete accord; and there are many things in it which want of space alone prevents me from singling out for praise. It is most satisfactory to find a champion of Agnosticism repudiating the nonsense about "the *Unknowable*," whether with a big or little U (p. 451). His distinction between the "unknown" and the "unknowable" is thoroughly positive in every sense of that term. And all that he says of the contrast

between Agnosticism and Clericalism is most judicious and conclusive. It is pleasant, too, to find him adopting the English word *Renascence*, which for years I have been striving to acclimatise in place of the misleading Gallicism *Renaissance*. But most important of all is the positive declaration of faith that "the service of humanity" is the natural and permanent type of true religion. I can forgive him all the hard words he showers upon me, if I have been the humble instrument of leading this great Agnostic to avow his own gnostic faith at last.

It is most cheering to find that Mr. Huxley looks for a solution of the religious problem in this human, social, and terrestrial direction, and not in any Absolute philosophy of the Universe, or in any Agnostic creed whatever. He is quite right in rejecting Agnosticism as a creed, or the basis of a creed. It is interesting to find him disclaiming any scheme for a "Philosophy of Evolution." Mr. Herbert Spencer has attempted it with extraordinary powers and attainments, and has signally failed. And where Mr. Spencer has failed Mr. Huxley is not likely to succeed. Science, or rather physiology and its cognate subjects, is Mr. Huxley's true field, and not philosophy, much less the philosophy of religion. He is too prone to promote religion by ridiculing theology. He is too ready to think that those who differ from him, whether theologians or positivists, are enemies of science. But the latter, at any rate, can congratulate him on his new volume of essays as a brilliant contribution to the logic of scientific inquiry, and as an indication that he is really something more than an Agnostic.

XVIII

MR. HUXLEY'S IRONICON

I AM quite content to leave my debate with Mr. Huxley about Agnosticism just as it stands. His explanations have made his position, to me at least, much clearer than before; and I am pleased to have drawn from him these interesting elucidations. Agreeing with him as I do in the main on the ultimate background of philosophical thought, I have nothing to add on that topic. *Sat prata biberunt.* He and I find common ground on our *tabula rasa* as to the whole field beyond human knowledge. Only, I find in the field within it certain great truths which Mr. Huxley does not see, or sees dimly. Be it so: let him which is agnostic be agnostic still. I too am agnostic as to all that is outside the field of science. As to that which is within it I find a power nobler and more dominant than Nature—and that is Humanity.

But I have something to say about the wonderful discoveries concerning myself and my opinions which Mr. Huxley announces to the public. I will try to treat them as seriously as I can; but, as a sober person myself, I find it hard to rise to the boisterous humour of his *Ironicon*, which doubtless only by a slip of the pen he spells *Irenicon.*

He has now found out that I have abjured the fundamental dogmas of Positivism, that I contemptuously set aside Auguste Comte, and have forsworn any worship or religion of Humanity. Perhaps he will tell the world next that Mr. Gladstone has abandoned Home Rule, that Lord Salisbury is about to abolish the House of Lords, and that Sir Wilfrid Lawson has joined the Licensed Victuallers.

The evidence for this piece of news is "the good old rule, the simple plan" of quoting half a sentence, suppressing the other half, ignoring the context, and twisting the selected words into a new meaning. I know there is high recent authority for the practice which a great personage thinks it useful to adopt; and it is one of the most venerable weapons of theological war. I remember at Oxford an eminent divine who was fond (it was said) of proving, to the confusion of all Papists, that St. Peter was not above the other apostles, for Christ said, "Lo! I am with you all"-[ways, *sotto voce*].

Now by such a use of the *argumentum a suppressione* Mr. Huxley has proved to his own satisfaction that I contemptuously abjure Auguste Comte. He tells the world that I have written—"We do not believe in Auguste Comte." My answer is that I did not so write. I wrote a sentence out of which those words are picked; a sentence which bears a totally different meaning. Three years ago I was addressing the Positivist body in Manchester, and by way of warning them against any tendency to look for a verbal inspiration in Comte's writings, but to remember that a religion of demonstration must rest on scientific proof and not on authority, I said what I have often said before and since.

Positivism is not independent of the growth of sound science. It depends upon it. Auguste Comte is not above

philosophy and science. And when philosophy and science have superseded his theories with the sure evidence of other doctrines we will be the first to adopt them. We do not believe in Auguste Comte: we believe in the assurances of philosophy and science. We do not worship Positivism. We *worship* or (to use plain English) we submit ourselves reverently to Humanity.

The meaning of this is perfectly plain. Remember, I said, that the ultimate basis of Positivism is the growth of sound science. Do not put the words of any book, no, not Comte's, above philosophy and science. Attach no superstitious reverence to what you may take to be Positivism. The object of our worship—and by *worship* we mean reverent submission—is Humanity, as revealed by Science.

From this plain and, I think, very reasonable passage of mine Mr. Huxley detaches the words, "We do not believe in Auguste Comte"; putting a full stop where there was none, and suppressing the context, in order to prove that I have "contemptuously," "contumeliously," set aside Comte. And he finds in it evidence that I have abjured the fundamental dogmas of Positivism, and forswear the worship and the religion of Humanity. So pleased is he with the device that in four pages he cites these detached words five times, and he makes them the pivot of his remarks. I shall use no epithets to describe what to my mind savours of a child's game. It would be easy to prove anything by the same process. In p. 570 Mr. Huxley tells us that he is a very strong believer in hell, and intimates that he has himself "descended into hell." In his "Prologue," p. 52, he speaks of the Bible as the *Magna Charta*. It is quite true that the context shows that, in using these words, he means something very different; but what if some lively writer were to fill the pages of a Review with: "Mr. Huxley a Calvinist"; "the great Agnostic has been in hell and

sees at last it is all true"; "Mr. Huxley, the Atheist, is now converted to Holy Writ"—and so forth? It is very easy, and infinitely silly, to say nothing more. Mr. Huxley protests that he is no teacher or moralist. I think in his meditative retirement he should beware of rushing to the other extreme.

Suppose a facetious person, knowing Mr. Huxley's admiration for the philosophers Descartes and Hume, were to twit him with being a believer in "vortices," or in Hume's estimate of Charles I., Mr. Huxley might reply, "I am no Cartesian in the sense of believing in Descartes against the verdict of science; nor do I put Hume above the conclusions of sound historical knowledge." Whereupon the facetious person rejoins, "Mr. Huxley abjures Descartes, snaps his fingers at Hume, says he does not believe in either, has patented a new philosophy all his own! Poor old Descartes, good old David, it must make you turn in your graves to be so befooled," etc., etc. It is quite easy but it is a form of jesting for which I have no turn.

Mr. Huxley informs the public, mainly on the strength of the garbled sentence—(1) That I reject the fundamental doctrines of Positivism; (2) That I contemptuously disbelieve in Comte; (3) That I abjure systematic worship; (4) That I seek to get rid of a religion of Humanity. There is not a word of truth in any one of these propositions. But, even if they were true, what business is it of Mr. Huxley, and how does it prove Agnosticism to be the only sensible creed? It is worth while noticing how the debate has come round to this point. Some years ago I wrote an article to show that, however true as a philosophic thesis, Agnosticism was not an adequate or permanent solution of the religious problem. Mr. Huxley, whom I had not criticised, replied, not indeed to my argument, but by comparing me to the Pope,

Joe Smith, and other personages. That did not advance the case of Agnosticism; but I said no more. Three years afterwards he republishes the comparison of myself to the Pope and Joe Smith, in spite of my friendly remonstrances. I then took occasion to show, from a series of published addresses of mine, that nothing could be less like the Pope or Joe Smith than what I had been saying for years. And now he replies that I am a turncoat, unorthodox, an ungrateful, rebellious, and doubting disciple, and so forth. How does all this advance the case of Agnosticism as the final creed of science? It does not seem a very consistent thing to repudiate a system of belief for oneself, and yet to set up as judge of orthodoxy within it for others. Mr. Huxley would perhaps like Catholics and Protestants to come to him if they want to understand their own creeds, and not to listen to what they say at Rome or at Lambeth.

The article in which Mr. Huxley finds my contemptuous rejection of the fundamental dogmas of Positivism and of Auguste Comte contained this sentence:—"*My profound conviction of the central ideas of the religion of humanity, and my reverential gratitude to the philosopher who first gave it a systematic basis*, are beyond suspicion and deeper than words can express." With these words before him, Mr. Huxley thinks it worth his while to twist a phrase out of its context a few pages earlier, and gravely to tell the world of my "disbelief in the prophet," with sundry comicalities about Moses and Joshua, Mecca and Mahomet. There was a much simpler process ready to his hand. He should have taken the passage cited above, and quoted it after altering the word "*conviction*" into "disbelief," and "*reverential gratitude*" into "scorn." In religious controversy you should never stick at trifles.

The address in which Mr. Huxley discovers that I have abjured the religion of Humanity closes with the following passages :—

People who hear of a religion of Humanity for the first time are apt to compare it with the religion, so-called, of Christ, and of an omnipotent and omniscient Creator ; and they very naturally find it difficult to accept the divinity of the human race, its infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, and all the other relative attributes of a Creator. No such comparison is possible or reasonable. Those who are fully convinced of the reality and certainty of the Creator, and of the authority of the ways in which his will has been revealed to man, will not be disturbed in their belief by any word of ours. But that large and growing order of thinking men and women, who have no such conviction, may fairly be asked to reflect if religion has not been pitched in far too extravagant and mystical a key, if to ask for omnipotence, omniscience, all-goodness, and all-majesty be not an extravagant demand ; and if a manly, sober, rational, and practical religion may not be found in ideals less exalted, perhaps, but then far more distinct and close to us, in the trained sense of duty that we owe to the vast organic being of humanity, past, present, and to come, to render to it some infinitesimal part of the service which it has rendered to us, to look up to it with respect as our true mother on the earth, and to look forward to its indefinite progress in the future to a nobler state as the best equivalent of dreams of personal immortality. Duty to family has long been acknowledged as the most precious inheritance of civilised mankind ; duty to country has long been felt to be the foundation of men's life as social beings. There is one step more in the series which has long been taken unconsciously, but which it now awaits us to take consciously—the sense of duty to Humanity—a duty which, if less vivid in its power over us than duty to family, if less visibly present to us than duty to country, is infinitely grander, more permanent, more social than the idea of family or country, and is incapable of being turned, as both of these are, into a narrow selfishness ; and which, when duly cultivated by training from childhood, and duly set forth with all the glow of imagination and enthusiasm, is amply sufficient to make men steadfast and true in life, calm and resigned in death, just, honest, sober, and humane towards all men and at all times.

I have now been engaged (not indeed by my own spontaneous act, but by the pressing call of others) for

some twenty years in endeavouring to explain these ideas, and for many years I have been constantly addressing our body at Newton Hall. In all that time not one word has ever fallen from me other than what I truly described, in my article of last October, as "profound conviction of the central ideas of the religion of Humanity, and reverential gratitude" towards Auguste Comte. I have before me, in a collected volume, scores of such utterances extending over the last fourteen years. I shall not weary the reader with setting them forth; nor can I notice attempts to prove the contrary by the schoolboy's diversion of perverting a sentence by erasing words.

I am no stickler for consistency, and have but a moderate opinion of its virtue, in things practical and temporal. In philosophy and religion, anything but gradual evolution is perhaps a sign of weakness. Looking back over the course of our movement at Newton Hall and its very cautious development, I can find no trace of any variation in principle. Complete unity of idea has marked it throughout, and has certainly pervaded my own public utterances. As a summary of my own belief I have used indeed the same words from first to last without change. In the lines which we first laid down we have steadfastly continued; and, ever since I first addressed the public on these questions, I have, for my own part, uniformly held the same language and maintained the same position. The discovery, therefore, of any change of front, either in our movement or in my own teaching, is only the discovery of another mare's nest.

"I took it for granted," says Mr. Huxley, to me, "that you practised everything to be read in Comte on his absolute authority—priesthood on the Papistical model, spiritual despotism and all." Now a rigid Agnostic should not take matters of fact for granted

without verification. Why take this for granted? I reply by quoting a series of addresses which show that, whilst looking to the teaching of Comte with reverence and gratitude, we have never attributed to him verbal inspiration, and have no priesthood or spiritual despotism at all. Well, then, says he, "You ought to have, you are ungrateful rebels, apostates, and shams; and if you do not know what the essence of Positivism is, I will take leave to show you." Mr. Huxley has written a great deal about Descartes, for whom he professes a boundless respect. At the root of Descartes' system stands his proof of the existence of God. Suppose I "took it for granted" that Mr. Huxley adopted all this; he denies it; thereupon I reply, "Here is a rebel, sham believer in Descartes! What ingratitude, what fraud! The existence of God is the beginning and end of his doctrine, and the Neo-Cartesians reject it! I don't myself believe in all this metaphysics, but you are bound to do so." Such is the language he holds to me.

The ground which, from the first, I took up and have unceasingly maintained is quite consistent and perfectly plain. In the address of 1889, already quoted, I put it thus:—

> The idea of Positivism, of a co-ordination of Philosophy and Science, of a religion based on Demonstration, of Humanity as a living force and as an object of reverence, is as completely English and American as it is French, and belongs to the last four or five generations of enlightened men, and certainly to our own. We as a body have now been organised these many years, and have met week by week and year by year to make clear the faith that is in us. But we have as yet made no attempt whatever to put into practice all the suggestions and prescriptions that can be picked out of the writings of Auguste Comte.

That has been my position from the first. If it shocks Mr. Huxley, I can only smile at his setting up

for a grand inquisitor. He may call me all the names he can discover in the long history of heresy and schism — Supralapsarian or Homœousian — he may denounce me, if it give him satisfaction, for confusing the persons or dividing the substance; but if he says that I have ever uttered one word of disrespect for Comte or for the genuine worship of Humanity, he will be saying that which manifestly is not.[1]

And then Mr. Huxley sets up to teach me what I mean, or what I ought to mean, by the worship of Humanity. The simplest course would be to "take it for granted" that I mean what I say. I have stated it fully and precisely, but that does not satisfy him. My words were:—"I mean no more than reverence and love for all that is good and great in the social organism." On the next page I said:—By "religion" I mean the service of humanity; by "humanity," the permanent and collective power of the human organism; by "worship," the sense of gratitude, love, and reverence which men feel for their country, their family, their benefactors—somewhat higher in degree, but not differing in kind. I mean that and nothing more. I have always meant that. I intend to mean that. And, if any one tells me that I do not mean that, I can only politely request him to mind his own business. But Mr. Huxley is not content with that: he wants to teach me what I do mean, and is quite scandalised at my obstinate heresy. Can anything be more comic than Mr. Huxley raising an outcry that these wicked, ungrateful Positivists will not believe the plain words of Comte—or rather, what he, Mr.

[1] The other day, at a public place, an aggressive person accused a mild gentleman of carrying off his umbrella. The mild gentleman politely held up his, and showed his own name and address engraved on the handle. But the aggressive one did not apologise. "I took it for granted," said he, "that you had got mine, because I assumed you were not likely to have got so good a one of your own!"

Huxley, the Agnostic, takes for granted to be the plain words of Comte?

All that he says about *culte* is another mare's nest. His words are:—"When the founder of Positivism uses the word 'culte,' he, indubitably, uses it in the strict theological sense." To this I reply, in the classical language of Mr. Burchell, in the *Vicar of Wakefield*—"Fudge." Mr. Huxley goes on—"he sets 'Humanity' as the 'new Supreme Being' in the place of the Divinity of the theologians." Again, with Mr. Burchell, I say—"Fudge." Arrant, laughable nonsense, as any one who has read Comte with due care, well knows. *Culte* is, of course, good French for *worship* in the strict theological sense, the adoration of a superhuman transcendent Divinity. It also means, as Littré states in his dictionary, "vénération profonde," *i.e.* sincere reverence, and Littré quotes the phrase, "J'eus pour Scipion ce *culte* qu'il est doux d'accorder au génie."[1] Now this is the sense in which *culte* is habitually used by Comte. When he recommends "le culte des morts," "le culte de la femme," "le culte d'amour," does he mean the adoration (in the strict theological sense) of the dead as divinities, or of women, or does he mean the "adoration" of love? Nonsense, fudge! he means the cherishing a feeling of "sincere reverence" for the worthy dead, for good women, cherishing the spirit of love (rather than of hate and contempt).

It so happens that Comte's own daily prayers are published, as he recited them during eleven years down to his death. They fill twenty octavo pages, and, from first to last, there is not a single phrase of adora-

[1] As I write, I read in a recent political essay by a Belgian author, Dr. Saroléa, the following description of Condorcet, "Croyant quand même malgré la Terreur, *au culte de l'humanité*." Certainly Condorcet never dreamed in 1794 of "worshipping humanity." All that it means is, that he had a profound faith in human nature.

tion of Humanity, "in the strict theological sense." They consist entirely of moral sentiments, passages from Dante, Petrarch, and other poets, mental reflections on the goodness of a dead woman who was his Beatrice or Laura, and passages from their correspondence during life. The first line is, "Ce culte d'amour et de reconnaissance ne peut jamais cesser de me soulager et surtout de m'améliorer." Does this mean —this adoration of love, etc., etc.? Of course not. The English of it is—"This cherishing of love and gratitude (for a dead friend) can never fail to comfort, and above all to elevate me." Further on Comte speaks of "le culte intime d'une tendre mère et d'une digne fille ou sœur." Can this mean the divinising and adoring, "in the strict theological sense," of mother, daughter, or sister? Of course not. It means, cherishing the feeling of love for mother, daughter, sister.

Culte is a word which, as used by Comte, cannot well be rendered by any single English word or phrase. It implies all that can stimulate, cultivate, and enlarge our feeling of respect, gratitude, and love for some worthy object. Every act, whether of study, of expression, of art, or of meditation, which cultivates these feelings is included. "Worship" is a very inadequate word, for it has come, in modern days, to be restricted to the expressions of adoration for superhuman objects. *Culte de l'Humanité* properly includes such different things as the commemoration of great men; a Mozart or Handel festival; a visit to Shakespeare's birthplace and grave; a course of lectures on history; the reading of Dante, Milton, or Molière. When our body in Paris, annually, on September 5th, visits the tomb of Comte in Père-la-Chaise; when, in London, we visit the Abbey, where lie those whom Mr. Huxley, in his poetic hours, and in purely Posi-

tivist phraseology, so happily invokes as "head servants of the human kind"; when we sing in chorus the Marseillaise or Tennyson's "Ring out, wild bells," we do what Comte means by the *culte de l'Humanité*. To restrict the term to the invocation of an ideal being is contrary to the language as to the practice of Comte; and it is contrary to ours. Mr. Huxley quotes Candide's "*Cultivons* notre jardin." Does that mean, adore our garden? When next he undertakes to teach me French he should look into his Littré.

Comte chose to make use of a number of terms as old and as widespread as the human kind, which in modern Europe have drifted into a narrow, technical use. It was a very perilous experiment, which perhaps has weighted his teaching more than anything else. And the risk is doubled when the French is crudely done into English terms of the same sound with different connotations. "Religion" has got to mean "adoring the Divinity." "Supreme Being" now means God. "Worship" comes to mean invoking God. "Service" has come to mean recital of prayers or litany. But these ancient terms do not properly mean this. There is a very old and real religion of Confucius; in the marriage service the husband "worships" the wife; and the Republic was the supreme being of Danton. When the French terms are crudely put into schoolboy English, the confusion is still greater. A young Frenchman "adores" his mother, and even black coffee. He does not address his tutor as "dear sir," but as "vénérable maître"; every one who speaks for three minutes on his legs is an "orator"; and a pretty woman is *ange*, *déesse*, *divinité*, and so forth. They who have had to translate French know how seldom the French word can be rendered by its English synonym. Here is a pitfall for the tiro and a godsend to the funny man. Comte

boldly used these ancient terms in their sterling, general sense to mean things utterly different from the acquired theological sense. The tiro and the funny man persist in using them in the narrow theological sense.

It is a troublesome task to bring back indispensable terms to their true, rational, and scientific meaning and to wrest them from the grasp of priests; but it has to be done. We who are no longer the slaves of theological associations, now use "religion" for our devotion to our sense of human duty, "worship" for the cultivation of intelligent reverence, "service" for acts of usefulness and goodness towards our fellow-men, and "Supreme Being" for the collective power of the human organism. Mr. Huxley, who seems still in the bondage of theological associations, is scandalised at this profane use of sacred language, and invokes heaven and earth to witness how shamefully poor Comte is being betrayed. Let him use his Littré to better purpose, read Comte with the honest end of trying to understand him, and not to find in him a peg for a few epigrams, and cease to accuse Positivists of heresy, schism, and profanity, because they study Comte with open minds and understand the French language.

Take an extreme case. To the ordinary theological mind, "Supreme Being" means God Almighty. To every one who holds Agnostic opinions about creation and the conclusions of sociology as to the social organism, it is an accurate description of humanity. It is a term of exact science, and not of mystical adoration. What is a "being"? Obviously a man, woman, dog, family, city, country, and so forth, every collective unit having organic life and continuity. To the sociologist the social organism is simply a great organic being; to the Agnostic it is the greatest organic being scientifically known to

us on our planet. The social organism is therefore with rigorous accuracy described as the highest great organism known to science. I do not myself use a term so liable to be misunderstood, but Comte, who had the courage of his opinions, at times uses the term Etre-Suprême, or Grand Être, for the social organism. When he talks of "serving" it, he means by doing your duty; when he talks of "loving" it, he means, love your race as you love your country; and by chants to it, he means what our forefathers meant when they sang, God save the king! or when John of Gaunt broke out—

> This happy breed of men, this little world,
> This precious stone set in the silver sea.

That is what Comte meant and what we mean. Those that please may laugh. But the laughers only show that they cannot get rid of their early theological associations, and still see some mystical nonsense in exact scientific terms. Why, then, need we use terms which have acquired by association special connotations? Simply because we desire to divert old associations of reverence towards real and demonstrable objects of gratitude and respect.

This is now being carried into practice by a body of men and women who find in it happiness and strength—a happiness and a strength which make them supremely indifferent to the opinion of idle people wandering about the fair and looking out for heads to crack. Those who care to find out what it means can easily satisfy themselves, for the doors are always open and there are no mysteries. It is waste of time for them to cite a few sentences out of books they have never studied and do not understand. It would be as hopeful a task to try to make out what the Catholic Church is in practice by collecting a few

texts from Suarez, or by concocting epigrams about the *Syllabus*. I am sorry if we cannot look for assistance, or even sympathy, from Mr. Huxley—who speaks like a man to whom this world offers nothing to hope and little to love. But I am glad to think that the pessimism of his declining years will be soothed by that fine prophetic sentiment of his—that the service of humanity is the "only religion which will prove itself to be unassailably acceptable as long as the human race endures."

XIX

MR. A. BALFOUR'S FOUNDATIONS OF BELIEF

MR. ARTHUR BALFOUR'S book has excited so much attention and so directly challenges the Positivist Foundations of Belief, that some notice of it should now be taken. It is due to the high position which Mr. Balfour holds as a statesman and the obvious importance of any pronouncement of his on the popular creed. All respect must be given to his great ability and eminent position: his own graceful and ingenious spirit charms millions of his countrymen; and the eloquence, wit, and pathetic dreaminess of his writing cannot fail to be popular. But to speak the plain truth, his book offers us nothing new, nothing of philosophical power. It is mainly the old cloudy, sceptical, sub-cynical pessimism—trotted out again in the interest of the powers that be and the established creed. That such vague guessing and doubting should be seriously treated as the *foundations of belief* is a curious proof of the palsy which seems to be creeping over masculine thought and of the current set of opinion, under the tide of conservative reaction, towards metaphysical and theological conundrums.

It is not easy for a sincere admirer of Mr. Balfour's very interesting genius to treat frankly a book to which he has evidently given his whole heart. *Amicus Plato sed* ——. He has already treated of Positivism with the respect of genuine alarm and the ignorance of utter misconception; and much as one would make allowances for a graceful and candid critic, whose strength is given to statesmanship and not to philosophy, it would be real weakness to follow the adulation of the press, and to pretend that there is anything new or serious in these pretty bubbles of hypothetical doubts and imaginary dangers which Mr. Balfour has often blown before, and which so many other defenders of the faith have blown before and since.

It is not necessary to follow Mr. Balfour throughout his elaborate argument, because the whole of it is vitiated by the radical misconception which underlies the entire book, and which is carefully expounded in the preliminary chapter. His book is a convergent series of attacks on what he calls "Naturalism"; but it is plain from his opening pages that he misunderstands the philosophy of "Naturalism," that he misconceives its data, its method, its logic, and its aim. What he calls "Naturalism" is a method of reasoning that is not adopted by any school of credit in this country at any rate, but which he magnifies into a soul-destroying form of infidelity such as we so often hear denounced in impassioned sermons from the pulpit. The schools of thought which Mr. Balfour thinks he is confuting under the common description of Naturalism all deny that they ever held any such views at all. Agnostics, Empiricists, Evolutionists, Positivists, all in turn declare that they have neither kith nor kin with Mr. Balfour's "Naturalism." There may be types of French or German materialists who

hold something of the sort. But as to our own Agnostics, Empiricists, Evolutionists, and Positivists, Mr. Balfour, it is plain, has no real knowledge of their bases of belief or of their canons of reasoning. In his preliminary chapter he tells us that his book has reference to a system which ultimately profits by the defeat of Theology, and he thus describes this system:

> Agnosticism, Positivism, Empiricism, have all been used more or less correctly to describe this scheme of thought; though in the following pages, for reasons with which it is not necessary to trouble the reader, the term which I shall commonly employ is Naturalism. But whatever the name selected, the thing itself is sufficiently easy to describe. For its leading doctrines are that we may know "phenomena" and the laws by which they are connected, but nothing more. "More" there may or may not be; but if it exists we can never apprehend it; and whatever the world may be "in its reality" (supposing such an expression to be otherwise than meaningless) the World for us, the World with which alone we are concerned, or of which alone we can have any cognisance, is that World which is revealed to us through perception, and which is the subject-matter of the Natural Sciences. Here, and here only, are we on firm ground. Here, and here only, can we discover anything which deserves to be described as knowledge. Here, and here only, may we profitably exercise our reason or gather the fruits of Wisdom. Such in rough outline is Naturalism.

And in a note Mr. Balfour explains that by *phenomena* he means "things and events, the general subject-matter of Natural Science"; and by Metaphysics he means knowledge "respecting realities which are not *phenomenal*, *e.g.* God and the Soul."

Now the passage just quoted is full of confusion and misstatement. In the first place, Positivism and Agnosticism stand widely apart. Recent controversy has emphasised the fact that they entirely decline to accept each other's starting-point. Positivism is the religion of Humanity resting on the philosophy of

human nature. Agnosticism, as a specific philosophy, is necessarily negative: declining to commit itself to any definite religion. Nor is Positivism in any sense the equivalent of Empiricism. It has never identified itself with any absolute scheme of Evolutionism as a systematic and synthetic philosophy of the Universe. It has stoutly repudiated all absolute syntheses or attempts to explain the Universe or even Earth and Man on any set of homogeneous dogmas. It has been hotly criticised because it declines to accept as a new Book of Genesis all the so-called Darwinian hypotheses about the origins of living forms. For years Positivists have been engaged in showing the insufficiency of much that styles itself Agnosticism, Darwinism, Evolution, and the like, as all being alien to a truly relative philosophy and leading to a moral paralysis of the religious emotions. As to Materialism, Positivism has continually denounced these sophisms as shallow and debasing. And yet Mr. Balfour, who for many years has had controversies about Positivism on his hands, again talks loosely of Agnosticism, Positivism, Empiricism, and Naturalism, as all amounting to much the same thing. In truth, he has no philosophical grasp of any one of these four very different schemes of thought.

Confining myself strictly to Positivism, with which alone I am concerned, I begin by pointing out the fundamental misconception of Mr. Balfour in this passage above cited. The leading doctrines of Naturalism, he says, "are that we may know 'phenomena' and the laws by which they are connected, but nothing more." The only World of which we can have cognisance, according to Naturalism, "is that World which is revealed to us through perception, and which is the subject-matter of the 'Natural Sciences.'" And "phenomena" are "things

and events, the general subject-matter of Natural Science." Now, so far as Positivism is concerned, that is an entire perversion of the bases and the methods of its philosophy. The subject-matter of Positivism embraces all things of which any thinking being is conscious. All facts of consciousness, all mental impressions and ideas of any kind, are just as much its subject-matter as they are that of any theologian or metaphysician. Positivism does not limit the field of its subject-matter; it excludes nothing cognisable or even recognisable by the brain; it does not shut out any hypothesis. Everything that can be the subject of thought or consciousness is just as completely open to the Positivist to meditate upon as it can be to the theologian. The difference between Positivism and Theology lies not in the subject-matter of observation; for all things thinkable are the common subject-matter of both. The difference lies in their different canons of proof and methods of reasoning.

What is the meaning of "Naturalism" being confined to the World which is revealed to us through "*perception*," the World which is the subject-matter of the "*Natural Sciences*"? "Perception" ought to mean the apprehension of phenomena directly or indirectly manifested to our senses. Now, Positivism does not confine its belief to any such limited world. It admits all suggestions of the consciousness of every kind as amongst the material for meditation and reflection. Every hypothesis, every mental or moral instinct, is just as much a legitimate subject of study and logic to the Positivist as an object of sight or smell. All "things" are within the sphere of positive philosophy and religion *for what they are worth*. It may turn out that they are waking dreams, with no proof of reality behind them or within them: but

they are not at all outside "the subject-matter" of the philosopher.

Again, what is the meaning of the "subject-matter of the Natural Sciences"? The natural sciences mean, and ought to mean, the physical sciences—the sciences concerned with the interpretation of nature. Now, it would be a most enormous misconception to assert that Positivism is only concerned with the physical sciences. But then what do the "Natural Sciences" mean? Is Psychology one of the "natural sciences"? Is Ethics? Are the facts of the human will, of Consciousness, of the imagination, and the conscience—are these the data of the "Natural Sciences"? Are all the social facts, the coincidences and uniformities in social progress, also the data of the "Natural Sciences"? It would be a very violent use of language to call our reasoning about the emotions, about ideas, about the moral and social nature of Man, the relations of Man to the World—branches of the Natural Sciences. Yet Positivism is mainly and supremely occupied with these very things—things which, only by an outrageous misuse of philosophical language, can be called the subject-matter of the "Natural Sciences"—the world known to us through "perception." To make "natural science" cover the whole field of speculation about the mental, moral, and social nature of Man and his relation to the World, is a juggling with language. To say that Positivism excludes from its subject-matter the whole field of such speculations is a manifest misstatement of notorious facts.

A similar ambiguity and *petitio principii* lurks in Mr. Balfour's use of the word "phenomena." Why are phenomena "things and events, the general subject-matter of Natural Science"? In modern philosophy, and certainly in the Positivist Philosophy, *phenomena*

mean all facts whatever of which we can take cognisance, which we perceive, meditate or reason upon, or become conscious of. As Mr. Mill said long ago, "the phenomena with which the science of human nature is conversant are the thoughts, feelings, and actions of human beings." It is a preposterous abuse of language to call these thoughts, feelings, and actions of human beings the subject-matter of Natural (*i.e.* physical) Science. Phenomena comprehend all things which we can perceive, think of, feel, or be conscious of. It is a very old and almost obsolete device of theologians to limit "phenomena" to things which the senses perceive, and to call "phenomenists" those who subject all phenomena whatever to logical verification. It is not the "phenomena" whereby schools of philosophy differ: it is in the verification of phenomena and the conclusions the mind infers from them.

Why does Mr. Balfour talk of "*knowing phenomena*"? We do not *know* phenomena. We perceive, infer, reflect upon, or become conscious of phenomena. What we *know* is some relation between the phenomena, some truth of which the phenomenon is the first term. We know the syllogism, we do not *know* the names in our predicate. What is the meaning of "realities which are not phenomenal"? All realities are and must be phenomena. God and the Soul, says Mr. Balfour, are realities which are not phenomenal. If God and the Soul are realities they are certainly phenomenal, for they can be shown by reasoning to exist. Even if they are inevitable hypotheses, to which the consciousness instinctively turns, they are phenomena of consciousness. Much, no doubt, may be said as to whether they are hypotheses which can be verified, or are simply answers given by ancient meditation on the World and Man. So far as

Positivists are concerned, they express no definite opinion as to the first of these realities; but very stoutly maintain the reality of the second, as abundantly manifested both in reasoning and in consciousness. Positivists, let us assure Mr. Balfour, have a very strong and personal conviction of the reality of the phenomenon they call the Soul, resting not on a mythical revelation, but on a logical Psychology.

In his fourth chapter, Mr. Balfour sums up the conclusions of Part I., which, he says, display "the pitiless glare of a creed like this" (Naturalism); and he gives in a short "catechism of the future" five propositions (A) representing "current teaching," and five propositions *contra* (B), representing "the naturalistic theory." Now as to these five dogmas of Naturalism, marked B, Positivism repudiates every one with the utmost condemnation, not only repudiates these dogmas, but for years has been engaged in criticising and exposing them. Whether M. Häckel and his so-called school have used language of the kind, whether some Agnostics and self-styled Darwinians or Evolutionists have laid themselves open to these criticisms, whether Mr. Kidd or Mr. Grant Allen and others have so represented "natural selection" and so forth, we need not inquire. Certainly, Positivists have never remotely adopted any of the dogmas (B) described as the "naturalistic" theory. Any one who will look at the *Positivist Review* will see a series of articles condemning any concession to any of these "naturalist" doctrines. Mr. Balfour's Part I., therefore, simply ascribes to Positivism opinions that it systematically repudiates.

To take these five points of the "catechism of the future" (B). I. Positivism disclaims any such assertion as that "reason is to be found neither in the beginning of things nor in their end." It treats as ridiculous

any assertion whatever about the beginning of things or the end of things; it rejects as a silly bit of Metaphysics the hypothesis that the Universe is the casual result of blind chance, and it has called Atheism the most irrational form of theologism. Positivism adopts no absolute doctrine of Necessity, nor does it take upon itself to deny that things are foreordained. It leaves the origin of the Universe and its government as a mystery, a problem as insoluble as the origin of God, of Matter, or of Man. II. Positivism repudiates as unphilosophical and immoral the dogma that "the universal flux is ordered by blind causation alone." So far from asserting that throughout the world "reason is absent, so also is love," Dr. Bridges in the *Positivist Review* showed how Mind and Love are perceptible in germ from the dawn of life. III. Still more monstrous as applied to Positivism is the third of Mr. Balfour's naturalistic dogmas, that the instincts, appetites, moralities, and superstitions evolved in the course of man's social development "all stand on an equality." Every word that Comte ever taught, or which has been professed by Positivists, is directly to the contrary. The Positivist scheme of moral and social development simply rests on the control of the lower appetites, instincts, ideas, and beliefs by the higher. IV. Positivism rejects as idle metaphysical puzzles, all attempts to dogmatise about what Reason is in itself, or what Beauty is in the abstract. It does not call the first an "expedient for preserving the race," nor the second an "accident." It does not identify reason with "physiological processes," nor does it regard Beauty as a "poor jest played upon us by Nature." V. Lastly, Positivism rejects every one of the "Naturalist" dogmas set down by Mr. Balfour in B 5. It does not believe that "the individual perishes." It does believe that the race will endure without practical

limits. It asserts that all conduct affects the destiny of the race. It denies that our ignorance makes us helpless, that our conduct was determined for us in a remote past, that we are impotent to foresee the consequences of our conduct. Every single doctrine which Mr. Balfour puts in the mouth of his "Naturalist" catechumen is vehemently denied by Positivists. And yet he says that Positivism and Naturalism are interchangeable terms.

The Ethic of Positivism is not derived from Utilitarianism, nor from Natural Selection, nor the survival of the fittest, nor from evolution, nor from physical science. It is an independent science, the final, the noblest, the most complex science: its doctrines are not reducible to the terms of any natural, *i.e.* physical, science. It is wholly independent of any theory of the Origin of the Universe or any scheme of universal Evolution. It flows from the natural supremacy and the moral nobility of the social emotions of mankind, the highest form of social instincts which are observable throughout the whole living series. The attempt to represent Positivist ethics as a device for securing some competitive advantage in the struggle for existence is a wild hallucination of Mr. Balfour's own mind, as absurd as if one were to say that Unionism, Toryism, Imperialism, and Anglicanism are all schemes of thought which may be more properly termed Socialism —the ultimate triumph of which must degrade man to the level of the kangaroo and the hedgehog. That is no exaggeration of the confusion of Mr. Balfour's logic and the extravagance of Mr. Balfour's terrors.

It is quite tiresome in this age to hear again that stale theatrical thunder about Free Will and Necessity, as if either view could decide, or even affect, any philosophical or religious problem. Mr. Balfour

repeats in the tones of some eloquent curate, fresh from the Honour Schools, the same grand phrases about the Freedom of the Will, which years ago were poured forth by Mr. Kingsley and Mr. Martineau. All healthy minds now admit, with Mill and Henry Sidgwick, that there are insoluble difficulties in the way of any absolute doctrine either of Free Will or of Necessity, and that neither doctrine can be conclusive either in Ethics or in Theology. The abstract dogma of the Freedom of Will is in logic fatal to any rational system of Ethic as well as to any logical belief in Divine Omniscience. Positivism at any rate asserts no abstract dogma of Necessity. And it is droll indeed to find the old puzzle, about the reign of Law being irreconcilable with the Freedom of the human Will, now put forward as a refutation of Positivism. Irreconcilable as these dogmas may be, Positivists fully accept both; and they have long ceased to trouble their minds about this obsolete conundrum.

Enough has been said to show that, so far as Positivism is concerned, Mr. Balfour's criticism of Naturalism, which he says is another term for Positivism, has not the slightest application or meaning, because his so-called Naturalism and true Positivism have not a single belief in common. Whether any school or thinker holds any such Naturalism at all, does not concern us in this review. Whether these criticisms be true or not, they are certainly not new. We have long been accustomed to the same conventional diatribes. It remains to consider Mr. Balfour's own beliefs, or rather his infidelities; for in this enlarged edition of *Philosophic Doubt*, he frankly says, that much as he doubts about Naturalism, he is far from being certain about any antidote to it. The whole book is pervaded with the spirit of universal scepticism—a kind of despairing quietism. It is a

prose and *fin de siècle* version of Omar Khayyám, that all we do and think vanishes into air like the wind. And so, since Man is a bubble, and Life a jest, let us —doubtingly and mockingly—put up with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Thirty-nine Articles; for these can hardly be greater shams and fallacies than everything else in Heaven and in Earth.

XX

HARRIET MARTINEAU'S POSITIVE PHILOSOPHY

THE reprint of Miss Martineau's version of the *Philosophie Positive* affords a convenient occasion for a few words as to this well-known and often reprinted work.[1] It has recently been added to the great series of Bohn's Libraries, which now number more than 750 volumes. The present edition is in three, instead of two volumes, but is otherwise a simple reprint of Miss Martineau's book of 1853. It is a reprint, not a revised edition.

My own part in this publication is very small and quite incidental, and can be disposed of in few words. I was invited to write a short biographical and bibliographical notice of Comte's fundamental work in a limited space, which I agreed to do on condition of being free to add a version of the last ten pages of the *Philosophie*, vol. vi., which Miss Martineau omitted for the reasons stated in her preface. I accordingly prepared the Introduction, pp. v.-xix. vol. i. of the reprint, and pp. 414-419 of vol. iii. The rest of the work I did not touch, nor did I see it in proof.

[1] *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, freely translated and condensed by Harriet Martineau, with an introduction by Frederic Harrison, 3 vols., G. Bell and Sons, 1895. New volumes of Bohn's Philosophical Library. 5s. each volume.

Some persons may wish to have a revised and enlarged edition of Miss Martineau's version, and it may be useful to remind them of what this would imply. Miss Martineau's book is not a translation, but a very free *condensation*. It is reduced to one-third of the bulk of the original, and in this process a great deal of Comte's elaborate provisoes and qualifications disappear. Careful students of Comte are well aware how important these qualifications are for any exact understanding of Comte's system. Any one bold enough to revise Miss Martineau's version would be constantly confronted with the problem, which of the condensed paragraphs of Miss Martineau stood most in need of amplification, which he could leave as they are, and how far vividness of impression should be sacrificed to accuracy and completeness of the author's meaning. Before he had solved this dilemma to his satisfaction, he would find that he had greatly increased the bulk, and had entirely lost the vigour of her condensation; and, in fact, that he had destroyed the character and purpose of her book. A revision of Miss Martineau would indeed mean a rewriting of the whole. There is perhaps hardly a page of it which the translators of the *Politique Positive* would not wish to vary or even to recast. But this is a very big task, which the present writer at any rate was not invited to undertake and would hesitate to undertake. One day, no doubt, the *Philosophie Positive* will be fully and exactly translated; but there is no prospect of this being undertaken at present, even if there were any demand for it. It would need ample time and an encyclopædic range of scientific training.

It might seem a more manageable task to point out errors or very important omissions in Miss Martineau's version. All readers of the original are well aware that she made some serious slips, and, in search of a

short cut to her author's meaning, often produced a different impression from that which he had designed. But careful collation of the two texts, French original and English condensation, will convince any competent reader that these points are so numerous, or else are so closely entwined in the language of the version, that they far exceed the limits or the resources of any possible table of *Corrigenda*, and could not be made intelligible without pages of new matter. It would be useless to point out an error here and there, which would imply approval of the remainder unnoticed. Every careful reader of Miss Martineau's version knows, for instance, that in speaking of the organisation of the Catholic Church (vol. iii. p. 93) she wrote that it caused "the *superiors* to be chosen by the *inferiors*," whereas Comte obviously said the contrary. There are not many slips of this kind, but few of them are so manifest and so easily corrected. Again, in a well-known place she substitutes the name of Shakespeare for that of Corneille. But as Comte used Corneille's name simply as an example of an eminent dramatist, the change is of no great consequence. On the whole, a careful reader will find that his list of *corrigenda et addenda* runs curiously near to become a scheme of rewriting the book.

Miss Martineau's remarkable paraphrase must stand by itself and remain what she made it. It can no more be revised or rewritten than the original itself could be. It was made fifty-three years ago, when she knew nothing else of Comte's writing, and before the completion of the *Politique Positive*. It is in vain for those who have assimilated Comte's later works to require from Miss Martineau what she had no qualifications to do, and what she never undertook or intended to do. Comte may have been somewhat hasty or indulgent in the praises he gave her work, and far too

liberal in substituting her *condensation* for his own book. He has been scandalously repaid for his generosity by pretended philosophers who have elaborately criticised a work of which they never read a line in the original, and which they know only by a paraphrase. But the fact stands that in all subsequent editions of the *Positivist Library*, Miss Martineau's condensation is inserted and Comte's *Philosophie Positive* is not. And her version has been retranslated into French, and is adopted by Comte's French followers. At the present day, therefore, this version cannot be said to have been superseded, and it is not likely to be rewritten or revised.

A much more serious problem would remain. Would it be worth while to attempt a revision of Miss Martineau's version without attempting to revise Auguste Comte's own original? And who is prepared to undertake this task? The rapid progress of the physical and social sciences within the last two generations, together with the multiplication and improvement in our mechanical instruments of knowledge, have so largely added to our means of special research that much of Comte's *Philosophie* is based upon conceptions in exact science which are now practically obsolete. This has not destroyed its value as *Philosophy*, but it effectually prevents us from treating it as if it were a scientific *manual*, a textbook of encyclopædic knowledge up to date. This it is not, and was never intended to be. And Positivism would only end in a degrading obscurantism, worse than any theological reaction, if it led its votaries into a superstitious idea that Auguste Comte, having appeared on earth, had finally closed the book of science in the year 1830.

Remember that the Mathematics of the *Philosophie Positive* appeared in 1830, the Astronomy and Physics

in 1835, the Chemistry and Biology in 1838, so that the physical science of these three volumes is almost or quite seventy years old. Recall what has been accomplished in these seventy years by electricity, photography, spectrum analysis, modern measures of heat, weight, and force, molecular analysis, Embryology, Bacteriology, the theory of Cell and Protoplasm and Evolution,—recall the discoveries of the Herschels, of Helmholtz, Kirchhoff, Thomson, Dumas, Pasteur, Owen, Darwin—and we shall feel how great an epoch separates the science of 1830 from the science of to-day. Comte made no attempt to present mankind with a *vade mecum* of science in the year 1830. But in attempting a co-ordination or philosophy of the sciences, in tracing their filiation, evolution, and mutual relations, he could only start from the state of contemporary science, that is, the state of science seventy years ago. The immense improvements in our means of observation, and the discoveries of the last seventy years, have not perhaps effected a revolution in our knowledge so great as some specialists pretend, and as the ignorant believe. But of course they have in many things altered the point of view of competent men of science.

In carrying out his wonderful colligation of the sciences, Auguste Comte was at times too confident of his data, and he undoubtedly hazarded some premature generalisations; and, in two sciences, at least, he had little to go upon save conclusions that have in our day been virtually recast, and in part superseded. These two sciences are Physics and Chemistry. In Mathematics his data need no modification at all: in Astronomy very little: and even in Biology his results are far less affected by modern research than followers of Haeckel and of Huxley might be led to suppose. Both the amount and the effect on his speculations

of Comte's scientific shortcomings have been much exaggerated by some of his most hostile critics. As his business was not to teach the special sciences, but to initiate a scheme of general philosophy, he was not called upon to dogmatise on specific observations, but to trace analogies, classify, and co-ordinate general laws. In doing this the use of an illustration or a deduction now shown to be obsolete, signifies less than would appear at first sight.

A great deal has been said about Comte's rather premature remark "that we can never know the chemical composition of the stars." It is the fashion to refer triumphantly to the revelations of the Spectrum. But if we look at what Comte says in his opening remarks on Astronomy (vol. ii. chap. i., 1835) we shall see that his general conception is not unworthy of a philosopher. In Astronomy, he says, our sole method of research is limited by our means of *visual* observation. This of course remains true. "We may conceivably ascertain," he says, "the form, distances, size, and movements of the heavenly bodies. But we never can study their chemical composition, their mineralogical structure, and still less the nature of any organic bodies on their surface. That is to say, our positive knowledge of the stars is limited to the geometric and mechanical phenomena they exhibit, and we cannot extend to them the physical, chemical, physiological, and even social form of knowledge that we can obtain from objects within our other means of observation." Now here is an obvious error, in so far as the spectrum does lead us to infer the presence in the stars of various gases and elements, though we are only just enabled to infer that in a general way. This hardly amounts to being able "to study the chemical composition" of these bodies with all the resources of the laboratory. It is a wonderful and interesting discovery, but it does

not go very far. It falls very far short of any effective Chemistry of the Stars, and one of the greatest of living authorities has warned the British Association how very cautious astronomers must be in attempting to generalise too definitely as to the indications of the Spectrum. Comte certainly made an error, and a rash forecast, just as a few years ago a philosopher would have erred who should have said we shall never be able to see into the skeleton of living beings! But this error of Comte does not destroy—it hardly weakens —the value of his general remarks on the field of Astronomy.

There is, no doubt, a want of philosophical caution in the negative prophecy that Comte hazarded; for philosophers, like politicians, ought never to use the word *never*—"or hardly ever." But there are far more doubtful statements than this to be found in the second and third volumes of Comte's *Philosophie.* I am not disposed, for my part, to regard the *Physique* and the *Chimie* as anything more than an interesting sketch of a possible synthesis of the two sciences—a sketch which now has mainly a historic value. Both these sciences have been practically recast since the last sixty years; and it is safer to study the more general outline of them given in the *Politique Positive*, where they are condensed as *Cosmologie* in less than fifty pages. The *Biologie*, in spite of all that the science owes to the biologists of the last two generations in Europe, is no doubt much less affected than the Physics or the Chemistry. But we had better accept it as a general proviso in reading the *Philosophie Positive* that the co-ordination of the Physical Sciences there sketched out was necessarily based on data now more or less obsolete.

But, I repeat, the work of Comte was to initiate a Philosophy, not to teach any special science. No one

denies that the philosophical intuitions of Aristotle have profound value and interest for us to-day, though based on physical and biological resources so rudimentary as his were. This is even more true of the conceptions of Hippocrates and Archimedes, in spite of their very primitive science. The same is true of the suggestions of Bacon and of Descartes, whose works are strewn with hypotheses that we now know to be wildly absurd. Newton's speculations about Light and Molecular Physics are not worthless, although they are not true. Nor are the physical and biological thoughts of Goethe rubbish, because he lived before Helmholtz and Darwin. We need not suppose that Comte's errors and ignorances are anything like so startling as those of Aristotle, Bacon, and Descartes. All the sciences were in a state far more ready for systematisation in the days of Comte than they were in the infancy of science in the times of these mighty philosophers. But it would be ridiculous and degrading to us to hesitate to admit that there are errors and ignorances in the review of the physical sciences made by Comte seventy years ago.

As to the special contribution of Comte to philosophy—his institution of Sociology, which occupies three of his six volumes in the *Philosophie*, and nearly the whole of the four volumes of the *Politique*—something else has to be said. Here again we must remember that Comte claimed to have *instituted* this new science of society, not to have *constituted* it. Again, I am not prepared to deny that it contains defective and unproven generalisations—errors and ignorances, if it is wished so to call them. It would be ridiculous and degrading in us to suppose it to be an infallible and final revelation of truth. But its shortcomings are not the result of subsequent dis-

coveries or the labours of sociologists since the time of Comte. The social science of the *Philosophie* was completed in 1842, and that of the *Politique* in 1854. And in spite of the researches in History and in Sociology of the last fifty years, I do not see that the *data* used by Comte have been very materially amended or recast. This, however, is the case with the second and third volume of his *Philosophie*; and they must always be studied subject to this qualification. The great achievement of the *Philosophie* will always be found in the three latter volumes, in the masterly scheme for the new science of Sociology, and what Mr. Mill was forced to call "the extraordinary merit of his historical analysis."

XXI

THE GHOST OF RELIGION

This and the following essay form the discussion with Mr. Herbert Spencer and others which appeared in the "Nineteenth Century," 1884, vols. xv. and xvi. (Nos. 83, 85, 88, 91, 93). Mr. Spencer had my essays and his own reprinted, with notes by himself and his friends, New York, 1885. After the lapse of twenty-three years, and careful reconsideration of all the essays, I reprint my own. I have again carefully studied Mr. Spencer's replies and his defence, but I find no reason to retract anything I urged, or to modify anything here set forth.

In the eighty-third number of the *Nineteenth Century*, vol. xv., 1884, there was to be found an article on Religion which justly awakened a profound and sustained interest. The creed of Agnosticism was there formulated anew by the acknowledged head of the Evolution philosophy, with a definiteness such as perhaps it never wore before. To my mind there is nothing in the whole range of modern religious discussion more cogent and more suggestive than the array of conclusions, the final outcome of which is marshalled in those twelve pages. It is the last word of the Agnostic philosophy in its long controversy with Theology. That word is decisive, and it is hard to conceive how Theology can rally for another

bout from such a *sorites* of dilemma as is there presented. My own humble purpose is not to criticise this paper, but to point its practical moral, and, if I may, to add to it a rider of my own. As a summary of philosophical conclusions on the theological problem, it seems to me frankly unanswerable. Speaking generally, I shall now dispute no part of it but one word, and that is the title. It is entitled "Religion." To me it is rather the Ghost of Religion. Religion as a living force lies in a different sphere.

The essay, which is packed with thought to a degree unusual even with Mr. Herbert Spencer, contains evidently three parts. The first deals with the historical Evolution of Religion, of which Mr. Spencer traces the germs in the primitive belief in ghosts. The second arrays the moral and intellectual dilemmas involved in all anthropomorphic theology into one long catena of difficulty, out of which it is hard to conceive any free mind emerging with success. The third part deals with the evolution of Religion in the future, and formulates, more precisely than has ever yet been effected, the positive creed of Agnostic philosophy.

Has, then, the Agnostic a positive creed? It would seem so; for Mr. Spencer brings us at last "to the one absolute certainty, the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed." But let no one suppose that this is merely a new name for the Great First Cause of so many theologies and metaphysics. In spite of the capital letters, and the use of theological terms as old as Isaiah or Athanasius, Mr. Spencer's Energy has no analogy with God. It is Eternal, Infinite, and Incomprehensible; but still it is not He, but It. It remains always Energy, Force, nothing anthropomorphic; such as electricity, or anything else that we might conceive as the

ultimate basis of all the physical forces. None of the positive attributes which have ever been predicated of God can be used of this Energy. Neither goodness, nor wisdom, nor justice, nor consciousness, nor will, nor life, can be ascribed, even by analogy, to this Force. Now a force to which we cannot apply the ideas of goodness, wisdom, justice, consciousness, or life, any more than we can to a circle, is certainly not God, has no analogy with God, nor even with what Pope has called the "Great First Cause, least understood." It shares some of the negative attributes of God and First Cause, but no positive one. It is, in fact, only the Unknowable a little more defined; though I do not remember that Mr. Spencer, or any evolution philosopher, has ever formulated the Unknowable in terms with so deep a theological ring as we hear in the phrase "Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed."

The terms do seem, perhaps, rather needlessly big and absolute. And fully accepting Mr. Spencer's logical canons, one does not see why it should be called an "absolute certainty." "Practical belief" satisfies me; and I doubt the legitimacy of substituting for it "absolute certainty." "Infinite" and "Eternal," also, can mean to Mr. Spencer nothing more than "to which we know no limits, no beginning or end," and, for my part, I prefer to say this. Again, "an Energy"—why AN Energy? The Unknowable may certainly consist of more than one energy. To assert the presence of one uniform energy is to profess to know something very important about the Unknowable: that it is homogeneous, and even identical, throughout the Universe. And then, "from which all things proceed" is perhaps a rather equivocal reversion to the theologic type. In the Athanasian Creed the Third Person

"proceeds" from the First and the Second. But this process has always been treated as a mystery; and it would be safer to avoid the phrases of mysticism. Let us keep the old words, for we all mean much the same thing; and I prefer to put it thus. All observations and meditation, Science and Philosophy, bring us "to the *practical belief* that man is ever in the presence of *some energy or energies*, of which he knows nothing, and to which therefore he would be wise to assign no limits, conditions, or functions." This is, doubtless, what Mr. Spencer himself means. For my part, I prefer his old term, the Unknowable. Though I have always thought that it would be more philosophical not to assert of the Unknown that it is Unknowable. And, indeed, I would rather not use the capital letter, but stick literally to our evidence, and say frankly "the unknown."

Thus viewed, the attempt, so to speak, to put a little unction into the Unknowable is hardly worth the philosophical inaccuracy it involves; and such is the drawback to any use of picturesque language. So stated, the positive creed of Agnosticism still retains its negative character. It has a series of propositions and terms, every one of which is a negation. A friend of my own, who was much pressed to say how much of the Athanasian Creed he still accepted, once said that he clung to the idea "that there was a sort of a something." In homely words such as the unlearned can understand, that is precisely what the religion of the Agnostic comes to, "the belief that there is a sort of a something, about which we can know nothing."

Now let us profess that, as a philosophical answer to the theological problem, that is entirely our own position. The Positivist answer is of course the same as the Agnostic answer. Why, then, do we object to

be called Agnostics? Simply because Agnostic is only dog-Greek for "don't know," and we have no taste to be called "don't knows." The Church organ calls us Agnostics, but that is only by way of prejudice. Our religion does not consist in a comprehensive negation; we are not for ever replying to the theological problem; we are quite unconcerned by the theological problem, and have something that we do care for, and do know. Englishmen are Europeans, and many of them are Christians, and they usually prefer to call themselves Englishmen, Christians, or the like, rather than non-Asiatics or anti-Mahometans. Some people still prefer to call themselves Protestants rather than Christians, but the taste is dying out, except amongst Irish Orangemen, and even the Nonconformist newspaper has been induced by Mr. Matthew Arnold to drop its famous motto: "The dissidence of Dissent, and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion." For a man to say that his religion is Agnosticism is simply the sceptical equivalent of saying that his religion is Protestantism. Both mean that his religion is to deny and to differ. But this is not religion. The business of religion is to affirm and to unite, and nothing can be religion but that which at once affirms truth and unites men.

The purpose of the present essay is to show that Agnosticism, though a valid and final answer to the theological or ontological problem—"what is the ultimate cause of the world and of man?"—is not a religion nor the shadow of a religion. It offers none of the rudiments or elements of religion, and religion is not to be found in that line at all. It is the mere disembodied spirit of dead religion: as was said at the outset, it is the ghost of religion. Agnosticism, perfectly legitimate as the true answer of science to an effete question, has shown us that religion is not to

be found anywhere within the realm of Law. Having brought us to the answer, "no cause that we know of," it is laughable to call that negation religion. Mr. Mark Pattison, one of the acutest minds of modern Oxford, rather oddly says that the idea of deity has now been "defecated to a pure transparency." The evolution philosophy goes a step farther and defecates the idea of cause to a pure transparency. Theology and ontology alike end in the Everlasting No with which science confronts all their assertions. But how whimsical is it to tell us that religion, which cannot find any resting-place in theology or ontology, is to find its true home in the Everlasting No! That which is defecated to a pure transparency can never supply a religion to any human being but a philosopher constructing a system. It is quite conceivable that religion is to end with theology, and both might in the course of evolution become an anachronism. But if religion there is still to be, it cannot be found in this No-man's-land and Know-nothing creed. Better bury religion at once than let its ghost walk uneasy in our dreams.

The true lesson is that we must hark back, and leave the realm of cause. The accident of religion has been mistaken for the essence of religion. The essence of religion is not to answer a question, but to govern and unite men and societies by giving them common beliefs and duties. Theologies tried to do this, and long did it, by resting on certain answers to certain questions. The progress of thought has upset one answer after another, and now the final verdict of philosophy is that all the answers are unmeaning, and that no rational answer can be given. It follows, then, that questions and answers, being but accidents of religion, must both be given up. A base of belief and duty must be looked for elsewhere, and

when this has been found, then again religion will succeed in governing and uniting men. Where is this base to be found? Since the realm of Cause has failed to give us foothold, we must fall back upon the realm of Law—social, moral, and mental law, and not merely physical. Religion consists, not in answering certain questions, but in making men of a certain quality. And the law—moral, mental, social—is pre-eminently the field wherein men may be governed and united. Hence to the religion of Cause there succeeds the religion of Law. But the religion of Law or Science is Positivism.

It is no part of my purpose to criticise Mr. Spencer's memorable essay, except so far as it is necessary to show that that which is a sound philosophical conclusion is not religion, simply by reason that it relates to the subject-matter of theology. But a few words may be suffered as to the historical evolution of religion. To many persons it will sound rather whimsical, and possibly almost a sneer, to trace the germs of religion to the ghost-theory. Our friends of the Psychical Research will prick up their ears, and expect to be taken *au grand sérieux*. But the conception is a thoroughly solid one, and of most suggestive kind. Beyond all doubt, the hypothesis of quasi-human immaterial spirits working within and behind familiar phenomena did take its rise from the idea of the other self which the imagination continually presents to the early reflections of man. And, beyond all doubt, the phenomena of dreams, and the gradual construction of a theory of ghosts, is a very impressive and vivid form of the notion of the other self. It would, I think, be wrong to assert that it is the only form of the notion, and one can hardly suppose that Mr. Spencer would limit himself to that. But, in any case, the construction of

a coherent theory of ghosts is a typical instance of a belief in a quasi-human spirit-world. Glorify and amplify this idea, and apply it to the whole of nature, and we get a god-world, a multitude of superhuman divine spirits.

That is the philosophical explanation of the rise of theology, of the peopling of Nature with divine spirits. But does it explain the rise of Religion? No, for theology and religion are not conterminous. Mr. Spencer has unwittingly conceded to the divines that which they assume so confidently—that theology is the same thing as religion, and that there was no religion at all until there was a belief in superhuman spirits within and behind Nature. This is obviously an oversight. We have to go very much farther back for the genesis of religion. There were countless centuries of time, and there were, and there are, countless millions of men for whom no doctrine of superhuman spirits ever took coherent form. In all these ages and races, probably by far the most numerous that our planet has witnessed, there was religion in all kinds of definite form. Comte calls it Fetichism—terms are not important: roughly, we may call it Nature-worship. The religion in all these types was the belief and worship, not of spirits of any kind, not of any immaterial, imagined being *inside* things, but of the actual visible things themselves—trees, stones, rivers, mountains, earth, fire, stars, sun, and sky. Some of the most abiding and powerful of all religions have consisted in elaborate worship of these physical objects treated frankly as physical objects, without trace of ghost, spirit, or god. To say nothing of fire-worship, river, and tree worship, the venerable religion of China, far the most vast of all systematic religions, is wholly based on reverence for Earth, Sky, and ancestors treated objectively,

and not as the abode of subjective immaterial spirits.

Hence the origin of religion is to be sought in the countless ages before the rise of theology; before spirits, ghosts, or gods ever took definite form in the human mind. The primitive uncultured man frankly worshipped external objects in love and in fear, ascribing to them quasi-human powers and feelings. All that we read about Animism, ghosts, spirits, and universal ideas of godhead in this truly primitive stage are metaphysical assumptions of men trying to read the ideas of later epochs into the facts of an earlier epoch. Nothing is more certain than that man everywhere started with a simple worship of natural objects. And the bearing of this on the future of religion is decisive. The religion of man in the vast cycles of primitive ages was reverence for Nature as influencing Man. The religion of man in the vast cycles that are to come will be the reverence for Humanity as supported by Nature.

The religion of man in the twenty or thirty centuries of Theology was reverence for the assumed authors or controllers of Nature. But, that assumption having broken down, religion does not break up with it. On the contrary, it enters on a far greater and more potent career, inasmuch as the natural emotions of the human heart are now combined with the certainty of scientific knowledge. The final religion of enlightened man is the systematised and scientific form of the spontaneous religion of natural man. Both rest on the same elements—belief in the Power which controls his life, and grateful reverence for the Power so acknowledged. The primitive man thought that Power to be the object of Nature affecting Man. The cultured man knows that Power to be Humanity itself, controlling and controlled by

nature according to natural law. The transitional and perpetually changing creed of Theology has been an interlude. Agnosticism has uttered its epilogue. But Agnosticism is no more religion than differentiation or the nebular hypothesis is religion.

We have only to see what are the elements and ends of religion to recognise that we cannot find it in the negative and the unknown. In any reasonable use of language religion implies some kind of belief in a Power outside ourselves, some kind of awe and gratitude felt for that Power, some kind of influence exerted by it over our lives. There are always in some sort these three elements— belief, worship, conduct. A religion which gives us nothing in particular to believe, nothing as an object of awe and gratitude, which has no special relation to human duty, is not a religion at all. It may be formula, a generalisation, a logical postulate; but it is not a religion. The universal presence of the unknowable (or rather of the unknown) substratum is not a religion. It is a logical postulate. You may call it, if you please, the first axiom of science, a law of the human mind, or perhaps better the universal postulate of philosophy. But try it by every test which indicates religion and you will find it wanting.

The points which the Unknowable has in common with the object of any religion are very slight and superficial. As the universal substratum it has some analogy with other superhuman objects of worship. But Force, Gravitation, Atom, Undulation, Vibration, and other abstract notions have much the same kind of analogy, but nobody ever dreamed of a religion of gravitation, or the worship of molecules. The Unknowable has managed to get itself spelt with a capital *U*; but Carlyle taught us to spell the Everlasting No with capitals also. The Unknowable is no doubt

mysterious, and Godhead is mysterious. It certainly appeals to the sense of wonder, and the Trinity appeals to the sense of wonder. It suggests vague and infinite extension, as does the idea of deity: but then Time and Space equally suggest vague and infinite extension. Yet no one but a delirious Kantist ever professed that Time and Space were his religion. These seem all the qualities which the Unknowable has in common with objects of worship — ubiquity, mystery, and immensity. But these qualities it shares with some other postulates of thought.

But try it by all the other recognised tests of religion. Religion is not made up of wonder, or of a vague sense of immensity, unsatisfied yearning after infinity. Theology, seeking a refuge in the unintelligible, has no doubt accustomed this generation to imagine that a yearning after infinity is the sum and substance of religion. But that is a metaphysical disease of the age. And there is no reason that philosophers should accept this hysterical piece of transcendentalism, and assume that they have found the field of religion when they have found a field for unquenchable yearning after infinity. Wonder has its place in religion, and so has mystery; but it is a subordinate place. The roots and fibres of religion are to be found in love, awe, sympathy, gratitude, consciousness of inferiority and of dependence, community of will, acceptance of control, manifestation of purpose, reverence for majesty, goodness, creative energy, and life. Where these things are not, religion is not.

Let us take each one of these three elements of religion—belief, worship, conduct—and try them all in turn as applicable to the Unknowable. How mere a phrase must any religion be of which neither belief, nor worship, nor conduct can be spoken! Imagine a religion which can have no believers, because, *ex*

hypothesi, its adepts are forbidden to believe anything about it. Imagine a religion which excludes the idea of worship because its sole dogma is the infinity of Nothingness. Although the Unknowable is logically said to be Something, yet the something of which we neither know nor conceive anything is practically nothing. Lastly, imagine a religion which can have no relation to conduct; for obviously the Unknowable can give us no intelligible help to conduct, and *ex vi termini* can have no bearing on conduct. A religion which could not make any one any better, which would leave the human heart and human society just as it found them, which left no foothold for devotion, and none for faith; which could have no creed, no doctrines, no temples, no priests, no teachers, no rites, no morality, no beauty, no hope, no consolation; which is summed up in one dogma—the Unknowable is everywhere, and Evolution is its prophet—this is indeed "to defecate religion to a pure transparency."

The growing weakness of religion has long been that it is being thrust inch by inch off the platform of knowledge; and we watch with sympathy the desperate efforts of all religious spirits to maintain the relations between knowledge and religion. And now it hears the invitation of Evolution to abandon the domain of knowledge, and to migrate to the domain of no-knowledge. The true Rock of Ages, says the philosopher, is the Unknowable. To the eye of Faith all things are henceforth ἀκαταληψία, as Cicero calls it. The paradox would hardly be greater if we were told that true religion consisted in unlimited Vice.

What is religion for? Why do we want it? And what do we expect it to do for us? If it can give us no sure ground for our minds to rest on, nothing to purify the heart, to exalt the sense of sympathy, to deepen our sense of beauty, to strengthen our resolves

to chasten us into resignation, and to kindle a spirit of self-sacrifice—what is the good of it? The Unknowable, *ex hypothesi*, can do none of these things. The object of all religion, in any known variety of religion, has invariably had some quasi-human and sympathetic relation to man and human life. It follows from the very meaning of religion that it could not effect any of its work without such quality or relation. It would be hardly sane to make a religion out of the Equator or the Binomial theorem. Whether it was the religion of the lowest savage, of the Polytheist, or of the Hegelian Theist; whether the object of the worship were a river, the Moon, the Sky, Apollo, Thor, God, or First Cause, there has always been some chain of sympathy—influence on the one side, and veneration on the other.

However rudimentary, there must be a belief in some Power influencing the believer, whose influence he repays with awe and gratitude and a desire to conform his life thereto. But to make a religion out of the Unknowable is far more extravagant than to make it out of the Equator. We know something of the Equator; it influences seamen, equatorial peoples, and geographers not a little, and we all hesitate, as was once said, to speak disrespectfully of the Equator. But would it be blasphemy to speak disrespectfully of the Unknowable? Our minds are a blank about it. As to acknowledging the Unknowable, or trusting in it, or feeling its influence over us, or paying gratitude to it, or conforming our lives to it, or looking to it for help—the use of such words about it is unmeaning. We can wonder at it, as the child wonders at the "twinkling star," and that is all. It is a religion only to stare at.

Religion is not a thing of star-gazing and staring, but of life and action. And the condition of any such

effect on our lives and our hearts is some sort of vital quality in that which is the object of the religion. The mountain, sun, or sky which untutored man worships is thought to have some sort of vital quality, some potency of the kind possessed by organic beings. When mountain, sun, and sky cease to have this vital potency, educated man ceases to worship them. Of course all sorts and conditions of divine spirits are assumed in a pre-eminent degree to have this quality, and hence the tremendous force exerted by all religions of divine spirits. Philosophy and the euthanasia of theology have certainly reduced this vital quality to a minimum in our day, and I suppose Dean Mansel's Bampton Lectures touched the low-water mark of vitality as predicated of the Divine Being. Of all modern theologians, the Dean came the nearest to the Evolution negation. But there is a gulf which separates even his all-negative deity from Mr. Spencer's impersonal, unconscious, unthinking, and unthinkable Energy.

Knowledge is of course wholly within the sphere of the Known. Our moral and social science is, of course, within the sphere of knowledge. Moral and social well-being, moral and social education, progress, perfection naturally rest on moral and social science. Civilisation rests on moral and social progress. And happiness can only be secured by both. But if religion has its sphere in the Unknown and Unknowable, it is thereby outside all this field of the Known. In other words, Religion (of the Unknowable type) is *ex hypothesi* outside the sphere of knowledge, of civilisation, of social discipline, of morality, of progress, and of happiness. It has no part or parcel in human life. It fills a brief and mysterious chapter in a system of philosophy.

By their fruits you shall know them—is true of all

sorts of religion. And what are the fruits of the Unknowable but the Dead Sea apples? Obviously it can teach us nothing, influence us in nothing, for the absolutely incalculable and unintelligible can give us neither ground for action nor thought. Nor can it touch any one of our feelings but that of wonder, mystery, and sense of human helplessness. Helpless, objectless, apathetic wonder at an inscrutable infinity may be attractive to a metaphysical divine; but it does not sound like a working force in the world. Does the Evolutionist commune with the Unknowable in the secret silence of his chamber? Does he meditate on it, saying, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength? One would like to see the new *Imitatio Ignoti*. It was said of old, *Ignotum omne pro magnifico*. But the new version is to be *Ignotum omne pro divino*.

One would like to know how much of the Evolutionist's day is consecrated to seeking the Unknowable in a devout way, and what the religious exercises might be. How does the man of science approach the All-Nothingness? and the microscopist, and the embryologist, and the vivisectionist? What do they learn about it, what strength or comfort does it give them? Nothing—nothing: it is an ever-present conundrum to be everlastingly given up, and perpetually to be asked of oneself and one's neighbours, but without waiting for the answer. Tantalus and Sisyphus bore their insoluble tasks, and the Evolutionist carries about his riddle without an answer, his unquenchable thirst to know that which he only knows he can never know. *Quisque suos patimur Manes*. But Tantalus and Sisyphus called it Hell and the retribution of the Gods. The Evolutionist calls it Religion, and one might almost say Paradise.

A child comes up to our Evolutionist friend, looks

up in his wise and meditative face, and says, "Oh! wise and great Master, what is religion?" And he tells that child, It is the presence of the Unknowable. "But what," asks the child, "am I to believe about it?" "Believe that you can never know anything about it." "But how am I to learn to do my duty?" "Oh! for duty you must turn to the known, to moral and social science." And a mother wrung with agony for the loss of her child, or the wife crushed by the death of her children's father, or the helpless and the oppressed, the poor and the needy, men, women, and children, in sorrow, doubt, and want, longing for something to comfort them and to guide them, something to believe in, to hope for, to love, and to worship—they come to our philosopher and they say, "Your men of science have routed our priests, and have silenced our old teachers. What religious faith do you give us in its place?" And the philosopher replies (his full heart bleeding for them) and he says, "Think on the Unknowable."

And in the hour of pain, danger, or death, can any one think of the Unknowable, hope anything of the Unknowable, or find any consolation therein? Altars might be built to some Unknown God, conceived as a real being, knowing us, though not known by us yet. But altars to the unknowable infinity, even metaphorical altars, are impossible, for this unknown can never be known, and we have not the smallest reason to imagine that it either knew us, or affects us, or anybody, or anything. As the Unknowable cannot bring men together in a common belief, or for common purposes, or kindred feeling, it can no more unite men than the precession of the equinoxes can unite them. So there can never be congregations of Unknowable worshippers, nor churches dedicated to the Holy Unknowable, nor images nor symbols of the

Unknowable mystery. Yes! there is one symbol of the Infinite Unknowable, and it is perhaps the most definite and ultimate word that can be said about it. The precise and yet inexhaustible language of mathematics enables us to express, in a common algebraic formula, the exact combination of the unknown raised to its highest power of infinity. That formula is (x^n), and here we have the beginning and perhaps the end of a symbolism for the religion of the Infinite Unknowable. Schools, academies, temples of the Unknowable, there cannot be. But where two or three are gathered together to worship the Unknowable, there the algebraic formula may suffice to give form to their emotions: they may be heard to profess their unwearying belief in (x^n), even if no weak brother with ritualist tendencies be heard to cry, "O x^n, love us, help us, make us one with thee!"

These things have their serious side, and suggest the real difficulties in the way of the theory. The alternative is this: Is religion a mode of answering a question in ontology, or is it an institution for affecting human life by acting on the human spirit? If it be the latter, then there can be no religion of the Unknowable, and the sphere of religion must be sought elsewhere in the Knowable. We may accept with the utmost confidence all that the evolution philosophy asserts and denies as to the perpetual indications of an ultimate energy, omnipresent and unlimited, and, so far as we can see, of inscrutable mysteriousness. That remains an ultimate scientific idea, one no doubt of profound importance. But why should this idea be dignified with the name of religion, when it has not one of the elements of religion, except infinity and mystery? The hallowed name of religion has meant, in a thousand languages, man's deepest convictions, his surest hopes, the most

sacred yearnings of his heart, that which can bind in brotherhood generations of men, comfort the fatherless and the widow, uphold the martyr at the stake, and the hero in his long battle. Why retain this magnificent word, rich with the associations of all that is great, pure, and lovely in human nature, if it is to be henceforth limited to an idea, that can only be expressed by the formula (x^n); and which by the hypothesis can have nothing to do with either knowledge, belief, sympathy, hope, life, duty, or happiness? It is not religion, this. It is a logician's artifice to escape from an awkward dilemma.

One word in conclusion to those who would see religion a working reality, and not a logical artifice. The startling *reductio ad absurdum* of relegating religion to the unknowable is only the last step in the process which has gradually reduced religion to an incomprehensible *minimum*. And this has been the work of theologians obstinately fighting a losing battle, and withdrawing at every defeat into a more impregnable and narrower fastness. They have thrown over one after another the claims of religion and the attributes of divinity. They are so hopeless of continuing the contest on the open field of the known that they more and more seek to withdraw to the cloud-world of the transcendental. They are so terribly afraid of an anthropomorphic God that they have sublimated him into a metaphorical expression—"defecated the idea to a pure transparency," as one of the most eminent of them puts it. Dean Mansel is separated from Mr. Spencer by degree, not in kind. And now they are pushed by Evolution into the abyss, and are solemnly assured that the reconciliation of Religion and Science is effected by this religion of the Unknowable—this *chimaera bombinans in vacuo*. Their Infinites and their Incomprehensibles, their

Absolute and their Unconditioned, have brought them to this. It is only one step from the sublime to the unknowable.

Practically, so far as it affects the lives of men and women in the battle of life, the Absolute and Unconditioned Godhead of learned divines is very much the same thing as the Absolute Unknowable. You may rout a logician by a "pure transparency," but you cannot check vice, crime, and war by it, nor train up men and women in holiness and truth. And the set of all modern theology is away from the anthropomorphic and into the Absolute. In trying to save a religion of the spirit-world, theologians are abandoning all religion of the real world; they are turning religion into formulas and phrases, and are taking out of it all power over life, duty, and society.

I say, in a word, unless religion is to be anthropomorphic, there can be no working religion at all. How strange is this new cry, sprung up in our own generation, that religion is dishonoured by being anthropomorphic! Fetichism, Polytheism, Confucianism, Mediæval Christianity, and Bible Puritanism have all been intensely anthropomorphic, and all owed their strength and dominion to that fact. You can have no religion without kinship, sympathy, relation of some human kind between the believer, worshipper, servant, and the object of his belief, veneration, and service. The Neo-Theisms have all the same mortal weakness that the Unknowable has. They offer no kinship, sympathy, or relation whatever between worshipper and worshipped. They too are logical formulas begotten in controversy, dwelling apart from man and the world. If the formula of the Unknowable is (x^n) or the Unknown raised to infinity, theirs is (nx), some unknown expression of Infinity. Neither (x^n) nor (nx) will ever make good men and women.

If we leave the region of formulas and go back to the practical effect of religion on human conduct, we must be driven to the conclusion that the future of religion is to be, not only what every real religion has ever been, anthropomorphic—but frankly anthropic. The attempted religion of Spiritism has lost one after another every resource of a real religion, until *risu solvuntur tabulae*, and it ends in a religion of Nothingism. It is the Nemesis of Faith in spiritual abstractions and figments. The hypothesis has burst, and leaves the Void. The future will have then to return to the Knowable and the certainly known, to the religion of Realism. It must give up explaining the Universe, and content itself with explaining human life. Humanity is the grandest object of reverence within the region of the real and the known, Humanity with the World on which it rests as its base and environment. Religion, having failed in the superhuman world, returns to the human world. Here religion can find again all its certainty, all its depth of human sympathy, all its claim to command and reward the purest self-sacrifice and love. We can take our place again with all the great religious spirits who have ever moulded the faith and life of men, and we find ourselves in harmony with the devout of every faith who are manfully battling with sin and discord. The way for us is the clearer as we find the religion of Spiritism, in its long and restless evolution of thirty centuries, ending in the legitimate deduction, the religion of the Unknowable, a paradox as memorable as any in the history of the human mind. The alternative is very plain. Shall we cling to a religion of Spiritism when philosophy is whittling away spirit to Nothing? Or shall we accept a religion of Realism, where all the great traditions and functions of religion are retained unbroken?

XXII

AGNOSTIC METAPHYSICS

I

MANY years ago I warned Mr. Herbert Spencer that his Religion of the Unknowable was certain to lead him into strange company. "To invoke the Unknowable," I said, "is to re-open the whole range of Metaphysics; and the entire apparatus of Theology will follow through the breach." I quoted Mr. G. Lewes's admirable remark,[1] "that the foundations of a Creed can rest only on the Known and the Knowable." We see the result. Mr. Spencer developed his Unknowable into an "Infinite and Eternal Energy, by which all things are created and sustained"; though he afterwards modified these highly theological words, "created and sustained."

He discovered it to be the Ultimate Cause, the All-Being, the Creative Power, and all the other "alternative impossibilities of thought" which he once cast in the teeth of the older theologies. Naturally there is joy over one philosopher that repenteth. The *Christian World* claims this as equivalent to the assertion that God is the mind and spirit of the universe; and the *Christian World* says these words might have been used by Butler or Paley.[2] This is,

[1] *Problems of Life and Mind*, vol. i. Preface.
[2] *The Christian World*, June 5 and July 3, 1884.

indeed, very true; but it is strange to find the philosophy of one who makes it a point of conscience not to enter a church described as "the fitting and natural introduction to inspiration!"

The admirers of Mr. Spencer's genius—and I count myself amongst the earliest—will not regret that he has been induced to lay aside his vast task of philosophic synthesis, in order more fully to explain his views about Religion. This is, indeed, for the thoughtful, as well as the practical, world the great question of our age, and the discussion that was started by his paper[1] and by mine[2] has opened many topics of general interest. Mr. Spencer has been led to give to some of his views a certainly new development, and he has treated of matters which he had not previously touched. Various critics have joined the debate. Sir James Stephen[3] brought into play his Nasmyth hammer of Common Sense, and has asked the bold and truly characteristic question: "Can we not do just as well without any religion at all?" And then Mr. Wilfrid Ward,[4] "the rising hope of the stern and unbending" Papists, steps in to remind us of the ancient maxim—*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus.*

I cannot altogether agree with a friend who tells me that controversy is pure evil. It is not so when it leads to a closer sifting of important doctrines; when it is inspired with friendly feeling, and has no other object than to arrive at the truth. There were no mere "compliments" in my expressions of respect for Mr. Spencer and his work. I habitually speak of him as the only living Englishman who can fairly lay claim to the name of philosopher; nay, he is, I believe, the

[1] H. Spencer, in *Nineteenth Century*, January and July, 1884. No 83, vol. xv.

[2] F. Harrison, in *Nineteenth Century*, March 1884 No. 85, vol xv.

[3] Sir J. Stephen, in *Nineteenth Century*, June 1884.

[4] W. Ward, in *National Review*, June 1884.

only man in Europe now living who has constructed a real system of philosophy. Very much in that philosophy I willingly adopt; as a philosophical theory I accept his idea of the Unknowable. My rejection of it as the basis of Religion is no new thing. The substance of my essay on the "Ghost of Religion" I have long ago taught at Newton Hall. The difference between Mr. Spencer and myself as to what religion means is vital and profound. So deep is it that it justifies me in returning to these questions, and still further disturbing his philosophic labour. But our long friendship I trust will survive the inevitable dispute.

It will clear up much at issue between us if it be remembered that to me this question is one primarily of religion; to Mr. Spencer, one primarily of philosophy. He is dealing with transcendental conceptions, intelligible only to certain trained metaphysicians: I have been dealing with religion as it affects the lives of men and women in the world. Hence, if I admit with him that philosophy points to an unknowable and inconceivable Reality behind phenomena, I insist that, to ordinary men and women, an unknowable and inconceivable Reality is practically an Unreality. The Everlasting Yes which the Evolutionist metaphysician is conscious of, but cannot conceive, is in effect on the public a mere Everlasting No; and a religion which begins and ends with the mystery of the Unknowable is not religion at all, but a mere logician's formula. This is how it comes about that Mr. Spencer complains that I have misunderstood him or have not read his books, that I fail to represent him, or even misrepresent him. I cannot admit that I have either misunderstood him or misrepresented him on any single point. I have studied his books part by part and chapter by chapter, and have examined the authorities on which he relies.

He seems to think that all hesitation to accept his views will disappear if men will only turn to his *First Principles*, his *Principles of Sociology*, and his *Descriptive Sociology*, where he has "proved" this and "disproved" that, and arrayed the arguments and the evidence for every doctrine in turn. Now, for my part, I have studied all this, to my great pleasure and profit, since the first number of *A Synthetic Philosophy* appeared. Mr. Spencer objects to discipleship, or I would say that I am in very many things one of his disciples myself. But in this matter of religion I hold still, as I have held from the first, that Mr. Spencer is mistaken as to the history, the nature, and the function of religion. It is quite true that he and I are at opposite poles in what relates to the work of religion on man and on life. In all he has written, he treats religion as mainly a thing of the mind, and concerned essentially with mystery. I say—and here I am on my own ground—that religion is mainly a thing of feeling and of conduct, and is concerned essentially with duty. I agree that religion has also an intellectual base; but here I insist that this intellectual basis must rest on something that can be known and conceived and at least partly understood; and that it cannot be found at all in what is unknowable, inconceivable, and in no way whatever to be understood.

Now, in maintaining this, I have with me almost the whole of the competent minds which have dealt with this question. Mr. Spencer puts it rather as if it were merely fanaticism on my part which prevents me from accepting his theory of Religion. Mr. Spencer must remember that in his Religion of the Unknowable he stands almost alone. He is, in fact, insisting to mankind, in a matter where all men have some opinion, on one of the most gigantic paradoxes in the history of thought. I know myself of no single

thinker in Europe who has come forward to support this religion of an Unknowable Cause, which cannot be presented in terms of consciousness, to which the words emotion, will, intelligence cannot be applied with any meaning, and yet which stands in the place of a supposed anthropomorphic Creator. Mr. George H. Lewes, who of all modern philosophers was the closest to Mr. Spencer, and of recent English philosophers the most nearly his equal, wrote ten years ago:—"Deeply as we may feel the mystery of the universe and the limitations of our faculties, *the foundations of a creed can only rest on the Known and the Knowable.*" With that I believe every school of thought but a few dreamy mystics have agreed. Every religious teacher, movement, or body has equally started from that. For myself, I feel that I stand alongside of the religious spirits of every time and of every church in claiming for religion some intelligible object of reverence, and the field of feeling and of conduct, as well as that of awe. Every notice of my criticism of Mr. Spencer which has fallen under my eye adopted my view of the hollowness of the Unknowable as a basis of Religion. So say Agnostics, Materialists, Sceptics, Christians, Catholics, Theists, and Positivists. All with one consent disclaim making a Religion of the Unknowable. Mr. Herbert Spencer may construct an Athanasian Creed of the "Inscrutable Existence"—which is neither God nor being—but he stands as yet *Athanasius contra mundum.* It is not, therefore, through the hardness of my heart and the stiffness of my neck that I cannot follow him here.

Let us now sum up the various positions which Mr. Spencer would impose on us as to Religion. After his two articles and the recent discussion we can hardly mistake him, and they justify my saying

that they form a gigantic paradox. Mr. Spencer maintains that :—

1. The proper object of Religion is a Something which can never be known, or conceived, or understood ; to which we cannot apply the terms emotion, will, intelligence ; of which we cannot affirm or deny that it is either person, or being, or mind, or matter, or indeed anything else.

2. All that we can say of it is, that it is an Inscrutable Existence or an Unknowable Cause : we can neither know nor conceive what it is, nor how it came about, nor how it operates. It is, notwithstanding, the Ultimate Cause, the All-Being, the Creative Power.

3. The essential business of Religion, so understood, is to keep alive the consciousness of a mystery that cannot be fathomed.

4. We are not concerned with the question, "What effect this religion will have as a moral agent?" or, "Whether it will make good men and women?" Religion has to do with mystery, not with morals.

These are the paradoxes to which my fanaticism refuses to assent.

Now these were the views about Religion which I found in Mr. Spencer's first article, and they certainly are repeated in his second. He says :—"The Power which transcends phenomena cannot be brought within the forms of our finite thought." "The Ultimate Power is not representable in terms of human consciousness." "The attributes of personality cannot be conceived by us as attributes of the Unknown Cause of things." "The nature of the Reality transcending appearances cannot be known, yet its existence is necessarily implied." "No conception of this Reality can be framed by us." "This Inscrut-

able Existence which Science, in the last resort, is compelled to recognise as unreached by its deepest analyses of matter, motion, thought, and feeling." "In ascribing to the Unknowable Cause of things such human attributes as emotion, will, intelligence, we are using words which, when thus applied, have no corresponding ideas." There can be no kind of doubt about all this. I said Mr. Spencer proposes, as the object of religion, an abstraction which we cannot conceive, or present in thought, or regard as having personality, or as capable of feeling, purpose, or thought —in familiar words, I said it was "a sort of a something, about which we can know nothing."

Mr. Spencer complains that I called this Something a negation, an All-Nothingness, an (x^n), and an Everlasting No. He now says that this Something is the All-Being. The Unknowable is the Ultimate Reality —the sole existence;—the entire Cosmos, as we are conscious of it, being a mere show. In familiar words:—Everything is nought, and the Unknowable is the only real Thing. I quite agree that this is Mr. Spencer's position as a metaphysician. It is not at all new to me, for it is worked out in his *First Principles* most distinctly. Ten years ago, when I reviewed Mr. Lewes's *Problems of Life and Mind*, I criticised Mr. Spencer's Transfigured Realism as being too absolute. I then stated my own philosophical position to be that, "our scientific conceptions within have a good working correspondence with an (assumed) reality without—we having no means of knowing whether the absolute correspondence between them be great or small, or whether there be any absolute correspondence at all." To that I adhere; and, whilst I accept the doctrine of an Unknown substratum, I cannot assent to the doctrine that the Unknowable is the Absolute Reality. But I am quite aware that

he holds it, nor have I ever said that he did not. On the contrary, I granted that it might be the first axiom of science or the universal postulate of philosophy. But it is not a religion.[1]

I said then, and I say still, speaking with regard to religion, and from the religious point of view, that the Metaphysician's Unknowable is tantamount to a Nothing. The philosopher may choose to say that there is an Ultimate Reality which we cannot conceive, or know, or liken to anything we do know. But these subtleties of speculation are utterly unintelligible to the ordinary public. And to tell them that they are to worship this Unknowable is equivalent to telling them to worship nothing. I quite agree that Mr. Spencer, or any metaphysician, is entitled to assert that the Unknowable is the sole Reality. But religion is not a matter for Metaphysicians — but for men, women, and children. And to them the Unknowable is Nothing. Sir James Stephen calls the distinctions of Mr. Spencer "an unmeaning play of words." I do not say that they are unmeaning to the philosophers working on metaphysics. But to the public, seeking for a religion, the Reality or the Unreality of the Unknowable is certainly an unmeaning play of words.

Even supposing that Evolution ever could bring the people to comprehend the subtlety of the All-Being, of which all things we know are only shows, the Unknowable is still incapable of supplying the very elements of Religion. Mr. Spencer thinks otherwise. He says, that although we cannot know, or conceive it, or apply to it any of the terms of life, or of consciousness, "it leaves unchanged certain of the sentiments

[1] My words were that, "although the Unknowable is logically said to be Something, yet the something of which we neither know nor conceive anything is practically nothing." That is, speaking from the point of view of religion.

comprehended under the name religion." "Whatever components of the religious sentiment disappear, there must ever survive those which are appropriate to the consciousness of a Mystery!" Certain of the religious sentiments are left unchanged! The consciousness of a Mystery is to survive! Is that all? "I am not concerned," says he, "to show what effect this religious sentiment will have as a moral agent!" A religion without anything to be known, with nothing to teach, with no defined moral power, with some rags of religious sentiment surviving, mainly the consciousness of Mystery—this is, indeed, the mockery of Religion.

Forced, as it seems, to clothe the nakedness of the Unknowable with some shreds of sentiment, Mr. Spencer has given it a positive character, which for every step that it advances towards Religion recedes from sound Philosophy. The Unknowable was at first spoken of almost as if it were an unthinkable abstraction, and so undoubtedly it is. But it finally emerges as the Ultimate Reality, the Ultimate Cause, the All-Being, the Absolute Power, the Unknown Cause, the Inscrutable Existence, the Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed, the Creative Power, "the Infinite and Eternal Energy, by which all things are created and sustained." It is "to stand in substantially the same relation towards our general conception of things as does the Creative Power asserted by Theology." "It stands towards the Universe, and towards ourselves, in the same relation as an anthropomorphic Creator was supposed to stand, bears a like relation with it, not only to human thought but to human feeling." In other words, the Unknowable *is* the Creator; subject to this, that we cannot assert or deny that he, she, or it, is Person, or Being, or can feel, think, or act, or do anything else that we can either know or imagine, or

is such that we can ascribe to Him, Her, or It anything whatever within the realm of consciousness.

Now the Unknowable, so qualified and explained, offends against all the canons of criticism, so admirably set forth in *First Principles*, and especially those of Dean Mansel, therein quoted and adopted. The Unknowable is not unknowable if we know that "it creates and sustains all things." One need not repeat all the metaphysical objections arrayed by Mr. Spencer himself against connecting the ideas of the Absolute, the Infinite, First Cause, and Creator with that of any one Power. How can Absolute Power create? How can the Absolute be a Cause? The Absolute excludes the relative; and Creation and Cause both imply relation. How can the Infinite be a Cause, or create? For if there be effect distinct from cause, or if there be something uncreated, the Infinite would be thereby limited. What is the meaning of All-Being? Does it include, or not, its own manifestation? If the Cosmos is a mere show of an Unknown Cause, then the Unknown Cause is not Infinite, for it does not include the Cosmos; and not Absolute, for the Universe is its manifestation, and all things proceed from it. That is to say, the Absolute is in relation to the Universe, as Cause and Effect.

Again, if the "very notions, beginning and end, cause and purpose, relative notions belonging to human thought, are probably irrelevant to the Ultimate Reality transcending human thought," as he truly tells us, how can we speak of the Ultimate Cause, or indeed of Infinite and Eternal? The philosophical difficulties of imagining a First Cause, so admirably put by Mr. Spencer years ago, are not greater than those of imagining an Ultimate Cause. The objections he states to the idea of Creation are not removed by talking of a Creative Power rather

than a Creator God. If Mr. Spencer's new Creative Power "stands towards our general conception of things in substantially the same relation as the Creative Power of Theology," it is open to all the metaphysical dilemmas so admirably stated in *First Principles*. Mr. Spencer cannot have it both ways. If his Unknowable be the Creative Power and Ultimate Cause, it simply renews all the mystification of the old theologies. If his Unknowable be unknowable, then it is idle to talk of Infinite and Eternal Energy, sole Reality, All-Being, and Creative Power. This is the slip-slop of theologians which Mr. Spencer, as much as any man living, has finally torn to shreds.

In what way does the notion of Ultimate Cause avoid the difficulties in the way of First Cause, and how is Creative Power an idea more logical than Creator? And if, as Mr. Spencer says (*First Principles*, p. 35), "the three different suppositions respecting the origin of things turn out to be literally unthinkable," what does he mean by asserting that a Creative Power is the one great Reality? Mr. Spencer seems to suggest that, though all idea of First Cause, of Creator, of Absolute Existence is unthinkable, the difficulty in the way of predicating them of anything is got over by asserting that the unthinkable and the unknowable is the ultimate reality. He tells that, though we cannot *conceive* the Unknowable, we are *conscious* of it. He said (*First Principles*, p. 110), "every supposition respecting the genesis of the Universe commits us to alternative impossibilities of thought"; and again, "we are not permitted to know—nay, we are not even permitted to conceive—that Reality which is behind the veil of Appearance."

Quite so! On that ground we have long rested firmly, accepting Mr. Spencer's teaching. It is to

violate that rule if we now go on to call it Creative Power, Ultimate Cause, and the rest. It comes then to this: Mr. Spencer says to the theologians, "I cannot allow you to speak of a First Cause, or a Creator, or an All-Being, or an Absolute Existence, because you mean something intelligible and conceivable by these terms, and I tell you that they stand for ideas that are unthinkable and inconceivable. But," he adds, "I have a perfect right to talk of an Ultimate Cause and a Creative Power, and an Absolute Existence, and an All-Being, because I mean nothing by these terms—at least, nothing that can be either thought of or conceived of, and I know that I am not talking of anything intelligible or conceivable. All the same we are conscious of there being something. That is the faith of an Agnostic, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be sound."

Beyond the region of the knowable and the conceivable we have no right to assume an infinite energy more than an infinite series of energies, or an infinite series of infinite things or nothings. We have no right to assume one Ultimate Cause, or any cause, more than an infinite series of Causes, or something which is not Cause at all. We have no right to assume that anything beyond the knowable is eternal or infinite, or anything else; we have no right to assume that it is the Ultimate Reality. There may be an endless circle of Realities, or there may be no Reality at all. Once leave the region of the knowable and the conceivable, and every positive assertion is unwarranted. The forms of our consciousness prove to us, says Mr. Spencer, that what lies behind the region of consciousness is not merely unknown but unknowable, that it is one, and that it is Real. The laws of mind, I reply, do not hold good in the region of the unthinkable; the forms of our con-

sciousness cannot limit the Unknowable. All positive assertions about that "which cannot be brought within the forms of our finite thought" are therefore unphilosophical. We have always held this of the theological Creation, and we must hold it equally of the evolutionist Creation. Here is the difference between Positive Philosophy and Agnostic Metaphysics.

But if this Realism of the Unknowable offends against sound philosophy, the Worship of the Unknowable is abhorrent to every instinct of genuine Religion. There is something startling in Mr. Spencer's assertion that he "is not concerned to show what effect this religious sentiment will have as a moral agent." As in *First Principles*, so now, he represents the business of Religion to be to keep alive the consciousness of a Mystery. The recognition of this supreme verity has been from the first, he says, the vital element of Religion. From the beginning it has dimly discerned this ultimate verity; and that supreme and ultimate verity is, that there is an inscrutable Mystery. If this be not retrogressive Religion, what is? Religion is not indeed to be discarded; but, in its final and perfect form, all that it ever has had of reverence, gratitude, love, and sympathy is to be shrivelled up into the recognition of a Mystery. Morality, duty, goodness are no longer to be within its sphere. It will neither touch the heart of men nor mould the conduct; it will perpetually remind the intelligence that there is a great Enigma, which, it tells us, can never be solved. Not only is religion reduced to a purely mental sphere, but its task in that sphere is one practically imbecile.

Mr. Spencer complains that I called his Unknowable "an ever-present conundrum to be everlastingly given up." But he uses words almost

exactly the same; he himself speaks of "the Great Enigma which he (man) knows cannot be solved." The business of the religious sentiment is with "a consciousness of a Mystery that cannot be fathomed." It would be difficult to find for Religion a lower and more idle part to play in human life than that of continually presenting to man a conundrum, which he is told he must continually give up. One would take all this to be a bit from *Alice in Wonderland* rather than the first chapter of *Synthetic Philosophy*.

I turn to some of the points on which Mr. Spencer thinks that I misunderstand or misrepresent his meaning. I cannot admit any one of these cases. In calling the Unknowable a pure negation, I spoke from the standpoint of Religion, not of Metaphysics. It may be a logical postulate, but that of which we can know nothing, and of which we can form no conception, I shall continue to call a pure negation, *as an object of worship*, even if I am told (as I now am) that it is that "by which all things are created and sustained," or "that from which all things proceed." Such is the view of Sir James Stephen, and of every other critic who has joined in this discussion.

With respect to Dean Mansel I made no mistake; the mistake is Mr. Spencer's—not mine. I said that of all modern theologians the Dean came the nearest to him. As we all know, in *First Principles* Mr. Spencer quotes and adopts four pages from Mansel's *Bampton Lectures*. But I said "there is a gulf which separates even his all-negative *deity* from Mr. Spencer's impersonal, unconscious, unthinking, and unthinkable Energy." Mr. Spencer says that I misrepresent him and transpose his doctrine and Mansel's, because he regards the Absolute as positive and the Dean regarded it as negative. If Mr. Spencer will look at my words again, he will see that I was speaking of

Mansel's Theology, not of his Ontology. I said "*deity*," not the Absolute. Mansel, as a metaphysician, no doubt spoke of the Absolute as negative, whilst Mr. Spencer speaks of it as positive. But Mansel's idea of deity is personal, whilst Mr. Spencer's Energy is not personal. That is strictly accurate. Dean Mansel's words are, "it is our duty to think of God as personal"; Mr. Spencer's words are, "duty requires us neither to affirm nor deny personality" of the Unknown Cause. That is to say, the Dean called his First Cause God; Mr. Spencer prefers to call it Energy. Both describe this First Cause negatively; but whilst the Dean calls it a Person, Mr. Spencer will not say that it is person, conscious, or thinking. Mr. Spencer's impression then that I misrepresented him in this matter is simply his own rather hasty reading of my words.

It is quite legitimate in a question of religion and an object of worship to speak of this Unknowable Energy, described as Mr. Spencer describes it, as impersonal, unconscious, unthinking, and unthinkable. The distinction that, since we neither affirm nor deny of it personality, consciousness, or thought, it is not therefore impersonal, is a metaphysical subtlety. That which cannot be presented in terms of human consciousness is neither personal, conscious, nor thinking, but properly unthinkable. To the ordinary mind it is a logical formula, it is apart from man, it is impersonal and unconscious. And to tell us that this conundrum is "the power which manifests itself in consciousness," that man and the world are but its products and manifestations, that it may have (for aught we know) something higher than personality and something grander than intelligence, is to talk theologico-metaphysical jargon, but is not to give the average man and woman any positive idea at all, and certainly

not a religious idea. In religion, at any rate, that which can only be described by negations is negative; that which cannot be presented in terms of consciousness is unconscious.

I shall say but little about Mr. Spencer's Ghost theory as the historical source of all religion; because it is, after all, a subordinate matter, and would lead to a wide digression. I am sorry that he will not accept my (not very serious) invitation to him to modify the paradoxes thereon to be read in his *Principles of Sociology*. I have always held it to be one of the most unlucky of all his sociologic doctrines, and that on psychological as well as on historical grounds. Mr. Spencer asserts that all forms of religious sentiment spring from the primitive idea of a disembodied double of a dead man. I assert that this is a rather complicated and developed form of thought; and that the simplest and earliest form of religious sentiment is the idea of the rudest savage, that visible objects around him—animal, vegetable, and inorganic—have quasi-human feelings and powers, which he regards with gratitude and awe. Mr. Spencer says that man only began to worship a river or a volcano when he began to imagine them as the abode of dead men's *spirits*. I say that he began to fear or adore them so soon as he thought the river or the volcano had the feelings and the powers of active beings; and that was from the dawn of the human intelligence. The latter view is, I maintain, far the simpler and more obvious explanation; and it is a fault in logic to construct a complicated explanation when a simple one answers the facts. Animals think inert things of a peculiar form to be animal, or, at least, to have active properties; so do infants. The dog barks at a shadow; the horse dreads a steam-engine; the baby loves her doll, feeds her, nurses her, and buries her. The savage thinks

the river, or the mountain beside which he lives, the most beneficent, awful, powerful of beings. There is the germ of religion. To assure us that the savage has no feeling of awe and affection for the river and the mountain, until he has evolved the elaborate idea of disembodied spirits of dead men dwelling invisibly inside them, is as idle as it would be to assure us that the love and the terror of the dog, the horse, and the baby are due to their perceiving some disembodied spirit inside the shadow, the steam-engine, or the doll.

I think it a little hard that I may not hold this common-sense view of the matter, along with almost all who have studied the question, without being told that it comes of "persistent thinking along defined grooves," and that I should accept the Ghost theory of Religion were it not for my fanatical discipleship. Does not Mr. Spencer himself persistently think along defined grooves; and does not every systematic thinker do the same? And it so happens that the Ghost theory leads to conclusions that outrage common sense. But it is certain that the believers in the Ghost theory as the origin of all forms of Religion are few and far between. The difficulties in the way of it are enormous. Mr. Spencer laboriously tries to persuade us that the worship of the Sun and the Moon arose, not from man's natural reverence for these great and beautiful powers of Nature, but solely as they were thought to be the abodes of the disembodied spirits of dead ancestors. Animal worship, tree and plant worship, fetichism, the Confucian worship of heaven, all, he would have us believe, take their origin entirely from the idea that these objects contain the spirits of the dead. If this is not "persistent thinking along defined grooves," I know not what it is.

The case of China is decisive. There we have a religion of vast antiquity and extent, perfectly clear

and well ascertained. It rests entirely on worship of Heaven, and Earth, and objects of Nature, regarded as organised beings, and not as the abode of human spirits. There is in the religion and philosophy of China no notion of human *spirits*, disembodied and detached from the dead person, conceived as living in objects and distinct from dead bodies. The dead are the dead; not the spiritual denizens of other things. In the face of this, the vague language of missionaries and travellers as to the beliefs of savages must be treated with caution.

Fetichism, says Mr. Spencer, is not found in the lowest races. Be that as it may, it is found wherever we can trace the germs of religion. I read in the *Descriptive Sociology* that Mr. Burton, perhaps the most capable of all African travellers, declares that "fetichism is still the only faith known in East Africa." In other places, we read of the sun and moon, forests, trees, stones, snakes, and the like regarded with religious reverence by the savages of Central Africa. "The Damaras attribute the origin of the sheep to a large stone." They regard a big tree as the origin of Damaras. "Cattle of a certain colour are venerated by the Damaras." "To the Bechuanas rain appears as the giver of all good." "The negro whips or throws away a worthless fetich." "The Hottentots and Bushmen shoot poisoned arrows at the lightning and throw old shoes at it." Exactly! And do these Damaras, Bechuanas, and Bushmen do this solely because they think that the sun and moon, the lightning, the rain, the trees, the cattle, and the snakes are the abodes of the disembodied spirits of their dead relatives? And do they never do this until they have evolved a developed Ghost theory?

This is more than I can accept, for all the robustness of faith which Mr. Spencer attributes to me.

Whilst I find in a hundred books that countless races of Africa and the organised religion of China attribute human *qualities* to natural objects, and grow up to regard those objects with veneration and awe, I shall continue to think that fetichism, or the reverent ascription of feeling and power to natural objects, is a spontaneous tendency of the human mind. And I shall refuse, even on Mr. Spencer's high authority, to believe that it is solely a result of a developed *Ghost theory*. To ask us to believe this as "proved" on the strength of a pile of clippings from books of travel is, I think, quite as droll to ordinary minds as anything Mr. Spencer can pick up out of the Positivist Calendar.

II

I pass now to consider the fifteen pages of Mr. Spencer's article in which he attacks the writings of Auguste Comte. And I begin by pointing out that this was not at all the issue between us, so that this attack savours of the device known to lawyers as "prejudice," or "abusing the plaintiff's attorney." I gave reasons for thinking that the Unknowable could never be the foundation of a Creed. I added, in some twenty lines at most, that Humanity could be. Throughout my article I did not refer to Comte. My argument was entirely independent of any religious ordinances whatever, whether laid down by Comte or any one else. Mr. Mill, in his work on Comte, has emphatically asserted that Humanity is an idea pre-eminently fitted to be the object of religion. And very many powerful minds agree with Mr. Mill so far, though they do not accept the organised form of that religion as Auguste Comte conceived it. To what degree, and in what sense, I

myself accept it is not doubtful; for I have striven for years past to make it known in my public utterances. But, until I put forward Auguste Comte as an infallible authority, until I preach or practise everything laid down in the *Positive Polity*, it is hardly an answer to me in a philosophical discussion to jest for the fiftieth time about Comte's arrogance, or about the banners to be used in the solemn processions, or about addressing prayers to "holy" Humanity. My friends and I address no prayers to Humanity as "holy" or otherwise; we use no banners, and we never speak of Comte as Mahometans speak of Mahomet, or as Buddhists speak of Buddha. For my own part, I am continually saying, and I say it deliberately now, that I look upon very much that Comte threw out for the future as tentative and purely Utopian. Since I have held this language for many years in public, I do not think that Mr. Spencer is justified in describing me as a blind devotee. And when he parries a criticism of his own philosophy, by ridiculing practices and opinions for which I have never made myself responsible, I hardly think he is acting with the candid mind which befits the philosopher in all things.

For this reason I shall not trouble myself about the "eccentricities" which he thinks he can discover in the writings of Comte. A thousand eccentricities in Comte would not make it reasonable in Spencer to worship the Unknowable; and it would be hard indeed to match the eccentricity of venerating as the sole Reality that of which we only know that we can know nothing and imagine nothing. But there are other good reasons for declining to discuss with Mr. Spencer the writings of Comte. The first is that he knows nothing whatever about them. To Mr. Spencer the writings of Comte are, if not the Absolute Un-

knowable, at any rate the Absolute Unknown. I have long endeavoured to persuade Mr. Spencer to study Comte, all the more as he owes to him so much indirectly through others. But, so far as I know, I have not induced him to do so. And his recent criticisms of these writings show the same thing. They add nothing, I may say, to the criticism contained in the work of Mr. Mill. To turn over the pages of the *Positive Polity* and find many things which seem paradoxical is an exercise easy enough; but to grasp the conceptions of Comte, or indeed of any philosopher, seriously, is labour of a different kind.

Nothing is easier than to make cheap ridicule of any philosopher whatever. The philosopher necessarily works in a region of high abstraction, and largely employs the resources of deduction. He is bound by his office to deal freely with wide generalisations, and to follow his principles across all apparent obstacles. Every philosopher accordingly falls from time to time into astounding paradoxes; he is always accused by the superficial of arrogance; by the wits of absurdity; by the public of blindness. It is the fate of philosophers; and the charges, it must be allowed, are often founded in reason. Descartes, Hobbes, Leibnitz, Hegel, may in turn be attacked for certain hypotheses of theirs as the most arrogant of men and the wildest of sophists. How often has Mr. Spencer shared the same fate! There are those who think that no other living man has ever ventured on assertions at once so dogmatic and so paradoxical. I have too much respect for Mr. Spencer to quote any one of these wonderful bits of philosophic daring. I recognise in him a real philosopher of a certain order, and I seek to understand his system as a whole; nor am I dismayed in my studies by a thousand things in his theories, which certainly do seem to me very hard sayings. Mr.

Spencer has himself just published a very remarkable work, "the Man *versus* the State"; to which he hardly expects to make a convert except here and there, and about which an unfriendly critic might say that it might be entitled "Mr. Spencer against All England." I shall not certainly criticise him for that. But it is a signal instance of the isolated position assumed from time to time by philosophers. Philosophers, who live, not so much in "glass houses" as in very crystal palaces of their own imagination, of all people, one would think, should give up the pastime of throwing stones at their neighbours' constructions.

I give an instance of the way in which Mr. Spencer misunderstands Comte. Mr. Spencer speaks of Comte's Historical Calendar as a "canonisation," as a list of "saints," to be "worshipped" day by day, as a means of "regulating posterity," and as part of the "deification" of Humanity. And he further represents this list of historical names as a strictly classified selection of men in degree of personal merit. Now every part of this view is an error. So far from this calendar being permanently imposed on posterity, Comte himself speaks of it as provisional, to serve a temporary purpose, and merely for the nineteenth century. And what is that purpose? Why, to impress on the mind the general course of human civilisation. Comte calls it "a concrete view of man's history." It is not meant to be a classification in real order of merit. It is not essentially personal at all. The names are given and always spoken of as "types," concrete embodiments of manifold elements in the civilisation of the past. Over and over again Comte says that the type and its place are often chosen without reference to personal merit to represent a class, a nation, or a movement.

They are not called, or treated of as "saints." There is no "canonisation," no "worship," no ascrip-

tion of perfection, or absolute merit of any kind. The whole scheme from beginning to end is, what Comte calls it, a concrete view of man's history, a mode of impressing on the minds of modern men what they owe in so many ways to men in the past. The exigencies of a calendar, with its months, weeks, and days, preclude any real classification of merit; nor is any such thing attempted. It is a mode of teaching history, using the artifice of associating the names of certain famous men with months, weeks, and days. And the object is to impress on the mind the multiplicity of the forces and elements which make up civilisation. To suppose that all names which occupy similar places represent men of exactly equal merit is a gratuitous piece of absurdity introduced into a fine conception. Even in the Church Calendar there is St. Paul's Day and St. Swithin's Day, though no one supposes that St. Swithin is regarded as the equal of St. Paul. But Comte's Historical Calendar has no analogy with the Catholic Calendar at all. It is a concrete view of history, intended to commemorate the sum of human civilisation.

A single example may show with how little care Mr. Spencer has looked at Comte. He complains that Comte should put Bichat above Newton, because he finds that Bichat heads a month in the Calendar, and Newton a week. Now, Comte never instituted any personal comparison between Newton and Bichat. But he explained that for the last month, which represents the course of modern science, he must choose a biologist and not a mathematician, on the ground of the superior importance of Biology. The Calendar was constructed more than thirty years ago, when certainly a thoroughly adequate type of Biology was not quite accessible. For grounds fully explained, he chose Bichat. Newton takes his place with the

mathematicians; but any idea that Bichat's intellect was superior to Newton's has not the smallest authority in anything said by Comte.

I shall certainly not enter into any defence of this Calendar. It seems to me the best synthetic scheme of history which has ever been constructed on a single page. But I am far from supposing it perfect, nor do I doubt that it might easily be amended or revised. Mr. Spencer seems astounded that Cyrus and Godfrey, Terence and Juvenal, Froissart and Palissy, should hold in it the places they do. To discuss that question would involve a long historical argument, and I am not at all disposed to enter into any historical argument with Mr. Spencer. With all his scientific learning and manifold gifts, Mr. Spencer is seldom regarded as having much to tell us within the historical field. It is here that his inferiority to Comte is most strikingly seen. Those who know the harmonious power with which Comte has called forth into life the vast procession of the ages can best judge how weak by his side Mr. Spencer appears. In Mr. Spencer's theory of history the past teaches little but a few Quaker-like maxims; that it is very like a savage to fight, and that military activity and superstition are the sources of all evil. Certainly Comte, as heartily as Spencer, has condemned the military spirit in this age, and the continuance of all fictitious beliefs. But he is not so blind to facts that he does not recognise the historical uses of the military life in the past, and the beauty of many theological types. And thus it is that he honours Godfrey the Crusader, as well as Socrates the philosopher; the conquerors Cyrus and Sesostris, as well as Penn the Quaker and St. Paul the Apostle.

There is a certain "fallacy of the Den" running through Mr. Spencer's historical notions, of which his article gives very striking examples. Possessed by his

theory of indefinite "differentiation," the course of civilisation presents itself to his mind as a perpetual development of new forces—progression in a constant series of divergent lines. According to this view of history, an institution, an idea, an energy which the civilisation of to-day has abandoned is finally condemned; to revive it, even under new forms, is retrogression. Since savages respected their ancestors, it would be savage to respect our ancestors. Since we have been tending, during the last two or three centuries, to lessen all temporal and spiritual influence on the individual, we must go on till we have reduced both to zero. Since war is inhuman, the qualities and habits which the military life promoted are equally abominable. To revive anything which modern society has discarded is retrogression. For the test with Mr. Spencer is not whether it is relatively good or bad for man, but is found in the fact of Evolution absolutely.

Now this error affects all that Mr. Spencer says about the history of civilisation. The truth is, as Comte has so wonderfully shown, the story of man's development is a tale of continual revival, reconstruction, and fresh adjustments of social life. Old habits, thoughts, and energies spring into new life, under altered forms, and in new co-ordination. Development means not indefinite differentiation, but continuous growth, with organic readjustment of the organism to its environment. And that organic readjustment is constantly demanding the renewal of dormant elements, and the new uses of old things. I should be sorry to think that Humanity were for ever condemned to lose everything which the taste of this somewhat cynical, material, and democratic generation is pleased to throw off. The phrase Retrogressive Religion does not frighten me at all. Any religion that the Future of

Man is to have will be retrogressive in this sense: that it will revive something of religious feelings which were once more active in the world than they happen to be to-day. Whether an enthusiastic regard for the welfare of our human race be retrogressive religion or not I care little. I should have thought it to be a new and a progressive type of creed, more so than the worship of the Ultimate Cause, and the Creative Power, and the All-Being; where I find, indeed (and where the *Christian World* finds also), retrogression into Metaphysic and Theology.

III

I turn now to the question—if Humanity be an adequate object of religion?—a question, as I say, independent of the forms in which Comte proposed to constitute it. Mr. Mill, with all his hostility to Positivism, asserted emphatically that it was; and he went so far as to say that every other type of religion would be the better, in so far as it approached the religion of Humanity. And first let us note that Mr. Spencer has given a quite exaggerated sense to what we mean by Religion and Humanity by attaching to these ideas theological associations. The same thing is done by Sir James Stephen, and by all our theological critics. Mr. Spencer asks, What are the claims of Humanity to "Godhood"? Sir James Stephen talks of "the shadow of a God," and he says he would as soon "worship" the ugliest idol in India as the human race. All this is to foist in theological ideas where none are suggested by us. Humanity is neither the shadow of God nor the substitute for God, nor has it any analogy with God. No one claims any "godhood" for humanity or any perfection of any kind. We do not ask any

one to "worship" it, as Hindoos worship idols, or as Christians worship God or the Virgin. If it misleads people, I am quite willing to spell humanity with a small "h," or not to use the word at all. I am quite content to speak of the human race, if that makes things clearer; I am ready to give up the word "worship," if that is a stumbling-block, and to speak of showing affection and reverence. If people mean by religion going down on their knees and invoking a supernatural being, I will wait till the word "religion" has lost these associations.

The very purpose of the Positive Scheme is to satisfy rational people that, though the ecstatic "worship" of supernatural divinities has come to an end, intelligent love and respect for our human brotherhood will help us to do our duty in life. So stated, the proposition is almost a truism; it is undoubtedly the practical conviction of millions of good people, and, as it seems, is that of Sir James Stephen. In plain words, the Religion of Humanity means recognising your duty to your fellowman on human grounds. This is the sum and substance of that which it pleases some critics and some philosophers to represent as a grotesque delusion. Whatever is grotesque in the idea is derived from the extravagance with which they themselves distort that idea. I have no wish to "worship" Humanity in any other sense than as a man may worship his own father and mother. A good man feels affection and reverence for his father and his mother; he can cultivate that feeling and make it the spring of conduct. And the feeling is not destroyed by his finding that his father and mother had the failings of men and women. Something of the affection, and more of the sense of brotherhood, which a man feels towards his own parents, he feels towards his family; not a little of it even to his home,

his city, or his province, and much of it towards his country. Every good and active man recognises the tie that binds him to a widening series of groups of his kinsmen and fellowmen. In that feeling there are elements of respect, elements of affection, and elements of devotion, in certain degrees. That sense of respect, affection, and devotion can be extended wider than country. It can be extended, I say, as far as the human race itself. And since patriotism does not stop with our actual contemporaries, but extends to the memories and the future of our countrymen, so, I maintain, our feeling for the human race must include what it has been, as well as what it is to be. That is all that I mean by the religion of humanity. What is there of "grotesque," of the ugliest of Hindoo idols, and all the rest of it, in so commonplace an opinion?

All good and even all decent men about us daily order their lives under a more or less effective sense of their social duties. They live more or less for their wives, their children, their parents, their family. I do not deny that they live largely for themselves also; but with good men and good women the two strands of motive are beautifully bound in one. And the better the man, the more close is the harmony between his social and his personal life. Outside their family, men have other strong ties of duty and of regard for definite social groups. They will do much for their friends, their party, their profession, their church, their academy, their class, their city, their country. It is disgraceful to proclaim oneself indifferent to these claims: to refuse to make any sacrifice for them, to deny that we owe them anything, or that we feel any regard for them. There is nothing very heroic about all this in the average; and it is always more or less mixed up with personal motives. But in the main

it is good and wholesome, and bears noble witness to the marvellous social nature of man. Now I do not say that this in itself is religion. But I mean by religion this sense of social duty, pushed to its full extent, strengthened by a sound view of human nature, and warmed by the glow of imagination and sympathy. It has been said in a vague way that religion is "morality touched by emotion." The religion of Humanity, as I conceive it, is simply *morality fused with social devotion, and enlightened by sound philosophy.*

Yet men who are known to live under a practical sense of their social duties, men who would be ashamed to profess total unconcern for father, mother, wife and child, friends and fellow-citizens, are not ashamed to exhaust the terms of opprobrium for the collective notion of humanity; which after all is only made up of a multitude of fathers, mothers, wives, children, friends, fellow-citizens, and fellowmen. Mr. Spencer's whole life (as his friends know even better than the world) has been one of unfaltering devotion to his great mistress Philosophy, worthy to compare with any in the roll of the "lovers of wisdom." Sir James Stephen is no less widely known, not only for his indefatigable public services, but for his hearty private character: a devoted public servant, who, it is said, sentences even the worst criminal "gently, as if he loved him," under a strong sense of public duty. Yet these eminent men, whose entire lives are filled with social, rather than personal, energy, have no words strong enough (for controversial purposes) to express their contempt for the human race. Mankind, says Mr. Spencer, is "a bubble," "a dull leaden-hued thing." Sir James Stephen says it is "a stupid, ignorant, half-beast of a creature"; and he would as soon worship the ugliest Hindoo idol, before which

the natives chop off the heads of goats. Why, this is the raving of Timon of Athens! These men are not cynics, but merely philosophers attacking an opponent. To my mind all this is sheer nonsense. Men, known to be generous and self-devoted in every duty of social life, are not believed when they utter tirades of this kind against mankind and human nature.

If the human race be "a half-beast of a creature," if it be this dismal "bubble," what else or what better have we? Why should they, or any man, waste lives of effort in its service; what is the worth of anything generous, humane, and social? Humanity, I say, is nothing but the sum of all the forces of individual men and women; and if it be this mere bubble and half-beast, the men and women that make it up, and the human feelings and forces which have created it, must be equally worthy of our loathing and contempt. In that case our only philosophy is a malignant pessimism, exceeding anything ever attempted in misanthropy before. I am no optimist; and I certainly see no "godhood" in the human race. I am as much alive to the vice and weakness of the human race as any one. But I feel, in common with the great majority of sound-hearted men, that there is a great deal of human nature in the human race, and that of good human nature; that the good abundantly predominates, and that the great story of human progress is on the whole a worthy and an inspiring record. At any rate, this planet, and, so far as we know, this Universe, has nothing (in the moral sphere) which is more worthy and more inspiring of hope. Divinities, and Absolute Goodnesses, and Absolute Powers have ended for us. The relative goodness and power of our race remains a solid reality. It is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; the stuff whereof our mothers, and our fathers, our sons and our friends, our fellow-citizens

are made: whereof are made all who with us and beside us are striving to live a humane life.

I will not do my friends the injustice of supposing that any regard for men which they acknowledge is confined to their own belongings and circles, and that for the rest of mankind they feel (what they assert) supreme contempt and dislike. Their words would suggest it. To Mr. Spencer Europe presents nothing but the revolting prospect of "a hundred millions of Pagans masquerading as Christians." Sir James Stephen says that a majority of the human race cannot read, and devote their time to nothing but daily labour. Are they mere beasts for that? Some of the greatest and best of men could not read; some of the noblest natures on earth are spent in the hovel and the garret of the poor. It is the task of the religion of Humanity to correct such anti-social thoughts, the besetting sin of the philosopher and the man of power. It will teach their pride that the nobility of human nature is to be found chiefly in the cottage and the workshop; where the untaught mother is lavishing on her children unutterable wealth of tenderness; where the patient toiler is subduing the earth that for the common good wise men may have an earth whereon to think out the truth, and the poet and the artist may have materials to satisfy us all with beauty.

Comte, of all men, did not choose out five hundred names to be "worshipped" as "saints," devoting the five hundred millions to oblivion. He taught us to see the greatness of human nature in the love and courage of the ignorant, as well as in the genius and the might of the hero. And when we think of Humanity our minds are not set on a band of the "elect," but on the millions who people this earth and subdue it, leaving each century on the whole a richer

inheritance in comfort, in thought, in virtue;—millions, not in the civilised world only, but in the rude plains of Asia, and of Africa, where the Hindoo struggles to rear an honest household in his plot of rice-field, and the fellah yields to the will of Heaven with sublime patience, whilst retaining uncrushed his human heart. Assuredly it is no "godhood" that we see there, no pride of human reason, no millennium, or transfiguration of Man. But it is human nature, sound down to its depths; rich with unfathomable love wherever there are a mother and a child, and rich with undying courage wherever there is the father of an honest and thriving household.

But it is not the present generation which absorbs our thoughts. Mankind, as we see it to-day, is neither god-like nor very sublime. But the story of human progress during fifty centuries, from the "half-beast" that it once was in the prehistoric ages down to the ideal civilisation which we surely foresee in the far-off ages to come—this is sublime. Or, if not sublime in the way in which the fairy-tale of Paradise, or the Creation of the Universe, is sublime, it is still the most splendid tale of *moral development* of which we have any certain record. I am not at all disenchanted when I am reminded of the savagery, the bestiality, or even the cannibalism of man's early career. There were noble savages even in the Palæolithic ages, and even the earliest type of man was superior in something, I suppose, to contemporary types of the ape. But such as he was I accept him as the ancestor of the human race, to whom it owes its first beginning. The glory of Humanity is not lost, in that it was once so low, but lies in that, beginning so low, it is now so high.

It is for this reason that Comte has insisted so much on the Past, and the religious value of a true

conception of human civilisation. It shocks Mr. Spencer to look with anything but horror on our fighting and savage forefathers. But, such as they were, they made civilisation possible. And the grandeur of human civilisation as a whole can only be realised in the mind when it constantly dwells on the enormous record of its progress from the half-bestial beginnings out of which it has slowly arisen by incalculable efforts and hopes. Still, it is a record of much failure, of shortcoming at the best. And for this reason, Positivism dwells quite as much in the Future as in the Past. Endless progress towards a perfection never, perhaps, to be reached, but to be ideally cherished in hope, a hope which every stroke of science and every line of history confirms to us, and with which every generous instinct of our nature beats in unison—such is the practical heaven of our faith. As there is no godhood now in humanity, so there is no Paradise in its future. Past, Present, and Future, all alike dwell on this earth ; on the facts of man's actual career in the dwelling-place that he has made for himself thereon.

Mr. Spencer is himself far too much of a philosopher, and too much of a believer in moral progress, not to have a deep faith in this very march of civilisation of which Humanity, as I understand it, is at once product and author. He says himself : "Surely civilised society, with its complex arrangements and involved processes, its multitudinous material products and almost magical instruments, its language, science, literature, art, must be credited to some agency or other." The words are not mine, but his. That is to say, the story of human civilisation is a very noble record, demanding, as he admits, "veneration and gratitude" somewhere. And in these words he throws to the winds "the bubble," and "the dull

leaden-hued thing," "the hundred million Pagans masquerading," "the stupid, ignorant, half-beast of a creature," as the judge calls it. The human race then is not the odious bubble; on the contrary, the splendid story of human civilisation must fill us with a sense of "veneration and gratitude." But by astonishing perversity, as it seems to me, by long habit of "persistent thinking along defined grooves," Mr. Spencer has nothing but contempt for the human race, and lavishes his "veneration and gratitude," called out by the sum of human civilisation, upon his Unknowable and Inconceivable Postulate. This is to me to outdo the ingratitude of the theologians who find "man only vile," and who ascribe every good thing in man's evil nature to an ineffable Being. Since Mr. Spencer agrees with me that "veneration and gratitude," for all that man has become, are due somewhere, I prefer to ascribe it to that human race which we know and feel; and which, so far as we can see, has fashioned its own destiny, in spite of tremendous obstacles in his environment; rather than to a logician's formula, about which the logician himself tells us that he knows nothing and conceives nothing.

Mr. Spencer has laboured to prove that Humanity (which he himself has so admirably described as a real organism) is unconscious. He might have spared his pains. Neither Comte, nor any rational Positivist, has ever regarded Humanity as conscious. And, for that reason, nothing will induce me to address Humanity as a conscious being, or in any way whatever to treat it as a Person. In that respect it stands on the same footing as Mr. Spencer's Unknowable, except that I say frankly that I have not the least reason to suppose Humanity to be conscious; whilst he will not say that his Unknowable may not be conscious (as it might be a vibration or a parallelopiped). And

then Mr. Spencer goes on to argue that, since Humanity is not conscious, that concludes the matter; "for gratitude cannot be entertained towards something which is unconscious." And by a really curious inconsistency he asserts that "veneration and gratitude" are due towards the Unknowable, which he has just told us cannot be conceived in terms of consciousness at all! So that he will not let me feel any gratitude to the human race, my own kindred, because it is unconscious; and he asks me to bestow it all on his unconscious, or non-conscious, or outside-of-all-consciousness Unknowable.

Apart from this singular slip in logic, he says much about the unconsciousness of the human race which amazes me. Why cannot a man feel any gratitude towards that which is unconscious? He tells us to examine our consciousness. Well! Did all the gratitude which he felt during life to his own parents, teachers, and benefactors cease at the instant of their death? I cannot find it in my consciousness. My gratitude to my parents is the same, living or dead; and, if gratitude to one parent can be expressed and answered in words, whilst gratitude to the other lies but in the silent communing of the heart, I cannot find that the one gratitude differs from the other, save that this last is the deeper, more abiding feeling. And, if a man is unworthy of the name of man who can feel no gratitude to a parent or a benefactor, the moment they are laid cold in death, why cannot a man feel grateful to the school where he was trained, or the church wherein he was reared, or the country of his forefathers and his descendants? And by school, church, or country, I mean the men therein grouped, some known, some unknown, some by personal contact, some by spiritual influence, by whose labour he has reaped and grown.

Mr. Spencer goes further in the same line. Since the human race, he says, was unconscious whilst slowly evolving its own civilisation, since the individual men and women were not consciously conferring any benefits on us, and very partially foresaw the result of their own labour, we owe them no gratitude. They acted automatically or like coral-polyps by instinct, following their own natures, satisfying their own craving, and we owe them no more gratitude than we owe to hogs for fattening, or to sheep for growing woolly coats. Watt, according to this view, invented the steam-engine to make money, or occupy his mind. Newton and Leibnitz toiled only for fame. If the poets and artists created beauty, it was because they liked beauty, and hoped for reward. I confess this seems to me to strike at the root of morality and all estimate whatever of human greatness and merit. A philosopher will tell us next that he owes no gratitude to the father who begat him, or the mother who nursed him ; for both were obeying instincts which they share with the lowest animals. If heroes, poets, and thinkers are mere automata, selfishly and blindly following instincts, like the polyps working their tentacles and thereby forming a coral reef, morality, and most of the moral qualities of man, are things which we cannot predicate of man at all.

Man is no doubt a highly complex being, and his moral, intellectual, and physical natures are blended in marvellous ways. It was never pretended by the optimist that any man has acted uniformly on the noblest motives ; but it has never been asserted by the pessimist that he acts invariably on the vilest. It is a mark of the meanest nature to refuse to acknowledge a benefit, on the ground that the benefactor was not wholly absorbed with the wish to benefit, or

entirely aware of the extent of his benefit. For my part, I refuse to measure out my sense of gratitude to my human benefactors, known or unknown, by so niggardly a rule. I trust that Raffaelle and Shakespeare did enjoy their work. But I love and admire the genius in which they revelled. Humanity is rich with gratitude to those who knew not the value of the services they were rendering, just as it is to those whose names and services are covered in the vast wave of time. What becomes of Patriotism, if it be open to us to suggest that the men who fought our battles or made our country wanted nothing but money or fame? What becomes of family affection, if a man can tell his mother that bore him that if she reared children it was only what cats and rabbits do?

The religion of Humanity, as we understand it, is nothing but the idealised sum of those human feelings and duties which all decent men acknowledge in detail and in fact. All healthy morality, as well as all sound philosophy, show us that the sum total of all this mass of life is good, and is tending towards better. As Mr. Spencer admits, civilised society as a whole must command "admiration and gratitude" somewhere. This being so, the sneers of philosophers and cynics may be left out of sight. I shall not follow Mr. Spencer in the wails of his Jeremiad over the folly and wickedness of his contemporaries. Millions, he says, still go to church and chapel, instead of studying Evolution and Differentiation, or praying to the Unknowable at home. At Eton and Harrow boys are taught to make Latin verses, and not the genesis of species. The House of Commons will not let Mr. Bradlaugh take his seat; and many still admire Lord Beaconsfield. Many people were sorry when young Bonaparte was killed by the Zulus; and they gave a dinner to Hobart Pasha. At a dinner in France, the

"army" was given as a toast. And German students will fight duels. And for these reasons Mr. Herbert Spencer has a great contempt for his species. *Risum teneatis, amici?* I must treat this as a mere outburst of ill-humour. We all know that there is folly, vice, and misery enough in the world—and for that reason all *absolute* "worship" of any one or anything is out of the question. Strangely enough, Mr. Spencer, who finds this folly and vice preclude him from any respect for Humanity, does not see that it ought also to bar any "veneration and gratitude" to the Unknowable; to which he ascribes the honour of producing civilised society, in spite of all its shortcomings. For my part I am not to be shaken in my belief that the sum of civilised society is *relatively* worthy of honour, by such melancholy facts as that Mr. Bradlaugh cannot get his seat, and that German students slit each others' noses.

Mr. Spencer raises a great difficulty over the fact that there are, and have been, very evil people in the world, who cannot be included in the Humanity which we are to honour. And he asks why they are excluded from the notion. He cannot reconcile Comte's definition of Humanity "*as the whole* of human beings, past, present, and future," with the statement that "the word *whole* points out that you must not take in all men." If Mr. Spencer would take some pains to understand Comte, he would see that the French word is "*ensemble*"; that is to say, Humanity includes the sum of human civilisation, but does not include every individual man, who may not have contributed at all to this *ensemble* or "sum." No one has worked out the organic unity and life of the Human Organism more clearly than Mr. Spencer himself. When we think and speak of that organism, we think and speak of those organs and elements which share in its organic

life, and not of the excrescences, maladies, or excrement, so to speak, which it has finally eliminated.

Men have a warm regard for their family, though there may be a blackguard in it, for whom they have no regard at all. They feel loyalty to their profession or their party, though they know that it counts not a few black sheep. And patriotism is quite possible towards our countrymen past and present, though some of the worst men in history have been amongst them. We are justly proud of our English race; but when we speak of its achievements we are not including in our honour King John, Guy Fawkes, and Titus Oates. If the existence of a minority of evil men makes it impossible to think of Humanity as a whole, or to honour it as a whole, the same argument would make it impossible to think of country as a whole, or to honour it as a whole. And this applies also to what Mr. Spencer calls "civilised society."

The analogies of Humanity are to be found with such minor aggregates of civilised society as Family, Church, State, Country. It has no analogy at all with God, or divinity in any form. When Mr. Spencer says that we "deify" Humanity, it would be as just to say that he deifies Evolution. He thinks that Evolution is the key of our mental and moral Synthesis. I think that Humanity is. But as I do not suppose that he finds "any claims to godhood" in Evolution, I beg him not to suppose that I find any in Humanity. If Family, Church, State, Country, are real aggregates, worthy of gratitude and respect, *à fortiori*, Humanity is a real aggregate, worthy of respect and gratitude. I cannot understand how the smaller aggregates can inspire us with any worthy sentiment at all, whilst the fuller aggregate of the Family of Mankind inspires nothing but contempt and aversion.

A few words on the original idea put forth by Sir James Stephen. Suppose that it turns out, he says, there is no possible object of Religion left to man, cannot he do very well without Religion altogether? It is a view that is often secretly cherished by the comfortable, the strong, and the selfish; but I am not aware that it has ever been calmly argued before as a contribution to the philosophy of religion. If his meaning be that we can do without adoration of any superhuman power, without believing anything to be above human science, or out of the range of human life, of course I wholly agree with him. And if he thinks that mankind will get on very well by means of human education, human morality, and the sense of practical duty to our fellow-beings—then he is something of an unconscious Positivist himself, and no one will ask him to go on his knees to an abstract notion, or to go through any imitation of Christian or other theological practices which he may regard as mummery. For my part, I neither desire nor expect that Christian charity, or Christian morality of any kind, will be preserved. It will be enlarged and solidified into human charity and human morality. And adopting all that Sir James has said thereon, I claim him as speaking on my side—as he certainly repudiates Mr. Spencer.

But this human charity and human morality will never be established if the peculiar cynicism which Sir James affects about the human race were ever to prevail. He says most truly that "love, friendship, good-nature, kindness, carried to the height of sincere and devoted affection, will always be the chief pleasures of life, whether Christianity be true or false." Comte himself never put it higher, and I am thinking of quoting this sentence as the text of my next discourse at Newton Hall. But this will not be so—love,

friendship, kindness, and devoted affection will not always be the chief pleasures of life—if philosophers succeed in persuading the world that the human race are a set of Yahoos. Sir James also sees that, apart from any theology whatever, the social nature of man will itself produce "a solid, vigorous, useful kind of moral standard"; and he goes on to show that this morality will have a poetic side, will affect the imagination and the heart by becoming idealised, and issuing in enthusiasm as well as conviction. O upright Judge! O most learned Judge!

I ask no more than this. The Religion of Humanity means to me this solid, vigorous, useful, moral standard, based on the belief that sincere and devoted affection is the chief pleasure of life, cultivated and idealised till it produces enthusiasm. Only I insist that it will need the whole force of education through life, all the resources which engender habits, stir the imagination, and kindle self-devotion, in order to keep this spirit alive in the masses of mankind. The cultivated, the thoughtful, and the well-to-do can nourish this solid morality in a cool, self-contained, sub-cynical way. But to soften and purify the masses of mankind we shall need all the passion and faith which are truly dignified by the name of religion—religious respect, religious sense of duty, religious belief in something vastly nobler and stronger than self. They will find this in the mighty tale of human civilisation. They will never find it in the philosopher's hypothesis of an Infinite Unknowable substratum, which "cannot be presented in terms of human consciousness," of which we can know nothing and can conceive nothing. Nor do I think they will ever find it in the common-sense maxim that "this is a very comfortable world for the prudent, the lucky, and the strong."

To all that many others have said, as to the same difficulties and weaknesses confronting the idea of Humanity as meet that of the Unknowable, I could have little trouble in showing, that as we claim for Humanity nothing absolute, nothing unreal, and nothing ecstatic, no such difficulties arise. It is a strength and a comfort to all, whether weak, suffering, or bereaved, to feel that the whole sum of human effort in the past, as in the present, is steadily working, on the whole, to lessen the sum of misery, to help the fatherless and the widow, to assuage sickness, and to comfort the lonely. This is a real and solid encouragement, proved by all the facts of progressive civilisation. If it is not the comfort offered by promises of ecstatic bliss, and supernatural intervention, it has the merit of being true and humane ; not egoist and untrue. If it is not enough, it is at least all that men and women on earth have. Resignation and peace will be theirs when we have taught them habitually to know that it is all —when the promises of the churches are known to be false, and the hopes of the superstitious are felt to be dreams.

XXIII

SCIENCE AND HUMANITY

The following address, given 18th May 1879, was the first of a series of discourses undertaken by the Positivist Committee in connection with M. Laffitte, the Director of Positivism in Paris. The course of addresses was designed to put forward and illustrate the six chapters of the "General View of Positivism" which forms the Introduction to Comte's Positive Polity, *and also to promote the practical realisation of the Religion of Humanity. The present discourse answers to the first of the six chapters of the "General View."*

Order and Progress . . .	*Live for others.*
The Principle . . .	*Love.*
The Foundation . . .	*Order.*
The End	*Progress.*

SUCH are the words which Auguste Comte inscribed, as the symbol and summary of our creed, on the first page of the work wherein he pictured in one system the scheme of life that had been forming itself in a long course of human history—the Religion of Humanity.

The whole of this work of his, the *Positive Polity*, is but the development of the thought which is embodied in these words. What is it that they mean? It is this.

The true moving force of man's life, individual or social, is Affection: love of our kind, love of right, zeal for the good. Let us live for others, for the happiness of man is to live as a social being; let us live for self, only so far that we may live more truly for the whole, to which we belong by the very nature of man.

Remembering always that this affection cannot be stable, uniform, or efficient unless it have a foundation. It must stir us not only to the right things; but to the right things through the right means. And to move us aright, it must know, or rather be guided by knowledge. Feeling, therefore, must ever rest on truth, must be in accord with facts, with all the realities around man and within man. And so, the foundation of right living is the true Order, first, of the world in which we find ourselves; next, of the society of which we are units; lastly, of the moral nature of the human soul. And that we may conform to these various kinds of order and live by them, and with them, we must *know* them. So knowledge is become a necessary condition of duty.

And yet again, the aim and goal of human life, individual as much as social, is improvement; a continual rising into a higher state, a firmer morality to each of us, a purer civilisation for our race. To love and desire the good: even to know how to achieve it, is not enough: we must labour for it, having as our motive, a sound Heart; as our guide, right Knowledge. Thus the union of Love for the good with Knowledge of the true Order issues finally in one end—Progress: material, intellectual, moral: increased mastery over nature, wider knowledge, purer hearts, and loftier conduct.

At last, after centuries of divided efforts, Feeling, Thought, and Activity come to work in one

harmonious whole. And the conception of Humanity rises up to give each of the three a new meaning. At last we see that it is the vast human whole which is the true source and end of every social union. So we see that all we really know is, the world of law translated into the language of the human mind, and ordered for the sake of human welfare. And lastly, it is the progress of man, and of man's earth for the sake of man, that is the noblest ideal of activity. Humanity is the embodiment of our highest love, the measure of all our knowledge, the object of our true activity. It is the source of all we have: the master of our present lives: the end of our hopes hereafter. It is at once the source and the object of real Religion.

I

What Religion Means

I have used the word *Religion*—a word which brings us face to face with two opposing difficulties and a crowd of ambiguities. It is said by some, "What is the need of Religion, if you take as your basis of life the entire sum of human science? If Religion is true, it is included in science; if it is not scientific, it will make life unreal." So argue, consciously or unconsciously, all who trust for the future of civilisation to bare knowledge of real things, who distrust Theology and all forms of emotional creeds.

On the other side, the objection of all who cling to Theology in any of its many forms is this: "How can there be a Religion, if there be no Divinity? Is Humanity a conception that can compare in sublimity

with God? Does not the reign of Law, which you take as your foundation, destroy the possibility of the Infinite, of Omnipotence, of Absolute Goodness; nay more, of Will, of consciousness in a supreme Being of any kind?"

It is most important to clear up what we mean by Religion.

If we thought that Religion were something outside of positive science, if it were merely "morality touched with emotion," if it were simply a yearning of the spirit after something or some being which we intuitively assumed to be, but of whom we really know nothing definite, or whom we deliberately take to transcend all human understanding — if Religion begins and ends with the worship of a sublime but vague ideal—then we say to the sceptic, or the atheist, or the man of scientific materialism, "By all means, we will have no Religion in that sense. You are right. Come what may, we will not build our house upon the sand of elastic emotion."

If, as some caricaturists would pretend, Positivism was designed simply to substitute for the adoration of God the adoration of transfigured Man, and to stop there, then it would deserve all the contemptuous condemnation of the man of science who takes his stand on knowledge of physical laws and rejects all Religion altogether. Such a creed would make life unreal; it would be in conflict with science; it would open human life again to all the danger and confusion of giving paramount place to a principle which is ultimately an emotion devoid of conviction. For we know that each heart and each imagination would unconsciously transform and recast that principle for itself. The result would not be worth the effort. The new object of adoration would be as unreal as the old.

But we mean something widely different by Religion. Religion, with Auguste Comte, means the perfect unison between man's intellectual convictions and his affective nature—both being devoted to a wisely ordered activity. When Intellect, Feeling, and Activity are brought into a consensus, so that man's whole powers are exerted harmoniously, in accordance with his true conditions and wants, then, and not till then, man's life becomes religious. Thus there is no contrast between science and Religion. Religion is science brought to bear upon man's industry and effort at the prompting of a noble feeling. Religion is not worship barely, because it is not any mere emotion: it is emotion inspired by knowledge to issue in action. Nor can Religion have as its object anything unknown or unknowable, or vague, or ideal only. For it implies the application of the whole of human knowledge to a definite purpose, under the fusing warmth of love.

The puzzle laid before man is this. The Intellect is ever at work discovering the hidden Laws and relations of Things. Man's noblest instincts are ever urging him to devote himself to the good; his lower instincts are constantly urging him to devote his energy to self. His energy is ever seeking work for its hands—work—product of some kind. How these three are to work together is the problem before man. The Intellect may serve bad instincts as well as good. The good instincts do not of themselves know how to find the truth. By themselves they are less vigorous than the selfish instincts. The energy is often wasted in vain efforts, and often is actively bad and destructive. Well! Religion, we say, is the concordat, or scheme of mutual alliance whereby each of the three are brought to co-operate and do their best by the others, under the earthly limitations of man's being.

Can any man say that, in this sense, Religion is

superfluous, or contrary to science, or a source of unreality? All serious men, whatever their creed, of whatever school, are aiming at this. All scientific labour whatever is directed (so far as it is not vain display or dilettante trifling) to give the greatest extension and unity to science, to bring it to bear most efficiently on human thought and life. Politicians, thinkers, moralists, practical reformers, and abstract theorists—all are occupied in bringing man's powers into truer relations with each other. At least they profess to be engaged in this. No man but the robber or the satirist is professedly occupied in making human life discordant.

It is the fashion to say, "No doubt human thought and activity must be got to harmonise; but this will come about of itself. Let us have no system, no general plan, no direct effort after unity. All will go well in the world if everything is let alone. The only Gospel is the Gospel of Absolute *Laissez Faire*; there is a plenary inspiration and an all-sufficing revelation in *Laissez Aller*. Individual energy will at last shake down into working agreement."

This is a wide question; and it cannot be decided *a priori*, without actual study of the system propounded. If Positivism, after honest inquiry, be found to be really repressive of the spontaneous activity of every individual unit of the community, if it repeat the social oppressiveness of the old socialist and communist utopias, if the harmony it offers be only a paper constitution, a narrow and inadequate miniature of a vast design, then assuredly Positivism deserves to be rejected by every free spirit. It would be a toy, a parody of a great thing, a nuisance and an obstruction. But no man has a right to say this offhand, without honest weighing of its nature and its aim.

To those, who think there is something generous

and profound in the monotonous Formula, "No system," we say, What is any kind of education, what is government, or philosophy; what is general science itself; what is morality; what are any of the higher efforts of the human mind, whether of creative genius, of force of character—what are these but attempts, partial attempts no doubt, to bring into working harmony men's varied capacities and energies? Civilisation is made up of the more or less conscious efforts of men so to order their lives with a mutual understanding that they may lead to the smallest amount of waste, and the greatest amount of common purpose. It is but the frenzy of insurrection which has taken for its watchword—"let everything go its own way"—when every rational effort of men about us in thought or in action, be it in the shape of advice or of law, springs from the wish that things should be got to go the right way and not the wrong way. Well, Religion, with us, means the state in which the human faculties pull together, and all pull the right way.

I turn now to the second class of objectors, the Theologians of any school, who mock at a Religion without divinities, and ask us if the universal Reign of Law which we proclaim does not exclude the very conception of Omnipotence and Absolute Goodness. I have said, we mean by Positivism an organisation of life, individual and social, and not the bare substitution of one object of adoration for another. We do not concern ourselves with the Absolute, and the Infinite, or with First Causes, or Eternity, or Transcendentals of any kind. We are not careful to answer men in this matter at all. We neither accept these notions nor deny them, nor disprove them, nor denounce them, nor in any way concern ourselves about them. Those who choose to found man's life upon the Infinite

(*i.e.* the Unintelligible), and upon the Superhuman (*i.e.* the visionary, the vague, the unreal), these men will not trouble us, and we shall not trouble them. The right ordering of man's life is a thing too serious and vast to be decided by any offhand appeal to rival sublimities.

When Theologians say, "Have you any such sublime conception as God to give us?—what can you offer us for the eternities, and omnipotence, and absolute goodness that you take away?", common sense replies—We take away nothing. These things are slipping away in spite of you and without any act of ours. If after eighteen centuries of struggle—nay, twenty-eight or thirty-eight centuries of continually new adaptations—this eternity, and omnipotence, and absolute goodness, are wholly unable to organise the intellectual and practical life of man, if they shrink, generation after generation, into a smaller field of life and man's interests, if they be ever growing more distinctly disparate with human life, and cannot be brought into line with science, and industry, and what is called our worldly life at all; if the utmost that Theology can do now is to attenuate itself to a pious wish, to urge deprecatingly and timidly that it is not *inconsistent* with science, not *incompatible* with worldly energy and every human delight in life, then we may say that Theology is manifestly unable to deal with the problem.

It is not enough to be a pious wish, a sublime abstraction. It is a miserable claim to be not inconsistent with science, not incompatible with energy and culture. The question is, Can Theology vitalise, stimulate, co-ordinate science? Can it show the relation of science to human progress? Can it on the conception of Law build up a religious attitude of mind far better than on the conception of arbitrary

omnipotence? Can Theology (with its vale of tears and its celestial crown) honestly direct the myriad efforts of human versatility to clothe human life with everything useful, ennobling, lovely? If it cannot do any of these things, it is manifestly unable to be the supreme law of human life, for two out of three parts of human nature are entirely beyond its reach.

It says (and it may say truly) its Principle too is Love. Yes! it is the Love of God. But there it stops. It does not pretend to say that its *Foundation* is *Order* (*i.e.* positive knowledge of real things), still less can it say its *End* is *Progress*—physical, material, intellectual, as well as moral, progress. It can only ejaculate that its foundation is a Divine Order, a thing ever shifting, vague, and purely hypothetical; its end is a transcendental Progress to a supersensuous crown of glory. To positive science, to practical human improvement, it has nothing whatever to say, except "set not your thoughts and affections on this world." In doing this, Theology withdraws from human nature. It says to the heart—worship, love, obey. To the Intellect, to the Character it has nothing to say at all but a pious hope that they will both act to the honour and glory of God: and both put their own interpretation on that.

Theology, therefore, is not Religion. It does not pretend to concentrate and harmonise human nature. It merely pretends to soften, console, and purify the heart. In the early stages of man's life it did more. There were once forms of Theology, which in their day very largely treated human nature as a whole, and in all its sides. When man knew very little, and led a very simple life, the conception of Gods, or God, and the manifold apparatus of Theology, really covered the greater part of his life, mental, practical, and emotional.

He heard, borne on the wind, the articulate voice
Of God ; and angels to his sight appeared
Crowning the glorious hills of Paradise ;
Or through the groves gliding like morning mist
Enkindled by the sun. He sate and talked
With winged messengers, who daily brought
To his small island in the ethereal deep
Tidings of joy and love.

Time was when, under the wing of the great Theocracies, or under Moses and the Prophets, in early Greece, and Rome, in Mediæval Europe, or in the glory of Islam, and amidst the first Bible saints, Theology was practically coextensive with life. It really knit human nature into a whole, explained it to itself, and taught man his relations to the world around him. But if sublimity, and universality, and omnipotence are the mark of what we need, or the test of truth, then surely the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, the God of Moses, and of David, the Pantheon of Greece and Rome, the Paradise of Dante, of St. Bernard, of Thomas à Kempis, shows us something far more sublime. Their Gods were far more almighty and omnipresent than the abstract, negative, hyper-ethereal Deity of a modern cultured theologian, a being who can only be described by negations, and who is relegated far away from science, politics, industry, culture, beauty—far away from every human sphere but that of metaphysical meditation ; who is too neutral to conflict with science, too ethereal to be dragged into practical fact, too subjective to have any consistent part in controlling man's real life and external activity.

No ! it is not now, when, century after century, Theology has been gradually withdrawing from the field of human nature, until it has reached almost the vanishing point, now that its sole hope is in its very indefiniteness, and its sole justification that it does not

meddle either with thought, or art, or practical activity or social order, it is not now that we can listen to its claim that it is so sublime and universal; touching, though it may be, is yet its power over the heart as well as the imagination, and exquisite as are often the products of its saintlier lives. The sublimity, the purity, the saintliness of its ideal, and often of its fruits, we see them all—and we trust we may preserve them and make them our own. But our present business is far more than simply to find a sublime ideal, or even to get a conception of exquisite pathos, with power to humble and to console the heart. Our business is to bring Religion once more to bear upon life and humanity, by finding that key of life which will correlate at once life and humanity in all their sides, after all the vast development they have had in modern ages. And this Theology cannot do, or at least does not do.

This same objection, it will be seen, applies equally to Theology of every kind, under every one of its modern forms, from that of the sternest Bible Puritanism or that of the most mystical Catholic cloister to the flimsiest cloud-shadow of God which engages the fancy of the modern *littérateur* or metaphysician. These rationalised Trinities, these residua and survivals of the bare old Deisms, these "defecated" hypotheses of a possible divine abstraction, these indescribable "eternals that make for righteousness," and all the other phrases by which clever men try to escape from the obvious difficulties they feel in saying God when they do not mean God—these are even less *Religion* than are the orthodox Theologies. The Unitarian formula which seeks to escape from logical contradictions by discarding the Athanasian Creed, the Neo-Christianity which seeks to escape from historical criticism by giving up the Bible as the word of God

and the scheme of Redemption as the basis of its creed, these philosophical conundrums which try to save Theology by veiling it in an impenetrable cloud-land —these have less to say to human nature, to thought, and energy, to modern science and industrial life, even than the Vatican itself, or Calvinism pure and simple.

The Vatican, it is true, offers nothing but the Syllabus for its mode of treating science and society. That we think is farcical enough. Calvinism ostentatiously declares that science and society are worldly, and therefore ungodly, and withdraws into its chamber to commune with its God. But it still finds its God commensurate with its own life, all stunted and distorted as that life is. Even these two have something to say about life—practical life, thought, conduct, happiness. But the bare Deist, the Rationalising Theist, the Metaphysical dreamer about a hypothetical First Cause, such as these are simply withdrawing from the field altogether. Their creed has nothing to say to man, and man's life, except what each man may find it in his own head or heart to say—which is a sort of Religion as you like it. They fancy they are dexterously avoiding the difficulties, logical or historical. But, in avoiding difficulties, they are more and more surrendering the whole field of human nature, intellectual, practical, aye, and moral too—for their Religion is refined down to a metaphysical puzzle. This is not Religion at all. They make Religion, in its flight, abandon the whole field of human nature which it is the business of Religion to transform and guide—which it once did transform and guide. They abandon it to those who have something to say about the re-ordering of human nature as a whole.

II

The Problem of Life

Let us see what the problem really is. Every Religion, every complete philosophy, and every systematic social Polity, aims at making man's life more harmonious within, more complete in social union, and in truer relation to the world around us. It is the fashion nowadays to say that Religion explains the relation of Man to the Infinite, or of Man to the Universe, of man to the mysterious questions within him, or the immensity without him. But this is merely a modern, narrow, and perfectly artificial idea of Religion. The Religion of Moses, or of St. Paul, meant something far more than the relations of these individuals to the Infinite, or their unexpressed and inexpressible yearnings after something mysterious. Religion then meant a comprehensive scheme of life and thought which made the man as a whole feel at rest, in health, in harmonious unison within him; which knit bodies of men having the same belief into a common mode of thought, and life, and activity; and lastly, which laid down the rule of life as marked out by their human lot, and showed them the only path to sustained Happiness. It thus did three things. It bound the human powers into a whole, and taught them to work as one; it united men in masses of believers; it imposed on them a rule of life. To harmonise the soul within, to draw men together, to regulate their whole lives, always was, and still is, the real business of Religion. The idea that Religion is concerned only with the Infinite and undefined yearnings is a modern piece of sentiment.

The difficulty of the task lies in this complexity of human nature, its contrasted elements, and the overpowering limitations upon man's destiny imposed by the facts of nature. Man has instincts, appetites, emotions;—violent or languid, selfish or unselfish, animal or tender, common or sublime. Man has intellectual powers, ranging from the lowest cunning to the most lofty imagination. He has qualities of energy, prudence, perseverance, courage: faculties that may make a hero, or may make a miser or a tyrant. Besides all this triple endowment of qualities, man is a social being, and his nature can only be developed by society with his fellows, and is deeply modified by that society. Lastly, this complex, modified, social being finds himself in a world of tremendous forces and boundless opportunities, where his whole energy sometimes can hardly sustain his life, which sometimes offers unlimited gratifications to his appetites, vast fields of conquest to his activity, perpetual pabulum for his inquiring thought. In this Chaos of necessities, allurements, opportunities without, in this conflict of forces within man, what is to be the spring of his life; which is to lead, which is to rule; what is to be the end, the result of the whole? To these questions all sorts of answers may be given, and have been given.

At the outset, the active energetic powers had it all their own way, casually stimulated first by one passion, then by another. Man thought just enough to get his weapons or win his battles. On a large scale, too, some famous societies, both in the old world of war and in the modern world of industry, have appeared to be based on the dominant scheme of activity. But societies or men which are absorbed in the blind rage for practical achievement, be it in fighting, robbing, producing, or trading, are soon found to be unsound. They are seen to be turned

into slaves of some ignoble appetite, and the force of society about them, or the facts of nature, bring them down and remind them that in headlong surrender to activity they were really the creatures of passion.

It has often been suggested that the dominant element in life should be sought for in some intellectual principle—in the search for truth, the superiority of knowledge, and the like. But when we come to examine it, we find that the search for truth is not a motive power at all. Truth can tell us how to do a thing, but it cannot impel us to do it. The motive source must be a feeling, or a desire. A profound knowledge of nature may be used either to enrich mankind or to commit assassination. Thought is neutral—it may act under an evil or an indifferent or a noble motive. It always acts under some impulse of the feelings, moral or immoral. Nor can thought command. The mind gives light; it does not give force. It is dispersive, and may exercise itself in the boundless fields of curiosity. By itself thought can neither concentrate man's life on a uniform purpose, nor sustain and stimulate him to enduring action. Lastly, it appears that the intellectual energy of the mass of mankind is far too moderate to constitute within them a principle of life. One in a thousand of us may really be capable of a life of intellectual effort. Nine hundred and ninety-nine make use of their intellects to serve their ends. How often beneath the show of a passion for intellectual engrossment do we find some refined egoism, some concealed vanity or ambition! The character which is given over to speculation is often a character of curious feebleness. A society which proclaims the supremacy of intellectual excitement is a society without steadiness, morality, dignity, or tenderness.

Therefore since the harmonising principle of life

cannot be permanently found either in the intellectual or the active powers, there remain only the moral on which we can found it. To which out of the various affections and appetites of man are we to turn? Obviously not to the lower appetites, or the self-regarding passions; violent, necessary even, and ever-present, as some of them are. It is a contradiction in terms to say that any man was ever raised to a higher nature or became a truer man by means of consistent devotion to one of his lower appetites; and it would be equally paradoxical to pretend that societies of men are civilised and united by the humanising power of the Gospel of selfishness. We may leave this singular form of Religion to the more fanatical disciples of the doctrines of Plutonomy.

It is plain that the harmonising principle must be found in the higher or unselfish instincts, in our feelings of Attachment, of Veneration, of Goodness: in those fine gifts of our nature which move us to devote ourselves to something outside us, to humble ourselves in awe before something that is greater than ourselves, to use our powers for good, for the benefit of our fellows and the common weal.

And thus it is that every Religion, or social system of any kind, which was ever worthy of the name, has aimed at regulating human nature and organising society by proclaiming as the principle of life the cultivation of some one or more of the great social feelings. They have used all sorts of devices, combinations, and forms. But priests, philosophers, moralists, and preachers of every creed have ever said, "Base your life upon a noble feeling, if you are to live aright; base the State upon a generous devotion of its members to some great ideal, if it is to prosper and be strong." The old Hebrews placed it in submission to their tribal God, who represented to them the spirit

of Theocratic patriotism. The old Romans placed it in courageous devotion to the Eternal Destiny of Rome. The older Greeks placed it in the adornment of their lives and of their cities with every ennobling attitude and grace. Christ and St. Paul placed it in humility, charity, longsuffering, mercy, purity. Mahomet placed it in utter devotion of self to the Will of an overruling Providence. The Catholic Church has found it in Veneration for the divine beings, and the cultivation of every Christian grace. The Protestant Churches have found it in obedience to the written word of God, and the ever-present sense of saving the believer's soul by a life of Love and Faith. All of these systems conceived that they could harmonise Life by placing it under the stimulus of a high unselfish passion.

And they were all right so far. There *is* no other basis on which man's life can be knit and society ennobled but by conscious devotion to some great Cause represented by a dominant Power. It was by virtue of this Truth that these various societies exhibited such wonderful powers, and produced such memorable results. They were strong by means of it; neither men nor races have been strong without it. This great truth lingers on even in the attenuated fragments which survive in the modern Theologies and Theistic philosophies. Powerless as they are to deal with contemporary Thought and Life, they still command respect and a clinging devotion from masses of men and women, and from some of the noblest spirits of our time, because in spite of their want of logic, force, humanity, or usefulness, they still do testify to the beauty of holiness, and the inspiring might of a lofty sense of devotion. Now Positivism declares that, come what may, this is the root of the matter. It holds with the Theologies, with all the

Theologies, that the key of man and of life is, as they ever said: *Love, Veneration, Devotion.*

Wherein, then, was their utter and portentous failure, if they were right in this main point? How is it that they have failed so strikingly both to assimilate science and to moralise industry? Why is it that their power is exerted but fitfully and slightly over one corner alone of human nature, whilst the breach they have made with the rest of human nature grows wider and wider every day?

Obviously, it was because their spiritual elevation and devotion were not according to Knowledge—not in correspondence with Fact. Touching man's noblest feelings they called on men to bow down to imaginary beings; when men asked them for evidence of these beings and proof of their doings, the Theologies could only answer "Believe in faith!" They invented childish theories about the earth and our world and the facts of nature, and treated the Intellect of Man as if it were a slave. They talked about the arbitrary intervention of mysterious wills and deities, when Science kept on showing us for ever new evidence of the Reign of Law through the World and a total elimination of all arbitrary Providences.

And when men came to act, to conquer this glorious earth and to organise their practical life in all the complications of modern material industry, the Theologies of themselves could do nothing to civilise and moralise it. They could only ejaculate "Lay not up for yourselves treasures where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." Well! this was to outrage the Intellect of man, to trifle with our human energies; and the fury with which the man of thought

and the man of action have so long pursued the Priest and his Theology dates from that day when, in the name of man's noblest emotions, man was ordered to forswear his reason and his manhood, and, if he took these precepts in their literal sense, to debase himself, to become an idle, hysterical, ignorant mystic. Love, Veneration, Devotion—Yes! but everything turns on what or whom it is that we Love, Venerate, and Devote ourselves to serve; and how these feelings may be ranged with all we know, and may inspire all the work that we find to do in the world.

The more we look at it, the more we see that this cardinal error lies at the root of every kind of Theology, or Metaphysical Theosophy, whether it take the form of Catholicism or Protestantism, Polytheism or Buddhism, Spiritualism, Deism, or Pantheism. Whether you worship God, or the Virgin Mary, or the Principle of Good, or the Anima Mundi, or the "Eternal that makes for Righteousness" —if you concentrate the noblest sentiments of the human spirit on imaginary and superhuman objects, if you place the ideal of happiness and perfection in some supersensuous kind of bliss—you must place the whole of this influence that you call Religion outside the human reason, which can only deal with the rational and the real, and outside the human energies which can only act in a human world. A superhuman creed may pretend to tell man his relations to the Infinite, and to prepare him for eternal bliss—but what is wanted here is something to tell him his relations to the Finite where he now is, and how he is to do his work honourably in this transitory but very urgent and very difficult bodily life on earth.

III

Free Thought *versus* Faith

But how comes it that, if Theology is so manifestly unable to perform its task, it has so long retained the hold it possesses; how comes it that the forces that have driven it from point to point have never succeeded to its place? For five centuries at least in Europe the struggle has been going on, and in every conflict Theology has lost some ground. Over the whole field of physical science the reign of law has been steadily and for ever established. The Heavens no longer declare the glory of God; they declare the glory of Kepler, Galileo, Newton. Neither Jove nor Jehovah now manifests his anger in the thunder, nor rides upon the wings of the wind. The electric force now binds two continents together, and the law of Storms is yielding up to us the secrets of the Gods of Heaven. The famines, the diseases, and the revolutions which afflict mankind are no longer the judgments of God. They are the inevitable sequences of known and preventible conditions.

Thus throughout the whole incalculable array of human discoveries, through the vast field of human industry and labour, there has stretched itself out a body of scientific laws and a wealth of practical achievement which are utterly incommensurable with Theology of any kind. These two are for ever incompatible—as distinct from each other as a dream is distinct from a demonstration in geometry, as distinct as a fairy-tale is from the invention of the Electric light. It is pretended, indeed, that Theology

may yet hold a place beside them. It is not so. The Theology of Moses, of St. Bernard, of Milton could not live beside them for an hour. If any Theology can live within their light, it is the metaphysical puzzle of some ingenious academic logician. How comes it then that this grand scientific movement, which has routed Theology in every battle, has failed to take its place in the world; cannot yet win that loyalty and authority which have ever been given to Religion?

After all, what is it that these vast intellectual achievements can offer to mankind? Inexhaustible satisfaction to our thirst after Knowledge; perpetual contrivances for making life richer; enchanting visions of yet brighter discoveries. But after that? Nothing but boundless fields of knowledge and fresh matter for investigation, and fresh appliances for life. But Affection, Veneration, Devotion, what of these? What power do these sciences and appliances offer to tame the turbulent passions and weld the discordant nature; in the name of what mighty force do they claim man's Veneration; to what service do they bid him to dedicate his life? They know nothing of these things. They offer him indeed a perpetuity of gratified curiosity, the service of pure unalloyed Truth, a noble wonder at the immensity and complexity of the All.

I will not deny that there are poets and philosophers here and there, of rare and peculiar genius, whom this exclusive thirst for Truth may lead to bright and useful lives. But what a mockery is this passion for Truth to the mass of the men and women around us, if we tell them to make it the standard and master of their lives. Curiosity is a low and feeble motive to appeal to, if you seek to lift rude men and women out of the slough of their selfish passions;

love of knowledge is a fine thing, but does it prompt men to succour the miserable and protect the weak? Truth is sacred, but will Truth make men generous, just, and tender, better fathers and husbands, truer friends, braver citizens, more humane men? Wonder is often a healthy state of mind; but will an eternity of wonder at the material world around us fill us with gratitude, veneration, and resignation, such as the Musulman, or Catholic, or Protestant felt, and may still feel, for his living Providence?

Here then for centuries there has been waged the secular conflict between Positive Science on the one side and Theology on the other—Free Thought and Free Life against a Supreme Faith and an exalted spirit of Devotion. It has long seemed an insoluble Dilemma. Each has something that the other cannot destroy. Each has something that the world will not accept; each wants something that the world will not forego. In spite of all the Priests of all the creeds, mankind will not consent to surrender one jot of their mind's freedom; nor can all the Preachers of a thousand sects persuade them to give up their interest in this earthly life. The intellect shall be free; and men will care to live in this world and not in any other. On the other hand, in spite of science, men will not rest in peace until they have a Faith; they cannot consent to forego a religious sense of duty and reverence. How long is this battle to be fought? Is the Dilemma for ever insoluble?

IV

Solution of the Dilemma

Positivism professes to be the answer to this momentous problem. The keynote of that answer is as follows. There must be both Science and Devotion, and the two must occupy the *same* field and be concentrated on the same object. Science alone, Theology alone, make a lame and one-sided scheme of life, for neither is Religion; neither gives a unity; and the two are incapable of ever coinciding in one. So long as Science is engrossed with the physical facts around us, it is impossible to say that Science can present us a religious basis of Life. So long as Faith is supposed to be something opposed to Knowledge, it is impossible to say that Faith can satisfy any rational mind. But the great intellectual fact of our generation is this:—that Science has extended its domain to the science of Man. Social things have now been brought, like physical things, within the realm of Law. The science of Society—or Sociology—has arisen. It is the unique and resplendent achievement of Auguste Comte.

No rational thinker now denies that the whole world of human activity, of intellectual and moral power, is, like the facts of nature, capable of scientific treatment. History, the origin and development of civilisation, the economy of our social life, the secret springs of our moral life, the laws of our intellectual life, are all reduced to a science; less exact than our knowledge of the solar system, but equally real and far more complex. That which of old time was known as Science—the laws of man's physical sphere, or of

his physical frame—is become but the prologue and ante-chamber of Science. The great Science, the sacred Science, the crown and summary of all science, is the Science of Man.

And now this new science unfolds to us an issue out of the dilemma. It reveals to us the laws of a Force towards which we can feel the highest sense of Sympathy, to whose service we can devote ourselves, whose mighty Power over us we cannot gainsay, whilst we must accept it with Love and Reverence. That Force is the vast and overwhelming consensus of all human lives, the complex movement through the ages of human civilisation and thought. Before this crucial discovery of human Intelligence it was impossible to feel that the truths of science and our noblest sympathies had a common object or field. One might wonder at the Firmament of Stars and delight in our study of the planets; but it was idle to love the Planets, or to feel ourselves inspired by the Milky Way. It was marvellous to track the secrets of electricity, or the analysis of gases; but the lives of men and women were never ordered by profound affection for electricity or gas. The study of all the forms of life upon the earth enlarged our minds, and the physiology of the human frame showed us how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; but no man could love the Vegetable or Animal kingdoms as a whole. Nay, Anatomy, or even Vivisection itself, were not found altogether conducive to a reverential and sympathetic state of Mind.

But when we passed into Social Science and found how all the other sciences had their issue and meaning in the Science of Man, when we found how they all served as the instruments and materials for the glorious human Fabric, when we learned how the long succession of ages had developed man's mind and powers,

how civilisation was advancing with sure and widening progress, how the efforts of the human race stood round each of us from the cradle to the grave, how the thoughts of the wise, and the works of heroes, and the influence of every noble life made us what we are—then we felt at last that the Realm of Law was become the Realm of Love. There was now a human Providence which watched over us, taught us, guided us, ruled us; there was a supreme Power which we might serve, but with which we could not contend; there was a Cause to which to devote our lives and which could inspire all the warmth of our souls. That cause was the onward march of the human race, and its continual rising to a better mode of life.

Thus then Science at last has brought us to the feet of a Power for which we can feel all those emotions of Love, Veneration, and Devotion that have been so long lavished upon the creations of our fancy or our fear. Man can again become a religious being, for the deepest principle of his nature is again the service of a Power for Good above him. But observe the vast difference in the new form that Religion has taken. This Power for Good is real, provable, human. It is entirely within the sphere of the Intellect, and is manifested by the efforts of the Intellect. The intellect is no longer the slave, or the foe, of the devotional ardour. It is its helpmate, its guide, and instructor. The new Power is not a transcendental ideal which drags man away from his life on earth. It is as human as himself; it offers not the ideal of one Christ, but the reality of all the Christs; one with us, tried as we are, suffering as we are, bound by the same laws of matter, and united by the same conditions. It is not, indeed, Eternal, Almighty, Omniscient, Perfect—that is to say, it is not unintelligible, unreal, unhuman. If it were these things it would stand

apart from our intellects, and be indifferent to the best of our practical energies. But relatively to us, it is perpetual, mighty, provident, benevolent. So that if Religion, at first sight, seem in its new form to have lost something in sublimity and intensity, it has gained everything in reality, in comprehensiveness, in usefulness, in humanity.

It is just because the new object of our highest Reverence is brought down from Heaven to earth, is brought within the range of our human powers, that it gives such a mighty stimulus to our reason, to our energies, to our zeal for every kind of Good. An infinite Trinity, or an infinite Godhead, is indeed incomprehensible, is above our intellect; does not need our thoughts; cannot be tracked out by finite minds. An Almighty Creator does not need our efforts; there is no work of his that we can really do, for his all-seeing Providence can baffle everything we attempt. He needs not our well-doing, for he is beyond all service and all good. We are to give him nothing but praises: we may show our virtue by benevolence; but virtue is not devoutness; "when we have done all that is commanded of us, we must say, We are unprofitable servants." Silent adoration is all we can really give. "Thou art necessary to me," says the Catholic Mystic to his God; "I am not necessary to thee!" In every way that we turn it, an Absolute Perfection paralyses our reason, unmans our energies, refines away even active goodness into a mere ecstatic prayer. Monks and Nuns are logically consistent with their creed.

But the power of Humanity calls up every fibre of our brains to understand its organism, to learn its forces, and to know its difficulties. We are all necessary to Humanity, for we are a part of it; it needs every faculty of our natures; not a stroke of

our true work is lost to it; not one of our human offerings is valueless; every good word, and act, and gentle touch has its fruit and serves our kind; every smile that we shed upon a child is an act of devotion to our Human Providence.

And yet let us beware of thinking that all this is bounded and ended by a vague Humanitarianism. If Religion meant simply that men and women would be saved by trusting to indefinite Progress, by relying on general goodness, and uttering encomiums on human dignity, Religion would lead to some extraordinary types of character, and would end in as little as so many kinds of vague worship and hope. On the contrary, Humanity, we say, is placed in a hard world, and has a world of hard work before it. There are mountains of things to be learned, of things to be done, of things to be practised. All round the human race stand the hard forces of Matter, and the difficult and complicated facts of science. Society cannot be touched without knowledge; and the knowledge of the social organisation of humanity is a vast and perplexing science. The race, like every one of us, is dependent on the laws of life, and the study of life is a mighty field to master. But life has its conditions in inert matter, of which chemical and physical laws give us the fixed and subtle limits. Lastly, our whole existence is dependent on the laws of the solar system wherein we dwell.

This vast array of Law thus forms the condition and basis of human life; and we can only live rightly in so far as we live in accordance with it. Thus knowledge, knowledge of the laws mathematical, astronomical, chemical, physical, biologic, social, moral, becomes for us not only compatible with Religion, but essential to Religion, a part of Religion, its foundation and Creed. To oppose or contrast

Science and Religion would be, for a Positivist, as irrational as it would be in a Christian to oppose the Creeds and the Gospels to Christianity. With us Science is Religion, so far that it is the Intellectual aspect of Religion. And thus with us the first part of a religious training is a sound and rational education. The beginning of all service of Humanity is the knowledge of the laws of the world which surrounds it, of the laws of its own nature. Enthusiasm for Humanity, worship of Humanity would be shallow sentiment or rank hypocrisy, if it did not imply unwearying efforts to know the Power we pretend to serve, to master those laws which reveal to us its Destiny, and to carry that knowledge into act.

Not that this knowledge can ever remain a dry intellectual attainment. Religion, as Comte has said, consists of Three parts: a Belief, a Worship, and a Rule of life, of which all three are equal, and each as necessary as any other. To make Religion consist in Knowledge only, would be to make it end in scientific curiosity. To make it consist in Worship only, would make it end in affectation and sentimentality. To make it consist in a rule of life alone, would be to make it end in Pharisaism. True Religion is the combination of Belief, Worship, Discipline. Humanity demands from us the best of our brains, of our hearts, of our conduct.

THE END

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